SEEDS OF PEACE

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April 18-24, 2005

Compassionate Alternatives to Neo-liberalism & Neo-fascism

80

SEEDS OF

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* Signature of Maha Sila Viravongs, a great literary man of Laos whose centennial natal anniversary was on 25th December 2004.

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.

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The goals of INEB are to:

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

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THE DALAI LAMA

October 11, 2004

H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej
The Royal Palace
Bangkok
THAILAND

Your Majesty,

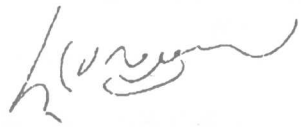
It has been brought to my attention that there will shortly be an occasion to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of your esteemed great grandfather, King Mongkut, Rama IV. I would like to take the opportunity of expressing a few words of appreciation on this important celebration.

I understand that King Mongkut is distinguished by the positive innovations that he introduced to both Thailand's religious and secular affairs during the crucial period of the mid-nineteenth century, the benefits of which continue to be felt to this day. During his nearly thirty years as a Bhikkhu, he led and encouraged reforms that gave rise to the Dhammayut order, while emphasizing the importance of the Vinaya, which in due course contributed to the modernization of Thai Buddhism and its early embrace of science. Moreover, once he ascended the royal throne, his ability to converse, read and write in English and his understanding of the West meant that he was successful in encouraging Thailand to enter the modern age and avoid colonial occupation. He was far-sighted to realize that educational improvements would contribute to the future welfare of his country.

King Mongkut seems to have been an exemplary Buddhist leader whose qualities we should still admire and learn from today. On the occasion of the anniversary of his birth I offer my prayers that the noble hopes and aspirations that he cherished for his people may be fulfilled.

With my prayers and good wishes.

Yours sincerely,



Editorial Notes

Seeds of Peace is now on its 21st year of existence. In the past two decades we have stood for the poor and the oppressed, especially in Asia. We have been seeking for alternatives to the mainstream of economism and consumerism. We try to build the culture of awakening from greed, hatred and delusion. Our path is non-violent and our goal is peace with justice and environmental balance. We support good people and good movements. We collaborate with good friends ecumenically through our various activities and organizations—be it Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and Wongsanit Ashram, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last December. All these organizations are under Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation which also celebrates its 35th anniversary of existence.

In the last issue, we honoured Rama IV. In this issue, we commemorate RamaVIII.

In this issue we honor three men of humble origin for their natal centenaries. One from Laos, Sila Viravong and two from Siam—Direk Jayanama and Kularb Saipradit. We are pleased to point out an outstanding Thai woman, too: Wanna Thappananon, better known by her pen name of Sridaorueang, in the tradition of Sri Burapha, the pen name of Kularb Saipradit. She is only sixty one years old, yet her fiction and short stories have two English titles already: *Married to the Demon King*, translated by Susan F. Kepner, and *The Citizen's Path* edited by Jakkrit Siririn. Please refer to these four names in the issue. In the last issue, we have already honored an American lady—Lillian Willoughby in her late eighties who spent a week in jail for her protest on the Iraqi war conducted in the name of American imperialism.

When we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of our Ashram and the thirty fifth anniversary of our Foundation, we invited two other Thai ladies to give public lectures—Ms. Siriporn Chotichatchawankul, about her experiences at the beginning of the Ashram, and Ms. Sivinee Swadi-Aree on Science and Society. Also in this issue, Jane Rasbash has written about the Ashram and her five years staying there.

On February 22nd, another Thai lady, Mrs. Bhinan Jotirosserani, will give the Komol Kemthong annual lecture. She is very significant in conscientizing the middle classes to be aware of human rights and environmental issues in her birthplace, Kanjanaburi, and from there she helped encourage people to link together in protecting the environment and for standing against the abuse of power by government officials and transnational corporations.

The Midnight University has already asked Mrs. Jintana Kaewkao to be the first to give the Charoen Wat-aksorn Annual Lecture on October 2nd, 2004. Mr. Charoen and Mrs. Jintana, two ordinary persons in Prajuab Kirikhan province, received honorary doctorates from the University for their research work in their area, the result of which was superior to those conducted by professors in mainstream universities who were paid by big companies wanting to destroy the natural environment in the area. Unfortunately Mr. Charoen was assassinated on June 21st, 2004.

On January 16th, the Venerable Samdong Rinpoche, Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in exile, will give the 11th Sem Pringpuangkaew Annual Lecture on Buddhist Democracy. These lectures will be reported in the next issue.

In this issue, we recorded a number of our friends who passed away. We are grateful to their friendship in the past. Most unfortunately that David Chappell, a member of the INEB execetive committee, just passed away. We intend to dedicate the next issue to his life and work. We are fortunate to have many friends who are still alive and help us directly or indirectly. We need our friends to guide us and to support us in cash or in kind, so that we may be able to plant more seeds of peace in the world.

We count on you, dear readers, as our good friends.

NEPAL

Terror Law Likely to Boost 'Disappearances'

On October 13, King Gyanendra issued a new version of the much-criticized Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADO), which had lapsed earlier this year. Under the law, a Chief District Officer can now approve preventive detention orders for six months, without any recourse to the judiciary. This period can be extended for another six months with the approval of the home minister. In previous versions of TADO, the preventive detention period was limited to 90 days. The new law broadens the powers of the security forces, which have been responsible for systematic human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests and torture.

"Given the scale of abuses by Nepal's security forces, laws need to be put into place that give greater, not fewer, protections for Nepalis," said Brad Adams, executive director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division. "This law is a major step backwards. It's likely to lead to more disappearances and more torture of people accused of being against the government or aligned with Maoist insurgents."

In a recent report, "Between a Rock and Hard Place: Civilians Struggle to Survive in Nepal's Civil War", Human Rights Watch documented how the Royal Nepalese Army acts with impunity in "disappearing" and executing suspected Maoists. The army routinely ignores habeas corpus orders from the Supreme Court ordering access to detainees, and it has repeatedly lied to the Supreme Court about the whereabouts of detainees in its custody. Moreover, the army has also failed to investigate and prosecute almost all cases of "disappearances" and summary executions, effectively allowing its soldiers free reign to commit abuses and fostering a culture of impunity.

According to the U.N. Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, Nepal in 2002 and 2003 led the world in the number of enforced disappearances by its security forces. Nepal's National Human Rights Commission has documented more than 1,000 disappearances that remain unresolved. Most of the persons "disappeared" by Nepal's security forces have likely been killed after interrogation.

"Nepal already leads the world in the number of persons who are 'disappeared' by its security forces," said Adams. "The law could give the army a green light to continue its dirty work. Allowing the security forces to keep people in secret custody for up to a year, without access to the courts, is sending the wrong message to an army already out of control."

Human Rights Watch noted that international experience shows that the most effective way to prevent "disappearances" and summary executions is to prevent the use of secret detention, and to ensure that detained persons are promptly brought before a judge and have access to their lawyers and families. The strengthened provisions of TADO, giving the security forces the power to hold people in unacknowledged preventive detention for up to a year, move Nepal in exactly the opposite direction.

Also important is an effective legislature, which can review and amend draft laws before adoption and can provide oversight over the behavior of the executive branch, including the army and police. However, because the king suspended all elected bodies and Nepal's parliament in August 2002, no public or democratic debate took place prior to the promulgation of the new TADO.

"The issuance of this new law by fiat demonstrates that a new parliament urgently needs to be convened," said Adams. "Laws of this importance should be the subject of public consideration and debate."

Human Rights Watch pointed out that in April the Nepalese government made a public pledge at the annual U.N. Commission on Human Rights to uphold human rights and the laws of war in its fight against the Maoists. It also promised to conclude an agreement with the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to allow the United Nations to provide assistance to the Nepalese government and the National Commission on Human Rights.

Brad Adams,
Executive Director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division,
October 26, 2004

SIAM

Revenge of the Forgotten Monarch

The True Life Sequel to the King and the Land of Smile

Fifty-six years ago a request was made to the British government on behalf of a nervous young Siamese man who wanted to come to England. The man, 20-year-old King Bhumiphol of Siam (pronounced Poomipon), had recently succeeded to the throne after his brother, King Ananda (pronounced Anant), was shot dead. Naturally Bhumiphol wanted to pay a visit to King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. The British replied with a polite, but firm no.

That was in 1948, two years after the shooting of King Ananda. No killer had been identified yet, and in Thailand the names of suspects were softly whispered amongst those in the know. Top-secret British government documents reveal that one such whisper, the softest of them all, was loud enough to be heard at the Foreign Office. There was a possibility of later embarrassment if Bhumiphol were to visit the King and Queen. It fell to Lord Mountbatten to break it to the Siamese that their King was not welcome as long as he was under any suspicion.

As for the killing of Ananda, officially it remains an unsolved mystery. In Thailand where even a hint of criticism of the monarchy is a serious criminal offense, inquiries are actively discouraged. The Thais have tried to bury the truth beneath a mountain of deceit and obfuscation. In the course of this cover, three innocent men were executed for the King's murder after an embarrassingly bungled series of trials. The current official version of events makes no mention of murder and vaguely glosses over Ananda's death as "accidental". The nature of the accident, and whose accident it was, is not disclosed. At best this is highly questionable.

As it happens, Britain payed a significant role in the aftermath of Ananda's death, and formerly secret governmental documents give considerable insights into the truth. While they do not finally answer the forbidden question: "Who killed Ananda?" the mountain of deceit is reduced to little more than a hillock and what was once described as "the great unsolved mystery of the Far East" is found to be no such thing.

The story began on 9th June 1946 in the Grand Palace in Bangkok, where Ananda and Bhumiphol were living with their mother (known as the Princess Mother). Although 20-year old Ananda had been King since the age of ten, he and his brother had lived in Thailand for only a few months, having been brought up in a villa in Lausanne, Switzerland.

At about 9:20 am, Ananda, lying in bed in a room guarded by two royal pages, was shot in the forehead with his own Colt.45. The "Lord of Life" died within thirty seconds. In keeping with the rules of succession, 18-year old Bhumiphol ascended the throne later that day, although his coronation did not take place until several years later.

The announcement from the Palace, broadcast on the radio that evening, disclosed no mystery. The King, who had been unwell, "must have played with his pistol as he was fond of doing, resulting in an accident". That might have been the end of the matter if awkward facts have not got in the way. In particular, the Colt.45 is not a gun prone to accidental discharge—it will fire only if considerable pressure is applied to the safety plate at the back of the butt at the same time as the trigger is depressed. If it was not an accident, could it have been suicide? After the shot was heard, Ananda was found outstretched on his bed, arms at his side, with the gun lying next to his left hand. But Ananda was right-handed. The gun had been fired within two inches of his forehead, the 11 mm (.45 inch) bullet entering above the left eye and traveling at a downwards angle to exit just above and to the left of the nape of the neck. The resting place of the pistol, the position of the entry wound and the trajectory of the bullet, all militated against Ananda killing himself, intentionally or therwise. Moreover, if Ananda had shot himself, it was not likely that his body would have been found in the position and posture described.

It is no surprise that the Medical Committee charged with investigating the King's death concluded two weeks later that Ananda was most probable murdered. The Committee, comprised of doctors and one policeman, reported that its votes in favor of murder, suicide and accident were respectively 16, 4 and 2. The two British doctors abstained from voting.

The Committee's report was a bombshell in Thailand. "Its publication", telegraphed Britain's Ambassador to Thailand, Geoffrey Thompson, "must cause a sensation of the first order... Government now realize their efforts to put across the accident theory had been a catastrophic mistake". If it was murder, how could an assassin have got inside the heavily guarded Palace to Ananda?

In a ciphered telegram, the Ambassador revealed that the Thai Minister for Foreign Affairs: "gave me the impression that had come to the conclusion that the tragedy had resulted from some sinister intrigue or quarrel within the Royal Palace itself." The Ambassador went on: "There have been whispers to this effect for some time. They derive from the fact that some delay occurred before any outside person was admitted to the King's bedroom, by which time the Royal remains had been tidied up. The weapon put aside and melancholy mise en scene interfered within other ways.

Within a few weeks of Ananda's killing, Bhumiphol and his mother asked the British to fly them back to Switzerland. The Foreign Office expressed reservations about the request: "a surreptitious departure to Switzerland would be undignified". Suggestions that the British might try to dissuade the errant royals were dismissed: "I am not sure that we should try to save the Siamese Royal Family from itself." A plane was provided and the royals departed on the day appointed by their astrologers, but before leaving Bhumiphol and his mother gave evidence to the Commission of Inquiry set up by the Thai government to investigate Ananda's death.

When that Commission published its findings several months later, it completely rejected any idea of accident. More rumors circulated in Bangkok, and one of the strongest amongst them was that Pridi Banomyong, who was Prime Minister at the time of Ananda's death, was implicated in his murder.

Pridi was a democrat of considerable integrity and a man with a distinguished war record. He was loathed by the Princess Mother, who suspected him of wanting to confiscate the royal belongings, but much liked by the British. When, in late 1947, the new military government named Pridi as chief conspirator in the murder. With the help of the British and Americans Pridi escaped from Thailand to Singapore.

A few weeks after the coup, the new heir apparent to the Thai throne had a long secret conversation with the British Ambassador. Prince Chumphot assured the Ambassador that Pridi and his assistant, who was also accused, were not involved in Ananda's death. But the possibility of accident could not be altogether excluded when the Commission of Inquiry had completely rejected the theory? The explanation seemed to be that the Commission had considered only the possibility that Ananda himself had an accident. Could another person have accidentally shot him?

In the coded telegram, the Ambassador told London: "This last remark impressed me because here and there a voice has whispered that the tragedy resulted from the accidental discharge of the automatic pistol when being handled by the young brother of the victim." Now a startling theory had seen the light of day. "if (it were) so", wrote the Ambassador, "this would go a long way towards explaining Pridi's extraordinary reticence."

Pridi remained in exile from Thailand for most of the remaining years of life, and he died in Paris in 1984. If he did know who killed Ananda, he took story with him to the grave.

Meanwhile Bhumiphol had been in Lausanne since August 1946. A few months after arriving he had sent a message saying that he did not want to go back to Thailand for his brother's cremation ceremony the following March. The cremation was postponed. The British Ambassador wrote to Ernest Bevin, then Foreign Secretary: "it will greatly strengthen the suspicion already held by many here that His present Majesty has no intention of formally ascending the throne if he can help it... Should the present King abdicate, the impact... would, I believe, be severe."

More than a year later, Bhumiphol had still not returned to Thailand. In a confidential US State Department memorandum written in February 1948, Mr. Landon reported: "Prime Minister Khuang is preparing to announce that King Bhumiphol killed his brother accidentally; that Bhumiphol will abdicate and that Prince Chumphot will become King... It may be true that Bhumiphol killed his brother either intentionally or accidentally."

In May of 1948 the Thai government approached the British with an idea. Bhumiphol might be persuaded to return to Thailand, they thought, if he could first visit England to study with the military, learn about the Royal Court, and of course visit King George. "There is, however, one serious obstacle." wrote the foreign Office in a secret telegram, "of many rumors circulating, one is to effect that King Ananda was

killed by the present King... It would obviously be highly embarrassing if, after the king of Siam had visited this country and had stayed with their Majesties, further charges arose of his complicity in his brother's death"

A Thai royal, Prince Dhani-Niwas, arranged to meet Lord Mountbatten in India to discuss the King's proposed visit. Lord Mountbatten wrote: "I told him that I had followed the details of the late King's death... I suggested that an accident might very easily have occurred in which the younger brother had by sheer mischance and ill-fortune killed the elder... If this were indeed the truth the future of the Siamese monarchy was in grave jeopardy, for at any time the enemies of that monarchy would be able to reveal that the present King was regicide, and would no doubt claim that his accident had been deliberate and not accidental."

"I said that if this theory was indeed true", went on Mountbatten, "I would urge that the King of Siam should fully and frankly confess, saying that he had been so overcome by grief at having accidentally killed the person whom he loved most in the world that he had allowed himself to be persuaded not make a statement at the time lest the double shock might prove too great for his people."

The Prince argued that the King had a cast-iron alibi. He was in his bedroom when the shot was fired and only then had Palace officials seen him go from there to Ananda's bedroom. If that was true, asked Mountbatten, why had the innocence of the King not been publicized.? "He replied," says Mountbatten, "that he presumed that the reason for this was that no one should be encouraged even to imagine that for the King to have killed his brother was a possibility."

The Prince named Pridi's assistant as the currently favored Thai candidate for Ananda's assassin. Mountbatten concluded "it would not be essential to proclaim either the assassin or the motive in order to clear the present King, since the minimum that was wanted was a cast-iron alibi which was apparently already available. I said that I could not in any event recommend that the present King should visit England until the question of his being involved in the accidental shooting of his brother was completely cleared up." Thus it was agreed that the Prince "would reassure himself of the strength of the King of Siam's alibi" and would then meet Mountbatten again.

Two months later the Prince met with Elser Dening of the Foreign Office. The idea of Bhumiphol making an official visit and studying in England had been abandoned and instead it was proposed that Bhumiphol come to England incognito. This idea was acceptable, and in a secret Foreign Office report Dening says of Bhumiphol: "I do not think we need worry unduly about his possible connection with the late King's death, because even if he might have shot him accidentally (which Prince Dhani says was impossible), I do not think it would ever come out." Was Bhumiphol to meet King George while traveling incognito. The answer form Buckingham Palace was diplomatic: "any question of his being invited to stay with our King and Queen should be postponed until the King of Siam has been crowned, and the trial concerning the late King's death has been concluded."

In the event, Bhumiphol never did come to England to study. The trials, which began in September 1948 were not concluded until October 1954, and Bhumiphol did not make his first and only official visit to England until 1960. But he did finally return to Thailand in 1950, well in time for the first verdicts.

Three men were tried, the two pages Chit and Butr who guarded Ananda's bedroom, and Ananda's ex-secretary Chaleo. The other two wanted men, Pridi and his assistant were in exile. There was simply no evidence against the three accused to connect them with Ananda's murder. The first verdict was delivered after 3 years - Chit was convicted, the other two were acquitted. On appeal by the prosecution, the verdict on Butr was reversed and he too was found guilty. There was a final appeal to the highest court, and the secretary Chaleo, twice found not guilty was convicted. Amongst the evidence that convinced the Courts were the facts that it was suspicious for Chit to have gone to the Palace to work when he should have been off duty; that the other page Butr was with Chit guarding Ananda, so it followed that he too must be guilty; and that secretary Chaleo was once seen disrespecfully sitting with his legs crossed in the Palace grounds.

All three men were executed by machine gun in February 1955. It has been suggested that the two pages must have known the truth about Ananda's death. Were they too afraid to say? Were they perhaps relying on royal pardon? The King and his beloved Princess Mother could have prevented those three innocent people from being executed but chose not to do so. Many years later the prosecution's star witness, whose evidence incriminated Pridi in particular, confessed that he had been paid by the police to lie. He received

about $300, although he was promised considerably more.

The executions did not silence the rumors about Ananda's death, and the guilt of the three men was so widely doubted that within a short time the official version of events made no mention of the trials. However, the families of the three convicted men still receive money from the Palace by way of compensation. The injustice done to the three who were executed and to Pridi and his assistant who died in exile has never been officially recognized.

While the Thai people are for the most part blissfully unaware that any of this happened, King Bhumiphol may well be thinking of it when he and the country celebrate his 77th birthday on December 5, 2004.

B.P.

SIAM
Thaksin: The Business of Politics

In *Thaksin: The Business of Politics in Thailand* Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker argue, "Thaksin's economic vision may be fixed on the future and the first world, but his social vision is medieval." For instance, they point to the silencing of public intellectuals and oppositional voices, extra-judicial killings resulting from the "war on drugs," and the undermining of individual rights and civil society—in short the substitution of management for politics. One can however take a diametrically opposite view: Thaksin's (and the powers-that-be's) social vision is truly modern. It is intimately invested in the regulation, as opposed to the destruction, of individual bodies and the population (i.e., the body politic) through surveillance, disciplining, normalization, etc. Modern power is what is political philosophers call "biopower" and therefore modern politics is "biopolitics". Biopolitics aims "to make live and let die." Thaksin's pseudo-populist soical programs and management determine to set the context of life—the life of the population. How then does power qua "power over life" let die? Certain bodies have to be relegated beyond the pale of "civilization," beseeching extermination or discipline for the vitality and progress of the population—drug traffickers, outlaws, separatists, terrorists, modern-day barbarians, etc. The three southernmost provinces of the kingdom, which are under martial law, have become an "immoral zone" (much like what Afghanistan and Iraq stand for the US, and Palestine for Israel in "the colonial present"), a zone of exclusion where the exception becomes the rule. When confronted with criticisms of the official killings of drug traffickers, the premier snapped, "It [murder] is not an unusual fate for wicked people. The public should not be alarmed by their deaths." The same logic applies to state-sponsored violence in the south. Thaksin is not a mad man: his reason is just unreasonable. Under his hyper-modern government, we must never forget that biopolitics and thantopolitics are part of the same technology of power.

Over in the military dictatorship of Burma, which recently had a coup d'état, the human rights situation "remains appalling" according to Human Rights Watch. It may even get worse—if there is such a thing—as hardliners are holding the mantle of power after the coup. And the Thaksin government is doing its best to help the Burmese people. Human Rights watch has documented "Thailand's repression of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers from Burma." It asserts, "The Thai government is arresting and intimidating Burmese political activists living in Bangkok and along the Thai-Burmese border, harassing Burmese human rights and humanitarian groups, and [forcefully] deporting Burmese refugees, asylum seekers and others with a genuine fear of persecution in Burma." Human Rights Watch further notes that the Thai government has "suspended screening of new refugee applicants from Burma by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The decision—part of an apparent government effort to forge friendships with Burma's military rulers—has suddenly thrown thousands of Burmese asylum seekers into legal and practical limbo." There are only Burmese people—like they are only southern barbarians. But who are we and who are the others?

S.J.

SIAM
Take Thaksin Away and Return Democracy to the People

We must not forget that when Thaksin Shinawatra assumed the mantle of the premiership a thick mist was hovering over him—his reputation and political future were at stake. The Constitutional Court could have found him guilty, barring him from assuming any political position for five years.

Some of us thought that we should give him a chance to administer the country. We did not see him as politically tarnished and seemed to believe that the premier had inadvertently committed an "honest mistake." I myself held this view. We all did our best to help make the premier acceptable publicly. We supported him for the following reasons. (1) We were completely fed up with the Democratic Party under Chuan Leekpai. (2) We saw that the Thai Rak Thai (TRT) Party's policies, especially towards the poor, were novel in many respects, deserving support or at least careful consideration. (3) We saw that many young bloods had joined the TRT, many of whom had been involved in people organizations or movements, had fought previous dictatorships, had fled to the jungles during the military dictatorship, etc. Many of them were quite progressive on matters of social justice. (4) TRT economic advisors seemed to advocate economic models that are distinctive from or alternatives to mainstream globalization—e.g., regionalization, cooperation with poor countries in other regions, lobbying the IMF and the World Bank to pay greater attention to the voices of the poor, etc. And (5) the prime minister was kind enough to visit the poor and the marginalized. For instance, he went to give his support to alternative movements such as the Santi Asoke and the Assembly of the Poor.

Even though some of us felt a bit embarrassed because Thaksin Shinawatra was a first-rate opportunist in building his business empire and because his road to political power had been paved by money politics and rather than democratic means, we wanted to give him an opportunity to prove himself. We believed that he is probably already rich enough and had done his share of accumulating enormous wealth. Therefore, we felt that he would now devote himself to selflessly serving his compatriots and country. People can always change for the better, we reasoned. We were wrong. He is a first-rate let down. Thaskin has increasingly become the opponent of the welfare of the people and country. He has been a chronic liar and has been corrupt in virtually every instance. He has deviously waved the banner of Nation, Religion, and Monarchy to augment his political power and that of the TRT. His policies are channeled to enrich his and his cronies' private coffers (e.g., enabling them to amass their fortunes from abroad). Taxpayers' money is being used to nurture vested interests. And so on.

The poor are greatly and truly suffering under Thaksin. He has exploited them in every conceivable way. He has undermined or destroyed the civil society and people organizations through a divide-and-conquer strategy, which essentially boils down to using financial clout and/or state-sponsored violence. As it turned out, Thaksin's outdated development strategy is destroying the dignity and human rights of the Thai people. It is also detrimental to the natural environment. Witness the Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline project, the potash mining in Udonthani province, the exploration of natural gas reserves in that same province, Pak Moon, and so on. Monks, novices, and ordinary villagers living in these project areas are facing real grievances. Like previous governments, the Thaksin administration has turned a blind eye to their plights. Manual laborers, small-scale farmers, and refugees are all suffering from the government's indifference and callousness. The government has also allowed local officials and politicians to abuse villagers—at times violently.

Even the middle class is not safe. Individuals who are not part of Thaksin's or his cronies' cliques are paying a heavy price. The inner sanctum of the cabinet is dominated by Thaksin's minions or clones. They are mostly his business affiliates. State enterprises are being privatized to enrich this network of cliques.

I won't elaborate on Thaksin's strategy of using the state to monopolize public property, to transfer public property into private coffers. Others are more qualified to speak on this matter. I merely want to point out that this is one manifestation of the present government's deviousness, which is quite unparalleled in scale and scope. This may well be the most corrupt Thai government thus far. Let me point out a few examples.

1. An enormous sum of money was spent on organizing the APEC meeting in Bangkok. This was largely done to persuade US President George W. Bush to participate in the meeting. The country has benefited absolutely nothing from APEC. It is widely accepted that APEC is merely a lavish cocktail party where nothing substantial gets done. After the APEC meeting, the Thaksin government deployed Thai troops to Iraq, a horrendous decision or miscalculation. Bush and APEC bought the country—or more specifically Shin Corp and cliques—the proverbial fifteen minutes of fame.

2. The Thaksin government has pursued a sycophantic or subservient relationship with China largely for improving the business prospects of Shin Corp and CP in China. Such policy has trammeled the dignity of Siam and of the majority of the population who are Buddhist. Upon China's request, the government refused to allow His Holiness the Dalai Lama to enter Siam. Also authorities arrested a Swedish practitioner of Falun Gong in the kingdom. This unconstitutional act was of course done to please China. I think no Thai government is looked down upon by China as much as the present government.

3. The government's stance towards the military junta ruling Burma is also shameful. It has shown that it is indifferent to the human rights and freedom of minorities in Burma. At least, the previous government had allowed H.H. the Dalai Lama to enter to the country and was fairly warm towards Aung San Suu Kyi and the democratic movements in Burma. The Thaksin government, however, has been most cordial to the Burmese military junta—to a bunch of criminals and murderers who are far more heinous than those of the National Peace-keeping Council whom we overthrew in May 1992. Thaksin also used taxpayers' money to provide a soft loan to Burma to enable the latter to build modern roads. I think the loan, which was in reality a grant, was given to facilitate Thaksin's business interests in Burma, especially his mobile phone company, which is intimately involved with a telecom company headed by the Burmese prime minister's son. I think the various secret dealings between Thaksin and his Burmese counterpart contributed to the latter's recent ouster by a coup d'état. The Burmese foreign minister was also removed from power. The powers that be in Burma have openly declared that they distrust the Thai government. So why don't we remove both our prime minister and foreign minister? The present foreign minister is probably the worst one we have ever had. And he has the gall to dream of becoming the UN Secretary General!

The present Thai prime minister is reputed to be a visionary man. This is far from the truth since he has blindly followed the politico-economic system advocated by the United States. He is also trying to emulate Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Mahathir Mohamed of Malaysia. These two figures are not worthy role models, a fact Thaksin is impervious to. Thaksin fails to see that the peoples in both neighboring countries are deprived of their dignity, freedom, and human rights. Singaporeans have been reduced to economic animals. The country became rich partly because of its small size and partly because of its wily exploitation of neighboring states. As for Malaysia, there are more poor people there than here—though on paper Malaysia seems more economically advanced than Siam.

Stealing a leaf from Washington's textbook, Thaksin believes that every problem can be solved by money and violence, forgetting that such policy incubates enemies and terrorists. In the US a growing number of civil and religious groups are demonstrating against their government, a phenomenon that the American mainstream mass media found it necessary to blackout. Likewise, through money and power Thaksin has hammered and molded the Thai mainstream mass media along the lines of 'calm politics.'

A point that cannot be overemphasized is that the current policies of the Thaskin government lack legitimacy and morality, reflecting its abysmal ignorance. The Thaksin government could hardly fathom the complex roles religion and culture play in bringing about the problems in the three southernmost provinces of Siam. This is highly dangerous, and may lead to hatred and violence spiraling out of control. Unless we (and

here I am referring to the government, its officials, and mainstream people) openly admit our devious exploitation of the ethnic Malay Muslim people in the South, are willing to ask for their forgiveness, and change our policy in order to restore the dignity and pride of the local people, we will not be able to solve our southern problems.

Pridi Banomyong had employed such strategy with success. He had attempted to enjoin politics and virtue. We must resurrect this long forgotten tradition in Thai politics. This entails paying due respect to other peoples and cultures, including their leaders and heroes. We must be morally courageous and debunk false heroes like the tyrant Sarit Thanarat whose monument stands at the center of Khon Khaen province. Sarit's monument must be replaced by that of Somdej Phra Maha Asapa Mahathera, a monk whom the tyrant imprisoned for five years. This venerable monk was the abbot of the largest temple in Bangkok, among other important positions. He was a hero of the Khon Khaen people....Similarly, the statue of Phao Siyanon must be removed from the Police Cadet Academy. Perhaps, Thaksin was held spellbound by Phao's brutality since his times at the Academy.

When I say that Thaksin's policy is incorrect I don't mean that the TRT's policy is wrong. This is because the TRT does not have a political ideology. TRT members and cabinet ministers are merely the slaves of Thaksin and his wife, the actual rulers of the country. Of course, both of them rule Siam as their personal fiefdom. The prime minister has resorted to every measure to destroy local traditions, especially the agrarian lifestyle in which the kingdom's heart and soul is situated. He has undermined the country's agriculture by supporting the research and development of GMO food crops—or Frankenstein food crops. His cronies such as the CP group stood to benefit from GMO products. Thaksin's minister of commerce is a son-in-law of the CP family.

Individual critics and NGOs are routinely suppressed or silenced. They are often verbally assaulted by the prime minister and his minions. Even eminent individuals such as Prawase Wasi and Paibhun Watthanasirithum have not been spared by Thaksin's vengeance. The premier's henchmen or underlings have continuously hurt civil servants in every ministry at will. The case of the foreign ministry is well known. Soon there will only be gays and eunuchs at the foreign ministry. In other ministries, thieves and morally corrupt individuals are being promoted to the top. The CEO bureaucratic system is a way of securing the positions of Thaksin's clones at the highest level. In other words, this is not only a form of parliamentary dictatorship (including the Senate). We are witnessing a dictatorship of the administrative wing, whose power penetrates into the bureaucratic and mass media systems.

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We in the NGO movement cooperated at every level nationwide to push for a new constitution in 1997. In many respects, the new constitution is the most democratic one the kingdom has ever had. It was designed with a good checks-and-balances mechanism. It decrees that senators are to be directly elected by the people. It created the Constitutional Court, the position of Ombudsman, the National Human Rights Commission, the Official Information Commission, and so on.

Why haven't these checks and balances really worked effectively? They all have been rendered ineffective. For instance, since the Chuan Leekpai government removed Surasee Kosolnawin from the Official Information Commission, this commission has essentially become a machine propagating sanitized official reports rather than exposing the misdeeds of the government and the bureaucracy—like what Thaksin does in his radio program every Saturday morning.

Worse, the present government has been an active and secret supporter of the Dhammakaya sect. The wife of the Thai Rak Thai party secretary-general has openly donated millions of baht to the Dhammakaya sect; many millions more were given behind closed door. The Dhammakaya is part and parcel of consumerism and economism and an affront to the Buddhist virtues. Conversely, the Thaksin government has given scant attention to good monks who uphold the *vinaya* and practice the dhamma; it has only backed shameless and fake monks who serve as the government's religious cheerleaders. The Thaksin government has made it clear that monks must not involve themselves in politics—e.g., criticizing the government. Monks are not allowed to use the dhamma to help brake the power of the state—to encourage the prime minister to be more humble,

compassionate, and mindful for instance. Though in Thaksin's twisted logic, monks are free to eulogize the government's deeds: this does not constitute a political interference.

Thaksin has not only disrespected Buddhism and Islam. He can also be charged with lese majeste. H.M. the King has often pointed out the advantages of sustainable development and of a self-sufficient economy. Though giving lip service to these principles, Thaskin emphasizes the very antithetical values of a fast-growing, consumeristic economy. H.M. the King has not condemned any previous government for corruption as heavily as he did to the present one.

In a constitutional monarchy the king's opinion or advice must be given careful consideration. The king has the right to criticize or caution the government on any significant matter. The king also has the right to openly support the government. The king has warned the Thaksin government. But Thaksin has given only scant attention to the king's advices. Moreover, Thaksin seemed to have verbally assaulted the monarchy when he said if King Rama IX does not like him, King Rama X likes him. Of course, this has not been reported by the mass media—by his media.

Thaksin has also used the taxpayers' money to buy the latest and most expensive model of airplane as the official transportation of the Thai prime minister. He did not deem fit to bestow the plane as a gift to honor the king. It seems that he wants to rival the king's majesty. As the prime minister is so rich, why didn't he buy the plane with his own money?

I can find no solution other than to remove Thaksin from power. When Chamlong Srimuang was a public idol, the political fortune of his Palang Dhamma (Moral Force) Party rose rapidly. Many *mara* (fiends) joined his party, including a man named Thaksin Shinawatra. Ultimately, the Palang Dhamma Party disintegrated. And one day we will likewise hear about the demise of the TRT, despite its enormous power and money—the law of impermanence.

How can we collectively work to overthrow Thaksin and unravel the TRT? We must resort to social dynamism to fight them. We must use dhammic justice as our shield and guiding star. We must use the truth to combat their deceptiveness, rely on non-violence to counter their violent aggression, and resort to alternative media to expose the lies of the mainstream mass media. We must not forget that even during the highly repressive dictatorial regime of Thanin Kravixien we had the *Mitra Thai* (Thai Friends) magazine, which was published in London and which helped kindle the flames of liberal democracy. And the Thanin Kravixien government was also eventually toppled from power.

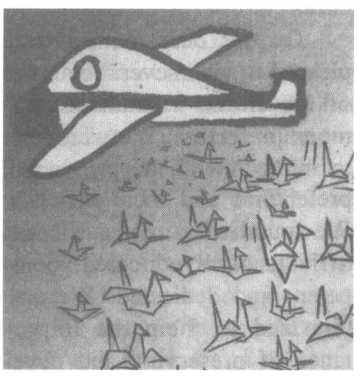
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We must expand our networks of students nationwide, and expose them to truth and goodness. Our NGOs must coalesce with their foreign counterparts, especially the ones in the field of human rights. They must always keep a wary eye on the government's divide and rule strategy. Religious leaders must bless the country to cleanse it from the accumulating filth and indecency. The people's faith in truth, beauty, and goodness must be restored. Our farmers must strengthen their traditional way of life and cooperate with those at the grassroots in other countries. We must not only fight against corruption, but the lack of governmental accountability in every instance. And so on.

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In 1976 we had successfully chased away Thanom, Prapas, and Narong even though they returned to take revenge on us violently three years later. In 1992, we had also removed Suchinda Kraprayoon from power. Why can't we succeed again in chasing Thaksin Shinawatra away? If we are determined and combine our power together through nonviolence and wisdom...if we become less self-centered and less attached to personal glory or the advancement of our respective groups...if we truly serve the people and justice...we will eventually realize santi pracha dhamma (Peace, Democracy and Decency).

Abridged and excerpted from Sulak Sivaraksa's speech at the Royal Hotel, 26 September 2004.



TIBET

Statement by Special Envoy Kasur Lodi Gyari, Head of the Delegation to China

Envoy Kelsang Gyaltsen and I, accompanied by two senior assistants, Sonam N. Dagpo and Bhuchung K. Tsering, visited China from September 12 to 29, 2004. This is the third trip of the delegation to China since 2002.

We met Minister Liu Yandong, Vice Chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and head of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, Vice-Minister Zhu Weiqun, the deputy head, Mr. Chang Rongjun, Secretary-General and other officials in Beijing. We had so far the most extensive and serious exchange of views on matters relating to Tibet. The discussions were held in a frank but cordial atmosphere. It was apparent from the discussions that there are major differences on a number of issues, including some fundamental ones. Both sides acknowledged the need for more substantive discussions in order to narrow down the gaps and reach a common ground. We stressed the need for both sides to demonstrate flexibility, far-sightedness and vision to bridge the differences.

On this occasion we were pleased to visit several counties of the Karze Tibetan autonomous prefecture. We were able to interact with the provincial, prefectural and local officials. We found most of the Tibetan officials well educated, competent and dedicated. We emphasized to them the importance of preserving and developing our heritage, namely the Tibetan language, culture and religion, while making economic progress. We also shared with the officials the vision and efforts that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is making in resolving the issue of Tibet.

We had the opportunity to tour Guangzhou city and the Special Economic Zones of Zhuhai and Shenzhen of Guangdong province. These areas have made tremendous economic progress within a short period of few decades. We also had the opportunity to visit Chengde city in the Hebei province, where Manchu emperors had built replicas of the Potala Palace, Tashi Lhunpo and Samye monasteries of Tibet.

We arrived in Dharamsala on October 1, 2004, and met Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche.

Yesterday we reported to His Holiness the Dalai Lama about our visit as well as about the overall economic and political developments in China. He is pleased that we were able to have extensive, serious and frank discussions with Chinese leaders and officials. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is aware that this is a long process and has encouraged and instructed us to continue to pursue this process with patience and determination.

We also briefed the chair and vice-chair of the Assembly of the Tibetan People's Deputies yesterday and the Kashag this morning.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to and thank our host, the United Front Work Department, and officials of the various levels for their hospitality and assistance.

Kasur Lodi Gyari
Dharamsala,
October 13, 2004



Direk Jayanama

Direk Jayanama was born on 18 January 1905, being the eldest son of Phya Upaipipaksa, a leading judge of the Supreme Court. Direk himself was called to the Bar in 1928 and joined the ministry of justice. After the bloodless revolution in 1932, which replaced absolute monarchy with constitutional monarchy, he served in many government posts: clerk to the cabinet, deputy foreign minister, foreign minister (3 times), minister of finance, and deputy prime minister. As diplomat, he was ambassador to Japan, the Court of St. James's, the Federal Republic of Germany, and Finland. In the academic field, he was the first dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University, where he received his honorary doctorate. He also held the chair of diplomacy at Thammasat.



It was said that Direk Jayanama reluctantly accepted the position of dean of the Faculty of Political Science, Thammasat University. Lacking political ambition, he had reluctantly accepted various other political positions before. His reluctance is understandable. At the time, Thammasat University had just reopened. It had been closed down by the military government, and military troops were deployed to and stationed in the university's grounds. The new Thammasat University was conspicuously de-politicized: even the words "political science" had been dropped from its name (Originally it was known as the University of Moral and Political Sciences.) The military government envisaged the university as a machine for producing docile, apolitical, and intellectually disarmed resources for the bureaucracy and society.

Prior to accepting the position of dean the military government that had illegally come to power through a coup d'état in 1947 by toppling the government of Khuang Aphaiwongse had offered Direk a number of political positions—all of which he turned down. At the time of the coup he was an envoy in London. The coup government asked him to continue this role due to his exceptional skills in diplomacy; his success in renegotiating and erasing the unequal treaty signed with London was a testimony to his great competence. Direk replied that he would continue in that role only until the British government formally recognized the coup government. True to his words, Direk ultimately stepped down from the position of ambassador to London because he was against military dictatorship and for democracy.

Direk cherished and believed in human dignity. It was an affront to his dignity to serve under a military dictatorship. He made it clear that the military dictatorship constituted a betrayal of the promise of democracy to the people.

But Direk treaded a fine and cautious line. He did not want Field Marshal Phibun—the new prime minister—to suspect him of being an enemy. The two were friends and had known each other for a long time. Phibun respected Direk's talents and trusted him. And Direk survived through the post-coup d'état period in part because of this friendship. We must not forget that when Pridi Banomyong launched a failed coup in 1949 to force Phibun out of power, he proclaimed Direk (who had no foreknowledge of this) the new prime minister. Moreover when the young King Rama VIII was found dead in his chamber, Direk was the minister in charge of the royal household affairs. Many had wanted him implicated in the "regicide." He survived both ordeals.

Also, Direk survived through the turbulent and dictatorial post-war years because the powers-that-be perceived him as weak and therefore non-threatening. He was always polite and well mannered. He was a Buddhist gentleman with ample moral courage and inner strength. Because of their own turpitude the powers-that-be did not appreciate, much less fathom, these qualities in Direk. He was a devout Buddhist. In his public lectures, his books, and indeed his own life, one can notice the influence of the Buddhadhamma all through. He was perhaps the only Siamese Ambassador who was elected vice president of the London Buddhist Society. During his tour in Japan, he tried hard and successfully to bring

the two Schools of Buddhism into closer contact. And while serving his last post in Bonn, he traveled far and wide to propagate the dhamma to the German people. His observations of Buddhist activities abroad were always reported to his compatriots at home through his speeches and writings, for which he was well known.

In any case, Direk became an effective dean and a great professor at Thammasat University. Professorship was a role he loved and was good at. He opened a new program in diplomacy, which eventually expanded into International Relations, and wrote a series of books on the subject, which were widely acclaimed at the time. His magnum opus is *Siam and the Second World War*, a book that has been translated into the English and the German languages. In this volume Direk included a picture of Pridi Banomyong—a very subversive thing to do at the time. It was his subtle and diplomatic way of expressing dissent against the military dictatorship. Pridi was an important political figure in bringing democracy to the kingdom in the form of constitutional monarchy. Earlier, while he was representing the Thai government in London, he had issued a passport for Pridi to enable the latter to escape into exile via Singapore in 1947.

During the war when Phibun also assumed the position of foreign minister he asked Direk to be his deputy; Direk however was more experienced in diplomacy and had served as foreign minister before. During the war, Japan also wanted Direk to represent the Thai government in Tokyo. Tokyo suspected Direk of being anti-fascist and anti-Axis and of aiding the underground activities of the Free Thai Movement. Japanese leaders wanted to keep a close eye on him. At first Direk declined to accept this role—a matter which infuriated Phibun. He ultimately and reluctantly accepted it, however. In Tokyo, he won the trust and respect of Japanese officials and bought a mansion that became the grounds of the Thai embassy and ambassador's residence in Tokyo.

When the Second World War ended and Phibun was (briefly) out of power Pridi wanted Direk to be the new prime minister. Pridi Banomyong, the head of the civilian wing of the Rasadorn Party, highly trusted Direk, and for good reasons. Direk was a true Buddhist gentleman—he valued simplicity, humility, and honesty. He had risked his life various times to serve the interest of his people. Many rightly consider Direk as Pridi's right hand. More importantly, Direk was well recognized by the US and Britain. Direk refused, reasoning that since 1933 the premiership had only passed into the hands of members of the Rasadorn Party. He did not want the Rasadorn Party to have a monopoly over the premiership—to monopolize political power. Therefore, he proposed that M.R. Seni Pramoj, the leader of the Free Thai Movement in the US, be the new prime minister, a suggestion Pridi accepted.

After the war, Direk stayed above the power struggles, the jockeying for political clout which culminated in the destruction of political opposition parties and the return of Phibun to power.

Each time Direk became foreign minister, it was during a highly sensitive period, requiring great understanding and subtle maneuvering. It was not an easy task. It was also during turbulent times that he became ambassador to Tokyo and London. In other words, if we fail to properly recognize the context of the situation he had to navigate we will not be able to appreciate his diplomatic dexterity and importance. Many of his colleagues and subordinates at the foreign ministry held him in high regards. He was ever supportive and he pursued a clear and principled foreign policy: he was determined to protect the sovereignty and dignity of his kingdom. Many of his successors at the foreign ministry however seemed impervious to his accomplishments, and they found no good reason to commemorate him. There is not even a Direk Jayanama room at the new buildings of the foreign ministry.

Direk was a Pridi man all his life. He did not desert Pridi. He did not switch political and intellectual allegiance even when it was fashionable or politically advantageous to do so. Put another way, unlike many of his contemporaries Direk did not participate in the demonization of Pridi in order to further his political ambition. He had no political ambition. As mentioned earlier, the political and diplomatic positions he held were often reluctantly accepted. He was a man of principle. Associating with Pridi was for Direk upholding the promise of democracy. This was the promise that he wanted to keep alive for the Thai people.

In 1957 there was another regime change in Bangkok. Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat usurped power dictatorially. Direck was glad to be far from the corrupted power by accepting the ambassadorship in Germany. He probably became the best Thai ambassa-

dor to the Federal Republic of Germany that the Kingdom had ever had. He bought a new residence on the bank of the Rhine River for the Thai ambassador to the FRG.

Direk did survive the post-war years, but he did not prosper financially like many others. In fact there is a negative correlation between the political positions he held and his financial fortunes: the more influential he became politically, the more his bank account dwindled, the smaller his residence got, etc. He did not use the political influence he had to enrich himself and his family. Towards the end of his life he was also in great debt even though his wife came from a wealthy and royal family. But he was always rich in compassion and sympathy for others, and his wife always supported him: they were a role model couple. He was a good Buddhist in leading his political as well as personal life.

If we commemorate or praise people simply because of their blood and status without trying to understand their backgrounds and actions we will end up commending all evil royalties and powers-that-be. Have we forgotten that the cult of royalties was a fairly recent construction—to be precise during the dictatorship of Sarit Thanarat? We have become so blind that we are now even commemorating Sarit himself! We have a monument celebrating this devious person. Conversely, we have failed to pay proper respect to individuals who had worked for the country without seeking for personal fame or enrichment like Direk Jayanama. In other words, we are trapped in the pitfall of artificiality and impurity, mistaking them for goodness: we have mistaken the devil's discus for the lotus. Direk was a lotus, pure and simple. He had a wife whose mind was equally beautiful. She also deserves respect from society.

S.S.

Sridaorueang

Sridaorueang was born in Pitsanulok province, Thailand, the third of nine children. Her father worked on the State Railway of Thailand and her mother as a market vendor. At the age of twelve her formal schooling came to a premature end when her mother sent her away to Bangkok to work as a maid. She subsequently spent many years working in a variety of menial jobs that included factory work, selling food in the market and waitressing. Following a chance meeting with the prominent writer, editor and intellectual; Suchart Sawasdsri, later to become her husband, Sri-daorueang began to broaden her own reading and try her hand at writing. Although she has since written four novels, it is as a short story writer that she is best known.

Sridaorueang's early stories were influenced by the socialist-inspired 'literature for life' movement of the early 1970s. She drew on personal experience as a low-paid worker in *'Kaw yot diew'* (1975; 'A Drop of Grass', 1994) to portray labor unrest in a glass factory. The prize-winning *'Khon dai ya'* (1979; 'The Grass cutter', 1984X, and *'Mue'* (1976; 'The Hand', 1994), narrated by a mained ex-factory worker who scavenges among rubbish heaps in search of plastic bags for recycling, both highlight the pitiful existence of workers eking out a living on the margins of society. *'Chai pha luang'* (1975; 'The Hem of the Yellow Robe', 1981), which deals with corruption within monkhood, and *'Muet law sawang'* (1980; 'Light After Dark', 1994), a sympathetic portrayal of the life of a prostitute, are typical in theme and treatment of many of the kind of stories being written by serious writers during the 1970s.

Sridaorueang's most recent work has moved away from the documentary fiction of the 1970s to explore themes of family, motherhood, sexual inequality, female identity and domestic betrayal. *'Matsii'* (1985; 'Mastsii', 1996) with its deliberate subversion of a well-known Buddhist jataka tale, deals with a young woman who abandons her child, while *'Sidadap fai'* (1984; 'Sida Extinguishes the Flames', 1998), is one of a series of stories that humorously portray gender conflict in urban middle-class families.

Sridaorueang has own a number of literary prizes in Thailand and several works have been translated into English and other foreign languages. Although her work has a more limited readership than that of many of her female contemporaries, she nevertheless remains one of Thailand's best-known woman writers, respected for her integrity and originality.

David A Smyth

Reference: Encyclopedia of World Literature in the 20th Century, University of London, St. James Press, USA. 1999 (p.99)

Kulap Saipradit



The 32nd Session of the General conference of UNESCO decided that UNESCO will coordinate the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Kulap Saipradit on 31st March 2005.

Kulap Saipradit was born on 31st March 1905. He was a highly respected thinker, writer and journalist. His works covered wide ranging areas, including literature, articles and poems using both his real name and many pseudonyms, the most well known of which is "Sriburapha".

Kulap Saipradit started writing at the age of 17, while he was a senior high school student. Later, he became a full fledged writer and journalist, writing on topics such as politics, religion, philosophy, social affairs and academic. He was also instrumental in promoting independence, democracy, sovereignty, freedom, equality, peace, human rights and justice in the society. Kulap supported democracy both before and after the political changes in Thailand in 1932, through the newspaper for which he was responsible, leading to much discrimination against him, including the closing down of the newspaper, the locking up of the newspaper's printing press, and ultimately his arrest.

Kulap Saipradit was a supporter of peace, and was against wars, both the Second World War and the Korean War, and his anti-war sentiment led to him being imprisoned for almost 5 years.

He was the founding chairman of the Press Association, and served as its Secretary for many years, before taking up the position of the President of the Press Association of Thailand. On the literature front, his most famous works include, *Lae Pai Kang Nah* (Looking forward), *Khang Lang Parb* (Behind the painting). *Songkram Cheevit* (War of Life), *Jon Kwa Raw Ja Pob Kan Eak* (Till we meet again), *Look Phu Chai* (Real Man) many of which have been selected as normal and extra-curriculum reading by the Ministry of Education. His works have also been translated into a number of foreign languages including English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, and has been adapted for television and movies for many times. Kulap Saipradit passed away in Peking on 16th June 1974, after 16 years of exile in China. The *Sriburapha Foundation* was found, and presently awards the *Sriburapha* Award to writers who have created works that are valuable to society and humanity since 1987. The Bangkok Metropolitan Authority has also named a road "Sriburapha" in honour of Kulap Saipradit, and has created a plaque of his handwriting praising peace, installed at the Suan Santiparb (Park of Peace), which was built to commemorate World Peace Day.

Letter from INEB

Dear INEB members and readers,

The year 2004 is running fast and now it is the 16th year of INEB. Last year, INEB organized some programs to realize our objectives that we regularly report in this magazine.

The INEB section in *Seeds of Peace* serves as a meeting place where you can share your activity and ideas. For this issue, you will find two reports from our friends: Eddy Setiawan from HIKMAHBUDHI in Indonesia and Yeam Chamnab of Dhammayietra in Cambodia. Both of them attended INEB's Youth Buddhist Leadership Training 2004. Their actvities with integration of Buddhist teachings are inspiring. In fact I would like to invite other friends and/or alumni to share their works as well.

Also our senior member, the Ven. Sumanalankar Mahathero wrote us a Yellow Robe Offering Ceremony from Bangladesh, which is a Muslim-majority country. With help from Buddhist donors from Siam and Thai Airways International Plc. we managed to make and fly three Buddha statues to his temple.

As for next year, the Youth Buddhist Leadership Training program will continue. So is an interfaith cooperation. INEB will work more closely with other faith-inspired organizations in Asia for regional peace and security for concern over religious fanaticism and terrorism is growing and spreading dramatically. And, of course Buddha's teachings of peace, wisdom and moral courage are crucial to reverse the trend.

Our main event this year would be the 2005 INEB Conference in Nagpur, India. In fact the event comprises several interesting activities. We also welcome a new staff Ms. Theeraporn Arunkanjanarote at the secretariat office.

Last year INEB lost one of the co-founders, Rev. Ryowa Suzuki. The memories of himself and his activities that help others remain in the mind of our members. Jon Watts is very kind to write an appreciation on him. We are also extremely sad to know the sudden death of David Chappell, member of our executive board. He was very active and supportive in re-energizing our network.

However, since we are fortunate to still have many more members alive, may I take this opportunity to express my wish to all members and readers to remain in good health and spirit for the coming new year.

Yours in the dhamma
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary

The 2005 INEB Conference in India

The next INEB conference will be held in India with cooperation of The Jambudhavipa Trust. The conference will be at Nagpur where Dr. Ambedkar led the mass of the untouchable to take refuge in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

The conference will comprise of various events.

8-11 October 2005
The Pre-conference workshop for the Ambedkarite Buddhists

12 October 2005
The ceremony of the 49th anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion.

13-16 October 2005
The 2005 INEB Conference "Buddhism, Social Equality and Ecological Balance"

17-20 October 2005
Pilgrimage to Ajanta Cave and other caves of Buddhist history (optional)

With the limited funds, The Secretariat Office would like to solicit for donation to support INEB members in poor countries. We would appreciate greatly your sponsorship of air tickets for members from South and Southeast Asian countries to be able to attend the conference.

For those who are interested or who wish to make donation, please kindly contact The Secretariat Office at <ineboffice@ yahoo.com>. Thank you.

Borobudur

Some moments in life make one feel as if there were no longer DISTANCE between heaven and earth, and in the creative blending into the whole, the sense of life is being revealed. Such an emotion is experienced when one ascends the stairs of Borobudur, a Buddhist marvel of a temple, in a full moon night.

Borobudur standing in "the garden of Java", near Yogyakarta, surrounded by mighty volcanoes, Borobudur emerges in all its splendour. More than eleven centuries ago anonymous artist started to construct an edifice fully realizing that they would never see it finished, but convinced that generations to come would complete and honour their creation.

Standing in a straight row, the triad temples of Mendut, Pawon and Borobudru form a symbolic unity. The oldest of the three is the Mendut temple, although hundreds of Buddha statues are present at Borobudur. The most impressive Buddha statue is housed in this temple; a three meter high statue of Buddha carved from one piece of stone represents an imposing expression of homage to Lord Buddha. At present most of the statues in Borobudur are broken; without heads, hands, etc,. My group HIKMAHBUDHI has counted all of the broken statue in Borobudur during our action to save Borobudur from commercialisation by local government and the capitalists in 2003 with their "Jagad Java Mall Project." We made a petition with the local people to protest this evil project. Then we met Mr. Philip de Lang the UNESCO representation in Indonesia and gave the petition to him and asked him to forward the petition to the central board of UNESCO in France. Hence the UNESCO sent a letter to Indonesian president, saying that UNESCO disagreed with that project and would not support the Indonesian government any more if the project was allowed to continue its course out. So the project was cancelled. We set up a demonstration in the Vesak Annual Ceremonial in Borobudur when a thousand of Buddhists gathered to join this ceremony. We handed out the papers to persuade people to save Borobudur from this project and other threats. And also we made a theatrical action at the night and doing puja at the top of the temple (Arupadhatu) the day after the vesak ceremony. The rain at that night saved us from the police oppression, I think Buddha blessed us. The puja has strong influence to make other visitors respect the temple, even for a while. It's common for them to climb, sitting and try to touch the Buddha inside the stupa because they believe that if ones can touch the Buddha statue inside the stupa at Borobudur their wish will come true. During the puja they all go down and keep in silent but after that they start again. The visitors also make the Borobudur dirty, so after doing puja we make the cleaning action. This 2004, the local government and the capitalist try to trick the people by renaming the project "Shopping Street Project" so we must prepare ourselves to face it.

Less than two kilometres away, separated by the Elo and Progo rivers, lies smaller Pawon temple, a jewel of Javanese temple architecture. In all probability this temple served as a stop to purify the mind, prior to ascending Borobudur.

A mere fifteen hundreds metres form Pawon, a stone hill of terraces arises, Borobudur with its hundreds of Buddhas.

When making the tour of the galleries with their high-set balustrades under the celestial canopy, one may imagine being in the temple. Saying one's prayers, passing along the two and a half kilometres of reliefs to the summit of the sanctuary, resembles a passage along an altar up to the hope for fulfilment.

The pilgrim or he who hopes to attain Bodhisattva, enters Mendut in honour of Buddha. Borobudur Candi, however, is like a prayer attended by the rosary of reliefs and ornaments. It rises to heaven toward the acquisition of Buddhaship, the absolute freedom from samsara cycle.

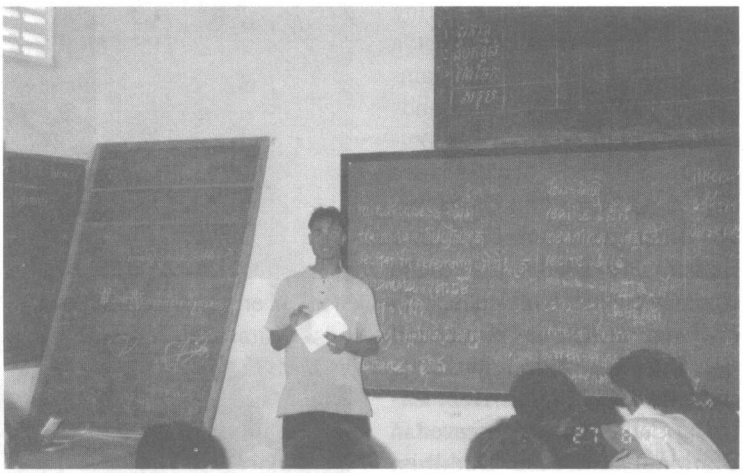
Hasta la Victoria siempre,
Eddy Setiawan



Dhammayietra to poor students and prisoners in rural Cambodia

Young Buddhist Training Alumni's Update

Yeam Chamnab, 24, came from Cambodia to join the training in July 2004. He was sent by Dhammayietra Center in Battambong province. After the training, his dream of establishing a small scale teaching project for the prisoners and the poor villagers was shared among his friends and received good support from them. He is now teaching in a government school in Pailin province to earn money. Unfortunately he gets paid only irregularly and not fully. He, therefore, decides to quit the job, go back to Battambong and follow his dream.



Education Centers for Prisoners and Evening School for the Poor

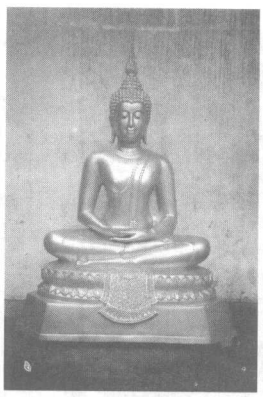
Dhammayietra Center in his province is able to provide some teaching for prisoners through its volunteers. However teaching by outside volunteers is not consistent. With the demand from the prisoners, Chamnab is planning to set up a learning center inside the prison and to encourage prison's staff and literate inmates to be volunteer teachers. He is now in a process of talking to the prison director and has received positive response.

Before teaching in Pailin, Chamnab and his friends took over a local primary school from 5.00-6.00 pm daily and turned it into a free evening school for the poor people in Phakchmar village, Battambong province. The school stopped for one year while he was away. Now he plans to reopen his school. From Monday to Friday, he teaches the English language. On Sunday, he holds a Buddhism class.

Support from Friends

Chamnab's dream was shared by all participants in the Young Buddhist Leadership Training. His friends promised to send some simple English and Buddhist books, etc. Some agreed to go to Cambodia to help conduct a training for the volunteer teachers that he organized. Ajan Sulak Sivaraksa granted him $100 for his basic needs and preparation for his work.

The latest news from him is that on he has reopened an evening school with approximately 400 students. Congratulations!



Nov 3rd, 2004. Three Buddha statues from Thai donors were flown to Parbatya Bouddha Mission (PBM), Khangrachari HT, Bangladesh. The Ven. Sumanalankar Mahathero, a senior member of INEB, and his friends established PBM since 1983. PBM since then provides services to indigenous ethnic minority, e.g. orphanage, poverty eradicating program, etc. His request for Buddha statues for his center was responded by some Thai people who wish to offer merit from the donation to mark H.M. Queen's birthday. Thai Airways is also kind to fly them free of charge. Having the Buddha statues would affirm confidence of his people in Buddhist practice and encourage application of Buddhism for the benefit of the multitude.

Yellow Robe Offering Ceremony by Bangladesh Buddhists

On 4 and 5 November 2004, the biggest religious ceremony called "Yellow Robe Offering Ceremony" held at the Parbatya Bouddha Mission (PBM) complex where some 10 thousands of Buddhists from various communities including indigenous Chakma, Marma and Barua and 18 Burmese from Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka joined the ceremony. Local officials both civil and non-civil also joined.



The biggest religious ceremony called "Yellow Robe Offering Ceremony" is observed in Bangladesh where Buddhist monks stay at any temples for a period of 3 months from August to October which is called rain-retreats. This is the biggest donation ceremony of the Buddhist community who observe following the Tripitaka. The monks who follow the rain-retreats are only able to receive the yellow robe offering from lay-people. Such donation can only be held a time at any temple in a month which starts from the ending day of rain-retreats to the last day of the same month. The donation is offered to the Bhikkhu Sangha.

This year, the lay-people as well as the sponsoring organization, the Parbatya Bouddha Mission (PBM) observed the "Yellow Robe Offering Ceremony" in different manner. A set of yellow-robe was made within 48 hours. In this donation, particularly women devotees prepared robe from thread to cloth including coloring, sewing etc. Some 40 women took this initiative.



For observing the yellow robe ceremony, a number of activities including Morning Prayer, Sutra recitation, meditation, religious music, food offering to the monks and lay-people, observing 5 and 8 precepts of the lay-people and 1000 of candle-lighting etc.

In the discussion session, Ven. Sumanlankar Mahathero, President of PBM, presided where 2 Burmese, Convener and Secretary of the Organizing Committee of the "Yellow Robe Offering Ceremony" and a number of venerable monks spoke in the ceremony. The participants including some 350 monks and novices and some 10,000 lay-people from different parts of the Khagrachari Hill Tracts (CHT) prayed for world peace.

Sumanalangkar Mahathero

Gross National Happiness in Asia
The Message from Bhutan

The idea that national politics should not only be driven by time-bound criteria like Gross National Product (GNP) but rather by a diversity of values culminating in timeless happiness has been picked up quickly by alternative intellectuals in the West. Maybe to a certain extent because the message of happiness-policies was proclaimed from the exotic Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan, a country that still preserves its mysterious identity behind a curtain of isolation. And who does not want to peep behind one of the last such curtains in this ageing 'Mc-World'? But how is the idea of Gross National Happiness (GNH) received in Asia and in particular in Thailand that kept its national autonomy until the end of the 19th century and since was soon overgrown by modernity?



This was the leading question of a recent seminar in the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) near Bangkok co-organized with the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, a body founded by Sulak Sivaraksa in 1969 and since the umbrella for a diversity of groups and initiatives questioning the modernity paradigm.

Escape from the framework of materialistic sciences and the illusion of economic 'progress' as the ultimate solution seems nearly impossible; and maybe should not be pursued. Even in Bhutan that will adopt its first constitution ever in 2005 it seems inevitable that modernity will have to be taken in and digested. This was exemplified during the seminar through the difference in approach between the keynote speaker from Bhutan Dasho Meghraj Gurung, Vice President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies and some of the researchers of the CBS. While the retired General Manager of Bhutan Post, the corporatized postal services of Bhutan and as such a forward looking CEO, opted for a careful approach with strong embedding in the GNH philosophy in local tradition, the modern trained newer generation showed little fear for formulating a GNH Index based on more universal principles.

The charm of the openness in which the different approaches among the Bhutanese participants and resource persons were displayed, with great calm and mutual respect, inspired the representatives form other Asian countries to frankly assess the situation in their respective countries and this lead to most interesting exchanges. Dr. Priyanut from the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) in Thailand highlighted the great potential of the Royal advice to the citizens of Thailand to explore and exercise 'sufficiency economy' but she admitted that reality was quite different from this guiding principle. Equally the principles of Ghandian philosophy that form the foundation of the economic development plan of the first democratically elected Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) require a mind shift for many Tibetans who make great efforts to overcome exile by catching up with the mainstream. Dr. Kunchok of the CTA Planning Council emphasized the importance H.H. the Dalai Lama adheres to happiness for all as ultimate goal, and the ongoing relevance of his spiritual guidance for the secular Tibetan administration.

Prof. Kyoko Kusakabe from Japan opened a new perspective in the discussion with the information she provided about the gender-specific corrections proposed to the Human Development Index (HDI), an index that is already nearer to the intentions of the GNH guideline to be formulated from Bhutan. While concerns of business leaders like Mario de Altis from Sri Lanka were presented to the audience by Prida Tiasuwan, President of Social Venture Network Asia (Thailand), as the need for the business sector to strengthen efforts towards Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) and further exploration of 'new paradigms

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In Spirit

The neglected element

We lavish attention on our bodies but too often ignore our mental/spiritual well-being; reining in poisonous emotions and reconnecting with others can improve our overall health

Fitness and sports centres teem with devices to burn calories and tone bodies. Hospitals have all the latest equipment and treatments. Stores offer a plethora of vitamin and herbal supplements which claim to boost our systems. All sorts of therapeutic spas, courses on yoga, tai-chi, various forms of massage and therapy are widely available.

Good health is now at our fingertips—provided, of course, we've got the necessary cash. Yet, we're still afflicted by all kinds of ailments—some unknown to our ancestors. Why is this so?

The Venerable Tsering Palmo, an ascetic and practitioner of traditional Tibetan medicine, believes it's because we are neglecting our mental state of health.

"We're missing the most important element in our lives," she said during a workshop on healing she gave recently in Bangkok.

"We put much energy and effort into bettering our physical side, while leaving our mind unattended.

"Unless we learn to bring our minds into balance, we won't attain holistic well-being," she added.

According to traditional Tibetan medicine, which has its roots in Buddhist teaching, well-being stems from maintaining a balance among a person's physical, psychological, social and spiritual elements, Ven Palmo explained.



The Ven. Tsering Palmo

Understanding and integrating Buddhist teaching in our lives is therefore a way to keep us holistically healthy, she added.

"Ignorance is the root of all our suffering and disorders, both emotional and physical.

"Ignorance creates ego-centred attachment, a sense of 'I', 'me' and 'mine'. This generates other negative states of mind, such as desire, hatred, jealousy, pride and delusion. These mental disturbances will subsequently lead to physical illness."

She noted that, according to traditional Tibetan medicine, the presence of any of the three "mental poisons", namely attachment/greed, anger and delusion, will ultimately affect the four elements (earth, water, air and fire) in a person's body.

Greed or desire disturbs one's air element, which is related to the emotions, Ven Palmo explained. If this element is out of balance a person is likely to suffer from insomnia, heart problems and mental conditions such as hypertension, stress, anxiety and depression.

When it comes to diet, attachment or addiction to certain foods weakens one's body, she said. For example, attachment to liquor can lead to liver cancer; to cigarettes, lung cancer. Excessive intake of fatty or sugary foods can induce heart ailments, diabetes and obesity.

Anger or aversion, another potent "poison of the mind", corresponds to one's fire energy; it affects the bile, stomach and small intestine. Cancerous cysts, according to the traditional Tibetan system, are the result of accumulated anger, frustration or jealousy.

Delusion disturbs one's water and earth elements, which correspond to phlegm and the upper part of one's body.

Knowledge of these fundamentals can help one prevent or deal with an ailment in its early stage, Ven Palmo told workshop participants.

"Observe your body," she advised. "It's important that we are constantly mindful of our habitual expression and accumulation of negative emotions. We should observe if we have any attachment to certain foods or behaviours, or if we are constantly angry".

"This regular mental inspection will help us avoid or let go of the root of illness."

Behavioural change is, therefore, important in attaining a good state of health. And it is not enough to refrain from destructive physical habits such as smoking or eating unhealthy foods. One must also refrain from habits that cause damage to one's mind such as stealing, adultery, lying and dishonesty, Ven Palmo advised.

"It's important too that we live in harmony with our fellows in society and with the environment. These social factors have a great effect on our emotions, thus our health and well-being."

The means of attaining harmony is already contained within Buddhist teaching, she pointed out.

"Follow the precepts. They are the natural rules for peaceful living. The Buddhist precepts for lay people and vinaya [monastic disciplinary code] are ways to healthy and peaceful social relations and cohabitation with nature."

Ven Palmo also recommended regular meditation, saying it serves as both preventive and curative medicine because of its power in calming the emotions.

Understanding the bigger picture vis a vis sickness helps us understand how to deal with it, she said, noting that Buddhism teaches us that illness is an integral part of one's life cycle. "With birth comes ageing, sickness and death."

To totally end suffering from sickness, one must stop the cycle of lifetimes by freeing the mind from greed, anger and delusion. For when that freedom comes, sickness is nothing to be afraid of.

Karnjariya Sukrung

My 5 Years at Wongsanit Ashram

Arriving at the Ashram was like being reborn, a real baptism of fire, a withdrawal from the familiarities of my culture, my work and status as an environmental consultant, being single in a western individualistic city. I was embarking on this new life with Pracha, then director of the Ashram who I had met the previous summer in the USA.

Five years later leaving the Ashram was a parting tinged with relief and sadness and once again an open sesame to a different way of life. The time in between a mixture of trivial and momentous experiences with many highlights, lowlights and invasion of comfort zones resulting in a wealth of memories and some changed patterns. Since then I have been in kind of limbo an aimless place with huge potential for growth. It has taken several years to synthesise these experiences and I am still absorbing the Ashram lessons as I slowly reintegrate into Western society.

Ashram days full of contradictions are etched on my mind. Aloneness in an unfamiliar culture, natural beauty in a hostile environment, frenetic yet rewarding work addressing the needs of marginalised people of South East Asia, alienation from the ashram community yet encompassed by a mantle of belonging, amazing opportunities for spiritual practice integrated into every aspect of the life.

Beautiful natural environment

Surrounded by shady trees and many ponds the Ashram was a respite for many forest evacuees since the surrounding areas became rice fields and canals. I remember one day seeing an enormous python around 12 feet long with a girth of an elephant's leg slithering at a fast rate under

our hut into the wilderness at the side of the klong (canal). I often spotted pink and green baby dinosaurs around the Ashram about 10 inches longs with spikes. Once on a rural road in the abandoned rice fields I came face to face with what must have been a teenager the size of a small deer with spiky back and fangs. I don't know who was more frightened. Then there were the cobras in the kitchen. It was awesome.

Living in a traditional straw hut was a constant reminder of being part of the eco-system. Unlike a modern metropolis, nature was not screened out and we learned to live in harmony with the many creatures that shared our home in the chain of life. It was like being part of a crazy jungle book cartoon. Mosquitoes that fed on us were food for the bats and lizards. The snakes that occasionally crept into the roof in the rainy season ate rats at other times the Ashram cats would come and feast. Several times I remember going into the hut to find a large, lethargic unmovable cat that I eventually realised was in the process of digesting a huge dinner. The gekko made his presence known nightly with loud guttaral croaks and the smaller lizards happily flitted around the place. One time there were a few tiger bees buzzing around. These were mean machines that packed a heavy sting yet we learned to dance with them and they easily share our space. However the woman that did our washing was stung and the Ashram boys came to take a look it seemed that the bees had taken up residence in a space behind a drawer in our wardrobe and we were about to be inundated as the baby bees hatched. I moved on to the veranda and then went away for a while—I told Pracha to make sure they were gone when I returned what ever it took. I heard tales of smoke, chanting and incense but I think there was a bit of manpower involved as when I returned the huge and intricate hive was removed to a barren area outside our hut. I didn't ask for details.

The ever-present ants of varying sizes and colours seemed the most intelligent and indestructible of creatures who no doubt with all their marching and building ant houses several feet tall were playing their unique role in the universe and will probably be around long after we humans annihilate ourselves. It was quite an education. Many times I remember looking up at the straw ceiling thinking what am I doing here? Yet waking up in the morning as the grey dawn speedily merged to the bright sun was a daily celebration, I could reach out from the hut and pick a banana, smell the jasmine and delight in the beauty of a perfect red hibiscus.

Exciting meaningful work

Making a difference to the lives of the oppressed was a noble and worthy occupation my ego told me regularly. Once entwined in the ashram life with the endorsement of a high ranking partner my life became a jumble of eternal worthwhile causes. Self determining programmes for ethnic minorities competed for my time with pioneering change in alternative Thai society, networking on alternatives to consumerism, Yadana pipeline activism and many more. So much to be done so little time to do it. No time to socialise, go on holiday and most importantly to meditate. That perhaps was my gravest mistake. It was an amazing opportunity to take responsibility in the conception and birthing of large projects, follow them through, watch them grow and let them go. Sometimes becoming monsters and sometimes angels most times somewhere in between. It was an unrelenting work schedule we even took the computer to the beach if we went away for a few days break. Is it any wonder I eventually burnt out with it all?

The work that gave me most satisfaction was the Grassroots Leadership Training programme and I still occasionally get asked to assist with this one way or another with requests coming to revise reports and proposals and organise study tours to Europe. The GLT started in 1996 when 20 Kachin leaders who worked for communities in Northern Burma came to the Ashram. The three-month trip to Thailand and the Philippines gave an introduction to participatory development ethos and practice. It included study tours that visited areas with social problems as well as the local NGO initiatives that were striving for answers to these kinds of issue. This was as much an eye opener to me from the 'over' developed world as to the Kachin from the 'under' developed world. The ravages of drugs, aids, sex tourism and consumerism as well as government sponsored intensive farming have caused enormous issues and I was humbled by the huge efforts of NGOs and peoples organisations to come up with alternatives to these sad scenarios. The Assembly of the Poor in particular moved me - huge numbers of ordinary villagers whose lives had been blighted by modernisation such as chemical pollution, over fishing and the building of dams set up camp

outside the government house in Bangkok for months in protest. There was one dam in particular that I learned about at the Pak Moon River in North Eastern Thailand. They had protested for more than 20 years to stop the dam on the grounds that it would flood their livelihood land, cause immense environmental damage and change their sustainable lifestyles for ever. These brave men and women did not give up when the dam was built. They set up a protest village on the banks of the river next to the dam site where they used non violent action to raise awareness of their cause requesting that the dam gates be opened and the land restored to its previous state. After a few more years the dam eventually opened its gates and the river at least partially returned to its normal flow. This story is ongoing and I am constantly amazed at the perseverance, dignity and tenacity of these people.

I was lucky enough to sit in on a participatory action research workshop during the GLT. Rawadee and colleagues from RRAFA ran the workshop and their years of experience in this type of work made it an extremely worthwhile component. Participants excitedly worked late into the night on exercises and proposals that could help their communities on their return. I later joined her in several follow-up workshops with the alumni in Burma as they started to set up community projects. This gave me the basis of working from a participatory ethos and rather than a western style consultant going in to help I tried to bear witness, learn and support rather than tell people what to do. Since that first GLT there have been many more that have included other marginlised groups in Burma as well as monks and nuns. More recently the GLT is reaching out to Thailand, Laos and Cambodia and I feel very grateful to have been around during the formative years of this well received training. Becoming a participatory person rather than a consultant type was a steep learning curve both personally and professionally with many mistakes along the way but on the whole I feel satisfied with the support I have given alumni projects and budding NGOs in Burma over the years.

Being a member of a community.

Perhaps the most poignant memory is a feeling of belonging despite the challenges of being alienated from others through lack of language and cultural understanding. I built a wall around myself to protect it from the unknown that was constantly being thrown at me. The ubiquitous smile that I quickly learned was not necessarily a sign of pleasure rather it covered up all kinds of emotions and reading the smile correctly a vital skill to integrate into the society. Generally I did not have a clue and each unreadable smile became another brick in the wall.

As a longer-term western resident I became a bridge for challenged volunteers whose own ideology had a gap from the realities of the Ashram version of participation. Volunteers came with enormous generosity of time and spirit but often like myself a huge gaping internal need projected onto helping the causes. Over countless meals we would critique Thai culture particularly the rather unique version at the Ashram - many discussions about patriarchy and hierarchy. I tried to stay loyal to Pracha and the Ashram but it was difficult when I could not totally understand where they were coming from. My role as a bridge was ropey—several fell off midway into the waters below, some sinking painfully and others swimming strongly and going on to do amazing things. A few made it across to become well integrated but what a weight on my back. Others ignored me and did their own thing.

After a few years I was burnt out but ignored it struggling on until my body succumbed to chronic illness perhaps the only way of escape for me from this place of growth and turmoil.

Jewels of wisdom in experiencing different ways

I gained a few jewels in my Ashram experience.

The beauty of aloneness in an unfamiliar culture, I say aloneness rather than loneliness as I was held so warmly by the community despite the obvious differences.

Another gem was the realisation that my personal safety zones were not relevant and constantly being knocked. This meant one had to be totally in the present to survive undented and despite the immersion in Buddhist doctrine and the attempts at meditation practice I doubt if I was in the present moment for more than a few seconds here and there. Unfortunately the above-mentioned wall was deep and high prior to this realisation and I spent a lot of time like a bull in a china shop—an emotional person in a country that revered calmness! Not an easy place to be.

A final piece of wisdom is the wondrous patterns of unfamiliar ranks of power in all rela-

tionships. I was a ship bobbing on the waves and only several years later with the help of some process orientated psychology am I seeing the beauty of the systems I floundered in. Finally I realised that although most of us thought of ourselves as spiritually engaged only a few were deeply grounded enough in practice to stay balanced. A regular spiritual practice is very helpful and I admire those who set their priorities to accomplish this including Pracha on most days.

Spiritual practices integrated into ethos

The Ashram is a magnet for amazing people of many spiritual disciplines yet generally very engaged with a common agenda of questioning the deluge of western society on the local cultures—the negative aspects of modernity.

During my stay I was privileged to meet and learn from Gandhians yogis, Buddhist practitioners and leaders from all denominations, Islamic activists, radical Christian priests as well as an assortment of indigenous and shamanic leaders of varying traditions. The latter in particular awoke a longing in me to reach for my spiritual roots through earth based practices and communing with the spirit world. I resumed yoga practice daily with an Indian Guru and this kept my chronic illness at bay for several years. At various times I attempted to gain a regular meditation practice but for some reason this seemed beyond me although since returning to the UK and living a quieter life I do at least practice a few times a week and often daily. The delightful and wise Buddhist monks and nuns who visited regularly were a joy to be around although in accordance to the local culture I had to remember not to get too close to the males or heaven forbid be alone in a room with one.

In addition to the richness of the many spiritual visitors the opportunity to practice was integrated into the ashram ethos. Ashramites were encouraged to go on regular retreats in addition to holidays, meetings often started with a meditation. The community met together to chant and meditate and there was the opportunity to join many nourishing workshops on topics as diverse as mud house building, various aspects of Buddhist practice, conflict resolution, nutrition and fasting and yoga.

Being in a committed relationship

My anchor in the community was being in a committed relationship with Pracha a long-standing ashram member and very active working in Sulak Sivaraksa's network. A year after my arrival in the community we cemented our relationship with a marriage ceremony at the ashram. It was beautiful with a grace and elegance that typical of Thai events seemed to all come together at the last minute after what seemed like a rather shambolic planning. At three o'clock with a blessing of unseasonal light rain we took our vows in the hall in front of the local and extended community. One of Pracha's monk friends presented me with a gold encased plaster Buddha that I treasure to this day. He gave me a gentle warning that the life I had chosen in the alternative sector of an alien culture might be a struggle although he had no worries about Pracha who had the benefit of years in training in the monkhood.

Had I not been in this relationship I am sure I would left within the first few years, possibly the first few months. This would have been a shame as the challenges, amazing work and spiritual opportunities that freely flowed my way have been character building to say the least.

Conclusion

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the title of this piece reads like a tombstone. Life is full of births, happenings, death and the fertile places of limbo in between. Like karma these threads happen concurrently with many linking causes and effects yet it has been helpful for me to separate out the ashram experience as a time of growth in my life. Writing this piece I have revisited those heady Ashram days. An auspicious rite of passage, to celebrate the happy times, exorcise unpleasant memories and pave the way to release myself from the limbo and be reborn into the next phase of my life.

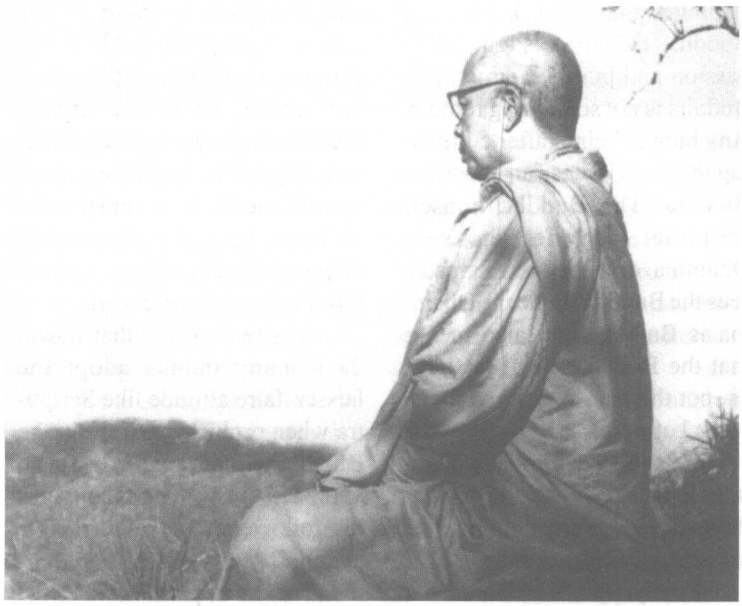
Jane Rasbash
Resided at Wongsanit Ashram,
from 1995 to 2000

Written for the 20th anniversary
of the Ashram



Buddha Cariya
A Lecture in "The 100th Anniversary of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu" Series

(Note: The year 2006 will be the centenary anniversary of The late Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. Many organizations, including the Buddhadasa Sukhsa Group, Sekiyadhamma group, Wongsanit Ashram, host a series of seminars on the Venerable's masterpiece writings called "Dhammakosana Series", containing more than 70 huge volumes on Buddhism. This paper summarizes the lecture by The Venerable Paisan Visalo in a seminar on the Buddha Cariya, which is one of the series.)



Usually, dhamma teaching is quite abstract. Though it is very useful, may I remind, we should not forget the dhamma in the form of story. Stories, whether real or fiction, can inspire people to do good or to get some practical idea. Dhamma teachings, when too abstract, can communicate only at the intellectual level. On the contrary, when it comes in the form of legends or life stories, it is powerful, inspiring and impressive. Stories can also verbalize the inexplicable, concepts such as mind, nature, human nature, etc., can be understood through a process of personification.

Buddhadasa's book *Buddha Cariya*, whether seen as a legend or historical fact, is always influential in that it provides a model or example to follow. I myself started reading *Buddha Cariya* a few months before the October 6th, 1976 student uprising against dictatorship and the resulting massacre. Although I adopted the Buddhist non-violent approach, I was caught between a rivalry of leftist and rightest ideologies. For the left wing, non-violence only delays the revolution, while the right is not much better in their practices against the opponent. Some part of the book talks about the Buddha who wins the heart of those with different ideas using compassion and non-violence. It inspires me. Normally, when we encounter people who think differently, we tend to see them as an enemy or rival. Moreover, if they attempt to challenge us, we get frustrated and angry. The late Buddhadasa put a strong emphasis that the Buddha never had a hostile attitude toward anyone, including those who intended to harm him.

In my own experience, I have been touched by many stories. One such story tells about four young girls competing in a race. Two runners take the lead leaving the other two behind. One of the first two accidentally stumbles. The other girl, instead of continuing, turns around and helps her. She could have won, if she went running on. Of course one of the two runners behind them wins the race. But the girl who helps her friend wins the heart of the people. She realizes that helping other is more important than victory, while others often perceive it the other way round. Preaching that helping other is good or that compassion and loving kindness are good, is not as powerful as telling stories. Stories make us feel that Dhamma is actually a daily matter.

Writing 32 years ago, Buddhadasa started the first part of *Buddha Cariya* with a question: What does the Buddha mean to the people? The title "Buddha" has three meanings. Firstly, it

means Buddha images or amulets, for the fool or the untrained. A step higher, the Buddha is a man in history, the Prince Siddhatha Gotama. The third level is the Buddha in its abstract meaning. It is not a person but rather attributes that make a person a Buddha, namely wisdom, compassion and purity. In this light, Buddha is not something remote. Any human being, after cultivating these attributes can become a Buddha. The Buddha himself said that, anyone who sees Dhamma or Paticcasamuppada, sees the Buddha. It means Dhamma is Buddha, and also means that the Buddha is not far from us, not the man who lived 2,500 years before of us.

What Buddha means or relates to us, according to Buddhadasa, can be summed up in three aspects:

Firstly, the Buddha is our friend in samsara. Before nibbana, he was our friend in samsara. After nibbaba he is still a good friend, showing us the way toward Lokuttaradhamma.

We normal people always see ourselves as "underwater lotus", how can we reach Lokuttaradhamma. The Buddha said, everyone has a right to enlightenment. Stories in the Buddha's time illustrate his words. The one who kills like Angulimala, who steals like Khujjutra, who is in extreme despair like Kisa Gotami, who is dull like Culapanthaka, who is greedy like Anathapindika's son, all of them got enlightened at various levels. People of all kinds, even the one in the Buddha's time who cut his own throat to commit suicide but ultimately could get enlightened. All stories encourage us that with efforts and good friends, we, too, can be enlightened. So, the second aspect, the Buddha is our guide.

Thirdly, he is our teacher. He always urges us to pay attention to Dhamma. He once expelled 500 young monks who were very naughty and noisy. But later he calls them back and teaches them. He then asks how Sariputra and Moggallana think of his action. Saribputra said, if the Buddha remains indifferent in this matter, he would also be indifferent, only practicing for his own happiness. But Moggallana said, if the Buddha remains indifferent, he and Sariputra will help share the Buddha's burden. His answer is appreciated.

It is remarkable that nowadays many monks adopt the laissez-faire attitude like Sariputra when problems arise. But the Buddha has never agreed on such approach. Instead, he encourages his followers to take corrective actions.

The next part is what the Buddha means to himself. The main idea in this part of the book is that in fact, the Buddha is not anything. Once there is a brahmin asking him who he is. Are you a deity, no. Are you a demon, no. Are you a man, no. Then, who are you?

To summarize the Buddha's reply, he is not anything because his *kilesha* that designates a deity, a demon or a man was all extinguished. And, he says, the brahmin can call him casually as "the Buddha."

Almost everyone perceives oneself as something or another. Once such perception arises, birth (*jati*) occurs, followed by decay (*jara*), death (*marana*) and suffering (*dukkha*). In fact, it is not perception of "I" alone, but an attachment that comes along that causes suffering. We can say that the Buddha overcomes the issue of identity because he does not attach to value to be anything, which is only conventional truth, not ultimate truth.

The next point is his relationship with other doctrine (*titthiya*) leaders. The Buddha's teaching is simply one of numerous schools of doctrine in his time. Now in Siam, the word *titthiya* (pronounced in Thai as *dirati*) is a dirty word, which comparably means heresy or pagan. Buddhadasa emphasizes that in the time of the Buddha, the word does not imply any insult or discrimination. The Buddha's attitude toward other religious leaders has never been adversarial. I think it is important to study the way that the Buddha relates himself to other faith communities, i.e. no hostility and no attacking response when engaging in dialogue. He only speaks of what he thinks and what the difference is. The Buddhist should learn and follow his example.

Then the book discusses on what the Buddha means to all beings. All beings here include trees, forest, animals, non-humans, and deities. Buddhadasa articulates that compassion of the Buddha is unlimited, without any exception.

Buddhadasa mentioned that the life story of the Buddha has two aspects, namely the physical and the spiritual. According to him, the "real" Buddha's life story covers only 12 hours of time. It's 12 hours, from 06:00 pm until 04:00 am, before attaining nibbana.

The majority of books on the life of the Buddha focus on his physical characteristics. While Buddhadasa pointed out that what is more crucial is instead the spiritual characteristics, that is the liberated mind or the void of self or *sunyata*. It is obvious that Buddhadasa tried to accentuate the abstract side. And the

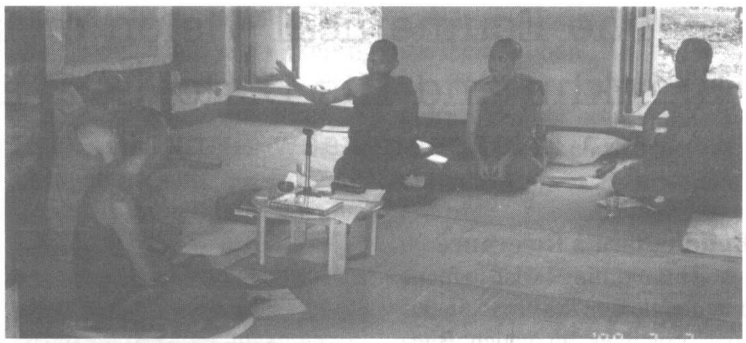
abstract characteristic is not limited to any particular person. That means, whoever assimilates such characteristics can become a Buddha. And that characteristic is also known as *buddha gabha*.

The next question is what the Buddha relates to his relatives. The Buddha puts that there are four kinds of relatives: relatives by blood, by familiarity, by work and by nature. The last one implies that we are relatives because all of us share the nature of birth, aging, decay and death.

The author includes a story of King Bimbisara. When Prince Ajatasatru and the chief monk Devadata's plan of regicide fails, the king discusses the matter with his ministers. The first group of ministers advises him to execute the prince, the chief monk and the follower monks. The second group suggests to execute only the prince and the chief monk. The third group suggests no execution. What the king commands is to appropriate peerage of the first group, to demote the title of the second group and to promote the third group. It is remarkable. With common sense, the assassination must be paid with death. But the king, already attained a basic level of enlightenment, practices forgiveness and even punishes those who advise the death sentence. His response illustrates well a Buddhist attitude toward those who commit harm to us.

There are some miscellaneous stories that depict the relationship of the Buddha and the common people. One small story tells about a kid who wants to give alms to the Buddha. Having nothing, he pours sand into his bowl. This the Buddha allows.

At the end of the book, the Buddha is not anything to us,



writes Buddhadasa. I suppose he said this in order to shake us from attachment, and make us understand the reality. He argued that the idea of being this thing and that thing reflects attachment. Once the mind is liberated, it will feel not to be anything at all.

There is one interesting sutta that illustrates another approach of the Buddha. It's Jora Sutta (teaching to the plunderer). Here the Buddha teaches that for plunderers to be prosperous, they should do no harm to those who cannot fight back, do no harm to women and girls, not plunder the ordained and state treasury, not rob completely but leave something to the owner, not plunder within one's own vicinity, should be wise in savings and do some merit. It is remarkable that he employs the skillful means in teaching the plunderers. If he tells them to stop robbery, they would not listen. Instead, the Buddha's advice is to reduce violence and to indirectly help them, e.g. by suggesting savings, which is more acceptable to them. The Buddha understands his audience, and knows how to approach them.

How could we apply his methodology in our time, e.g., in dealing with pharmaceutical transnational corporations? If we wish to enter their hearts, we need to get through their merit side. If we only reprimand them, they will create a wall against us. We should encourage them to do good things such as producing medicine the poor can afford. At the same time, in case of their abusive tactics such as excessive advertising to stimulate unnecessary consumption of medicine, we need to criticize them.

Some questions, the Buddha does not answer. The questions asked only out of curiosity, questions about metaphysics, and questions that are not beneficial to obtaining nibbana.

The Buddha's approach is a holistic one. He sees a person as composed of threefold parts: body, heart and wisdom. For body, he teaches *sila* for normal relationships and behaviour, including consumption and lifestyle. For heart, he teaches quality of heart such as compassion, forgiveness, etc. which manifest also in behaviour and relationship. For wisdom, he gives many profound Dhamma teachings such as *trilakhana*, etc.

In teaching Buddhism, teachers or monks may emphasize only one aspect. They may, for example, focus on meditation, but ignore wisdom, mindful consumption or simple lifestyle. Buddhist teachings for full development and to follow the example of the Buddha, must be in the holistic manner amid the community of good friends.

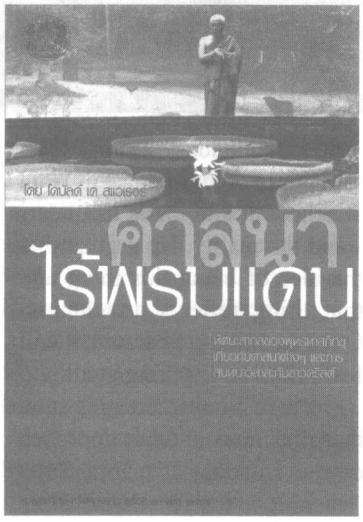
Phra Paisan Visalo

The Ecumenical Vision of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and His Dialogue With Christianity

Sem Pringpuangkaew Annual Lecture, May 2, 2004

Buddhadasa's Relevance

This morning I wish to focus our attention on the broad, inclusive principles on which Buddhadasa as a Buddhist philosopher grounds his understanding of Buddhism, in particular, and also other religions, especially Christianity. Buddhadasa's ecumenical vision, as I have chosen to call it, demands our attention today even more powerfully that it did thirty-six years ago when I first met him. 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. Buddhadasa's views offer a corrective to these forces of greed, divisiveness, and violence that engulf us. His vision of a dhammically governed society (*Dhammika sangkhom niyom*) is based on principles that are distinctively Buddhist but also truly universal. They include the principle of the good of the whole grounded in the knowledge of the dynamic and interdependent nature of things; the restraint of unbridled self-interest coupled with the positive virtue of generosity; justice motivated by a sense of empathetic fairness for all sentient beings; and, loving-



kindness and compassion based on the wise insight that religions, like human beings, while different share much in common.

Of the many intriguing aspects of Buddhadasa's worldview that deserve careful study, analysis, and critical evaluation —such as dhammic socialism, nature (*thammachat*), voidness (*sunnata*), and dependent coarising (*paticca-samuppada*) wish to direct my remarks specifically to his interpretation of religion with particular reference to Christianity. This is a fitting topic because today religion is regarded by many people as responsible for the spread of hatred and violence rather than providing a solution. Examples abound: Protestant-Catholic violence in Ireland; the conflict between Albanian Muslims and Serbian Christians in Kosovo; the animosity between Muslims and Hindus in India; the terrorist acts on the Tokyo subway perpetrated by Om Shinrikyo; the Sinhalese-Buddhist/Tamil-Hindu conflict in Sri Lanka and the list goes on and on. In the face of religious violence, tension, animosity, and conflict—ones that make headlines and those that do not—adherents of one religion or another are prone to respond defensively, assign blame to the other, or depict the other in the most negative and derogatory terms. These defensive responses only serve to exacerbate tensions among religious adherents. Instead of building bridges, walls are erected that prevent mutual understanding and the possibility of using the resources that reside in all religious traditions to contribute toward a more peaceful, harmonious, and just world.

I have chosen to speak about Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's ecumenical vision because of its universality and inclusiveness. His is a bridge-building understanding of religion that encourages every religious person to be faithful to his or her own tradition while at the same time respecting the truth and value of the other. Buddhadasa's interpretation of Buddhism and Christianity has been controversial. Some Thai Buddhists see his universalism as undermining their tradition, while some Christians charge that he distorts the true meaning of the Bible. The thought-provoking nature of Buddhadasa's point of view is suggested by the titles of his talks "No Religion" [*Mai Mi Sasana*], "A Good Buddhist Should be a Good Christian" [*Chaw Phut Thi Di Yom Pen*

Khrit Thi Di] to name only two. Buddhadasa's purpose was to encourage both Buddhists and Christians to recover the deepest principles of their religions, to delve beyond the outer, superficial coverings that hide the true core and in doing so to discover a common ground. For Buddhadasa this enterprise was nothing less than discovering the truth about the nature of things (*saccadhamma*).

No Religion!

Buddhadasa's startling claim, "that there is no such thing as religion can be analyzed into four distinct but related dimensions: pedagogical, ethical, epistemological, and ontological. First pedagogical. By the words, "*mai mi sasana*," Buddhadasa intends to capture our attention and curiosity. Let's imagine that we're at Suan Mokkh half awake in the early morning waiting for Buddhadasa to deliver his *dlwmmaiaQs*.. He slowly walks out of his feurt, sits down, and laughing softly blurts out, "there's no Buddha, no *dhamma*, no *sangha*." Suddenly, we're fully awake, wondering what he means by such an audacious statement, and all ears to what he will say next. Buddhadasa's pedagogical style, especially seen in his oral technique, is intended to shatter the doctrinal preconceptions that he believes blind most religious adherents from penetrating to the deepest meaning of their tradition. Equally important Buddhadasa's style is a form of *sati* or focused awareness. This is the *praxis* dimension of his pedagogical technique that involves the attention of our bodies as well as our minds, our heart (*cai*) as well as our mind (*chit*).

Second Buddhadasa's phrase, "*no* religion" has an ethical dimension, namely, an expression of his conviction that nonattachment lies at the heart of Buddhism and all religions. Preoccupation with the external trappings of religious institutions and their ritual ceremonies represents a particular form of attachment and, consequently, obscures the true meaning of religion which is to transform egoism into altruism. In the case of conventional Thai Buddhist practice, Buddhadasa directs especially sharp criticism at the practice of merit-making rituals: "the perception of most adherents of Buddhism is limited to what they can do to get a reward. While supporting the temples or monks and observing the precepts, they have only the objective of getting more in return than they give.... The heart of Buddhism is not getting things but getting rid of them. It is, in other words, nonattachment..." In the area of inter-religious relationships, Buddhadasa believes that those for whom religion is a matter of external form and practice tend to have a narrow, exclusivistic understanding of their religion that inevitably leads to inter-religious conflict. Here Buddhadasa makes a connection between the terms "outer" and "outsider." Those who see their religion in terms of outer form fail to fathom its essential nature. Consequently, "they look down upon other religions while praising and supporting their own thinking of themselves as a separate group. *Outsiders* are not part of our fellowship. They are wrong; only we are right." For Buddhadasa, being attached to external outer, physical forms we see everything in dualistic terms —good or evil, merit or sin, happiness or unhappiness, gain or loss, is or is not, my religion versus their religion.

Third, the epistemological perspective of "no religion" resides in his distinction between everyday language (*phasa khon*) and truth language (*phasa tham*) that enables him to develop a strategy for inter-religious understanding whereby he claims that religions can be both the same and different. They are similar or the same at the level of *phasa tham* and different at the level of *phasa khon*. Buddhadasa's distinction between *phasa khon* and *phasa tham* is not simply a creation of his own ingenuity but bears similarities to the Theravada distinction between conventional truth (*sammutisacca*) and absolute truth (*paramatthasacca*), and also to the Madhyamika theory of two levels of truth. In any case, Buddhadasa employs this hermeneutical strategy to interpret Buddhism, Christianity and other religions.

Ethically, the commonality of religions is found in their distinctive teachings about overcoming self-centeredness and its positive correlate, other-regarding love; epistemologically and linguistically the commonality is found in the metaphorical and symbolic nature of religious language; and, finally, from an ontological point of view, Buddhadasa's enigmatic phrase, "no religion," refers to a common ground shared by all religions. By its very nature this common ground cannot be described. We may name the undescribeable as Nibbana, God/ Brahman, Tao but they serve only as pointers. They do not exhaust the meaning of the reality to which they point, and if understanding remains stuck at the merely descriptive or *phasa khon* level true understanding remains hidden or unknown.

Buddha, Dhamma, and God

Using Buddhadasa's "no religion" perspective, we are enjoined to deconstruct the everyday or conventional understanding of these terms in order to penetrate to their deepest meaning; and, furthermore, when we come to this realization not only are the Buddha and the *dhamma* equated but they share a common meaning with the Christian concept of God. The equation of *dhamma* and Buddha has a long-standing, if much debated, tradition in the history of Buddhist thought. Thus, while Buddhadasa's interpretation may startle the ordinary Thai Buddhist, it is consistent with a stream of Buddhist thought found in Theravada as well as other Buddhist traditions. The *phasa khon* or conventional view of the Buddha regards him as a physical man of flesh and bone who was born in India over two thousand years ago, died, and was cremated. From the *phasa tham*, perspective, however, the Buddha became the Buddha only by the virtue of the truth that he realized, namely, the *dhamma*. Therefore, the Buddha is nothing other than this truth. To venerate the historical person called the Buddha or to believe that this person is somehow miraculously present in Buddha images and relics turns the Buddha into an object of attachment: "The *dhamma* is something intangible. It is not something physical, certainly not flesh and bones." As the *dhamma*, the Buddha in the true sense has not died. What has ceased to exist is just the physical body or outer shell. The real teacher, the *dhamma*, is with us still.

Buddhadasa has been criticized for dhammacizing God and for theologizing the *dhamma* and in doing so to gloss over fundamental differences between the Christian and Buddhist worldviews. Such criticisms, while not without some validity, disregard Buddhadasa's loftier purpose of promoting mutual sympathy, understanding, and cooperation among adherents of different religious traditions. Furthermore, Buddhadasa's hermeneutical principle of *phasa khon/phasa tham* enables him to claim not that all religions as the same but, rather, that religions are both alike and different; and, that the fundamental elements that religions share in common such as the value of other-regarding love is deeper and more significant that what divides them.

A Good Buddhist Is Necessarily A Good Christian

The title of Buddhadasa's *dhamma* talk at Wat Suan Mokkh in 2523 B.E./1980 C.E., *Phut Thi Di Yom Pen Khrit Thi Di* (A Good Buddhist Is Necessarily A Good Christian) is even more intriguing and controversial than his 2510 lecture, *Mai Mi Sasana* (No Religion). Let us again picture ourselves waiting for Buddhadasa to begin his lecture. We are familiar with Thai Christians, perhaps have Christian friends, or have been given Christian literature. Whether our perception of Christianity in Thailand is positive, negative, or neutral, we are quite aware that Christians and Buddhists are different in both belief and practice. Like a clever trickster Buddhadasa turns this preception we bring with us to his *dhamma* talk on its head. If I am a "good" Buddhist, how can this mean that I am a "good" Christian!?

Buddhadasa begins his lecture as he did when he spoke about "No Religion" by elucidating once again his well-known *phasa khon/phasa tham* hermeneutical strategy. He first applies the principle to Thai Buddhism, then to Zen, and finally to Christianity. Taking into account the nature of the Wat Suan Mokkh audience the sequence is important, beginning with the most familiar and then moving progressively to the less and finally to the least familiar. In this way, he prepares his listeners to be more open to the comparisons he draws between Buddhism and Christianity.

Buddhadasa's opening comments about Buddhism focus on the conventional understanding of the Buddha that associates the Buddha's [*parinibbana*] *with* his death. Old age, suffering, and death is the nature of things; the Buddha died, therefore, the Buddha is absent. For Buddhadasa, to understand the Buddha only in this way denies the very heart of Buddhism, for the Buddha's enlightenment represents the very negation of these conditions:

> *The Buddha can not die for the word. Buddha, refers to the Buddha's spiritual awakening which by its very nature is the transcendcence of birth,, old age, suffering, and death, and the conditions of kamma and rebirth. If this is not so, then Buddhism is of no value.*

Buddhadasa brings imaginative openness to Christianity, stating at the outset that he speaks about other religions in order to promote more harmonious relations among them, not to encourage conversion: "As you have often heard me say, I aspire to work for a better understanding among religions; to encourage individuals to understand their own religion as deeply as possible; and to promote liberation

from materialism." In this essay Buddhadasa adopts a twofold strategy to realize these goals: to discover similarities between religious traditions, and to broaden and enrich Buddhism through dialogue with Christianity, in particular. He freely acknowledges that his approach has provoked both Buddhists and Christians: "A Christian might respond to what I say with the immediate suspicion that *I'm* an enemy who cannot be trusted and who plans to devour his religion. As for Buddhists, they might think I'm trying to harm Buddhism and am teaching the superiority of Christianity."

A Good Christian Is Necessarily A Good Buddhist

In concluding my remarks this morning I have reversed the nouns in the title of Buddhadasa's talk. As a Buddhist, Buddhadasa declares, "Chao Phut Thi Di, Yom Pen Khrit Thi Di." As a Christian I propose to be as provocative and controversial regarding a Christian audience by saying, "Chao Khrit Thi Di, Yom Pen Phut Thi Di" I recognize, as I think Buddhadasa did in regard to his Buddhist audience, that many Christians *will* react to the statement, "a good Christian is necessarily a good Buddhist, with incomprehension. Buddhadasa wanted Buddhists to think deeply and in new ways about the nature of their faith; similarly, I hope that Christians in Thailand will reconsider their own faith and the faith of their Buddhist neighbors in more open and creative ways that will lead to their mutual enrichment.

In 1967 while studying in Kandy, Sri Lanka, I asked my Sinhalese friend and Catholic priest, Father Antony Fernando, to describe how he approached Christian evangelism. He replied, "I see my task as helping Buddhists to be better Buddhists". At the time I was shocked but I've never forgotten that conversation. Father Fernando provoked me to think about my Christian faith from a new perspective as has Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. These are the fruits of true dialogue, an ongoing, dynamic process of growth and discovery that refuses to hide behind the walls of dogma that is as open to the Buddhist *dhamma* in its 84,000 (i.e. inumerable) manifestations as it is to the love of the Christian God extended to all humankind.

Donald K. Swearer

for full version, please look at
www.sulak-sivaraksa.org

Sulak Sivaraksa : A Public Intellectual

Sulak Sivaraksa was born in BE 2475, a significant year in Thai political history. In other words, this year marks the 72nd anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen as well as of constitutional monarchy (there was no fanfare in the celebration of the latter, however). But we must not forget that Sulak is 72 years old this year too. How time flies.

In his lifetime Sulak has contributed enormously to society, and they cannot be adequately elaborated here. Most importantly, he has long served as a leading public intellectual.

Sulak's role as a public intellectual or critic is unparalleled. It is hard enough to find someone with the attributes of a public intellectual. It is even harder to find someone with those attributes who *chooses* to be one.

The primary role of a public intellectual is to dissent and to raise a warning flag. Put another way, public intellectuals act as the brake or bumper for society. As such, they are often condemned for going against the stream, for opposing the state, for raising embarrassing facts, for obstructing the maneuverings of the powers-that-be.

In general, there is no award or reward for serving as public intellectuals since no one has asked them to do so. To be or not to be a public intellectual is essentially a personal choice-and a moral one too. And generally, the people will only begin to recognize the virtues of a public intellectual long after she or he had passed away. The cases of Kularb Saipradit, Jitr Phumisak, Puey Ungphakorn, etc. are illuminating.

Suchart Sawatsri, a fellow traveler of Sulak, describes the latter thus:

> A commoner who stands outside the mainstream and who has increasingly moved towards the grassroots and the margins.... Even though his identity and his confidence in goodness, beauty, and truthfulness have made him a *bete noire* especially in the eyes of those who could not tolerate his wit and audacity, but to his friends, *kalyanamitta*, and the younger generation over

> the decades...Sulak is a good and virtuous companion who possesses a critical mind and moral courage....

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I am not sure when I started to know Sulak or where I met him for the first time. All I know is that it was a long time ago. Perhaps it was in 1967—it was during the sixties when the country's intellectuals and youths were on a "quest." Back then I was a Ph.D. student at Cornell University and returned home to do some research on my dissertation "The Rise of Ayudhya" in 1967.... I had an opportunity to follow Sulak and his friends who were then touring Kanchanaburi. It was the first time that I had encountered a group of "Siamese intellectuals." Aside from Sulak, Sumet Jumsai and Akarn Kalyanapong were also in the group. All three of them were the intellectual heavyweights of the time, and they were engaging in various captivating intellectual debates throughout the trip.

We spent a night at the countryside. It was very nice. There were trees and waterfalls. The group of Siamese intellectuals unrelentingly continued their debates and discussions on social and political issues throughout the night. A continuous barrage of words filled the air, and soon I felt nauseous. I must shed a bit of light on my personal background. I came from a fairly conservative family. I obtained my bachelor's degree in political science from Thammasat University, and I had my eyes set on working for the interior ministry or the ministry of foreign affairs. I was a fan of *Siam Rath* newspaper and admired M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. I also thought highly of the Democratic Party at the time. I was not acquainted to intellectual debates and exchanges even though I had spent a considerable time abroad and began practicing "long-distance nationalism." Therefore the discussion of the group of Siamese intellectuals, which often dealt with ideas that ran counter to those of the mainstream, left me gasping for air. I remember gradually fading myself away from the main discussion group and eventually talking to Suchart Sawatsri and Witthayakorn Chiangkul in the darkness of the night.

I began to diversify my reading consumption and started to pursue (or flirted with) an alternative line of thoughts, moving from the *Siam Rath* camp of M.R. Kukrit Pramoj to the *Social Science Review* camp of Sulak Sivaraksa. But it was a long journey from one camp to the other. Sulak was offering something new at the time, though many found his ideas snobbish.

Benedict Anderson explains in *In the Mirror: Literature and Politics in Siam during the American Era* thus:

> In 1963, the idiosyncratic conservative-monarchist intellectual Sulak Siwarak established, with the help of the Asia Foundation, a new journal somewhat misleadingly named *Sangkhomsat Parithat (Social Science Review)*. In spite of his excellent American connections, Sulak maintained a pointedly critical stance vis-á-vis the Americanophilia and "developmentalism" of the Sarit era. Although his insistence on trying to repopularize traditional upper-class Thai costume, and to revive "Siam" in place of the Plaek-period mongrelization "Thailand," earned him ridicule in some quarters, the thrust of many of his articles—a defense of Thai cultural and political autonomy from excessive American influence—won him a small, but increasingly influential youthful intellectual following.

In sum, I began to know Sulak from a distance by reading the *Social Science Review* during my final year at Thammasat University in 1963. I graduated the following year and worked briefly for the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Then I went to study abroad. I spent seven years abroad (1965-1973). I came back just in time to witness the uprising in October 1973 (as mentioned above I shortly visited home in 1968).

***

I was thus not at home to take part in the "quest" for meaning in the midst of dictatorial darkness. But abroad I also found answers to my "quest" in the form of the civil rights movements, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and so on. At that point, I returned home for a short visit and met the Siamese intellectuals in the countryside of Kanchanaburi.

When I first met Sulak in person I admired him and was excited. But at times he also irritated me. My first impression of him was thus a mixed one. But gradually my ambiguous feelings towards him changed. I carefully observed and studied Sulak's life and thoughts—the making of Sulak the public intellectual, his intellectual trajectory or genealogy, etc—through his writings,

the condemnations he faced, the legal charges against him, the lese majeste cases, etc.

Sulak became a highly interesting personality—eccentric, strange, and in the context of Thai society which is modern but not developed, it might not be wrong to call him "magical." Sulak has been widely condemned. And there are a lot of questions about him. Who is Sulak? What does Sulak want? Is he an ultra-conservative or an advocate of liberalism and democracy? Is Sulak a leftist or communist? Does he want to destroy Nation, Religion, and Monarchy?

Of course, it seems that everyone has his or her own set of answers to these questions. But as a student and a professor of history, whose role is to study the development of the Thai people and society, I must say that Sulak has had an enormous role in our society. Sulak has chosen a distinctive or unique life path. We may or may not like him. But if we are just we have to respect him in varying degrees.

Sulak Sivaraksa vis-á-vis M.R. Kukrit Pramoj and Suchart Sawatsri

As someone who is familiar with the writings and thoughts of M.R. Kukrit Pramoj, whom Sulak has criticized on many occasions and whom many see Sulak has been trying to match, I must say that these two individuals share both similarities and differences.

From M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's family background (he had both aristocratic and Chinese blood) and from his role and nature, we can say that he was a liberal conservative. As for Sulak (a bourgeoisie and commoner with Chinese blood), he is a conservative liberal (though Ben Anderson calls Sulak an idiosyncratic conservative-monarchist intellectual).

Both are thinkers, writers, social critics, and intellectuals. Their influence could be widely felt in Thai society. They are thus similar in this respect. But M.R. Kukrit was also something much more. He was a politician who knew how to apply his thoughts, writings, and influence to reach the apex of political life—the premiership. On the other hand, Sulak is not a politician, and he probably could not be or asked to be a minister in the cabinet (whether or not Sulak wants it).

As a close friend of Suchart Sawatsri...and since Suchart had also worked with Sulak as the editor of the *Social Science Review*...I have something to say about both of them. When I was "searching for meaning" abroad we established a group and started to contribute articles in the form of letters to *Prachatipatai* (Democracy) newspaper. There was a column called "Longing for Thailand." The group members were Pramote Nakonthup, Varin Vongharnchao, Boonsanong Boonyotayan, Yongyut Yutvong, Chaladchai Ramitanon, and Kwandee Rakpong. Suchit Wongthes and Sathira Janthimathorn collected our—foreign educated students'—contributions and printed them in two pocket books entitled *Longing for Thailand*.

We wrote about our feelings while living abroad and how we missed our country, which was in a crisis or multiple crises—the Vietnam War, the anti-communist campaign, the awakening of students' movements worldwide, the superpowers' détente and rivalry, etc. We wanted to awaken the public sphere, to promote dialogues, and to find a way out for our country, which was trapped in the whirlpool of military dictatorship. (We were practicing long-distance nationalism, so to speak.)

At this point when I traveled halfway around the globe to America I met Sulak on the intellectual road to wisdom and social responsibility and also Suchart Sawatsri. I became increasingly close to Suchart. We had known each other before we met one another. Ultimately, we knew each other's family, consulted one another on our futures, cared about one another, etc.

I started to contribute essays, letters, and book reviews to the *Social Science Review* since 1969. At that time Suchart had already replaced Sulak as the editor. Under Suchart the *Social Science Review* dealt more openly and directly with 'political' and contemporary social issues—modernity, environmental degradation, American influence in the country, military dictatorship, undemocratic tendencies in the country, and so on. Sulak had tended to use the country's tradition and culture as a base to evaluate society. It is thus possible to say that at that time Suchart was more "leftist" than Sulak though I am no longer sure whether this assertion is still true at present.

As a student and professor of history I must say that the thoughts and writings of Sulak rely heavily on history. Sulak is capable of animating the past and drawing important lessons from it—again a feat that few could match.

Sulak is interested in the past. But is Sulak a historian? I don't think he is, but Sulak is knowledgeable about many fields—not only about history, not only about philosophy, not

only about the social science, not only about the humanities, not only about religion and culture.

Sulak is like a duck that could swim, fly, walk, etc. Sulak can do many things. Time has not sapped the vitality of his intellect....He still remembers many minute, illuminating, and intricate historical details, which he recounts from time to time. The only obstacle hindering him from fully and freely expressing them is the hovering charge of *lese majeste*. In many respects the Thai society is still shrouded by the past, and Sulak is like a ray of light that attempts to pierce through the (self-imposed) darkness.

Moral Courage

Lastly, as a social critic who wants to act as the brake or buffer for society, a defining characteristic of Sulak is his moral courage. He is not afraid to speak out and to act according to his principles. He is not afraid to criticize others, particularly the powers-that-be. Risking his personal safety, he has criticized the so-called main pillars of society, for instance. As such he had been forced to flee abroad several times for his personal safety and likewise had narrowly escaped imprisonment many times. Sulak's decision to serve as a public intellectual—and the duty and responsibility it entails—is thus a gift to society.

When former prime minister Chatchai Choonhavan passed away in 1998, Sulak wrote thus:

The attempt to construct a monument for Khun Chatchai at Nakornrachasima province may be seen as overblown. But if we examine the monuments erected we must admit that good people are rarely commemorated.... We merely have to turn our gaze to the center of Khon Kaen province. There stands a monument of the enemy number one of Khun Chatchai. This person had destroyed democracy and was immensely corrupted—even more so than Khun Chatchai's father. Even though the monument in Lopburi province is that of the former superior of Khun Chatchai as well as of his father, to what extent had he benefited or harmed the country? To this day many of us are still wary of the role of this leader. Even the monument of Khun Chatchai's brother-in-law at the Police Cadet Academy is a negative and disgusting role model for the younger generation of police cadets.

Of course the individuals Sulak is criticizing above could be none other than Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, Field Marshal Phin Choonhavan, Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkram and Police General Phao Siyanon, respectively. If the Thai society wants to develop its democracy and moves towards a brighter future, it must re-evaluate the roles of these individuals in its history textbooks and in various other places.

Similarly, Sulak did not spare King Chulalongkorn, who is widely respected and is represented as the symbol of the country's modernity, from criticism.

Everybody reveres King Chulalongkorn. We only have to witness the ceremony at his monument on October 23 of every year, schools' textbooks, ordinary books, newspapers, etc. They all hold the king in great (or superfluous) admiration or reverence as if he was not a mortal. It seems as if everything that he had done was correct, as if he had not committed any blunders. It is as if he had performed miracles at will—even the creation of his own wealth. It is hard for mortals and commoners like us to emulate him.

Many hagiographies have been written about the king. None of them seems to have captured his real ingenuity: not understanding humans as mortal beings, how can one detect the extraordinariness of an ordinary human being? It is worrisome that if the members of the younger generation do not understand the king as an ordinary mortal being like us—as human all too human—they will eventually forget about him when it is out of fashion to respect the royalties. Something similar had happened after the revolution in 1932....

Whether or not Sulak's role as "the brake or buffer" for society will be recognized can only be judged a posteriori. But against the backdrop of widespread fascination with globalization, economic liberalism, and extreme developmentalism—with ignorance, power, and wealth—Sulak's hopes and dreams of taking the Thai society across the critical divide of violence are still illusory. His commands and warnings will reverberate in only a few of us, pointing to some of the problems the Thai society is facing. It is plausible, as Sulak believes, that any institution (especially the monarchy on which he places great importance) that is able to tolerate and withstand criticism will be able to survive for a long time. This is the major problem confronting us in the new century and in the present reign.

Charnvit Kasetsiri
for the 72nd birthday of
Sulak Sivalaksa
27th March 2005

Libra Professorship



Sulak Sivaraksa honored our Peace Studies Program with a two week visit from Oct 24 to Nov 5. This was the second visit to the University of Maine in 2004. During our three day International Peace Conference at UM in Orono in June 17-20, Sulak was one of our featured speakers. He impressed many people during that brief time but it was his 12 day visit this October and November that had a major impact on many people who had neither seen nor heard him at the Conference.

Over the course of nearly two weeks Sulak was kept busy with two a day appearances at Peace Studies classes as well as two venues open to the public. We were able, with the help of Peace and Justice groups in Maine, to distribute news of Sulak's talks to thousands of people engaged in peace issues. Articles were written to all the local newspapers but we were still surprised at the large turnout of people of all ages to the lectures. I had the pleasure of staying with Sulak at the Black Bear Inn in Orono and accompanied him to various events.

On the very first day, Oct. 25 we held a discussion with some faculty members on Buddhism and Feminism. On Oct 26 Sulak, accompanied by Hugh, went to a prayer group meeting and that evening gave a keynote speech in front of 80 people. The following day, Oct 27, a classroom talk and discussion had been arranged and then a Multicultural Ambassadors meeting. On Oct. 28 there was another public talk sponsored by the Socialist and Marxist Luncheon Series with 60 people in attendance and following that another classroom visit. On Oct. 29 a faculty retreat was held at the Black Bear Inn and Sulak spoke informally and answered questions. Over the weekend of Oct 30-31 he visited with his friends, Peggy and Ken McIntosh and on Sunday they drove him to the Morgan Bay Zendo in Surry. Here Hugh introduced Sulak to 50 very interested practitioners of meditation and to them he spoke for over an hour on engaged Buddhism and meditation.

Over the course of the week Chan (Toi) Bishop, Sulak's cousin, drove all the way from New Jersey, a trip of ten hours each way, and spent two days with us at the Black Bear Inn. We also met with Jim Riley, who had known Sulak in Siam 25 years ago as a vistiting anthropologist and is now a medical doctor in the Bangor area. Jim and his wife attended several of Sulak's talks and had him visit them as dinner guest. Still another interesting coincidence was meeting with a woman from Thailand who had married an American Air Force officer from Bangor and now worked in the University of Maine Bookstore.

Besides all the encounters with old and new friends, Sulak continued his busy schedule. On November 1, he spoke to an overflow crowd at the Philosophy Department on the subject of "A Buddhist Analysis of Self". The Philosophy Department had prepared seats for thirty people, since that was a normal turnout and the room hardly held more than that. But people kept coming until they were backed up into the corridor and stairway.

The following morning Sulak spoke to Professor Doug Allen's Hinduism class on some of the similarities between the Buddhist and Hindu tradition and on November 3 participated with a diversity group over breakfast. In the evening, a reception for thirty guests took place at the University Club.

On the final day, November 4, Sulak attended two more classes and then spoke in front of another overflow audience at the Eastern Maine Peace & Justice Center in Bangor. Interestingly enough, several members of the Peace & Justice Center are part

of ENGAGE, a group of students who work with rural farmers in Thailand. Some of them, including Nico Lustig and Laura Millay, were familiar with Sulak, having met him in Bangkok. With Sulak's encouragement Nico spoke with much clarity about some of the difficult issues facing farmers and villagers in rural Thailand.

This is not to say that everything ran smoothly all the time. There were several surprises. In one instance we drove to the airport, on the way to the lecture at the Peace & Justice Center, to arrange for an earlier flight-time. I had tried to do this over the phone but the red tape made it impossible. Sulak went to the ticket office while I, believing that the transaction would take at least a hour, parked the car. But in the two or three minutes it took to park the car Sulak re-emerged through the airport doors beaming and saying it was all taken care of. Later that evening Sulak phoned my room and said worriedly, "Hugh, I cannot find my passport". Luckily, after some phone calls we discovered that the passport was being kept safely at the airport desk having been left there inadvertently.

My personal interaction with Sulak was richly rewarding and deeply informative. Up until my informal conversations with Sulak over shared meals, I had only a sparse understanding of Theravada tradition since my training had been in the Mahayana tradition. But having the good fortune to ask questions I gained much and absorbed much. It is perhaps inevitably true that face to face encounters with someone like Sulak has much more of an inpact than knowledge acquired from books and journals. This was as true for me as it was for those who came to the talks. Some peace activists, as well as academics and students, were surprised that Buddhism had a strong tradition of engagement with social issues. They also expressed their gratefulness that Sulak was able to meet with so many different groups and classes.

At this point I would like to extend special thanks to Sulak from myself and the Peace Studies faculty at the University of Maine. It should be noted that Phyllis Brazee, the Director of Peace Studies, worked diligently to make the Libra Professorship possible. Professor Doug Allen of the Philosophy Department co-sponsored the Professorship and without their efforts and those of the staff, especially Ellen Woodhead, all the events co-ordinated around Sulak's visit could not have taken place. As the facilitator, I tried to make events run as smoothly as possible though Ajaan Sulak Sivaraksa made this an easy and enjoyable experience. Many words of thanks could be expressed, but for now we can just say that the benefits were immense and will be long-lasting and we look forward to more encounters with Sulak in times to come.

Hugh J. Curran

from page 23

in economics'. In Cambodia, still in the aftermath of violent conflict, the strive towards happiness was primarily seen from the perspective of Peace building.

The researchers from Bhutan unanimously made clear that they will take there time to weigh all arguments and considerations before they will come up with a GNH Index or any possible guidelines to give direction to national development and global transformation. A fascinating process of international and interdisciplinary consultations has been induced and promises to produce genuinely creative results.



Dr. Gothom Arya, Moderator, and happy participants in the AIT

The next step at the global level will be a Gross National Happiness conference in Canada, June 2004 titled Re-thinking Development.

We have to be grateful that the people of Bhutan not only carefully open their country to curious visitors but also reach out to the world with a unique message from an ancient culture to be preserved.

Hans van Willenswaard

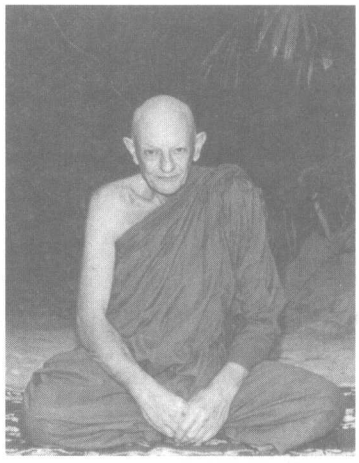
Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho

Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho is a Welshman who was ordained since 1957 (B.E. 2500). His monkhood was the longest among the western monks in Siam or even in the world. Up to his death on 18th August 2004 at Baan Taad Forest Monastery, his monkhood was almost 47 years long.

Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho's previous name was Peter Morgan. His grandfather was the Dean of St. David's Cathedral in Wales. Despite being an engineering graduate, he realized that all the worldly pursuits are impermanent and nonsense. He happened to encounter a book *Buddhism* by Christmas Hamphreys, who was the president of British Buddhists Society. The book linked him with some Buddhists in UK, which was small in number. Morgan, then, set up a group in Manchester to practice meditation and observe the precepts for the peace of mind.

Morgan became a disciple of a British monk Bhikkhu Kapilavaddho and followed him to Siam to get ordination in 1957. Bhikkhu Kapilavaddho wished to establish a sangha in UK. He therefore persuaded three other British to get ordination. If only all the four monks would remain in the robes, it would be the first sangha in the west. Unfortunately, all except Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho disrobed.

Shortly after ordination, he moved to London and got support from the Sangha Trust whose aim was to establish the UK sangha. He practiced in solitude, receiving no invitation. At that time there was one British Buddhist laymen association and one Singhalese Buddhist Vihara with Sri Lankan monks.



After 1957, I went to study and work in London. I had a chance to meet him and offered him Thai Language lessons when I knew that he wished to return to Siam to find a teacher in a forest monastery. Toward the end of 1961, he came to Siam and stayed at Jalapratan Rangsarit Temple. He turned down my suggestion to go to the late Venerable Buddhadasa of Suan Mokh because he wanted to focus solely on meditation, and preferred a strict forest monk astery. Later he met the Venerable Maha Bua Ñānasampanno in Chantaburi province. He considered this monk his ideal teacher, although he could not fully understand in Thai. In 1962, when the Venerable Maha Bua moved to Udonthani province, perceived as far, far away by city people, Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho followed his teacher to live there from the beginning. I accompanied him to the new temple. He even refused an invitation from the UK to go back and establish a sangha there. Later Bhikkhu Sumedho from Ajan Cha's forest monastery was invited instead.

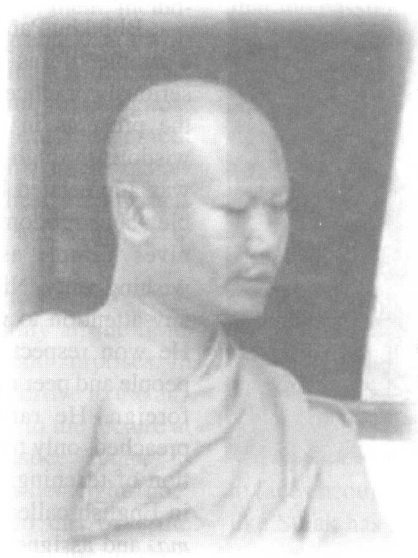
Bhikkhu Paññāvaddho lived a simple life as a forest monk, seriously practiced and observed the precepts in order to attain wisdom through meditation He was appreciated by the Venerable Ñānavarodom from Bavornnives Temple as a true monk wishing only Nibbāna without any attention to worldly matter. He won respect from both the people and peer monks, Thai and foreign. He rarely wrote and preached, only translated collection of teachings by his teacher in English called *Forest Dhamma*, and assigned me to publish it.

His worldview was confined within the forest monastery, and no more than that. He paid respect and loyalty to his teacher without doubt. I once asked him for his idea on the fact that now Baan Taad Forest Monastery is having many activities and losing tranquility. His teacher became famous and was awarded higher title from calling for donations from the people—the majority of them are poor—to sustain the Bank of Thailand. He had no reply but saw that it was good for his teacher. Being busy with various activities strengthened his health and longevity.

Although I did not fully agree with his reply, I accept it with respect. He is a good monk and his stay in my country for around four decades is true auspiciousness, to both my country and to Buddhism.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Bhikkhu Vajiañāno



The death of the Ven. Sudasna Vajiañāno on October 4, 2004, was not mentioned by newspapers, though the people around his Pa Daed Temple, Mae Chaem District, Chiangmai felt the lost. He was a leader in the promotion of education and restoration of local culture and art, making it meaningful to the new generation.

The Ven Sudasna Vajiañāno was born on May 4, 1966, to Mr. Singhkham and Mrs. Phan Natika, and got ordained on January 24th, 1987.

I met him since he was a young novice. He was introduced to me by Mr. Anant Viriyapinit of Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation who accompanied artist Fua Haripitak on a trip to survey mural paintings in many temples in the northern provinces. The novice Sudasna was keen on studying the religious scripts of Lanna tradition. He liked reading and wanted to set up a local library. His Pa Daed Temple is a unique one, situated in natural surrounding with beautiful traditional architecture. It needed preservation before being damaged by globalization.

I visited his temple and provided support to his activities. Once he turned 20, I sponsored his full ordination performed by the respectful Venerable Bodhirangsi Bhikkhu. The ceremony was done in Yang Luang Temple because his temple did not have an ordination hall. The ceremony was arranged in the beautiful northern traditional style. It was very impressive. Later his followers wished to construct a small ordination hall. With my suggestion, the Ven Sudasna asked Mr Tamnu Haripitak to do paintings on dhamma and folklore in order to place on the walls of the new hall.

When Sekhiya Dhamma Group (SKYD), a network of good friends who share commitment of monastic life and social engagement, was set up under the facilitation of the Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development (TICD) the Ven Sudasna joined SKYD. He also played a supportive role in the establishment and function of the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM).

All these activities have been done since he was only a young monk. He refused to take the position of abbot. However he finally could not avoid it due to the sudden disrobing of the previous abbot of his temple. He promised me that he would organize a temple fair this December to celebrate both his new position and my 6th cycle anniversary. He had arranged many fairs in order to preserve local traditions. This kind of activity later on became popular in other neighbouring temples. When we organized Sacred Music Festival at Chiangmai in the year 2000, he invited Tibetan monks to perform Vajirayana rituals at his temple. But with the law of impermanence, I heard the sad news of his sudden death from heart failure.

His demise reminds me to use skillful means to be aware of death, and to donate all merits to my friends in monkhood, fewer and fewer of them remain now. I am certain, without a doubt, he is going to a pleasant place. I only wish that his spiritual practice would become widely known so that Buddhism in Siam would be strong, deeply rooted into local culture and linked meaningfully with modern societies. By this, a culture of awakening would lead people from culture of chasing after indulgence, sensual pleasure and fame, to the path of purity with Buddha Dhamma by the sangha.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Note: The funeral ceremony of Ven. Sudasna will be on 29th Jan. 2005.

Chao Tzang Yawnghwe

On 20 July 2004 I lost one of my good friends whom I regard as a relative—Chao Tzang Yawnghwe, a prince of Tai Yai (Shan). He passed away peacefully in Canada due to brain tumor (like another friend of mine —Voraputti Jayanama) at the age of 65.

Chao Tzang Yawnghwe was born on 26 April 1939 in Yawnghwe, Shan State, Burma. He was a son of the Prince and the Mahadevi of Yawnghwe, of Tai Yai ethnic minority. Chao Tzang graduated from Rangoon University in 1961 with an honor degree in History.

When Burma was about to gain independence from British rule, U Aung Saan invited the Prince of Yawnghwe to be President of Burma and he himself would take the position of Prime Minister. Unfortunately, U Aung Saan was assasşinated before the independence. Then, U Nu was appointed the first Prime Minister of Burma and the Prince of Yawnghwe was President as planned.

According to the Pang Long Agreement, the Shans and other ethnic minorities in Burma were united with equality in the Union of Burma for 10 years. It is stipulated that they could separate from the Union if they wished.

But before the Union of Burma reached its first decade, General Ne Win seized power and overthrew the constitution and parliament (he probably might have learnt it from the Thai dictators). The Prince of Yawnghwe was arrested and tortured to death in prison.

The Mahadevi and her children had to take refuge to Siam.



At that time, Siam cooperated with the CIA and helped independence movements in Burma. Chao Tzang himself was also part of an armed struggle for Tai Yai freedom led by the Mahadevi. But his movements and those of other ethnic minorities were not given sincere support by the Thai and the US governments. It is very shameful that recent Thai governments had no integrity and democratic values, especially the present one which is the worst.

I, myself got to know and be familiar with the Mahadevi and almost all of her children. They used to write articles for the *Social Science Review* in its early years, some in English some in Thai translation.

From the Mahadevi's biography *The White Umbrella* by Patricia Elliot, which I wrote a review, I can see that Chao Tzang was her favorite son. I got to know Chao Tzang himself later but became more familiar with him than anyone in his family.

What I admire Chao Tzang most is his political viewpoint. He was firmly determined to promote the freedom and democracy of Tai Yai and of other minorities as well. He was very brave to frankly criticize the feudalism of Tai Yai - his father included - though it is less complicated and less socially unjust than the Thai's.

Due to the political situation, Chao Tzang Yawnghwe and his family had to live in Canada. The Mahadevi recently passed away there too.

I occasionally met Chao Tzang in various meetings in Siam and abroad, such as at the European Parliament where he tried to solicit for human rights protection for minorities in Burma including Tai Yai, Mon and others from the government of "civilized" countries.

It is a pity that the government of Burma is so bad that it does not allow people like him to live in their own land, not to mention of the exploitation and coercion of fellow Burmese and ethnic minorities. If its people openly involve in non-violent struggles for peace, democracy and righteousness, the military government will react with cruelty. Aung San Suu Kyi is one of the cases though her father was regarded as the "Father of Independent Burma".

I do wish him to live in peaceful place beyond this world. His death makes me feel that I need to dedicate myself more to our Tai Yai friends, and those suffering in Burma, Siam and other places for their freedom and dignity as human beings. I hope that Chao Tzang would know of and appreciate my activities.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Maran Ja Bawk - A Kachin Warrior



I breathed a sigh of relief as Ja Bawk confidently strode into the ashram. I'd heard that the Kachin people had a reputation as warriors and quickly learned that this powerful woman more than fulfilled this claim. The other participants of the first GLT course had arrived a few days previously. Ja Bawk arrived belatedly due to passport challenges but ready, willing and extermely well qualified to fulfill her post as translator. From the first conversation with her when she announced she had been in my bedroom, my living room and my kitchen (through) the novels she had read) I realised this was a woman to be reckoned with. That first training in 1996 was a triumph largely due to Ja Bawk's patient translation and solid yet unobtrusive leadership of the group. She was much more than translator as she was able to put things into a social and cultural context using stories and examples to get the point across. Her high morals coupled with a strong sense of justice became apparent after visiting Patpong, Bankok's famous redlight area she lambasted some of the GLT participant-male ministers who were very judgmental of the sex workers they had seen. There had been a very difficult debriefing session at Empower where many prejudices had been aired. Her scolding lasted all the way from Bangkok to Kanchanaburi a four-hour drive. Yet it did nothing to diminish her standing with the group. Everyone respected her totally.

The group visited Wat Thamkrabok a drug rehab centre during the study tour. Their process famously involves imbibing herbs and subsequent vomiting to detox the system physically and spiritually. The programme is very strict and once detoxed the inmates join in monastery life and assist with running the centre. Ja Bawk was very impressed with this initiative as several of her sons has become involved with drugs and one had died. Ja Bawk was very frank about this and her acceptance and openness won her great admiration. If such a prominent and educated family could have these problems then it was not such a shameful thing. Northern Burma is on the edge of the Golden Triangle. The drugs go out of the poppy fields of Northern Shan State, are refined in China and come back as heroin readily available for the desperate young people with virtually no opportunities for education or meaningful work. Heroin becomes a welcome temporary release. The visit to Wat Thamkrabok gave her new hope and it became her mission to set up a drug rehab centre in Myitkyina.

Ja Bawk never went on to fulfill that particular task but her life work became helping others understand and respond sustainably to the challenges of modernisation. When she returned to Myitkyina the Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) set up a Development Office with Ja Bawk at the helm administrating and supporting the GLT alumni and others to start up community development projects. She gradually nurtured and supported projects that SEM Alumni initiated. This involved extensive communication with each project and a lot of assistance for the project holders in preparing proposals and reports. The projects ranged from schools to rice banks, natural resource management to community development. All had a mission of edging the communities out of poverty and towards sustainability. Without Ja Bawk it is unlikely that many of these projects would have got further than their first year. As it is almost ten years down the line most are still active and many flourishing.

In between these endeavours she would accompany representatives of funding agencies and others on tours of grassroot projects, manage her own project Dorca's sewing centre, represent KBC at various meetings, translate for both KBC workshops and the frequent SEM alumni followup workshops. She particularly blossomed facilitating personal growth and environmental awareness in the various training courses she became involved with.

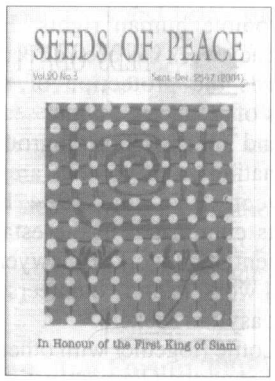
During these years Ja Bawk played a huge role she was the person trying to keep the funding agencies and KBC officials happy whilst providing the best possible support for the project holders. SEM tried to support her but this was often tinged with demands for her as a translator and collator of time-consuming quantitative and qualitative information about SEM Alumni. Although all parties concerned were clearly working to improve conditions at the grassroots Ja Bawk as co-ordinator often found herself caught up in various conflicts. There were the funding agencies with their accountability was based on hierarchical administration. Although all parties had a clear aim to support the grassroots works striving to implement a participatory approach, it is perhaps inevitable that there were huge gaps as accountability at grassroots level simply meant getting the job done and being respected by the local community for it. Reports and project plans were foreign concepts. Always concerned with the plight of those who suffered most as the grassroots Ja Bawk struggled trying to communicate clearly and plug the gaps as much as possible. She was extremely busy and at the end of the day it became too much both in workload and because in many ways the role tore her apart as there were just too many people with differing demands. This is a cautionary tale for all budding Ngos and their supporters. To add to these difficulties another tragedy occurred in Ja Bawk's life, sadly, a second son died. This was particularly poignant as he had attended one of the latter GLT courses and become hopeful as he saw how he could make a real difference. As deep and thoughtful as his mother he had plans for a new life in community work.

To give Ja Bawk a change of scenery at that difficult time and the opportunity to fulfill her thirst for learning SEM invited her to Scotland for a study tour. She had a rich learning experience visiting down and out communities in Glasgow, conflict resolution organisations in Belfast, courses at Schumacher College, Iona Abbey and the Findhorn Foundation. The Iona workshop on spiritual activism was a wonderful time of rich debate and discussion with a diverse group of activists and grassroots workers striving for a better world. Seeing Ja Bawk exchanged happily with young dreadlocked Trident Ploughshare activists again reinforced this amazing woman's capacity for acceptance and broadmindedness. Ja Bawk knew the meaning of less is more and everywhere she went her lean yet wise word were gratefully received. From the young activists to middle-class church women she always had a smile and instinctively know the right comment to make to form a lasting connection as a sister, a leader, a mother

Ja Bawk has a wonderful legacy in the projects she helped nurture, the books she translated and the leaders she supported over the years. It was not surprising that more than 500 attended her funeral. Ja Bawk with her wonderful humanity was an authentic warrior proud and dignified throughout all life threw at her, another Lady of Burma tragically influenced by circumstances yet rising above adversity to serve her community and share her wisdom.

She will be sadly missed by friends and alumni at SEM.

Jane Rasbash



Seeds of Peace is reaching 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.

Brother Suzuki Ryowa

Rev. Suzuki Ryowa, co-founder and long time INEB activist, passed away on October 25th, 2004. Rev. Suzuki was born on October 5, 1942, in Mikawa-Anjo in Aichi, about an hour south of Nagoya. He attended Shinshu University in Nagano where he majored in forest management in the department of agriculture. After working at a timber company briefly, he joined at the Japan Forest Management Association. Working on publications, he spent ten years there, where he met his wife, Reiko. In 1980, he moved



back to his parents Jodo Shinshu temple in Mikawa-Anjo, and became the abbot in 1983. From this position, he began doing local activism with another Jodo Shinshu priest on the problems of immigrant laborers in Japan with the group Asian Laborers Solidarity. By the late 1980s, he helped to form INEB Japan and was a central person in the founding of INEB in 1989. As the Secretary of INEB Japan, Rev. Suzuki was always dedicated to the problems of the marginalized and unheard, lending his special energies to Buddhists in Nepal, Bangladesh and Burma. He is survived by his wife, daughter, son and his father.

Jonathan Watts

Brother Wayne Teasdale

October 2004. Brother Wayne Teasdale has died after a long battle with cancer.

Brother Wayne Teasdale was a lay monk who combined the traditions of Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism in the way of the Christian sannyasa. A teacher and activist in building common ground among the world's religions, he served on the board of trustees of the Parliament of the World's Religions. As a member of the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, he helped draft their Universal Declaration of Nonviolence. He was also committed to the cause of a free Tibet.

Teasdale was an adjunct professor at DePaul University, Columbia College, and the Catholic Theological Union, and co-ordinator of the Bede Griffiths Trust. He held an M.A. in philosophy from St. Joseph University and a Ph. D. in theology from Fordham University. He lived at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

www.spiritualityhealth.com

Werner Lottje

Werner Lottje has dedicated his career to promoting human rights and strengthening the tools of Europe's institutions to transform violent conflicts worldwide. He has also worked tirelessly to promote democratic structures and the rule of law in developing countries.

For the past 25 years, Lottje has combined his visionary and strategic thinking to develop networks and partnerships to encourage innovative responses to conflict resolution. At the end of the Cold War, he focused on inspiring existing institutions to broaden their support for Balkan and eastern European countries to promote human rights. His advocacy work has been directed towards the protection of the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and other minority groups originating from conflict areas. Between 1977 and 1984 his efforts culminated in the establishment of networks of lawyers, social workers and volunteers to assist asylum seekers.

Lottje (together with others) established the German Institute for Human Rights (in 2001) and headed the Human Rights Desk of the Social Services Organisation of the German Platform on conflict prevention as well as heading the German Protestant Church (Diaconia). He is also co-founder of the European Platform on Conflict Prevention.

His work has helped bridge the gaps between various institutions such as grass roots organisations, established NGOs to work with, governments and the United Nations. His humanity and Christaian beliefs has meant that he is widely trusted and his advice often sought in difficult situations including pressurising governments to release imprisoned persons.

www.sfcg.org

Announcement

Congratulation to Swami Agniwesh, The 2004 Right Livelihood Awardee.

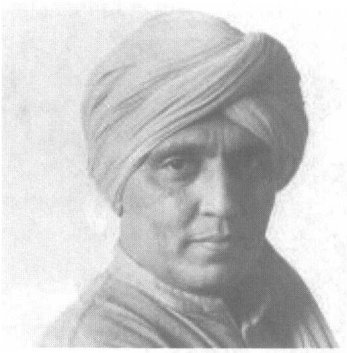
We would like to congratulate the respectful friend of INEB, Swami Agniwesh for his 2004 Right Livelihood Award which he shared with Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, a renowned Muslim scholar and social activist also from India *"for their strong commitment and cooperation over many years to promote the values of co-existence, tolerance and understanding in India and between the countries of South Asia"*.

Based on his view which is spelt out in a book published in 1974, *Vaidik Samajvad* (Vedic Socialism), Agnivesh, a hindu swami, has involved in a number of social issues such as liberation of child and bonded labour, elimination of discrimination against caste, interfaith cooperation, people's movement against consumerism, materialism and the 'neo-colonialism' of the WTO and World Bank.

Bridges : Dialogues towards a Culture of Peace

The upcoming series of 150 lectures and activities with 18 Nobel Laureates in various fields such as peace, physics, economics, etc. and with special guests of honor, e.g. former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and former UN Weapons Inspector Hans Blix comprising *"Bridges : Dialogues towards a Culture of Peace"* between December 2004—April 2005. in Bangkok and other provinces in Siam.

For more details, please visit www.peace-foundation.net



Swami Agnivesh

4th Annual Certificate Program in Authentic Leadership

January 17-April 30th 2005
Directed by Susan Skjei, with Fred Kofman, Barbara Lawton, and Micki McMillan

The annual certificate program integrates the best of Western management practices with the wisdom of Eastern cotemplative traditions. Times of uncertainty and tumultuous change call for leaders who can manage effectively with skill and compassion. Whether we work in business, government or a non-profit agency, too often it seems we must choose between being true to ourselves and being successful. By increasing self-awareness, confidence and insight we enhance our ability to address core dilemmas in new and creative ways.

For more information see:
http://www.naropa.edu/leadership/index.html

Bandung Forum 2005

"Rethinking Solidarities in Global Civilisations"
50th Anniversary of Bandung Conference of Africa-Asia
Bandung, Indonesia,
April 18-24, 2005

Bandung 1955 Africa-Asia Conference is the birthday of the so-called New Emerging Forces, a calling for a peaceful coexistence, an independence from the hegemony of any superpower, and solidarities related to the disadvantaged peoples.

But 50 years later, wars continue, similar system of domination by the powerful in the world order replaced the old one, injustice has appeared in more sophisticated forms and larger dimensions. Where is our world going? Is a better world still possible? Is there any alternative to the present course of globalisation?

Join concepts, projects, and actions, toward alternatives to the present world order in areas of politics, economics, culture/religion/spirituality, environment and education.

Secretariat
Bandung Forum 2005
Jalan Sumur Bandung 20
Bandung 40132, Jawa Barat,
Indonesia
Email: info@bandung2005.org
Website: www.bandung2005.org

The bound volume of Seeds of Peace

The back issues of *Seeds of Peace* of last two year, Vols. 19 - 20 (2003 - 2004), are now available in the bound format at USD50.00 apiece. For those who wish to collect complete *Seeds of Peace* or for the libraries, you can place order at <ineboffice@yahoo.com>

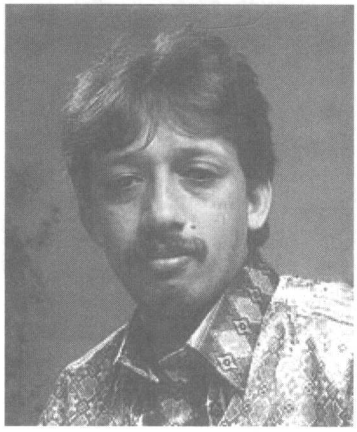
Assassination of Former RLA

We, the undersigned, Laureates of the Right Livelihood Award, were shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the death on 7 September of our fellow-Laureate from Indonesia, the highly respected human rights activist, Munir, who died on a flight from Indonesia to The Netherlands.

Having now learnt that the autopsy undertaken by the Dutch Forensic Institute discovered lethal levels of arsenic in his body, we are confronted with the dreadful fact that Munir was the victim of an assassination. After the execution of Ogoni leader Ken Saro-Wiwa in Nigeria in 1995, this is the second time a laureate of the Right Livelihood Award has been murdered for the work he was doing.

We wish to convey our deepest sympathy to Suciwati, Munir's wife, and wish her the strength to face this terrible loss.

Munir's assassination is an evil crime that strikes not only at the victim and his loved ones but is also a warning to the human rights community in Indonesia, a crime intended to make human



rights activists throughout Indonesia fear for their own safety, whether at home or on their travels abroad. We wish to express our solidarity with, and support for, the human rights community in Indonesia and wish them the fortitude to cope with the possible dangers they now confront.

The struggle for human rights has been accepted by the international community as a legitimate activity the world over, ever since the adoption by the United Nations on 10 December 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and nothing should be allowed to obstruct men and women who devote themselves to this righteous cause.

We call on the Indonesian Government under its leader, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, to conduct a thorough investigation into this crime and make every effort to bring the perpetrators to justice as quickly as possible. The world will be watching to see whether the Indonesian authorities are dealing with this matter with all the seriousness that it demands.

Signed:

.....

Laureates of the Right Livelihood Award

Gratitude to our Sponsors

Again that INEB, ***Seeds of Peace*** and organizations under Sulak Sivaraksa are provided very kind support by many friends. We would like to extend our deep gratitude to the following people:

H.E. Lodi Gyari for the USD500 donation. Jon Isiri for the USD200 donation, Dr Jim Riley for the USD100 donation. Tom Brown continues his merit making by donating both money and labour in distributing this issue of ***Seeds of Peace*** to readers abroad.

With the mentioned generosity and donations through ***Seeds of Peace*** subscription and membership renewal by many, many readers, we feel reenergized to continue our social activities.

Dear Sulak

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Centre for Peace Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada. We would be honoured if you would consider participating in one of our major lectureships by delivering the Ninth Annual Mahatma Gandhi Lecture on Nonviolence.

Since 1989 our Centre has been teaching undergraduates about peace, war and concepts of justice. We have also carried out practical projects in peace-making, both in our local community and in five areas of violent conflict (Gaza, Croatia, India, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka). Our Gandhi lectures were inaugurated in 1996. Previous lecturers have included Ovide Mercredi (Canada), Gene Sharp (U.S.A.), Adam Curle (U.K.), Douglas Roche (Canada), Medha Patkar (India) Fatima Meer (South Africa), Lowitja O'Donoghue (Australia), and Acharya Ramamurti (India).

We honour your work as an intellectual, spiritual leader, writer and social activist. We have taken strength from your words and actions in these recent years of astonishing danger and renewed imperialism.

In asking you to be our ninth speaker, I want you to understand that speakers in this series seldom talk about Gandhi and are not required to regard themselves as followers of Gandhi. We do not go in for aggrandizing or worshiping Gandhi. Our aim is to encourage thinking about grassroot action for justice and peace, especially that which takes place without violent means. We would be happy to let you choose the topic of your lecture, trusting that whatever you choose will draw many people from our community.

Our preferred time for your visit would be during January or early February, 2005. We would like to have your main lecture on a Monday evening, so the possible dates for the lecture are: January 10, 17, 24, 31; and Feb. 7 and 14. (If you cannot make these dates, we might be able to clear Feb. 28.) We will do our best to take care of you and shield you from the Canadian winter!

Ideally, we would arrange a 3-4 day stay, during which you would deliver one evening public lecture and participate in two or three less formal conversations with members of the peace and peace studies community. The evening lecture is free of charge and open to all members of the community, and it is widely advertized. The Gandhi lecture is usually about an hour in length and is followed by a question period of half an hour or more.

If you wish to take advantage of the trip to Canada to give lectures at other universities, we would gladly help initiate that process. No doubt there are many people in this country who would like to hear you.

Thank you for considering this invitation. I hope you do not mind my sending the invitation by e-mail. It is less formal but more efficient! Please do not hesitate to address to me any questions you may have.

With hearfelt best wishes,

Graeme MacQueen

Centre for Peace Studies
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario,
Canada, L8S 4M2

Dear Dr. Sivaraksa,

Please accept this letter as a sincere expression of appreciation from the members of the Parliament Program committee for your contribution as a Program Presenter at the Barcelona Parliament event. Specifically, we want to thank you for your interest in the Parliament as a unique forum for interreligious exchange, your initiative in making a program proposal, your preparation for this specific audience and your commitment of time, energy and resources to be a part of the Fourth Parliament.

We have received many messages of thanks and gratitude from around the world for the quality,

relevance and variety of the program offerings. A unique feature of the Parliament is the fact that the program is compiled from proposals that come from a wide variety of people representing all the constituencies of the global interreligious movement. The most difficult task for the program committee was to select just one-quarter of the total number of program that were proposed.

Evaluation of the Fourth Parliament will play an important role in Parliament planning for the future. Your assistance in the planning process by sending in the enclosed Program Evaluation Form will be appreciated. A separate Evaluation Form covering many sapects of the Parliament event is available at www.cpwrglobal.net. Your participation in this full evaluation process will also be greatly appreciated.

Thank you again for you contribution to the Fourth Parliament. We hope the experience was helpful and rewarding and that you will be with us at Future Parliament events.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. William Lesher
Co-Chair, Parliament Program

Travis Rejmen
Co-Chair, Parliament Program

Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions
Post Office Box 1630 Chicago, Illinois, 60690-1630 U.S.A.

Ciao Sulak,

Just wanted to thank you so much for the copy of *Seeds of Peace*, it's always consoling to know there are brothers and sisters in the same frame of socratic and peaceful mind.

I and Francisca (the mexican woman you met with us) held four weekends of aztec sweat lodge with a sage and cosmologo from Mexico. Hard work and very transforming for all who participated. Summer has provided a prosperous garden, but lots of troubling world news, woman mustn't lose her role as healer!!

Our group was just invited to perform for the world council of peace fom Ginevra here in Roma the 23 October. It is a great honor to be involved as a musician this way.

There will be a CD that will be called "all colors of the world" and hopefully will reach its donation point of the Ivory Coast in africa.

I hope you and your family are all well and happy, and that we can keep in touch. Choden Rinpoche will be here in Rome for teachings and encounters with Gyalten Pelmos center...they need prayers!!

All my best,
Tosi Poleri
via delle grotte 13, 00052, I Terzi, Rome, Italy.

Dear Ajarn Sivaraksa,

When we were last in touch at the end of July, you were just about to leave for London—and I hoped to link you up with Alan and David Channer, producers of the documentary "The Cross and the Bodhi Tree". Both Channers—father and son—have been repeatedly in Cambodia and have collaborated with Buddhist friends in Amaravati monastery and in Cambodia in making several documentary films. Including "The Cross and the Bodhi Tree", which incidentally was shown on national ABC television here last week.

Sadly, either my emails did not reach Dr Alan Channer, or he did not understand my instructions—which were to contact you at the numbers you had sent. So I apologise that they were not in touch, nor with other friends of MRA-Initiatives of Change who would have welcomed meeting you.

I am just about to leave for Europe myself this weekend, spending time in Romania, Ukraine, Latvia

where young teams of post-graduate students have set up MRA groups. And then to Geneva and London. I am returning in early December, stopping one day in transit in Bangkok on my way out of Cambodia where I spend a week—so will be in Bangkok on Sunday 12 December, between 10 am arrival and 7.00 pm departure to Singapore.

Though a Sunday, and though some time away, would there by any chance of seeing you? I would not hesitate to come in from the airport if so. Indeed I could bring one of the Channer's videos with me. Equally, I would appreciate the chance to get your wisdom on what we are attempting in peace-making, inter-faith cooperation and establishing some ethical basis in government and corporate life in various countries. In Europe I will be meeting with the "International Council" of MRA-Initiatives of Change, of which I am now one of 10 members. We feel in great need of more mature understanding and connection among those acting for justice and healing in Asia. So I would value such an interchange.

My colleagues, Peter and Glenys Wood, much appreciated their dinner with you and Jeffery Sng as they came through Bangkok a few weeks ago. I saw them in Australia shortly after. They send warm regards.

I also heard recently from our respected friend Ian Mayo-Smith.

with best wishes,

Mike Brown

Dear Sulak:

It was wonderful to re-connect in Montserrat and it Barcelona last Summer.

Your book of Socially Engaged Spirituality has been waiting for me at my Illinois office since July. (I have been out in Oregon teaching at our other center in Gold Beach until last week).

Thank you so much for this special book, and for your legacy of remarkable global changing work. I am so honored to be your kindred spirited friend.

I hope you continue to be well, and safe in all your world travels.

The world situation remains gloomy, especially after the USA election. More consciousness altering work must be done through all thinking folks in the world.

In any case, I simply wish to be in touch and thank you again for your thoughtful gift. Please stay in touch.

All the Best Wishes, and in deep appreciation and gratitude,

Your admiring friend,
Chungliang Al Huang
President-Founder

Living Tao Foundation
P.O. Box 846, Urbana, IL 61803-0846
U.S.A.

My most honourable and respected Sulak

First of all, my heartiest congratulations. 20 years of achievement with unwavering determination is a great motivation and a beacon for us all.

I am forever grateful to you and your organisation as the very first Thai NGO responding to our plight.

The endeavour of SEM under your leadership to build up the capacity of our grassroot leaders is truly practical and useful. The GLT alumni are all indebted to Pracha and Moo for their unfailing diligence. Although concrete impact may not be seen immediately let me assure you that it has the ripple effect of

pebble thrown into a pond-gradually reaching out to everyone.

My dear Sulak with inspiration gained from you I have returned home to work for and to be with my people. Just to keep on my feet has been a challenge- a far cry from you who have been extending help to other nations.

I seriously regret the inability to make in personally to this celebration of your two decades of accomplishment but please know that I am spiritually with you.

Sincerely
Seng Raw
Yangon, 03 December 2004

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

Our meetings at your Klongsan office this year on March 19 and then again on July 2 have inspired us long after we parted. Let me give you a brief summary of what has happened since. First, on July 7, Rector Naris of Thammasat University officially appointed me as a Research Fellow at Thammasat University on a theme that is a paraphrase of your article in the Bangkok Post of October 12, 2003. The goal of the research is to apply your key statement that "Ancient Buddhist philosophy contains the keys to living in the Age of Technology" to higher engineering education. Being based at Thammasat University, we certainly intend to follow up your suggestion to involve Thaikadi Research Institute.

With regard to the study of Thai culture, we have also started preparing to develop a Joint Master Program in Thai Studies with Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. The idea is to run the program in English both from Thailand and from Belgium, primarily through distance education. To facilitate the cooperation, one staff member of STOU will be residing at GROUP T until the summer of 2005.

We have been meeting many old and new friends in the past months. In August my close colleague Jan Van Maele went to Paris to meet a very congenial Dr. David Loy, who turned out to be as interested and interesting as people get. David was very happy to receive the copy of Trans Thai Buddhism you had asked to pass on. Two weeks ago Dr. Vuthipong Priebjriyavat was a guest at GROUP T for dialogue with faculty and students. He gave successful seminars in which he introduced the ideas which he published in his introduction to 'Dharmodynamices' and his satire on 'Corruptology'. And just last week we had two meetings with the new Thai Ambassador to Belgium and the European Union, Mr. Don Pramudwinai, and his minister, Mr. Krisda Piampongsant, to consider how GROUP T could be a partner in the 'One District, One Scholarship' program and provide a solid educational experience in a caring international environment to the next generation of Thai engineers, educators, and entrepreneurs.

Concerning the foundation on **'Engineering Emptiness'**, I would like to thank you for the support you have expressed during both our meetings. With regard to our question to affiliate this foundation with SNF, I would like to ask you whether you have seen the chance to raise the matter with the board of SNF yet?

Finally, I have one request, if you permit. I would like to take up your invitation to visit Ashram Wongsanit during my upcoming visit to Bangkok this month. In your autobiography 'Loyalty demands dissent', you describe how the ashram was started in a spirit 'acting locally, thinking globally', integrating head and heart, involving Thai people and others, with a particular concern for the neighboring countries of the Greater Meking subregion. I believe that many activities that we could organize in the framework of the Engineering-Enlightening Foundation would resonate deeply with the purposes of the ashram. What is more, I would like to ask you whether it is thinkable to take Ashram Wongsanit as the social seat of the foundation on 'Engineering Emptiness'?

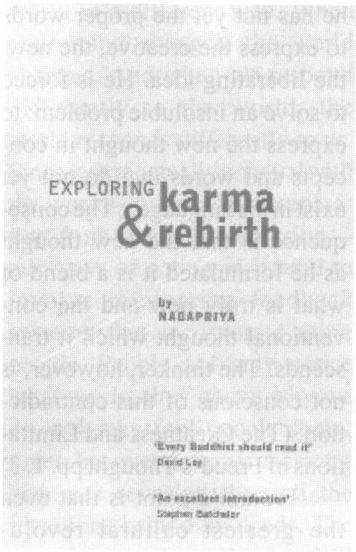
Yours truly,
Johan De Graeve, President, GROUP T

Exploring Karma & Rebirth
by Nagapriya
(Birmingham: Windhorse, 2004.)

Karma and rebirth have become problems for modern Buddhism that can no longer be evaded. To believe that karmic determinism is a "moral law" of the universe—with an inevitable and precise calculus of cause and effect—leads to a severe case of cognitive dissonance for contemporary Buddhists. The physical causality that modern science has discovered about the world seems to provide no mechanism for karma or rebirth to operate. Moreover, the usual understanding of karma is used to rationalize the authority of political and economic elites, who therefore deserve their wealth and power, and also justifies the weakness of those who have neither. It provides the perfect theodicy: there is an infallible cause-and-effect relationship between one's moral actions and one's fate, so there is no need to work toward social justice, which is already built into the moral fabric of the universe. In fact, if there is no undeserved suffering, there is really no evil that we need to struggle against. If there is something wrong with one's social situation, then, no one else can be held responsible.

In short, karma is probably the most critical issue for contemporary Buddhist societies. But has it been misunderstood? Is it a fatalistic doctrine, or is an empowering one?

I highly recommend Nagapriya's *Exploring Karma & Rebirth* as an accessible study that begins the kind of careful re-evaluation we need today. He challenges the common understanding that karma is a law of moral equilibrium and inevitable



retribution. He argues that karma is more psychological that metaphysical: not a mysterious, incomprehensible law that must be accepted on faith, but a part of everyday life. Karma teaches us that morally-relevant conduct has morally-relevant consequences, by transforming us, influencing others, and affecting the ways we experience and understand the world. He acknowledges that some texts in the Pali Canon support a more deterministic view (e.g., Culakammavibhanga Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 135, where karma is used to explain various differences between people, including physical appearance and economic inequality), but contextualizes such claims by citing many other passages where the Buddha denies moral determinism (e.g., Tittha Sutra, Anguttara Nikaya 3.61) and rejects the view that all pain and pleasure are due to previous conduct. For example, in the short and humorous Moliyasivaka Sutta (Samyutta Nikaya 36.21), an ascetic named Sivaka asked the Buddha about a view held by some ascetics and Brahmins that "'Whatever a person experiences, be it pleasure, pain or neither-pain-nor-pleasure, all that is caused by previous action.' Now, what does the revered Gotama say about this?"

"Produced by (disorders of the) bile, there arise, Sivaka, certain kinds of feelings. That this happens, can be known by oneself; also in the world it is accepted as true. Produced by (disorders of the) phelegm...of wind...of (the three) combined ...by change of climate...by adverse behavior...by injuries...by the results of Karma—(through all that), Sivaka, there arise certain kinds of feelings. That this happens can be known by oneself; also in the world it is accepted as true. Now when these ascetics and Brahmins have such a doctrine and view that 'Whatever a preson experiences, be it pleasure, pain or neither-pain-nor-pleasure, all that is caused by provious action,' then they go beyond what they know by themselves and what is accepted as true by the world. Therefore, I say that this is wrong on the part of these ascetics and Brahmins." [Moliyasivaka Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya 36.21].

Nagapriya clarifies these original teachings by placing them in their original cultural context, and then provides a persuasive interpretation of what those teachings can mean for us today. In the remainder of this review, I would like to supplement Nagapriya's book by adding a few reflections of my own.

One of the most basic principles of Buddhism is interdependence, but we do not usually realize what that implies about the original teachings of the Buddha. Nothing has any "self-existence" because everything is part of everything else. Nothing is self-originated because every-

thing arises according to causes and conditions. Yet Buddhism, as we know, originates in the experience of Shakyamuni, who became "the awakened one" upon attaining nirvana under the Bodhi tree. Different Buddhist scriptures describe that experience in different ways, but for all Buddhist traditions it is the source of Buddhism, which unlike Hinduism does not rely upon ancient revealed texts such as the Vedas.

As Buddhists we usually take the above for granted, yet there is a problem with it: it is a myth of self-origination. If the interdependence of everything is true, the truth of Buddhism could not have spring up independently from all the other spiritual beliefs of the Buddha's time and place (Iron Age India), without any relationship to them. Instead, the teachings of Shakyamuni must be understood as a response to those other teachings, but a response that, inevitably, also presupposed many of the spiritual beliefs current in that cultural milieu—for example, popular notions of karma and rebirth, which were widespread at that time in India although not universally accepted.

Consider the following insightful comment that Erich Fromm made about another (although very different!) revolutionary, Sigmond Freud:

The attempt to understand Freud's theoretical system, or that of any creative systematic thinker, cannot be successful unless we recognize that, and why, every system as it is developed and presented by its author is necessarily erroneous. ...the creative thinker must think in the terms of the logic, the thought patterns, the expressible concepts of his culture. That means he has not yet the proper words to express the creative, the new, the liberating idea. He is forced to solve an insoluble problem: to express the new thought in concepts and words that do not yet exist in his language... The consequence is that the new thought as he formulated it is a blend of what is truly new and the conventional thought which it transcends. The thinker, however, is not conscious of this contradiction. (The Greatness and Limitations of Freud's Thought pp. 1, 3)

Fromm's point is that even the greatest cultural revolutionaries cannot stand on their own shoulders. They are dependent upon their context,-whether intellectual or spiritual—which, to say it again, is precisely what Buddhist emphasis on impermanence and causal interdependence implies. Of course, there are many important differences between Freud and Shakyamuni, but the parallel is nevertheless very revealing: the Buddha, too, expressed his new, liberating insight in the only way he could, in the language that his culture could understand and that he himself was a product of. Inevitably, then, his way of expressing the Dharma was a blend of the truly new (for example, anatta, paticca-samuppada) and the conventional religious thought of his time (karma and rebirth?) "which it transcends." The implication that there is always tension between what is convertional speaks directly to a possible inconsistency that has puzzled many Buddhists over the centuries: is anatta really compatible with the older, traditional beliefs in karma and rebirth?

During the time of shakyamuni Buddha, karma and reincarnation were widely although not universally accepted religious principles. They were part of the cultural milieu within which he grew up. Earlier teachings such as the Vedas tended to understand them more mechanically and ritualistically. To perform a sacrifice in the proper fashion would inveriably lead to the desired consequences. If those consequences were not forthcoming, then either there had been an error in procedure or the causal effects were delayed, perhaps until one's next lifetime. The Buddha's spiritual revolution transformed this ritualistic approach to controlling one's life into an ethical principle by focusing on one's mental attitude—that is, our volitions and motivations.

The important point about karma is not whether it is a moral law involving some inevitable and precise calculus of cause and effect. More than a means to control what the world does to us, karma is better understood as the key to spiritual development: how our lives are transformed by our mental attitudes. When we add the Buddhist teaching about nonself—the claim, consistent with modern psychology, that one'sense of self is a mental construct—we can say that karma is not something I have, it is what I am, and what I am changes according to my conscious choices. "I" (re) construct myself by what I intentionally do. My sense of self is a precipitate of my habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Just as my body is composed of the food I eat, so my character is composed of my conscious choices, constructed by my consistent, repeated motivation. People are "punished" or "rewarded" not for what they have done but for what they have become, and what we intention-

ally do is what makes us what we are. An anonymous verse expresses this well:

Sow a thought and reap a deed
Sow a deed and reap a habit
Sow a habit and reap a character
Sow a character and reap a destiny

Such an understanding of Karma does not necessarily involve another life after we physically die. As the philosopher Spinoza expressed it, happiness is not the reward for virtue; happiness is virtue itself. To become a different kind of person is to experience the world in a different way. When your mind changes, the world changes. And when we respond differently to the world, the world responds differently to us. Since we are actually nondual with the world—our sense of separation from it being a delusion—our ways of acting in it tend to involve reinforcing feedback systems that incorporate other people. People not only notice what we do, they notice why we do it. I may fool people sometimes, but over time my character becomes revealed through the intentions behind by deeds. The more I am motivated by greed, ill will, and delusion, the more I must manipulate the world to get what I want, and consequently the more alienated I feel and the more alienated others feel when they see they have been manipulated. This mutual distrust encourages both sides to manipulate more.

In addition to Nagapriya's fine book, I also recommend the latest issue of the World Federation of Buddhists Review (the last issue of 2004), which includes a special section on "Rethinking Karma: The Dharma of Social Justice," edited by Jonathan Watts.

David Loy

Building Trust: A Socially Engaged Buddhism from Southeast Asia
by Sulak Sivaraksa
BR Publishing Corp.
New Delhi, India

At the threshold of twenty first century, Sulak Sivaraksa has emerged as an exponent of Buddhism for social and economic change based on the universal principles of moral law *(dhamma)*.

In a world cursed by the material tensions, the humanity has lost its natural moorings at the levels of individual, family, society and nation. The clarion call for building a new global economic order has worsened the situation in the sense that the autonomy of *baan-muang* and flowering of local initiatives are seriously threatened. In this scenario, Sulak has fearlessly expressed his concerns, raised his lone voice against social injustice and crusaded for a dhammic social order based on the teachings of Buddha, the Enlightened one, who was the most energetic socially engaged spiritual leader of his time in the distant sixth century before the birth of Christ. The words of the Master has gained new significance in the strife-torn world of inequality through Sulak's powerful writings and charismatic personality.

A very important part of Sulak's vast corpus of writing is now available through his *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. His vision for creating a Buddhist culture of peace requires greater attention from global policy planners, facing the problems of containing international terrorism. His thoughts on the dialectics of social structure and structural violence need a deeper understanding. His Buddhist response to the prevailing paradigms of development, globalization and modernism offers viable alternatives. In his search for Siamese identity, he goes beyond the Marxist and capitalist constructs and travels from the Buddha to Gandhi, covering an intellectual journey of two thousand six hundred years.

I am sure this monograph containing the crucial writings of Sulak will go a long way in creating international awareness and understanding about the relevance of Buddhism in the post-modern world of uncertainties and furthering his mission for a world free from consumerism, greed and exploitation.

I wish a long, healthful life for my friend Sulak, the Siamese Bodhisattva in the service of humanity in the beautiful land of Siam and beyond.

Sachchidanand Sahai

The 2005 Think Sangha Meeting

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@isri.jp

Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Culture and Change
by Sulak Sivaraksa
Wisdom Publishing USA

Sulak Sivaraksa continues an important theme in his book "Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Culture and Change" which is being published by Wisdom Publishers. Sulak observes that "much global conflict [is the result of] structural violence" based on the "religion of consumerism [which promotes] greed...giving rise to violence". These fundamental and important themes are being explored in new ways in this book. Sulak observes that it is through the practice of non-violence that we can develop "peacemaking, peacebuilding and peacekeeping" in order to evolve a genuine "culture of peace". Reconciliation is needed, as is forgiveness and cooperation, for a peaceful future to be possible. But this has to be based on "metta karuna" (ie loving—kindness and compassion) and to apply this principle of love we must respond creatively to violent situations. We must learn the depths of the practice of not killing (ahimsa) which has "its roots in our minds" and at the deepest level means non-harming and non-violence. Since we all participate in "structural violence", in a global sense, Sulak asks how we can practice non-violence when we contribute to violence by our taxes and the products that we buy?

Sulak also addresses the problems of the media and asks who we can trust for fair reporting? We cannot trust the mass media which "merely beats the drum of war" even though there are some individual journalists who "report on the truth". But there are genuine peacemakers at work in trouble spots such as Israel and Palestine. For instance, Uri Avnery of Gush Shalom, recently received the Right Livelihood Award for his non-violent efforts to bring together Palestinians and Israelis. Other groups, including the Peace Brigades International, "have intervened in conflicts in Guatemala, Sri Lanka and elsewhere". These indicate that "ordinary people can nonviolently intervene in conflicts".

Sulak states flatly that America is on a path full of hubris and if they do not begin to "shun violence" there will be dire consequences. Pious principles have been masking cold-hearted policies that have resulted in the death and injury of people in such places as Vietnam, Laos, Afghanistan and Iraq. In America's response to 911 there is no indication that the "American ruling elites" have reflected "critically on this act" with any degree of wisdom and compassion. Instead, "vengeance and hatred" have been fostered and "more violence" has taken place thus escalating the initial violence. The problem, as Sulak sees it, lies in "structural violence" and illegitimate use of power and this can only be overcome by "mindfulness and ahimsa (non-harming)" metta (loving kindness), karuna (compassion) and wisdom. Only in this way can peace be achieved.

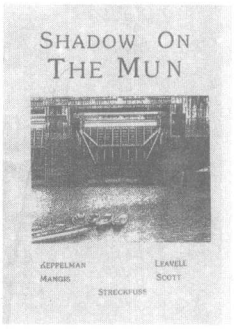
In the chapter of "culture and reconciliation" Sulak takes up another favorite topic, the formation of the "Assembly of the Poor", a grassroot organization of farmers in Thailand who lost their farms as a result of the building of a hydroelectric dam. "Self-sustainability and community well-being" became the watchwords by which they re-established themselves, although some of these desestablished people have become part of the "urban poor". Because the present Thai administration has not kept promises made to remedy the plight of the villagers "feelings of bitterness and anger" are becoming evident. Sulak states that this anger "should not be ignored or suppressed" since it "is a feature of human experience". Reconciliation needs to take place for any genuine solution to the problems.

Although I have been briefly summarizing only the first section of the book not enough space is available to discuss all 16 chapters. For anyone interested in understanding modern trans-national problems from a Buddhist perspective, Sulak's analysis and remedies are much needed. The many abuses being perpetrated on humans and non-humans around the globe are mind-numbing. when read or reflected on individually, but Sulak's approach is revelatory and his remedies achievable. His underlying compassion shines through and helps free the concerned reader from feelings of resignation and despair. All problems, in Sulak's view, can be solved, even if they seem, from the outside, to be unresolvable. But given a strong will, with much patience and the practice of loving kindness and non-violence, all beings will ultimately be benefited. Although dissension and war and resource disparities are so prevalent in our times, Sulak addresses ways in which all these can be reduced so that the level of needless suffering brought on by greed, anger and delusion can be transformed. This is a book well worth having, not just for one reading but for many re-readings.

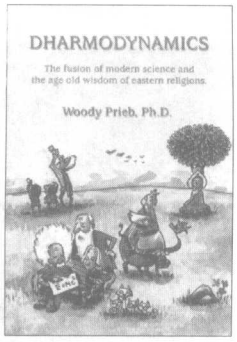
Hugh Curran



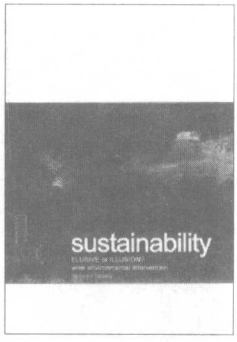
Dharma, Color, and Culture: New Voice in Western Buddhism
edited by Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín
Published by Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, USA



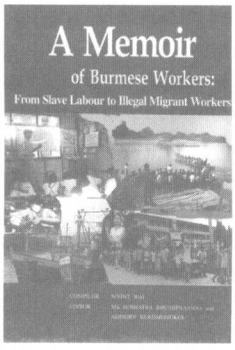
Shadow on the Mun
by Susan Keppelman, Ginny Leavell, Philip Mangis, KTJ Scott, David Streckfuss



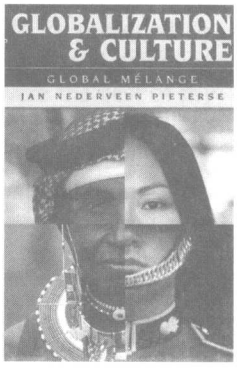
Dharmodynamics: The fusion of modern science and the age old wisdom of eastern religions
by Woody Prieb, Ph.D.



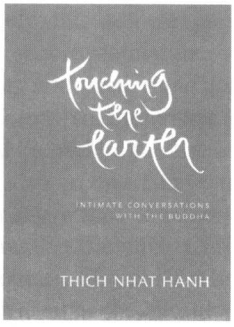
Sustainability: Elusive or Illusion? Wise environment intervention
by Lindsay Falvey



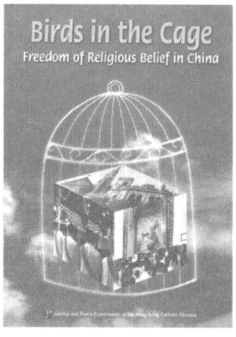
A Memoir of Burmese Workers: From Slave Labour to Illegal Migrant Workers
Compiler: Myint Wai
Editor: Subhatra Bhumiprabhas and Adisorn Kerdmongkol



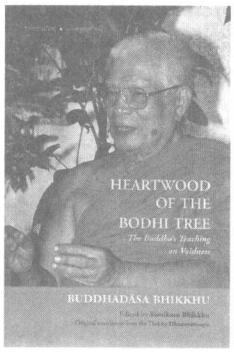
Globalization & Culture: Global Mélange
by Jan Nederveen Pieterse
Published by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. USA



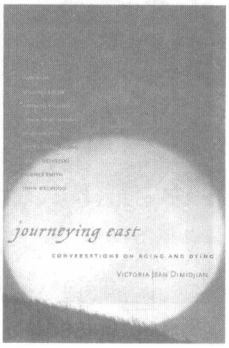
Touching the Earth: Intimate Conversations with the Buddha
by Thich Nhat Hanh
Published by Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, USA



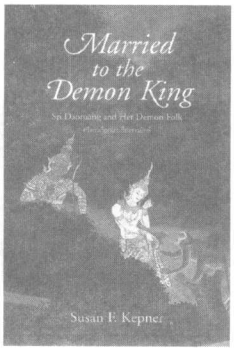
Birds in the Cage: Freedom of Religious Belief in China
by Justice and Peace Commission



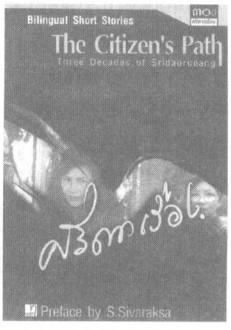
Heartwood of The Bodhi Tree
The Buddha's Teaching on Voidness
Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
edited by Santikaro Bhikkhu
Original translation from the Thai by Dhammavicayo
Published by Silkworm Books. 2004. Chiang Mai



Journeying East
Conversations on Aging and Dying
Victoria Jean Dimidjian
Published by Parallax Press Berkeley, California



Married to the Demon King
by Sri Daoreuang
Transated by Susan F. Kepner
Published by Silkworm Book



The Citizen's Path
by Sri Daoreuang
edited by Jakkarin Siririn
Published by Neo Way Publishing House
Bangkok, Thailand. Aug. 2004

Center for the Study of World Religions
HARVARD UNIVERSITY — THE DIVINITY SCHOOL

Religion and Politics in
Contemporary Thailand:
King Mongkut's Legacy

Friday, November 5, 12:00 pm
CSWR Common Room, 42 Francis Avenue



With
Sulak Sivaraksa
Thai Buddhist Activist

Respondent:
Charles Hallisey
University of Wisconsin

Part of the CSWR series
"Religion in Politics: Complexity and Conflict."

Reservations are required for this event
Contact Rebecca Kline or call 617.495.4476 to RSVP. Lunch will be served.

for further information

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from page 60
Humanity in Honolulu in 1980. This was the beginning of the Buddhist Christian Society, and ever since this meeting I have served as a permanent member of the Cobb-Abe dialogue, known officially as the Buddhist Christian Theological Encounter, hence I have made more Christian friends.

In Honolulu, you introduced me to many such as Aitken Roshi, Glenn Paige, George Simpson, Majid Tehranian, Johan Gultung, and Bishop Fujitani, all of whom have become my good friends. You needed not introduce me to John Grove, Les Sponsel and Grant Olsen since I had known their Thai wives already.

You and I also expanded our encounter with Muslims, some have also become personal friends, like Abdurrahman Wahid, Chandra Muzzafar and Anwar Ibrahim. Master Sing Tao has become a wonderful spiritual link in this encounter—not to mention Ruben and Maria Habito.

I greatly appreciate your serious support for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. Although some may question your decision to join the Soka University in the US, instead of staying on at Honolulu, people who knew you could not help but admire your skillful means in maintaining your integrity with justice and compassion. Of course, Stella was so pleased to be back in the LA area.

You and I have traveled to many places together—whether for the Buddhist Christian dialogues, Buddhist Muslim dialogues, or the World Parliament of Religions. I often stayed at your home and you stayed at ours. Stella and Nin have become good friends. It was always good to have Stella with us, especially at our last stay together in Barcelona.

You and I have dreamed up and drafted quite a number of projects for the better future of our world, whether they be alternatives to consumerism, the Spirit in Education Movement, overcoming structural violence or the Second Bandung Conference in April 2005. However many of our dreams have not yet been realized, particularly the last one, which was initiated by Abdurrahman Wahid while he was president of Indonesia.

As an ordained minister in the United Church of Canada who has become a serious practicitioner of the Dharma, you were not hostile to Christianity. I remember once we held a Buddhist-Christian dialogue at Tsi Lai Temple near Los Angeles. It was Palm Sunday. When Hans Kung celebrated mass to commemorate Christ's last supper, he invited all his Buddhist friends to take bread and wine with him. Some American Buddhists refused to do so but you and I participated willingly. You even whispered to me that Han Kung's approach made you feel that you could return to being a Christian, but you doubted whether your church would accept such a liberal approach.

For my 70th birthday, you kindly edited essays in my honor entitled *Socially Engaged Spirituality*, which came out on time—27th March 2003. So many friends from all spiritual traditions contributed so much—not just praise for my work, but also proposals for action, a number of which you and I would have liked to do together.

Kumarian Press liked the book so much that they asked you to abridge it for sale in the US. You would have liked to do it for my 72nd birthday—the sixth cycle in our Siamese reckoning—but you were so over committed to your family, to Stella, to your students and your teaching as well as your concern for social justice with compassion locally and internationally.

I admired so much your sense of humor and your sense of service and dedication. Your bodhisattva path was really to serve all sentient beings. But for me personally, I value our friendship the most. We may have been friends for only 27 years in this life. But we may have been good friends in many past lives and I am sure that we shall be good friends again in future lives before we both liberate ourselves from the cycle of birth and death.

The Buddha said that the first sign of the rising sun is the light of dawn, likewise the Noble Eightfold Path is preceded by *kalayanamitta* (good friends). David, you were the best of my *kalayanamitta*. You were so generous to me and others—not only with material things, but with your time, your energy, your heart and your wisdom. I owe you so much and I will try my best to be as good, as generous and as selfless as you during the remainder of this life. Then I will soon join you in the next life, in order to practice our bodhisattva path together until we could really enter the gates of Nirvana.

Yours in Dhamma,

Sulak

P.S.

Dear David,

You may not appreciate me ending this epistle by paraphrasing Phaedo when he spoke of Socrates as being the wisest, the most broad-minded, and the best. For me, this phrase is true for you.

A Letter to David W. Chappell

(February 3, 1940 - December 2, 2004)



Dear David,

Our friendship dated from the summer of 1977, when I was exiled after a bloody coup in Bangkok in October 1976. Some American friends skillfully arranged for me to teach a spring semester at UC Berkeley and an autumn semester at Cornell. Bob Bobilin then invited me to give a series of lectures to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the University of Hawaii at Honolulu. This is where we first met.

I remember vividly when I made the remark that there was no room for violence in the teaching of the Buddha. And you pointed out gently and politely that in the Chinese Buddhist tradition, there was a sutra which stated that if a bodhisattva knew that a robber was going to kill 500 passengers in the ship, out of compassion, the bodhisattva should kill the robber and suffer the personal consequences of that karma. I appreciated your remark. After the lecture was over, you inquired about my return to Siam. But at that time I was not sure when I would be able to return home and my future was most uncertain. You then said that after you finished your work in Hawaii you would be teaching at the University of Toronto. You asked me if I would accept to teach a semester at UT if invited. I said I would but thought that you were just being polite.

Then at Cornell before the end of the autumn semester, you telephoned me from Toronto saying that the Center for Religious Studies at UT would like me to be a professor there for one semester. Would I accept? Of course I was overjoyed. Despite the cold weather that my son, Chim, and I had to endure there, your friendship was so warm. Besides you introduced me to a number of Canadians who have become friends—Bruce Matthews, John Ralston Saul and Adrienne Clarkson.

My teaching load in Toronto was light and I was a full professor with a bit of the English academic tradition of high tables, Latin grace and gowns. At Berkeley and Cornell I was a visiting lecturer since I did not have a doctorate. Toward the end of the semester you organized a colloquium entitled "Multiple Loyalties: Buddhism and Christianity in Crisis" and I was asked to deliver a paper on "Buddhism and Society: Beyond the Present Horizons." Those taking part in the colloquium were Wilfred Cartwell Smith, Roger Hutchinson, Abe Masao, and Will Oxtoby.

After the semester you took me to give lectures at Smith College and Colgate University where I met new colleagues like Ty Unno and John Carter who have become dear friends. You also kindly edited the paper and lectures I delivered at Toronto and elsewhere as a book entitled *A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* which, since its first publication in 1981, has had three editions already. Donald Lopez took an article from this volume and put it in his *A Modern Buddhist Bible* without my permission. Writings from this volume, plus a few other pieces, were later compiled by Tom Ginsberg and Arnie Kotler of Parallax Press into *Seeds of Peace*, which became my best-seller in the US and which has gone to many editions and has been translated to so many languages. In a way, dear David, you made my work known in North America.

After you left Toronto and returned to teach in the warmer Hawaiian clime, you again invited me to teach, this time as a Numata Visiting Professor. You were the first to invite me to take part in the Buddhist-Christian Conference on the Future of

continue on page 59