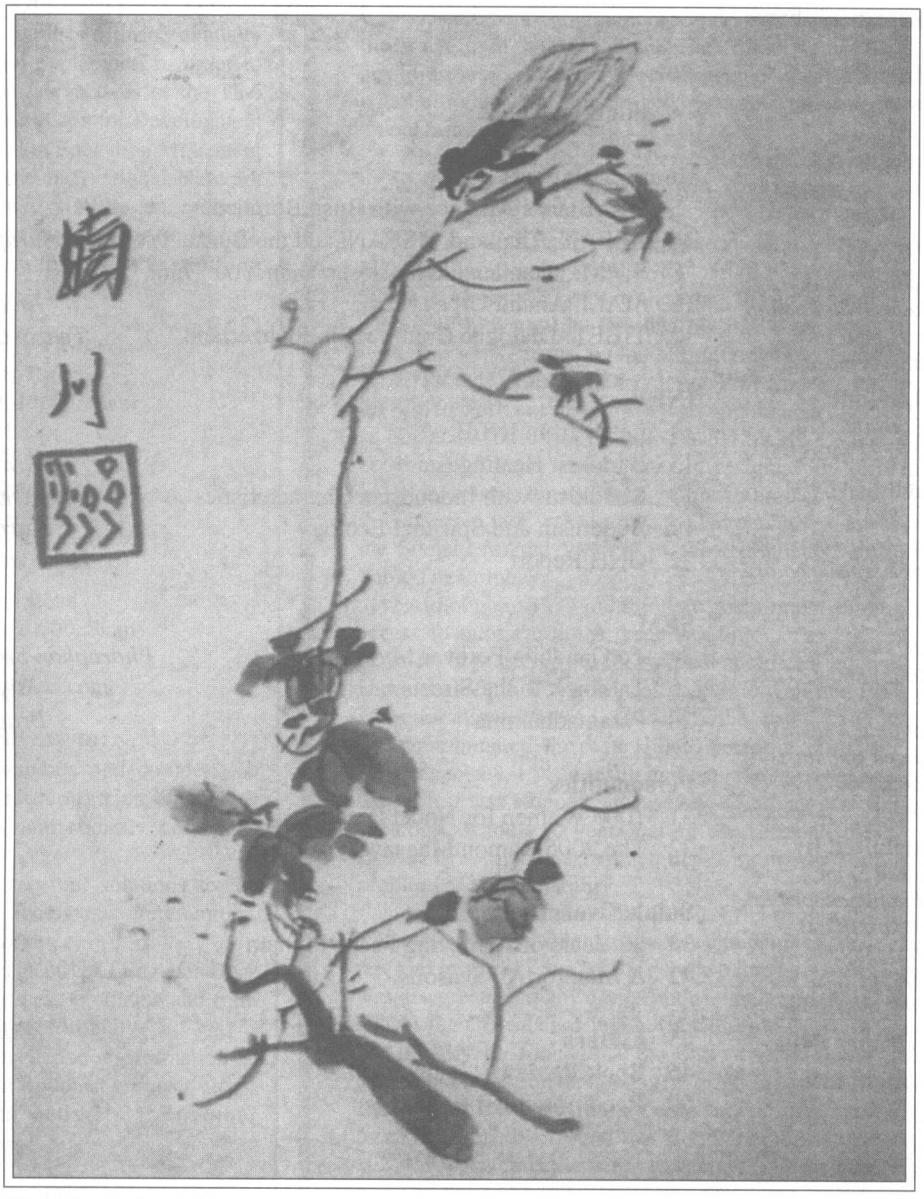
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Water colour painting by Ven Boonyarith Pandito The 91 year old meditation master

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* Dr. B.R. Ambeakar. On the same date and place as his conversion to Buddhism in 1956, INEB will have the 2005 Conference

PEACE

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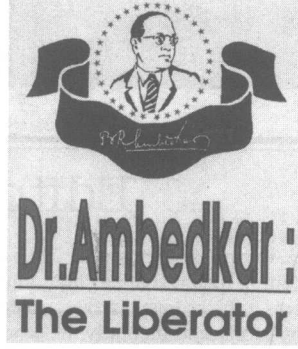
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The goals of INEB are to:

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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Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1891. He was the fourteenth son of Ramji Subedar and Bhaimbai in Konkan province, Maharashtra, India.

Despite being an untouchable, his father had done his service in the army. So in the army climate, as a child, young Bhim had not had any injurious experience. The first incident took place when he went to a barber to have his hair cut and the barber refused on the account of an outcaste.

However, Bhim was offered to use a Brahmin family name "Ambedkar" by a teacher who was kind to him and recognized his talent.

Dr. Ambedkar first studied in the camp school. He did his high school in the Bombay Elphinstone High School. He got scholarship from His Majesty, Sayajirao Gaikwad, the liberal king of Baroda, who supported him until he finished his Ph.D. at Columbia University. Later on, he went to London and Germany to finish more degrees, M.A., Ph.D., D. Sc., and Barrister-at-law. And yet, it was still difficult for him to work even though he was appointed a high ranking position as Finance Minister in Baroda. Finally he got a job as a professor of economics. Twenty months later, he resigned and spent his whole life on social reform for the rights of the Untouchable.

His first task was to uplift the Untouchables. He first established the Society for the Welfare of the Excluded (Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha) in Bombay.

Although in 1923 the Bombay government announced the equal access to public utilities, such resolution was not implemented in practice. In March 1927, Dr. Ambedkar led nearly ten thousand of the Untouchables to Chowdar tank, a public well that the Untouchables were not allowed to use, and drank the water. Feeling that the tank was contaminated, the caste Hindus performed rituals to purify it. Dr. Ambedkar saw it as an insult and planned for a big protest. However the protest was stopped because an officer suggested him to fight in the court. It took 10 years before the Untouchables won the case. Hence, Dr. Ambedkar realized that lawsuit was not a remedy to the problem of untouchability.

Dr. Ambedkar also struggled for his people through legislative and administrative mechanisms. He campaigned for a separate electorate and reserved seats for his people in the Congress. Such campaign was disagreed by many caste Hindus, including Gandhi himself. And, he was the chairman of Indian Constitution Drafting Committee.

Finally he found that the only way to social liberty for the Untouchables is conversion, as revealed in his announcement in May 1936. With his two criteria, being Indian origin and discrimination free, Dr. Ambedkar found that Buddhism might be an option. From 1935-1956, he did extensive research to find the right choice.

On the same date and place that King Ashoka embraced the Buddha's teaching, 14 October 1956, Dr. Ambedkar together with approximately 388,000 Untouchables took refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. It triggered the mass conversions to Buddhism of the Untouchable.

Although he passed away on 5 December 1956, his hope for establishing social equality is a model for many.

From *Dr. Ambedkar: The Liberator*, published by INEB.
The book is available at INEB at USD5.00

Editorial Notes

Sulak Sivaraksa, our publisher, is now 72 years old i.e. he has completed the 6th cycle anniversary which in our Siamese reckoning means that he should have more time to rest, to meditate and contemplate for the next world. Yet he seems to be as busy as ever, going upcountry and abroad almost every month. He says that as he is still capable physically and mentally, he would like to contribute to all sentient beings in any way to lessen their suffering as well as to promoting their happiness—apart from his own seeds of peace. He believes in H.H. the Dalai Lama that world peace would not be possible, unless each of us cultivate peace within. Although this is a very difficult task, it is the only way.

As for INEB, Mr. Sulak helped found it over fifteen years ago and he asked not to be on the executive board of this organization but still plays the role of an advisor.

As for the Komol Keemthong Foundation which he helped to set up in order to promote youth idealism in 1971, in the beginning he was the managing director and later became its president until his resignation on his 72nd birthday—27th March 2005.

He is still president of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation which he was a pioneer in establishing a legal umbrella of many of his activities which are all autonomous e.g. Spirit in Education Movement, Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development, Sekhiyadhamma and Wongsanit Ashram. In fact he had tendered his resignation from the presidency at the end of last year but board members asked him to carry on as a figure head until he reaches the age of 75 (i.e. if he lives that long).

The reason Mr. Sulak stepped down from all the organizations which he founded during the four decades of his active life, is that he felt that the young people are now able to run all these activities as a team—very much like the lay Sangha—in a very democratic manner, with accountability and transparency. He feels that with members of the younger generation, male and female, taking over, he is happy and content. He does not like promoting heroism or a one man show. Nor does he want any member of his family to replace him in any of the NGO movement.

This year, Santi Asoka, the most successful Buddhist grassroots movement, led by Ven. Samana Bodhiraksa, reached its 30th anniversary since its declaration of independence from the National Sangha Establishment. Mr. Sulak gave them encouragement as well as criticism since it is the only people's movement with a real alternative to consumerism and globalization with local wisdom and dhammic socialism. If the movement depends less on its leader and move cautiously in the spirit the Sangha, it will really be a great story of success in Siam.

The abbot of Wat Dhammasobhit in Uthaidhani wanted to honour Mr. Sulak on his 72nd birthday by naming the temple library after him. He declined the honor politely and proposed instead that it be named after the late Somdej Phra Vanarat (Heng Khemacari) a native of the town who became a successful patriarch in Bangkok. Mr. Sulak went to formally open the library at that temple on March 26, 2005 with a public lecture which also attracted a great crowd from other provinces.

Earlier Mr. Sulak had proposed that the bridge across the Chao Phya River from Nakornsawan to Uthaidhani be named after the late distinguished patriarch, a native of Uthaidhani and a former ecclesiastical governor general of Nakornsawan. He lobbied three Prime Ministers before the proposal was accepted. The argument was that no public building could be named after a Buddhsit monk; they were named only after the royalty, military and politicians.

Next year, Venerable Bhikkhu Buddhadasa will reach his 100th anniversary on 27th May; he passed away on 8th July 1992. Mr. Sulak, as president of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, has convinced the Royal Thai Government to nominate the late monk's name to UNESCO to be a worthy personality of the world. We have to celebrate the event nationwide, perhaps internationally too.

This year we celebrated Mr. Kularb Saipradith's centenary on March 31 and the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Thai Peace Day on August 16. Mr. Sulak's translated lecture on the latter event is published in this issue.

We collaborate with the Anglo-Thai Foundation to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Thai Peace Day in London in October because many Thais in the UK were so active in the Free Thai Movement. Among those Thais was Prince Subhasavasti, whose children gave us the land for our Ashram Wongsanit, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last year.

Our events in London will also remind the present generation of Mr. Direk Jayanama, whose centenary was on January 18, 2005. He was our first Thai ambassador to the Court of St. James's after the war and during the war he played a vital role in the Free Thai Movement as Mr. Pridi Banomyong's right hand man. Without Mr. Direk's modest part, the Free Thai Movement might not have been a success.

Although Mr. Sulak refused to have any party for his 72nd birthday, a group of his admirers planned to organize musical events, theatrical performances and public debates in December and we told him that these are not to honor him, but to mark the history of intellectual pursuit and culture freedom, of which he is a part since 1963 when he started the first issue of the *Social Science Review*, the forerunner of *Seeds of Peace*. We hope you will all renew your subscriptions to the worthy journal. Indeed any contribution to the worthy causes carried out by our various activities within the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation would be most welcome. Foreign cheques should be made payable to the name of Sulak Sivaraksa to avoid overdue bank charge. However the Foundation will give its receipt which is tax exempted within the Kingdom.

UK

Blair's Alliance with Bush Bombed

"If you bomb our cities," Osama Bin Laden said in a recent videotape, "we will bomb yours." It was clear Britain would be a target ever since British Prime Minister Tony Blair decided to join President Bush's "war on terror" and his invasion of Iraq. We had, as they say, been warned. The G-8 summit was obviously chosen, well in advance, as Attack Day.

It's no use Blair telling us, "They will never succeed in destroying what we hold dear." They are not trying to destroy "what we hold dear." They are trying to get public opinion to force Blair to withdraw from Iraq, out of his alliance with the United States, out of his adherence to Bush's policies in the Middle East. The Spanish paid the price for their support for Bush—and Spain's subsequent retreat from Iraq proved that the Madrid bombings achieved their objectives—while the Australians were made to suffer in Bali.

It is easy for Blair to call yesterday's bombings "barbaric" —they were—but what were the civilian deaths of the Anglo American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the children torn apart by cluster bombs, the innocent Iraqis gunned down at American military checkpoints. When they die, it is "collateral damage"; when "we" die it is "barbaric terrorism."

If we are fighting insurgency in Iraq what makes us believe insurgency won't come to us? One thing is certain: If Blair really believes that by "fighting terrorism"' in Iraq we could more efficiently protect Britain, this argument is no longer valid.

To time these bombs with the G-8 summit, when the world was concentrating on Britain, was not a stroke of genius. You don't need a Ph.D. to choose another Bush-Blair handshake to close down a capital city with explosives and massacre its citizens. The G-8 summit was announced so far in advance that he gave the bombers all the time they needed to prepare. A coordinated system of attacks of the kind we saw yesterday takes weeks to plan; we can forget the idiotic fantasy these were timed to coincide with the Olympic decision. Bin Laden and his supporters don't set up an operation like this on the off chance that France will lose its bid to host the Games. Al-Qaida does not play football. No, this would have taken months—to choose safe houses, prepare explosives, identify targets, ensure security, choose the bombers, to plan the communications.

Coordination and sophisticated planning—and the usual utter indifference toward the lives of the innocent—are characteristic of Al-Qaida. Let us reflect on the fact that yesterday —the opening of the G-8— represented a total failure of our security services. These are the same intelligence "experts" who claim there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq when there were none but who utterly failed to uncover a months-long plot to kill Londoners.

Trains, planes, buses, cars, metros. Transportation appears to be the science of Al-Qaida's dark arts. No one can search 3 million London commuters every day. No one can stop every tourist.

Then come the Muslims of Britain, who have long been awaiting this nightmare. Now every one of our Muslims becomes the usual suspect, the man or woman with brown eyes, the man with the beard, the woman in the scarf, the boy with the worry beads, the girl who says she's been racially abused.

I remember, crossing the Atlantic on 9/11—my plane turned around off Ireland when the United States closed its airspace—how the aircraft purser and I toured the cabins to see if we could identify any suspicious passengers. I found about a dozen, of course, totally innocent men who had brown eyes or long beards or who looked at me with "hostility." And sure enough, in just a few seconds, Bin Laden turned nice, liberal, friendly Robert into an anti-Arab racist. And this is part of the point of yesterday's bombings: to divide British Muslims from British non-Muslims (let us not mention the name Christians), to encourage the very kind of racism that Blair claims to resent.

But here's the problem. To go on pretending that Britain's enemies want to destroy "what we hold dear" encourages racism; what we are confronting here is a specific, direct, centralized attack on London as a result of a "war on terror" that Blair has locked us into. Just before the U.S. presidential elections, Bin Laden asked: "Why do we not attack Sweden?" Lucky Sweden. No Osama Bin Laden there. And no Tony Blair.

Robert Fisk,
July 08, 2005, www.zmag.org

ASEAN

Thailand, ASEAN, and the Burma Problem: Eight Long Years of Disgrace

In 1988, under the iron fist of General Newin, the Burmese military dictatorship massacred thousands of Burmese citizens who were demanding for democracy, an atrocity that was heavily condemned by the international community.

With a straight face, the Chatichai Choonhavan administration of Thailand openly expressed sympathy for the Burmese junta. Subsequently, the Thai government sent General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh (then Army Commander in Chief) to Rangoon, and he promptly returned to Bangkok with a number of highly lucrative fish and timber concessions to redistribute to powerful cliques in the Thai business community that were close to the government. General Chavalit's trip to Burma served as a prototype for designing a foreign policy that is geared toward pampering vested interests at the expense of other considerations, especially the national interest. Successive Thai administrations, including the present one, have closely adhered to this policy.

Since 1988 Thai foreign policy toward Burma has persistently helped to shield, nurture, and legitimize the Burmese military junta despite of its authoritarianism and unsavory human rights record. ASEAN eventually followed suit, opening its arms to Burma's membership in July 1997.

Therefore, Burma has been able to benefit from the positive image and international standing of ASEAN. The Burmese military junta is using ASEAN primarily as a tool to guarantee its survivability and entrench military dictatorship in the country —not as a means to foster regional cooperation, stability, progress, and peace.

To Rangoon, ASEAN is a major protective shield in its foreign relations. Put differently, the Burmese military junta has successfully transformed the conflict it is having with the international community into a conflict between ASEAN and the international community. Burma has become ASEAN's Gordian knot, one that it had tied by itself through a confluence of forces— ignorance, greed, naivety, etc. Worse, ASEAN seems to lack the courage or determination to cut through this knot.

The various rationalities on which ASEAN relied in admitting Burma as a member may be summarized as follows: 1) Burma is situated in Southeast Asia, and therefore it should be part of ASEAN; 2) since Southeast Asia is comprised of ten states admitting Burma into ASEAN as its tenth member would 'complete' and strengthen its bargaining power and stature in international political and economic relations; 3) Rangoon's membership would enable ASEAN to drive a wedge between China and Burma or make Rangoon less dependent on Beijing; 4) several governments in the West wanted ASEAN to delay or forestall the membership of Burma, but as a cohesive and independent regional organization ASEAN would not kowtow to outside pressure or Western domination; and 5) once admitted into ASEAN Burma would naturally undertake the necessary reforms and adopt the regional organization's values, standards, and best practices, contributing to regional progress.

The illogic of these rationalities is however apparent. The influence or bargaining power of an organization is not necessarily determined by its size or the number of its members. Rather, a more important attribute seems to be its credibility, image, or reputation.

As for driving a wedge between China and Burma or minimizing Beijing's influence on Rangoon, the very opposite has in fact occurred. The influence of China on Burma has deepened and has proliferated into every nook and cranny. Flanked by India and China, it is inconceivable that Burmese foreign policy would not be influenced by these two powerful states. Therefore, Burma sought membership in ASEAN to expand its breathing space, while simultaneously facilitating Chinese and eventually Indian influence in the country.

The past eight years have sufficiently proven that admitting Burma into the regional organization was more about pursuing the hidden agenda of each ASEAN member state rather than 'saying no' to the West. For instance, both Malaysia and

Indonesia were motivated by the same political objectives that determined their support for the admittance of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia to ASEAN; that is, to put a lid on or regulate the spirit of democracy in ASEAN emanating from Thailand and the Philippines. Back in 1997, among ASEAN states, only Thailand and the Philippines possessed liberal democratic political systems.

Employing double standards and a highly inadequate or secretive deliberative process, ASEAN did not carefully take into account the political and economic realities of Burma and failed to ascertain whether or not as a member Rangoon would impede ASEAN progress.

It is worthwhile to compare ASEAN's decision to admit Vietnam and Laos to the regional organization with that of Burma. In the case of Vietnam and Laos, ASEAN contended that their admission was conditional upon undergoing a 'learning process' for at least one year. As such, both states became 'observers' prior to their full entrance into ASEAN. Cambodia had planned to become an ASEAN member in 1997 but there was a coup d'etat in the country that year. Although ASEAN has long professed the virtue of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states, members or otherwise, it reneged to uphold this principle on this occasion. ASEAN delayed the membership of Cambodia, and declared that Cambodia must first make a gesture of democratic reform before entering this exclusive regional club. On the contrary, Burma did not have to go through these hassles. It became an ASEAN member without any strings attached, without having to undertake any political reforms.

To cope with "the Burma problem", ASEAN accepted and adopted the Thai proposal calling for "constructive engagement" in 1992. This policy is however neither constructive nor a form of engagement. At face value, "constructive engagement" is driven by noble objectives such as the respect for the sovereignty and territorial inviolability of member states, the development of mutually beneficial relations with Burma in every dimension, the inclusion as opposed to isolation of Rangoon so as to contribute to Rangoon's stability, security, and progress, which would put Burma firmly on the track of democratization; and so on.

Constructive engagement has consistently failed to deliver its promises in the past 13 years. Worse, the political and economic situation in Burma has regressed. ASEAN had incorrectly assumed that Burma shares values and objectives that are compatible with those of the regional organization. And it does not have a viable strategy or the collective will to materialize the promises of constructive engagement.

Eventually, "constructive engagement" became a shameless pretense. Some ASEAN leaders have even utilized constructive engagement as a pretext to legitimize the military junta in Burma. It has been distorted into a recipe for political inaction vis-à-vis the military junta in Burma. Political inaction is not always or necessarily damaging. But in this case, political inaction has entailed distorting the gravity of the political situation and tacitly consenting to the derailing of democratization in Burma. It has also entailed the denial to confront the Burma problem and to assess the negative impacts of this problem on the image and credibility of ASEAN. Another façade that ASEAN regularly hides behind in order to avoid confronting the Burma problem is the principle of consensus: all members must vote in favor of a policy before it is adopted. Perhaps ASEAN member states are too mired in their own vested interests to think about disrupting the status quo in Burma. Constructive engagement is thus a dangerous policy of denial par excellence.

Recognizing that constructive engagement was too ossifying to adequately cope with the Burma problem and posed an obstacle to the development of collective action to tackle regional problems, the Chuan Leekpai government (1997-2001) endeavored to substitute it with the policy of flexible engagement at the ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Manila in 1998.

Flexible engagement incorporated all of the main provisions of constructive engagement, but also called for ASEAN to admit that in the era of globalization many security problems are transnational in character. With the exception of the Philippines, the remaining ASEAN member states jointly shot down the Thai proposal. This was no surprise. ASEAN's refusal to adopt flexible engagement is further proof that its regionalism has serious limitations, and that it will be difficult for ASEAN to deepen its integration along the lines of the EU.

A major difference between ASEAN and the EU is that the latter has very clear requirements for the admission of any new member: the applicant state must be a liberal democracy with a market economy, for instance.

ASEAN, on the other hand, does not have such clear criteria for admitting new members—aside from the simple fact (or geographical determinism) that they must be situated in Southeast Asia. Without a clear guidance, the admission of a new member into ASEAN may be quite arbitrary, depending on the whims of the original members. More importantly, the absence of clear criteria for deciding on admission means that ASEAN also lacks rules to regulate the behavior of member states or to dismiss any member state that has not conformed to its standards.

Furthermore, ASEAN's rejection of flexible engagement demonstrates that in practice the regional organization is internally divided. It is separated into two political poles: liberalism versus authoritarianism. Every time ASEAN deliberates on political matters, the tension between these two poles is brought to the forefront.

Ever since it became a part of ASEAN, Rangoon has practiced a linkage policy toward the other members of the regional organization, helping to guarantee the survival of authoritarianism as well as the military junta's preponderance of power in Burma. That the linkage policy has functioned quite effectively is because of the weakness of ASEAN and the vested interests of ASEAN members.

ASEAN has not attempted to reverse the linkage policy. Put differently, ASEAN may tie its support for Burma with Rangoon's overall behavior. For instance, if Rangoon fails to alter or modify its behavior in ways that are compatible with the standards of the international community, then ASEAN may choose to withdraw their support for Burma. There are numerous nodal points to reverse the linkage, tying ASEAN support to democratization, national reconciliation, and so on. Doing so may enable ASEAN and Burma to move along together in mutually rewarding relations.

It is therefore high time for ASEAN to reevaluate and rethink its policy toward Burma. For starters, trade with and investment in Burma must be de-linked from the security and legitimacy of the Burmese military junta. They should be treated as separate issues, as apples and oranges. The remaining nine members of ASEAN must refrain from acting as Burma's faithful lawyer at multinational forums, defending the innocence of Burma against various charges. (Rather they should act like accountants auditing the behavioral accounts of Rangoon.) Burma must be left to its own means to defend its image and reputation at the global level. ASEAN must not be used as Burma's political pawn. This suggestion may bear fruits as long as the nine ASEAN states do not break ranks. Burma will be internally excluded within ASEAN, and it will resume its role as a proper member again once it has shown that it is as responsible and considerate as the other ASEAN members are. Also the governments of ASEAN member states should facilitate their legislative wings to embark on concerted efforts to pressure Burma on pursuing democratization and national reconciliation with good faith. They should also facilitate the networking of civil groups or organizations in the region as another means to help pressure Burma. Finally, if Burma is merely re-dressing (as in making cosmetic changes) as opposed to redressing its problems, then ASEAN should not allow Rangoon to assume the chairmanship of the regional organization in mid-2006. Rather it should only be ASEAN's 'vice chairman.' These efforts combined with continual pressures exerted by the United States and the European Union should suffice to catalyze positive reforms in Burma. ASEAN, the US, and the EU may foster the necessary conditions for the democratization of Burma and the long-term security and prosperity of Southeast Asia.

Surapong Jayanama

SIAM

Guantanamo Is Closer Than You Think

The spate of attacks on Yala town on the night of 14 July 2005 is said to be the last straw that compelled the Thaksin government to declare a state of emergency. Was it really the last straw or was it a pretext to issue the executive decree as violence in the deep South has erupted on a daily basis for the past several months?

In any case, if the executive



decree replacing the martial law with the declaration of a state of emergency is the Thai version of the Patriot Act, will that make pockets in the three southernmost provinces our Guantanamo, our Camps X-Ray and Delta? The analogy is even more disturbing as the state of emergency will be largely enforced on a Muslim population.

Deputy Prime Minister Visanu Krue-ngarm suggests that unlike the martial law, the state of emergency is more democratic and accountable, as it will be exercised by the executive wing of a civilian government as opposed to the military. In other words, this will not hark the Thai people back to the dark days of military dictatorship. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra stated on his Saturday morning live radio program (16 July 2005) that the state of emergency is more compatible with democracy and with the international public opinion. For once he seemed to care deeply about the international public opinion. But should we deeply meditate not only on 'who governs?' but also on the nature of power that is being exercised? (Does it really matter who is operating the Panopticon, for instance?)

So let us turn to the state of emergency or the state of exception. The state of emergency was, as Giorgio Agamben puts it, "a creation of the democratic-revolutionary tradition and not the absolutist one."[1] Moreover, *pace* Mr. Visanu and Mr. Thaksin, the state of exception is more akin to emergency decrees, state of siege, martial law, or emergency powers than to civil codes. Agamben contends, "the declaration of the state of exception has gradually been replaced by an unprecedented generalization of the paradigm of security as the normal technique of government."[2] In the West, the expansion of executive power into judiciary power (i.e., the collapse of the separation of power) and the normalization of the state of exception in the name of security have been by-products of the First World War, the depression during the inter-war years, the Second World War and the Cold War that ensued. Agamben explains, "The state of exception is not a dictatorship (whether constitutional or unconstitutional, commissarial or sovereign) but a space devoid of law, a zone of anomie in which all legal determinations—and above all the very distinction between public and private—are deactivated."[3] He continues, "The state of exception is not a 'state of law,' but a space without law..."[4] It is situated in a non-place vis-à-vis the law, whereby the law is enacted through its suspension.

Life as it emerges in the state of exception is thus an unclassifiable living body completely denuded of rights—a pure existence that is subject to purification by pure violence; a violence whose relation to the law has been severed. The state of exception enforced by the Patriot Act created a special category of legally unclassifiable being called "enemy combatant" or "detainee." For example, the Taliban captured in Afghanistan and incarcerated in Guantanamo do not enjoy the status of prisoners of war. As Agamben writes, "Neither prisoners nor persons accused, but simply 'detainees,' they are object of a pure de facto rule, of detention that is indefinite not only in the temporal sense but in its very nature as well, since it is entirely removed from the law and from judicial oversight."[5] Therefore, Guantanamo and similar American-run detention centers worldwide are special places of torture beyond the reach of law (civil, military, and international) in which the division of humanity is enacted and which is deemed necessary for the US's and the civilized world's survival.

As Mr. Visanu argues, one

of the main stated objectives of the executive decree is to integrate powers that are "scattered here and there" to build a more cohesive front to put an end to the unrest in the South. But this integration of power leads not to Hobbes's Leviathan; the Leviathan comes into being when the people make some sort of contract among themselves to give all power to a person or a group of persons, and it operates by promulgating and enforcing the law. On the contrary, this integration of powers is initiated through the suspension of the law. However, it can be as arbitrary as the Leviathan in the name of security.

Building on Agamben's insights, Judith Butler claims that contemporary forms of sovereignty are coercive but not in the sense of the rule of law. Rather, they "exist in a structurally inverse relation to the rule of the law."[6] She asserts, "It is not, literally speaking, that a sovereign power suspends the rule of law, but that the rule of law, in the act of being suspended, produces sovereignty in its action and as its effect. This inverse relation to law produces the 'unaccountability' of this operation of sovereign power, as well as its illegitimacy."[7] The suspension of the law thus brings about "a resurgent sovereignty" that operates as "a lawless and prerogatory power, a 'rogue' power *par excellence*."[8] It is a sovereign power with no checks and balances.

Promising round-the-clock surveillance and control, the executive decree will enable the prime minister to, *inter alia*, tap telephone calls, prohibit the publication and dissemination of ùimproperû materials (i.e., the policing of thoughts), confine people within their residences for a certain duration, and preemptively detain 'suspects' for seven days upon court permission (after the initial seven-day incarceration the duration of detention may be prolonged to no longer than seven days each time with 30 days as the maximum period of detention). Reference to the court is disingenuously interesting. In the face of an unchecked executive power and the suspension of the law, the dice is already loaded. Moreover, where will 'suspects' or the unlocalizable be detained? They cannot be detained in ordinary prisons, as criminals and thugs were not preemptively arrested and incarcerated. Nor can they spend the seven days in a police station. They cannot be detained in military prisons, as they are not prisoners of war. And prisoners of war do enjoy certain basic rights sanctioned by international law. Hence, they must be detained in special detention centers or, even better, camps—with all the negative connotation that this word implies. Perhaps, we shall call them "Camps TRT."

Equally important, the prime minister may use military forces to 'normalize' the situation, and as the *Bangkok Post* notes, "Authorities performing duties as ordered by the prime minister's orders are exempt from civil, criminal and disciplinary actions." Can these authorities kill or torture with impunity? Will state-sponsored terrorism be condoned? What constitute 'improper' materials and who fall under the category of 'suspects'? When will the situation return to 'normalcy'? Who decides? The officials of this resurgent sovereign power will arbitrarily decide upon these issues, which are also matters of life and death. And we must trust their good instincts since they serve as our Shepherd.

The state of exception opens a legal and philosophical can of worms. It creates a space of terror that is so far from the law and so close to a roguish sovereign power—a pure power that breeds pure violence. Under the state of emergency, certain bodies will be denuded of rights, existing as "bare life." Deprived of rights, will they be treated as human beings? Or will there be a caesura in the status of life? Certain bodies will be unworthy of rights —will be "unreal" lives. And therefore we must not grieve or mourn for their plight or departure from life. (As "unreal" lives or unpeople, they will leave no trace when they are gone. We will not be able to calculate the cost of the exercise of this power.) They must be detained, silenced, put under house arrests, or executed for us to continue living in 'normal' conditions. Some bodies must be made more vulnerable through 'preemptive strikes' to augment our sense of invulnerability and security. The state of emergency is rationalized as the protection of life and security, and hence its allure. The prime minister argued that this is part of the social contract. But we must not overlook its policy of "letting die" and the suspension of rights that are a constitutive part of this apparatus of power. In sum, when critics point to the loss of certain civil rights that will be incurred by the state of emergency, they should also focus on its impacts on the ontological status of life. It is not simply that some lives will be internally excluded and deprived of the constitutional rights of citizenship. More to the point is that some lives will be "de-realized" or seen as not fully human.

In the US, Patriot Act I was soon followed by a more strident Patriot Act II. Will there be more executive decrees pertaining to the state of emergency waiting in the pipeline here? Will there be a Ministry of Homeland Security if the situation in the deep south turns for the worse? Again, decisions will be solely in the hands of officials of this resurgent sovereign power.

Perhaps, the declaration of the state of emergency is a fitting move for Thailand as Washington's major non-NATO ally. Perhaps by criticizing the Thai government's declaration of the state of emergency, one is already designated as a suspect or an "enemy combatant." We are closer to Guantanamo than we think.

Soravis Jayanama,
19 July 2005,
www.thaiwac.ias.chula.ac.th

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[1] Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 5.
[2] Ibid., p. 14.
[3] Ibid., p. 50.
[4] Ibid., p. 51.
[5] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[6] Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Life* (London and New York: Verso, 2004), p. 60.
[7] Ibid., p. 66.
[8] Ibid., p. 56.



The seminar "Life that Left Behind and Smile after Bloodshed: The Unheard Stories of Women from the Three Southernmost Provinces of Thailand" was held by Women for Peace Network on 23rd August 2005 in Bangkok. The network continuously provided healing workshops and helps for women who lost their family members from the violent urgencies in the south since 2004. The seminar brought women who were ready to share their stories with aim to raise public awareness of sufferings of the people.

SIAM

Anand Urges Media to Keep Its Distance from Troubles

Former prime minister Anand Panyarachun called on the international media to "keep a distance'' from reporting the violence in the deep South, saying there is no point paying too much attention to problems that other countries, including England and Russia, are also experiencing.

Mr Anand said every country had a problem with terrorism and separatism so the violence in southern Thailand was nothing unusual.

"Separatism is no big deal, so try to treat it as a criminal activity,'' Mr Anand said. Speaking at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand last night, Mr Anand said unrest in Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat was a local, not an international issue.

"You have to nurture the peace process. Change your mindset and mentality. We can address the problem by ourselves and with our own government,'' he said.

Mr Anand now chairs the National Reconciliation Commission, an independent body set up to find ways to return peace to the deep South.

Mr Anand said he himself did not fully understand what caused the violence to erupt in that region, given that Buddhists and Muslims, the latter making up 85% of the population in the three border provinces, had lived together in harmony for a long time.

Mr Anand said conflicts over contraband smuggling and gambling as well as unfair distribution and poor management of natural resources might be among the causes. However, he was surprised the media regularly blamed "southern bandits'' for all violence in the region.

"You can overlook the failure of the past policy of the government. Now we are starting a new chapter,'' he said.

He said the NRC had urged the government to increase support for education, clear up misunderstanding, respect peaceful solutions, recognise and respect diversity of cultures, and try to make the South more multi-cultural.

His panel had a free hand in doing its work and had received overwhelming support across the country. He was optimistic reconciliation would be achieved.

Mr Anand said he had told Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra that the violence could be attributed to mistreatment of people, lack of respect for different cultures and religions, lack of awareness of the area's history and people's distrust of the government.

Mr Thaksin listened. "I believe strongly that we are on the right path,'' he said.

Anucha Charoenpo,
19 May 2005

TIBET

Dialogue Continues in Switzerland: Progress Needed

Washington, D.C. July 1, 2005 —The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes the announcement of a fourth round of talks between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Chinese Government officials. The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced on July 1, 2005 that the Special Envoy of of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari and his colleague Kelsang Gyaltsen have concluded a meeting with Chinese officials in the Swiss capital of Bern.

"The International Campaign for Tibet and Tibet supporters around the world are watching for real progress to result from these talks. There is no doubt that His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his envoys are making sincere efforts to find a negotiated solution for Tibet, but the Chinese side has yet to clarify its commitment to this process,"

said Mary Beth Markey, Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Contact was re-established between the Tibetan and Chinese sides in September, 2002 when the Dalai Lama's envoys had meetings with officials in China and Tibet. The most recent meetings occurred in China and Tibet in September 2004. The Tibetans characterized the nature of the meetings so far as "confidence-building" opportunities.

"ICT notes with interest that the venue of this meeting is in the Chinese Embassy in the Swiss Capital, Bern," said Markey. "A third country venue appropriately reflects the tremendous support of the international community for resolving the Tibetan issue and may indicate that China is interested in raising the profile of the dialogue," Markey concluded.

The United States government has repeatedly declared its support for substantive discussions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives. In its most recent "Report on Negotiations" issued in April 2005, the State Department made public repeated efforts by the President, Secretary of State and other senior U.S. officials to promote a negotiated solution for Tibet. According to the report:

"Encouraging substantive dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama is an important objective on this Administration. The United States encourages China and the Dalai Lama to hold substantive discussions aimed at resolution of difference at an early date, without preconditions. We have consistently asserted that any questions surrounding Tibet and its relationship to Chinese authorities should be resolved by direct dialogue between the Tibetans and the Chinese. The Administration believes that dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives will alleviate tensions in Tibetan regions of China"

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959, after an uneasy arrangement between the Chinese and Tibetan governments broke down and culminated in a popular uprising in Lhasa. Beijing continues to violate the human rights of Tibetans and to withhold from them the right to live according to their own traditions and aspirations.

ICI urges the United States and other governments to continue to support the widespread desire among Tibetans for a negotiated solution.

Tenzin Geyche Tethong
Secretary to
H.H. the Dalai Lama
Dharamsala, India
July 1, 2005

Know Your Food

- A typical meal made from supermarket-bought ingredients consumes anywhere from four to seventeen times as much oil for transportation than a meal made from locally bought ingredients.
- Much of food transportation is redundant. For example, California imports many of the same products it ships around the world.
- Flying food by air uses 37 times more fuel per ton than transport by sea and causes more pollution.
- Coffee co-operatives fortunate enough to sell to the fair trade market received a minimum of $1.10 for a pound of Robusta coffee beans—nearly four times what farmers received through the traditional system.
- In the U.S., 100,000 family farmers were forced out of farming between 1996 and 2001.
- Corporate agribusiness profits increased 98 percent during the 1990s. Meanwhile, in 2002 farmers earned their lowest real net cash income since 1940.
- In a study of seed stock available in 1903 versus that available in 1983, the Rural Advancement Foundation International found that we have lost nearly 93% of lettuce varieties, over 96% of sweet corn, about 96% of field corn, more than 95% of tomato, and almost 98% of asparagus.
- Since 1935, the U.S. has lost 4.7 million farms. Fewer than one million Americans now claim farming as a primary occupation.
- Farmers supplying the global food chain earn 9 cents for every food dollar. Farmers selling at a farmers market earn up to 90 cents per food dollar.
- ConAgra is the number 3 seller of retail food products in the world and has continued to aggressively acquire small rivals. ConAgra's brand names include: Armour, Butterball, Chef Boyardee, Healthy Choice, La Choy, Orville Reddenbacher, Parkay, and Hebrew National, just to name a few.

Letter from INEB

Dear INEB members and readers

In the last four months, the INEB Secretariat Office in Bangkok has been rather quiet. It's because we were away for the INEB Youth Buddhist Leadership Training in May and June. The training brought many young Buddhists in Asia to meet together and learn from each other. In addition to his active participation in the training, Venerable Nyanachatta was very kind to share his paper on Buddhism in Indonesia in this issue.

In July, INEB co-organized a seminar on "Karma and Rebirth in Contemporary Time" to celebrate the 70th birthday of H.H. the Dalai Lama. The seminar interested many Theravada Buddhists in Siam, many of them wishing to know more about Tibetan Buddhism. We saw this as a good sign for future exchange between the two orders.

The tsunami relief program is still going on. We have a report of our work here in this issue. We would love to learn about any other activities that our members have been doing for tsunami survivors in their countries as well.

This time of the year is the *vassa* or the rain retreat. It's another reason why the INEB office has slowed down. Theravada monks and nuns now concentrate on Dhamma studies and practices as their first priority. However, the most important activity—The 2005 INEB Conference—awaits us in October. I am looking forward to meeting some of you in our gathering. Once again, if you have any suggestions or ideas to share, you are welcome at anytime, not only during the conference.

As soon as the *vassa* is over in the end of October, a number of INEB activities will resume. The next issue will be filled with more reports and news updates.

Yours in dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary



The 2005 *"Young Bodhisattva"*
Youth Buddhist Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation

30 young Buddhists, including monks and nuns, from Myanmar, Cambodia, Siam (Thailand), Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, India and Tibet in exile joined the training from 22 May—30 June 2005 in Siam. In addition to the knowledge of globalization and current issues, the training also focused on Buddhist teachings that can be applied for social development. Other important activities were exposure visits, meditation retreat and cultural sharing that strengthened the spirit of our network.

Buddhist Healing: Embracing One's Own Suffering First

What is "healing" in terms of Buddhism? Many Buddhists have tried to answer this question especially in such a great crisis like the tsunami. Such question was also pondered by the participants of a workshop on **'Buddhist healing'**. They were monks, nuns, and lay persons from tsunami-hit villages in Phang nga province and outside. The workshop was one of INEB's programs on trauma healing for tsunami survivors. Facilitated by Phra Paisal Visalo and Ouyporn Kheankhaew, participants defined healing as *"the inner process of how people accept changes and overcome crisis, and helping people who are in suffering should start with understanding one's own suffering and dealing with it in the right way."* Otherwise we tend to separate ourselves from others even though they are in front of us, and preach without an exact understanding of their condition.



Understanding the Buddha's teachings is the first component of Buddhist healing. Putting it simply, to help people, we have to do our own "inner work" at the same time, meaning we have to release our sufferings or conflicts inside. Such negative features appear in the forms of fear, pain, lack of confidence, etc. Knowing, understanding and healing ourselves are fundamental to Buddhism. The Buddha learned from his experience. So do we. In helping people who suffer, we do not use only theory. Instead we learn from our own experiences, whether or not we are still in suffering or in the process of solving it. At least we try to embrace suffering and to be friendly with it. By thinking this way, we realize how to connect with people who are under the common law of *samsara as friends*.

The second component is *the understanding of trauma*. Each case has different symptoms. The understanding is useful not only to help people who are affected by the tsunami, it can be applicable to other cases concerning other forms of violence. Some symptoms are the guilt of survival, depression and isolation. Strong feelings would normally occur, it is just a psychological mechanism. It does not mean that they are mad. If we try to understand, we would know the severity and could be more comfortable when people start crying or show strong emotions.

Another symptom is "spiritual crisis." Some may question "Why did this kind of thing happen to me? I am a good person, I will not believe in goodness anymore." Conversely, survivors may unexpectedly attach to any faith system although they were not interested in or deeply devoted to it before. This is also normal. But we have to be careful not to argue with them even if we do not agree. It is not helpful.

The majority of people do not feel the importance of spirituality. It is often found that they help by giving out materials and money. These things are important, of course, but as we learnt from an old woman of Moken ethnicity, for her, the shaman's death and the spirit house's damage saddened her. It made her decide that she would not go back to the village. It was very important for her, but no one realized it.

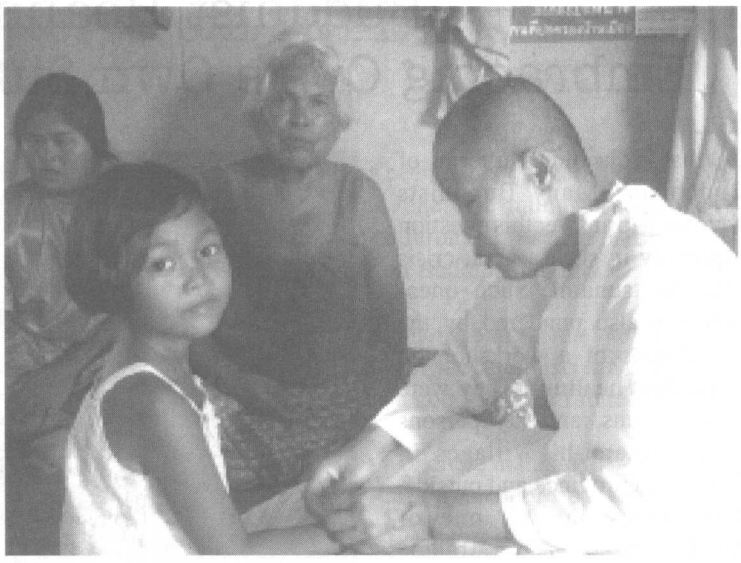
Understanding the social structure is important, too. It helps us know the connection between sufferings and the current situation which is influenced by globalization. Knowingly or not, everyone is affected

by such social forces, especially the poor whose human rights are hardly protected. To remove suffering is not an individual's burden. It needs everyone. The tsunami gave us a chance to question ourselves. Have we been too submissive by allowing modernization to be imposed on us? Have we enjoyed too much consumption while the poor are oppressed?

We should recognize our interconnectedness. Anyone or anything cannot be separated from the whole web of life. It made us understand *collective karma* better. It is not just that one's karma is an individual's karma alone. Besides, it is discouraging us to detach ourselves from people who are suffering. Therefore if we say to the survivors "you should accept it, it is your own karma," it is not helpful. It will make them suffer even more.

This was a participatory workshop, i.e. learning from our own experiences. The workshop included practicing skills, allowing us to recall past experiences while working with the real cases. The skills we practiced were to listen deeply with compassion, to give feedback and to solve problems together. So, we had to practice mindfulness during the process, to be completely with the people, to make no judgment and to believe that everyone has wisdom (*Buddhahood*) especially the people who are suffering. There was no need to suggest to them what to do. They are experts on their own lives. With only sufficient listening skills, we can help them bring back their awareness and self- respect.

It sounds simple, but in the last session, participants reflected that it is not. We usually make judgments. We are used to



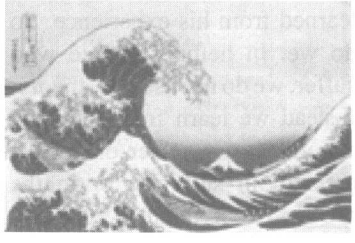
teaching and making decision about what others should do. We had less skills to completely be with the people in front of us. However, the participants said, they believed that everyone can do it, if we try, it is not too difficult to understand each other. This approach was helpful and powerful to make those suffering realize their own inner power and finally liberate themselves from external support.

In the last session, participants visited people who previously lived in *Baan Nam Kem* village. We went to *Laem Pom* Temple that offered temporary shelters for around 80 families. Our monk and nun participants visited people in their shelters and listened to them kindly. Three monks and a nun volunteered to stay at Taptawan temporary shelter and provided healing sessions for another five days.

Every time INEB arranged a monthly visit for monks and nuns to tsunami shelters, we led normal lives as if we were in a temple. People always offered alms as they have done since our first visit in January. We arranged chantings and talks in a multi-purposed temporary hall. Children listened to stories of the Buddha from our monks. Some even slept on our laps. Beautiful chantings on impermanence by nuns made them cry. It came when their hearts were touched by the Dharma in the process of embracing pain from deaths of loved ones.

Life goes on. Mindfulness, positive thinking and realizing the value of life are critical. Guests like us, though we consider ourselves as friends, sooner or later will go back to where we belong. We learned that the survivors are capable of overcoming their suffering. Their survival was a valuable lesson for us to humbly welcome every aspect of life, be it grace or grief.

Araya Payungpong



Buddhism with Indonesian Characteristics

It is not easy to live as a minority group in a non-Buddhist country. Problems surrounding religions are not entirely separate from social life. Religion can be used as a basis of understanding behavioural patterns and social characteristics. On the other hand, how people tend to behave, think, and live, may also indicate the religious beliefs that they hold.

In Indonesia, we have been living in a society where non-Buddhist values are dominant. Under such a condition, our thought patterns and views are, to a certain extent, influenced. The simplest instance is the view about God, the concept of heaven and hell, and the understanding of karma.

Due to being a minority group, our understanding of Buddhism has been heavily influenced by concepts from other religions, especially by theistic religions, such as Islam and Christianity. Sometimes, even Buddhists do not really know the reasons why they are Buddhists. Furthermore, they pray to gods in the same manner as people of the theistic religions pray to their God. These Buddhists also believe karma as synonymous to fate ascribed to a divine God, rather than as a universal law governing cause and effect. Some also view heaven and hell as eternal after-life worlds, as grace and condemnation by God.

Buddhism has been proven as a way of life which can blend with local native cultures in a flexible manner. Therefore, Buddhism grew and was integrated seamlessly in Tibet with the Tibetan culture, and in China with the Chinese culture. In all these cases, Buddhism did not deteriorate by detaching the fundamental concepts, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the taking of refuge to the Three Jewels. In my opinion, it is time that Buddhism in Indonesia sink more deeply in tune with the Indonesian culture.

Through history, we have learnt that when Buddhism was first introduced into China, it could not take root there, for the Chinese culture was different from its Indian counterpart. For instance, going around for alms with alms bowls (*pindapata*) is, in the Chinese view, a lowly act. When Buddhism was finally integrated within the Chinese culture, it then became a popular and fast growing religion there. Many holy men were living in that country, such as Hui Neng, the sixth Zen patriarch. Following that, Zen Buddhism of the Soto and Rinzai traditions made its way from China into Japan. Many great masters of Buddhism today, including H.H. Dalai Lama, Master Sheng Yen, Mahasi Sayadaw, D.T. Suzuki, Thich Nhat Hanh, and others, have made movements to introduce and bring the benefits of Buddhism to the Western World. Most of these great masters had the upbringing and studied Buddhism in places or countries where Buddhism is the key component of the social culture.

Could we expect to find Buddhism in China, Japan, or Tibet today if Buddhism were not fully integrated within their native cultures in the first place?

Many times, I have been truly awed by the Burmese, Tibetans, Japanese, and the Chinese, who have all been able to chant during the Buddhist *pujas*, while at the same time comprehend the meaning encapsulated within the chants. This is truly in stark contrast with most of the Buddhists in Indonesia. They chant the *sutras* during *pujas*, strong and melodious but like a parrot singing, with shallow or no knowledge at all as to the meaning of those *sutras*.

As we know it today, there are three major Buddhist traditions in Indonesia: the Theravada tradition, which uses Pali language; the Mahayana tradition, which uses the Chinese language; and the Vajrayana tradition, which, of course, uses the Tibetan language in all their religious ceremonies. The problem is that the majority of the Indonesians understand only one single language as their *lingua franca*, i.e. the Indonesian language. This has an implication in that as these people are participating in ceremonies in the viharas, be it the Theravada, Mahayana, or the Vajrayana viharas, their participation is no more than merely as parrots. They 'sing' with strong and melodious voice, but they do not comprehend the meaning of the 'songs.'

Under such circumstances, Buddhism would not be different from Brahmanism. As in Brahmanism, monks would then be viewed as holding on to the divine secrets, and as a medium between the worldlings with Lord Buddha in every such ceremony. This certainly does not

get well with the young generation, which tends to hold to more critical thinking. The *sutras* are laden with wisdom of Lord Buddha, however, conducting *pujas* and chanting of these *sutras* in a language that none can comprehend could only create new problems, i.e. the emergence of listless and unenlightened believers.

Many youth, who have not an inkling of comprehension on the *sutras* they are chanting, would then be easily swayed to attend the masses in Christian churches. In these churches, they have the liberty to attend the masses in the language of their choice. They are presented with an array of interesting choices. Masses are available in the Indonesian language, in the Chinese language, and even in the English language. Just like a superstore, Christian churches are able to fulfill the needs of the young generation. Further, Christians also hold the masses in local Indonesian dialects, such as in the Javanese language, the Batak language, and many more. Under this condition, these young people, who do not comprehend an iota of the *sutras* they are chanting, are susceptible to convert to other religions.

There is also a second group of people who do not possess full comprehension, but nevertheless still support Buddhism. This group of people would be blind followers of Buddhism. This group of people take pride in the new foreign cultural elements of the religion. Ignorance reigns supreme. In their opinion, chanting *sutras* in a particular language and with a particular style, is more sacred than chanting the same *sutras* in a different language and style.

Historically, Buddhism has been well known for its flexibility. I would like to conclude my talk with this: to further the propagation and promotion of Buddhism in Indonesia, as a young and new generation, we need to develop a Buddhism rooted and blended deeply with the Indonesian culture. That is: Buddhism in an Indonesian style, with Indonesian characteristics. In a wider perspective, wherever we go to spread Buddhism in this world, we need to sink the roots of Buddhism deep with the local culture. Furthermore, we should strive not to let emerge groups of blind followers. This, I believe, is an urgent and important task. Cultivating and spreading Buddhism in unison with the local native culture would, perhaps, be a better approach.

As part of the new generation, I believe my views may create many pros and cons. In a way, they may be viewed as a kind of new-age Buddhist movement in Indonesia. It is my sincere hope that in times to come, ironic tales about young Indonesian people, who convert to other religions on the pretext of having no comprehension of the *sutras* that they used to chant in the viharas, would no longer be heard. I wish that these tales be a thing of the past.

Ashin Nyanachatta
Ekayana Buddhist Centre



Photo sent by Yuliana, our alumni from Ekayana Buddhist Center, Indonesia, showing a ceremony to offer one million candles to Candi Borobudur on the full moon night of July.

Buddhism and Spiritual Ecology

To explore how Buddhism relates to nature, conservation and sustainable development, a group of US teachers recently travelled to the North to engage in an uplifting exercise in 'spiritual ecology.'

The course only lasted a week but this is a school with ample resources for year-round classes. Sometimes the day's activities took place in a watershed forest, sometimes on the ridge of a steep limestone cliff, sometimes in a remote hilltop village.

Doi Chiang Dao, a mountain Chiang Mai people regard as sacred, was a most fitting backdrop for an unusual programme called "Buddhism and Community-based Conservation." An innovative joint venture between US and Thai educators, it was an effort to bridge East and West, wherein the ultimate teacher was none other than Mother Nature herself.

For those seven days, 20 secondary-school teachers from the US reverted to being students. They went trekking, did walking and sitting meditation, listened to talks on dharma by a Buddhist monk, devoured tales from ethnic-Karen villagers, or simply sat still and watched the clouds floating by. And, judging from the feedback, each one of them seemed to have discovered a rich mine of wisdom from lessons readily provided by the forest.

"I really liked the day we went into the woods where we were asked to contemplate on nature," said Maria Schwartz, who hails from Ohio. "I realise that in order to live well, we need to be like big trees in the forest. For them to grow strong and tall,



their roots have to dig deeper into the ground to tap the underground water so that, no matter what happens outside, they'll always have fountains of life from underneath. I look back at myself. I need a good and strong foundation of life and it is deep inside my mind."

"For me, it was the day we had to climb up that rocky, muddy hill to reach the Karen village," said Page Prescott from New Mexico. "It was such a soulful experience and I still feel connected to the Karens and their rice-farming way of life."

Randy Merker, from Nevada, chipped in: "It's a great irony that Americans rarely feel connected with the rest of the world despite all the high technology. Most of us don't travel outside our country and we tend to believe what the media say, which sometimes leads to prejudice and conflicts."

"But here I have established a personal connection with Thai and Karen people and I'm sure no one can tell me otherwise what they are." This last he delivered with a gentle smile.

Such shrewd and honest insights seemed to please Chris Myers, director of Earth Expedition, the US partner in this course.

"Thailand is rich and unique in its natural resources, wildlife and its people," he said. "I'm impressed with the community-based work that has been happening here, especially in the area of conservation and education. I think such work [provides] good examples for us to develop work in similar veins.

"Buddhist philosophy and values not only provide a good model for individual development, but also serve as a great example for how it can be applied to and benefit community-based education and conservation tasks."

Every year, a group of graduate students in Miami University's Project Dragonfly get the chance to spend some time overseas. And this year it was Thailand's turn.

To enable his charges to really explore the spirit of the Kingdom, Myers enlisted the help of Thai friends of his. They included academics and activists from the Green World Foundation in Bangkok and the Chiang Rai-based Kwan Muang Institute.

Everybody agreed that one of the highlights of the week was a one-day trek through the woods with Phra Phaisan Visalo, the conservationist monk. But why take this forest-and-Buddhism slant?

"What is unique about Thailand is Buddhism and its people," Myers explained. "An understanding of conservation in Thailand would be incomplete without understanding how Buddhism relates to nature. Buddhism provides approaches to promote self-reflection and a healthy relationship between oneself and others, including nature."

His Thai colleagues agree:

The human element is a must.

"For the idea of conservation to work, to be sustainable, we need a shift of human consciousness. On their own, scientific knowledge and technological developments cannot help us conserve nature," said Sorrayut Ratanapojnard, director of the Thai Spiritual Health Programme, an offshoot of the Thai Health Promotion Office.

"Learning at the intellectual level, that is to read, think and remember, is still very limited and far from enough. We need to create a new consciousness, one that can be cultivated from inward or spiritual learning."

In its broadest sense, Sorrayut continued, the term "spiritual ecology" encompasses how humans find meaning and value in their environment. It is, indeed, one of the earliest forms of learning and in some cultures is still passed down from generation to generation. Take the Karen, for example. Every Karen child has to learn where exactly the 32 kwan (spirits of life) reside in the forest; some live in trees, they believe, some in animals and some in rocks. And each child is taught that the destruction of the abodes of these kwan will lead to the end of his or her own life.

"Spiritual ecology is experiential, contemplative and participatory learning," Sorrayut said. "It has to be first-person education, by which one uses one's body and mind as tools to learn about the world and the truth.

"Each individual must have direct experience or contact with the subject of learning, must contemplate deeply on the subject and be able to relate it to him or herself. From there, we will develop a deeper understanding, the right consciousness of how we should utilise and conserve nature."

When the connection between spiritual wisdom and wilderness was first mooted, many of these teachers must surely have thought of their compatriot, Henry Thoreau, the transcendentalist who led a reclusive two-year existence in Walden Woods and later wrote about the deep insights he gained from his experiences there.

And although it only lasted a single day, that trek through the forest covering Chiang Dao must surely have given the US visitors a taste of the transformative power of nature.

"Truth is expressing itself to us all the time and everywhere. It is we who need to clear our hearts in order to see it," said Phra Phaisan Visalo, the monk, writer and conservationist who led the party to the top of the mountain to visit Wat Pa Pang Ma-o. "There have been cases of monks who reached sudden enlightenment at the very moment that they saw leaves falling, or clouds in the sky."

To Phra Phaisan, falling leaves reveal the impermanent nature of all things. As do the constantly shifting clouds, everyday demonstrations of the interconnectedness and ceaseless transformation of all beings.

To reach this level of understanding requires some training, of course. But this training does not depend at all on the religious beliefs to which one subscribes. Nor is it particularly esoteric. Any newcomer to Buddhist philosophy can learn simple ways to cultivate awareness.

As part of their "Mindfulness in Nature" lesson, the teachers were asked to walk slowly behind Phra Phaisan and try to be mindful of every single step they took.

"Spend time in a natural environment for a while and your mind will absorb the peaceful nature of its surroundings and you will feel calm," he told them. "To realise the benevolence of nature, we need to listen to her sound and respect it. A lot of tourists go into the woods but unfortunately they bring along all their electronic gear to occupy themselves. Or they keep talking or singing or playing music."

After a while the monk called a halt and told everyone to find a spot to sit alone. "Keep the silence for a while," he said. "After that, contemplate on your current situation or your state of mind."

Except for the rustling of leaves and the humming of insects in the background, all is quiet for a time. Then Phra Phaisan spoke up: "Choose one natural thing around you; whatever attracts your attention the most. Contemplate on it. Try to see if it has some truth or message for you."

At the end of that al fresco session the revelations of what the party had discovered were both varied and remarkable.

"I used to see myself as a rock immovable, strong and in control," said one. "Not any more, though. I realise now that rocks can crumble into pieces. They can be moved by wind and water. I don't think I'm in control any more. In fact, I'm subject to change and impermanence."

"While I was sitting in silence," another member of the group said, "I heard leaves moving. Then I realised that it was the work of the wind. The wind can move leaves, branches and plants without being seen. Sometimes, things can be done without having to be seen."

Several others in the group

related themselves to climbing plants, noting that for life to progress, both people and vines need to be flexible, make gradual but steady movements and depend on strong foundations roots or community in order to grow up and some day reach the sunlight at the top of the forest.

At this point Phra Phaisan began speaking about the benefits that nature has to offer us. "Nature is the source of wisdom and ethics. When you are in despair, for example, look at the bees. These small creatures never lose heart. When someone takes away their hive, they don't drop dead or stop [moving]. What do they do? They go on and build a new one.

"If one goes out to find empowerment or moral support from nature, it always works," he added. "What we should do is open our hearts in order to see the wisdom and the lessons.

"Forests are considered sacred. Many Buddhist monks, from the Buddha's time up to the present day, became enlightened during pilgrimages in the forest," he said.

One such example was Phra Ajaan Mun Bhuridatta Mahathera (1870-1949), a highly revered forest monk who, as it happens, is believed to have attained enlightenment during a sojourn on this very same mountain.

But then, as Phra Phaisan noted, Buddhism is all about nature.

"The Buddha's life, from birth to Nirvana, was spent close to nature. He was born under a tree, attained enlightenment under a bodhi [pipal] tree and throughout his 45 years of teaching, he resided and preached in the forest. And even when he was dying, he lay down under a tree.

"Thus Buddha advised his disciples to practise and learn from nature. He often said that dharma was nature."

So, conserving nature could be seen as the duty of both Buddhist monks and laity, a fulfilment of their responsibility to cherish the source of wisdom. Which is why there is a long-standing Buddhist tradition of monks making pilgrimages into the forest and establishing monasteries there.

"Nature has a more powerful wisdom than any building or artificial material can offer," Phra Phaisan said.

On a more mundane level, he continued, nature provides us with the basic requisites for survival, from food, clothing, shelter, medicine and, most crucially, oxygen and water. "The quality of nature will define the quality of our lives."

Above and beyond the purely physical benefits, the beauty of nature entices us and gives us sensual pleasure a quality which, more and more these days, is being commoditised for "consumption" by tourists.

"For us to see the all-encompassing benevolence of nature, we need to respect it as our teacher and not [regard it as] material for economic growth, senseless consumption and exploitation," Phra Phaisan said.

"[If we possess] this right view, it will be hard, even impossible, for us to abuse nature, our teacher and life-giver."

Cultivating Wisdom from Nature

Regardless of whether you're in the heart of the city or out in the countryside, you can always re-establish a connection with nature and learn from it. The sky, wind, stars and moon; flowers, rocks, grass, trees, animals and human beings; they all carry some pearls of wisdom inside. Here are some tips on how to enhance your sensitivity to "natural truth".

Seek a location, preferably in natural surroundings, where you can sit undisturbed and contemplate. It could be your own garden, a park, a beach or some wild place in the middle of nowhere. But it could equally be a city street choked by rush-hour traffic.

Sit still and be silent for a while, at least five minutes until you start to feel calm and peaceful.

Then take a few minutes to reflect on your current situation or your state of mind.

Next, look at whatever nature is around you and choose the thing that most attracts your attention. It could be a bush, a bunch of weeds, a bird, a patch of sand, some seashells whatever. Even if you're stuck in the middle of a ferocious traffic jam, you can always look up at the sky, at the clouds or focus on a roadside tree, at the insect on your windscreen, even. Pick something and concentrate on it for a while.

Contemplate on its meanings, and the wisdom it brings to your mind. The first time you try this you may have difficulty concentrating but after repeated practice, insights from nature will reveal themselves faster and more clearly.

And, every now and then, do make the time to get out into real wilderness. For, according to Phra Phaisan Visalo, deep in the forest is where the power of wisdom, and the insights it brings, is most intense.

Karnjariya Sukrung
The Dhamma Times,
(10 July 2005)

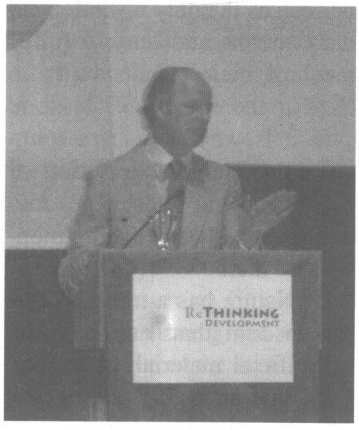
Gross National Happiness Gains Momentum Re-thinking Development in Canada

A lively platform for interaction on shaping alternative development is the movement supporting the idea of Gross National Happiness, a concept launched by His Majesty the King of Bhutan, a small Himalayan country squeezed between China (Tibet) and India. His Majesty declared that Gross National Happiness (GNH) is more important for his people than Gross National Product (or Gross Domestic Product = GDP).

A new episode in this process recently unfolded in Nova Scotia, on the Atlantic coast of Canada, 20-24 June 2005. The incredibly fascinating element of this conference **'Re-thinking Development. Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing'** held at St. Francis Xavier University was that the whole flow of exchanges was patterned according to *the Four Pillars of Gross National Happiness.*

Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley, the former Prime Minister of Bhutan, in the beginning of the conference laid out clearly how the insight of the *Four Pillars* had grown and how the people of Bhutan and its government are working towards the operationalization of Gross National Happiness. And he made an appeal to the conference participants to formulate advice for the 40-person' delegation from Bhutan during the last day, organized as a hearing. 'We have no model to offer, we are no example of best practices. To us the realization of GNH is as much a challenge as in any country of the world'.

'The Four Pillars are: Environmental Preservation, Cultural Promotion, Good Governance and Sustainable and Equitable Economic Development. This is not a dogma, we are flexible. We are here to listen.'



His Excellency John Ralston Saul : good governance essential for GNH

The readers of *Seeds of Peace* may primarily be interested in the cultural pillar of GNH. However, in order to honor the holistic approach it is essential to see initiatives in all four sectors as interrelated. Therefore a brief overview of contributions from all over the world, divided over the pillars, is given here.

As environment is the given foundation of all life, while culture, governance and economy are man-made we imagine the GNH concept as three pillars sustaining the fourth pillar. In the past we could extract from the environment at will. Nowadays, we must to sustain nature in order to preserve her, and in many instances we have to rehabilitate nature from damage.

This particular imagination of the four pillars corresponds to the approach of *threefolding* as presented at the second SVN Asia conference in Singapore by Nicanor Perlas, Right Livelihood recipient from the Philippines. In Perlas' visionary understanding of the social dynamics of globalization he distinguishes three domains: Culture is the domain of civil society; governance and legislation the domain of governments; and the economic sector is the domain of the business community in its full diversity. The common interest to managing the environment sustainably creates *tri-sector cooperation.*

It is amazing that the structure of the Four Pillars as *a healing strategy* for unbalanced, devastating globalization, is offered to the world by the government of Bhutan. Bhutan being one of the poorest and least developed countries of the world if measured according to official, mainstream criteria!

The conference in Canada offered an optimistic signal that globalization could gradually crystallize in a process of consensus towards a cooperative pattern based on common understanding of three, sustaining a fourth, autonomous domains of civil interaction. However this common understanding and shaping of the process of globalization will only work out if based on groundwork at the community level. Many examples from the grassroots were presented with great enthusiasm during the conference.

Remarkable representatives of Cultural Promotion were, in the first place, Karma Ura from the Centre of Bhutan Studies



Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley, former Prime Minister of Bhutan with Siok Sion Pek-Dorji

who pictured an in-depth perspective of the Bhutanese Buddhist tradition from which the four pillar-philosophy emerged. An intriguing mixture of contemplative Tibetan tradition and modern life-style was personified in Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, one of the sons and the lineage bearer of Choegyam Trungpa. Trungpa founded the Shambala Movement, including Naropa University in Boulder, USA, and the Shambala community in Nova Scotia, Canada. His son Sakyong guided a creative, sometimes puzzling, meditation to open the conference.

A confrontation between tradition and modernity full of creative enigma was presented in the film *Words of My Perfect Teacher* with Bhutanese Buddhist teacher Khyentse Norbu. The film shows the trips of the London-based teacher and his disciples as crazy fans to a World Cup football match in Munich as well as to his home-country of Bhutan where devoted laypeople revere him in total surrender. Media representatives were Siok Sian Pek-Dorji of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation (managing 54 tv-channels in Bhutan!), Paul Shore of the Guerilla News Network and John deGraaf, producer of *Affluenza.*

Another thought provoking title in the Documentary Film Festival organized concurrently with the conference was *The Corporation* including forty interviews with corporate insiders and critics like Ray Anderson (Founder and Chairman of Interface Inc. a carpet and furnishing giant in the USA and one of the speakers at the conference), Milton Friedman, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and Michael Moore. It discusses the impact on our world culture of corporate law in the USA.

An essential role in the *Rethinking Development* conference was played by the native Canadians, representatives of a diversity of 'First Nations' or indigenous clans. Especially moving was the presentation of Cindy Blackstock on the fate of indigenous children who were as a matter of routine separated from their parents by the invaders of Canada—and their majority generations—and put into compulsory boarding schools. This was the case until as recently as 1995. Up until the present day many children of native Canadians are uprooted and need the good care of social work.

His Excellency John Ralston Saul in his speech recognized both the tragic fate in history, and the important role to play by the indigenous peoples towards Canada's future. Humanity will have to understand again animism, the sacred life forces in nature, in order to ground with adequate depth their urgently needed common commitment towards environmental rehabilitation. What counts for the 'alternative movement' however, according to Saul, is whether we can gain real *power.*

Crucial for the mood and atmosphere of the conference was the full participation of teenagers and students. They did not just talk but used every nerve and muscle to build their houses with straw and other local, natural materials.

After this dazzling festival of good ideas and practices, the final (and optional) day consisted of a hearing to advise and support the Bhutanese delegation on the further development of the Gross National Happiness movement. Sombath Somphone from Laos, who, once back in his country, received the *Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership*, proposed that countries in the Mekong subregion could exchange ideas with the people from Bhutan. The Mekong river springs from the Himalayas, the Tibetan plateau and follows its course through Southern China, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The cultural epicenter of the Mekong subregion, that connects peoples divided by state frontiers but with common cultural concerns, is Wat Angkhor in Cambodia.

Hans van Willenswaard
Wallapa Kuntiranont

To Gandhi—Forever My Hero:
Inspiration from the 1st Advanced GLT Study Visit to India

The strong golden light shone through the sheer curtain into my bedroom in the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. I hardly opened up my eyes. I was still very tired after returning at 2 o'clock the previous night from visiting five night-shelters for the homeless in Delhi.

The picture of smiling Gandhi—the father of modern India and my idol—on the wall in front of me reminded me of many poor people I visited. Some of them died from car crashes since they had to sleep on footpaths. Some dead bodies have been left under the toll way for more than three months as nobody paid attention to them.

I smiled at him and silently asked him the silliest question I have ever made. "What are the causes of those sufferings, and how can we free those people from their plight? It is such a simple and stupid question, isn't it? Well, if you don't know, then who would?"



Dehra Dun and Himalaya

The 1st Advanced Grassroots Leadership Training (the 1st Advanced GLT-Burma) in India started the next day, and lasted for 4 weeks. With the continuous support from SEM, 24 seeds of peace from Burma attended a brushing-up program. They were GLT-Burma alumni who have been working for their communities development and social harmony for more than five years. This program was organized according to their needs. They wished to broaden the perspective on social movements in other countries and to develop the techniques/strategies of implementing their development projects. Though small but memorable, one feature of the program was ethnic diversity. Ethnic minorities such as Kachin, Mon, Wa, Lisu, Lahu, Shan, and Shin were included. Friendship increased everyday through sharing, trekking, helping, understanding, and experiencing things together in India.

We spent the first week in Northern India with the staff of *Bija Vidyapeeth*—the prominent alternative ecological college based in Dehra Dun and the villagers. We discussed organic farming and local movements to protect the diversity of seeds and indigenous culture. There, we also experienced how to make many kinds of compost. Our participants enjoyed the compost making workshop very much. Also, in Dehra Dun, we were impressed by the advanced philosophy of Education from *Nunhi Dunya School* ran by Aloke Alfat's family. The school's emphasis was on freedom of learning through art and respecting the children's different interests.

In the second week, we departed from Dehra Dun to the Himalaya foothills. We learned how to wisely provide education for the locals based on local resources with the *Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas (SIDH)* in Mussoorie. SIDH showed and shared their insight on how to strengthen local people to be teachers and how to work with them to organize development projects based on the hilly environment and indigenous culture. There, we had a chance to visit three local schools with teachers who are SIDH—trained villagers. What an impressive and inspiring development project we learned there!

During the last three days of this week, we trekked to Himalaya villages in Budhakedar amidst heavy snow. It took us six

hours to climb the high and (in some parts) steep hills. We planned to visit three villages by foot. Unfortunately we had to cancelled it, since nature was not on our side. It was the heaviest snow in the last 70 years. How unlucky we were! Anyway, all participants, including myself, were very excited to touch the snow for the first time in their lives. So, we spent the first day simply enjoying the snow. Finally, we did not want to waste our sweat for climbing and getting nothing except having fun. We invited five women and two men from the village to discuss with us about their lives, traditions, and development projects. In our frozen surroundings, tiredness, fun, curiosity, excitement, boredom, worry, and friendship pervaded in our minds again and again. It finally created a long-lasing impression in our memory. We all returned to Budhakedar valley with smiles, even after the extremely tough trekking, especially for those who were over 40 years old.

Another impressive session was the Yoga Retreat in Rishikesh led by Dr. Ramu Manivannan —a Kalayanamitta (good friend) of SEM from South India. In Rishikesh, after yoga in the morning, we meditated alongside the Ganges River. We shared the Gandhian thought and spiritual experiences with one another. All weariness from the trekking had been taken away after the retreat. We all were definitely ready for the next intensive session in Delhi.

On the way to Raj Ghat, Gandhi Memorial Park, New Delhi

Those memories occasionally came into my mind on my way to Raj Ghat—Gandhi Memorial Park. We had cancelled visiting the Gandhi museum as it was closed very early at 3 pm. I was disappointed because I regard it as the highlight of the program to know more about Gandhi.

We reached Raj Ghat late in the afternoon. To me, the park was nothing more than a recreation place for urban people: People taking photos with many kinds of lovely flowers. I was not sure what to expect from visiting this place. I just felt unhappy and a bit disappointed deep inside without knowing why.

The next two days, we visited four NGOs in Delhi. The first one was *Parivartan* which supports the struggle of the poor and exploited people for their basic rights against corruption. The second one was the *We for Change Foundation* which works on environment protection. Next was *Center for Science and Environment (CSE)* which researches and runs projects on nature preservation and restoration and supports the poor who are affected by the environmental crisis in industrial cities and rural areas. The last one was Aashray Adhikar Abhiyaan (AAA) which works with a hundred thousand homeless in Delhi. They focus on providing basic needs for the poor such as shelters, health care, etc.

Having experienced the lives of brothers and sisters in India, and the hard work of local NGOs to support them, we were immensely inspired and encouraged to go on with our work. "Whenever we are in low spirits, just think of the works of AAA for a hundred thousand homeless or of *We for Change* to clean the Yamuna in Delhi. You'll see that they are facing more challenges and hard works."

On the flight back to Thailand:

I could not sleep at all while flying back to Siam. It was not only due to my acrophobia but also my memory about the recent experiences.

The training itself was not so strenuous, though. We visited the *Understanding Theater of the Oppressed* (UTOO) and learned performing art as a tool for social movement for five days. In the meantime we met two prominent thinkers of India —Vandana Shiva and Ashis Nandy, and the prime minister of Tibet in Exile—The Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche.

The three resource persons spoke on different topics. Vandana Shiva talked about the biodiversity movement and the monoculture process of globalization. Ashis Nandy's topic was nationalism. The Ven. Samdhong Rinpoche lectured on "The Tibetan in Exile and limitations of development work inside Tibet." From my observation, the most common thing they had done so far was to struggle for peace through non-violence.

I did not mean to compare them with Gandhi in order to strengthen my faith in him. I truly respected their ideas. Still, it appeared to me the flavor of Gandhi is behind them, the flavor of peace. Gandhi's influence, though quite ideal, was handed down from generation to generation. Seeds of peace have been planted from time to time out of such influences. We came back home with great inspiration in addition to knowledge. The seed of hope—of building peace in the world by peaceful means—are being planted everywhere, not only in India but in other coun-

tries, too.

I pray for you to rest in peace, Gandhi. Don't worry about the questions I just asked. Allow me to repeat them to myself; and they will inspire me to search for the answers myself as you had done in your life.

Though I could not find the answers yet, I promise I will never give up.

Phornphan Srikhatthanaprom

Taking It to the Streets

Bangkok, Thailand. He considers himself the Boyd Kosiyapong of the clerical community. As a songwriter and musician, Boyd produces popular tunes with such wide ranging appeal that they please both grandmothers and grandsons.

Best-selling monk Phra Maha Wudhijaya Vajiramedhi is using modern means to promote and popularise the age-old teachings of the Lord Buddha It is in that particular respect that best-selling monk Phra Maha Wudhijaya Vajiramedhi, who writes under the pen name W. Vajiramedhi, warrants comparison. His work, which appears in the form of books, magazine articles, TV dramas and dharma songs, is read, listened to or viewed by people from five to 90 years old, from members of non-governmental organisations to the prime minister.

"I write 10 columns for magazines and newspapers at present," noted Phra Maha Wudhijaya, 32, as he sat down behind a low table in the upstairs reception area of his kuti at Wat Benchamabopitr. On it sat a large and thick appointment book.

"I have started to accept invitations for lecture and dharma talks for a couple of years," the monk said. He shook a glass full of uniformly brown-coloured, sharpened pencils. "Someone gave them to me," he indicated. "I actually write with a computer notebook."

One of the most prolific monks around, Phra Maha Wudhijaya has written more than 20 books. One of them, *Dharma Tid Peek* (Words of Wisdom), was made into a TV programme for children. It was so popular that a second season is being made. The series also won the Golden TV award as an outstanding drama for social development.

The range of publications that the monk contributes to is indicative of his breadth and popularity. It includes almost anything from hard-news newspapers like *Matichon* to cooking magazine *Health & Cuisine*, relationship titles such as *Love and Share*, strictly dharma and amulet publications like *Thong Dharma* (Flag of Dharma) and Saksith (Sacred), as well as the practical guide Kae Jon (Stopping Poverty).

A studious monk who reads three newspapers a day and has more than 5,000 books in his possession, Phra Maha Wudhijaya started writing because he wanted to popularise Buddhist teachings as a practical tool to solve problems in everyday life.

"In terms of canon, we have some of the best written by the likes of P.A. Payutto or the late Buddhadasa. It is applied dharma for a majority of people - members of the middle class or the young generations - that we still lack," he said.

One of his books, *Tai Laew Kerd Mai Tam Nai Buddhasasana* (Rebirth in the Buddhist Context), caught the eyes of Amarin Publishing's top executive Metta Utakapan. She invited him to write for the company's magazines and later published a series of dharma-made-easy books including *Dharma Lab-Sabai* (now available in English under the title of Anger Management), *Dharma Dub Ron* (The Recipes for Success) and *Dharma Bandan* (The Inspiration) among others.

Phra Maha Wudhijaya cites his love of reading and learning—not only of religious matters but of social and current affairs—as the resources for his work. "I don't shut myself in the temple. I try to expose myself to society and to things that are happening in people's lives. I travel," the monk said, adding that he started reading the Tripitaka and encyclopaedia when he was 15.

"I love learning, so much it sometimes becomes a bit of a problem. I have two secular degrees now but every time I see some new courses opening, I still feel like taking them. I have to tell myself that I must know what is enough, that it is better to know my handful of leaves well than to seek every leaf in the forest," said the monk, who holds a bachelor's degree in education from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, and a master's of Buddhist studies from Mahachulalongkorn.

This love of reading can be traced back to his childhood. A native of Ban Krueng Tai, Chiang Rai, Phra Maha Wudhijaya described himself as the family's bookish, compliant youngest son. He was always with his mother when she went to make merit at a local temple.

"I've liked the idea of being a monk since I was a child. It could be said it was love at first sight," he said, adding that his primary school shared the same wall with the temple and the sight of saffron robes was uplifting to him. When he finished primary school at age 14, he received ordination as a novice and continued his religious and secular studies concurrently.

"I did not feel deprived that I could not run around dancing and having fun like my friends or people of the same age. I entered the religious life because of faith, not necessity," he said.

"My family is happy with it. I was by nature a studious child and I became even more learned as a novice. I memorised all the sermons. I read all the books there were at the temple's library."

At 21, he was fully ordained as a monk. Later, he took residence at Wat Benchamabopitr to continue his Pali studies.

"As a novice, I studied to enrich myself," he recalled. "As a monk, the aim of my study was to teach others. Also, I started to practice meditation. And I realised that the practice was indeed the core of monkhood." He added that meditation makes him realise that there is a certain kind of joy beyond senses, a fine sense of happiness which not many people know exists.

"As a novice, I was not that different from lay teenagers. I sometimes listened to music and songs from a small radio that I had. Once I learned meditation and had a chance to stay alone and practise in the forest, I stopped enjoying it. I gave the radio away and I have practised meditation ever since," the monk said.

With demands from the outside increasing, both for his writing and his lectures, how does he juggle between the needs to promote dharma and to continue his own education?

"Meditation is not just about sitting still with your eyes closed," the monk remarked. "You can do it while going about your everyday life, doing chores. I train myself to concentrate when I write my columns—I only write one draft. I practise self-awareness when I take a bath, do cleaning or walk along the road to receive alms in the morning."

Phra Maha Wudhijaya emphasised that while he certainly sets aside time to do "proper" sitting-down-with-closed-eyes meditation, many times work and life could be blended into a whole act of cultivating mindfulness and wisdom.

With news about the misdeeds of monks and conflicts in the clergy's hierarchical administration hitting the headlines frequently, Phra Maha Wudhijaya believes that the Sangha has no choice but to strengthen its knowledge of the Buddha's dharma and to engage more with society. "The Sangha can no longer wait for people to come to the wat. We have to reach out and use all modern means and media to get dharma to the people. If the Sangha fails to do that, it will eventually lose its role in contemporary society. It would become like one of those decaying old chedis in Ayutthaya—once very sacred and important but now just a mark on the road for people to make a U-turn," he said.

As a monk, Phra Maha Wudhijaya views financial interests, fame and sexual desires as the three top challenges that each must face. He is well aware that one of them - popularity - has been knocking on his kuti door. "Fame is like the wind. It can make us feel fresh but we can't really hold onto it. What I can do is to divert the popularity to benefit other useful causes," he said.

On financial interest, the monk said that he used all the royalties he received from his books and columns to build a library at his hometown wat.

He acknowledged that among the three defilements, desire is perhaps the most formidable. "There were 40 monks who were ordained at the same time with me. They have long quit the monkhood and have family. I'm the only one from the batch that remains."

The young monk said that in his case it was helpful that he'd had a chance to gradually study and train himself all along from being a novice to a monk.

"I have had some sort of immunity from the training. The rest is about common sense and ethics. If we know who we are and what status we are in, we'll behave accordingly and then we'll be safe," said Phra Maha Wudhijaya, who has been in the monkhood for 19 years.

The monk's next project is to produce books about Buddhism for children. "I would like to write a book like *The Little Prince* but with Buddhist concepts. Perhaps *The Little Buddha*," he said. "Children are seedlings for the future. We have to give them good fertiliser."

Atiya Achakulwisut,
Bangkok Post, July 31, 2005

Paramadhamma

A Lecture in "The Dhammakosana Series of Lectures"
to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa

"Paramadhamma" is a term introduced by Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa as a synonym to *nibbana*. Generally, Buddhists tend to see *nibbana* as remote and unattainable. But in his book *Paramadhamma* Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa articulates that, in fact, *nibbana* is a state of mind that any people can experience.

Another synonym that is better known is *paramatthadhamma*. This term has an extra word in the middle, i.e. *attha*. *Attha* means the meaning or value of life. It refers to 'Saphāvadhamma' (Principle of nature) that manifests in our lives. Therefore, for Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa, *paramadhamma, paramatthadhamma,* and *nibbana* share the same meaning.

Three levels of the meaning of life

In discussing the meaning of life, the Buddha defined it in three levels. Firstly, *ditthadhamikatta* is the meaning that can be perceived immediately and intellectually. Secondly, *samparayikattha* is the meaning in the life to come or long-term meaning. Lastly, *paramattha* refers to the ultimate meaning. And, it is the main topic here.

However, when talking about *paramatthadhamma* (the ultimate meaning), we should also mention *Sammatidhamma* (conventional meaning). It is a definition given to something based on mutual agreement and understanding. Nowadays, people are trapped in the conventional rather than the ultimate meaning. But the ultimate meaning can be understood through conventional meaning.



There are many ways to experience *paramadhamma*, e.g. through direct experience, helping others, reading, harmonizing with nature, and meditation. Among these ways, meditation leads to the most profound experience.

Many a time we admire someone outstanding. In that very moment, we look down on the remaining ordinary people. When newspapers made news of a Thai student who got a gold medal from the academic Olympics, we must be aware that we are violating many other students. Such attitude may cause them to feel that they are meaningless. Therefore, *paramadhamma* or *paramatthadhamma* is what we have to perceive beyond immediate meaning or even long-term meaning.

We can realize the meaning of life when doing something not for ourselves but for the benefit of the public. Moreover, the meaning of life can be experienced when we harmonize ourselves with nature by not trying to discriminate, by not being judgmental. Rather, we should surrender ourselves with it and become part of it. Then, we would reach a point where happiness is.

According to Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa, *paramadhamma* can be practiced at any age. Not only the elderly but also the youth can learn and understand it. In order to reach *paramadhamma*, one should start from infancy. When sucking the milk from the mother's breast, the baby starts to learn about patience (*khanti*), and effort (*viriya*). Moreover, since breast milk is not as delicious as factory milk, it is also the time to learn the meaning of *kavalinkārāhāra* (material as food). It is something that is nutritious but not tasty. Those who missed this kind of chance seem to be further far away from *paramadhamma*.

Paramadhamma at social level and Interconnectedness

Paramadhamma must be understood also at the social level. This is the practice of Dhamma that is profound and beneficial, i.e. sharing suffering with others who are not our acquaintance. It is the practice without division of the self, but it is for the creation of loving-kindness (mettā) and compassion (karunā) in the society and community. The practice of Dhamma in the community helps us to realize that our selves are in fact non-self. It also convinces us that loving-kindness and compassion must underline the community structure so as to hold together

every unit of the community. We may use the sangha (in this case means the community of the ordained) as an example. Nowadays, there are many problems in the sangha. One of them is the lost of communal spirit in the sangha. We have a group of monks as individuals, while the real meaning of sangha is a community with loving-kindness and compassion.

Pramuan Pengchan, the discussion leader, shared with the other participants his involvement with relief work for Shan refugees in Siam. Such work made him forget the discourse on human beings given by either the Thai or the Burmese state. But he saw only human beings who relate to him. Once such understanding occurs in our minds, our lives would be meaningful—we begin to contribute to the society. We will be concerned more about social structures rather than individual problems.

It is generally understood that *śati* (consciousness) is only at the individual level. But in fact there is consciousness at the social level as well since from the ultimate or *paramadhammà* perspective, the individual is not separate from society. But we cannot create social consciousness unless we have the individual one. If we cultivate our own consciousness, we can make a change even without intention.

The Buddha himself opposed social injustices in his time such as the caste system, the prohibition against using the languages of certain groups, etc.

Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa, when addressing such issue, always emphasized on suchness and non-self. He did not call for withdrawal. Instead he encouraged us to "do our duties." It is very clear today because a lot of university students want to earn money or win personal success rather than doing their duties.

Most people think that Prince Siddhattha got enlightened by his own efforts. But in fact, his enlightenment is the product of humankind. As we know, the Buddha was born incalculable times to accumulate merits, which are the results of interaction with others. His enlightenment did not simply result from his own struggle but from people around him.

To this point we may think that our success such as graduation is due to our own effort. But thinking thoroughly, we would see that our graduation was brought about by the actions of many people including our parents. Nowadays, success is becoming individual success, so is merit.

Once we understand the social dimension of *paramadhamma*, we would understand social structural problems and could find answers on social ethics. Surely, we would not allow someone or some group in our society to take advantages of others. Instead, we would cultivate loving-kindness and compassion in society.

To diminish individualism, there is *sārānīyadhamma*, which is the principle for living in society. The six-point principle consists of compassionate action, compassionate speech, compassionate thought, sharing of gain or benefit, agreement on and respect of discipline and rules, and embracing the same understanding. The main point is not to stress on individualism but on the mentality/ideology of the sangha or community. The mentality to which we subscribe will bring about the ideal path or approach.

People often think of ideology in terms of politics. In search for either communist or democratic ideology, millions of lives had been destroyed. But from the Buddhist point of view, our ideology is *nibbaba*. And the ideal path is the noble eightfold path and threefold training.

In order to reach *paramadhamma*, we should understand its two aspects: social and individual. Practicing dhamma means an appropriate interaction between oneself and the world. If these aspects are satisfactory, i.e. the world provides encouraging circumstances and contemplation skills are cultivated, it would be easy.

The structure of Buddhism —the structure of life

To obtain the right understanding in Buddhism, we have to understand the structure of Buddhism, which is called *sarana* (refuge). We take refuge in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The Buddha is the knowing, the awakening and the joy. Dhamma is practice, and not only theory. Sangha means community in terms of interrelatedness, coexistence, living and working together. Sangha is an important instrument to spread knowledge throughout the society. Understanding such structure leads to the right attitude to embrace *paramadhamma* or the whole teachings of the Buddha.

According to Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa, we have to live our lives according to the trisikkha (the threefold training), which are sīla (precept), samādhi (meditation), and paññā (Wisdom) in order to internalize such refuge. Wisdom does not mean remembering enormous information. Rather it connotes the mind that has overcome defilements.

Therefore, to him, the structure of Buddhism is in fact the structure of life.

Moreover, in order to live our lives according to the structure of Buddhism, there are two dimensions of practices. Firstly, *pahānadhamma* means qualities to be eradicated, e.g. greed, hatred and delusion. Secondly, *bhāvanā* means qualities to be developed such as sharing, compassion, wisdom, etc. Wisdom can be seen as the capacity of our consciousness to recognize the values around us that connect us with others.

After *pahāna* (giving up) and *bhāvanā* (developing), qualities that follow include *nibbidā* (dispassion), *virāga* (detachment to feelings) *vimutti* (freedom), *visuddhi* (purity), and *santi* (peace)

Deep materialism

In his book *Paramadhamma*, Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa has elaborated on materialism so much that it became another keyword. He first mentioned this term in 1969 when the disadvantage of materialism was not as severe as now.

Materialism that influences the world today means that the meaning of our lives is created from the materials that we possess. We feel we are meaningful only when we possess materials. Such idea is in contrast to the Buddhist concept. In Buddhism, non-possession is the most excellent. That's why we pay respect to monks. We respect them because they possess nothing. If they start to accumulate materials, they become similar or equal to the laity, and then we would not respect them. Their livelihood is a good example for Buddhist laypeople. The less they possess the more happiness they gain even though they don't know whether they would have anything to eat the next day.

In response to the economic crisis in Siam, the government followed the materialistic resolution by giving out money to villages to stimulate consumption. On the contrary, according to the Buddhist Way, instead of fund, we should mobilize dhamma. The suffering of people nowadays is not caused by lack of material, rather by lack of dhamma. In the past people had to utilize objects from nature but now we live in a comfortable and convenient condition. But the comfort and the convenience do not give more happiness as in the past

At the deepest level, materialism is not only the consumption of material per se. Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa discusses materialism in the first part of the book *Paramadhama* in terms of the four kinds of food. The first kind of food is *kavalinkārāhāra* or material as food that people consume. It is within human capacity to identify what is good or bad food. Secondly, *phassāhāra* which is nutriment consisting of contact. People consume form, taste, odour, sound, touch and mind-object. This kind of food is manifested in the mass media that make us addicted to form, taste, odour, sound, touch and image associated with the products. Thirdly, *manosañcetanāhāra* which is expectation as food. It is necessary for life to be meaningful. In the capitalist society, people consume the economic indicators that show the growth or material or technological prosperity. Such food allows people to exploit others while fulfilling the expectation. The deepest kind of consumption is *viññānāhāra* or consciousness as food. It means we consume the meaning or discourse. Materialism as we see today is reaching the conscious level now. For example, when we consume a pair of sneakers of American brand, in reality they are not made in the USA, but in China. But the consciousness of brand name was manipulated in a way that what we consume is the formless meaning of such American sneakers, and no longer the object solely. The values, too, are manipulated. Thai people feel inferior due to their small built bodies or dark skin. We are made to feel that to be meaningful, Thai people should look like westerners.

To summarize, one should remember that the meaning of life will be cultivated only in the heart that is filled with loving-kindness and compassion, or "love" for short. Everyone is encouraged to develop the heart so that it is full of love for all beings. We can start from those who are dear to us, our husband/wife, sons/daughters, relatives, neighbour, all fellow human beings, animal and all beings.

Once we cultivate love for anything, it will become our meaning of life. We will care for it. If we love the world, we will be kind to everything in this world. The world will become meaningful to us. Such meaning is *paramadhamma*. Everyone should be encouraged to search for it, because *paramadhamma* is in fact in the heart of everyone.

Pramuan Pengchan

Note: 2006 will be the centenary of the late Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa. The Dhammakosana Lecture Series is organized to discuss his *magnum opus, Dhammakosana*, consisting of more than 70 huge volumes on Buddhism. This article summarizes the contents of a lecture based on a book in the series called *Paramadhamma*.

1000 Women for Nobel Peace Prize

This year is the time to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first woman Nobel Peace Laureate. She was Bertha von Suttner, who was recognized for her dedication to the peace campaign. In our time, countless women have been working in every corner of the world to build peace. To honor them and make their work widely recognized, a campaign for 1000 Women for Nobel Peace Prize was initiated by some Swiss peacemaking NGOs and organizations. The project is supported worldwide.

Among the 1000 women, some of them are friends of INEB. We would like to extend our best wishes to them.



Douangdeuane Bounyavong

Douangdeuane Bounyavong (Laos) is widely recognized for her dedication to improving literacy, education and culture preservation in Laos.



Bhinand Chotirosseranee

Bhinand Chotirosseranee (Siam) for her dedication to the protection of environment and campaign against the government's development project that entails ecological devastation and sufferings of ethnic minorities.



AOP women members protesting against the construction of Rasi Salai Dam

Women's Group of The Assembly of the Poor (AOP) (Siam) for the spirit and bravery in struggling against the unjust and violent socio-political-economic structures of the country.



The Venerable Dhammananda

The Venerable Dhammananda (Siam) for her scholarship in Buddhism and her devotion to improving the education and the status of Buddhist nuns and women.



Stella Tamang

Stella Tamang (Nepal) for her dedication to the rights of women, indigenous peoples, and religious minorities.

The 2005 INEB Conference: Buddhists and Social Equity

9-16 October 2005
at Nagaloka, Bhilgaon, Nagpur, Maharashtra, INDIA

9 October 2005
Arrival at Nagpur, Maharashtra, India
10-11 October 2005
Pre-conference workshop
12 October 2005
The ceremony to celebrate the 49th anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion
12-16 October 2005
The 2005 INEB Conference
17-18 October 2005
Pilgrimage to Ajanta and Ellora caves (optional)

The registration form and conference information is available at both INEB (ineboffice@yahoo.com) and Dhammacari Lokamitra (inebindia@jambudvipa.org)

The 2005 Ramon Magsaysay Awards

Congratulations to our friends who are Magsaysay Awardees this year:

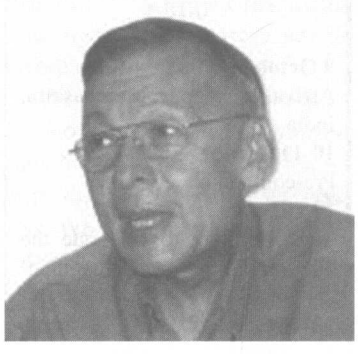


Sombath Somphone

Sombath Somphone (Laos)

Empowering the youth for community leadership

More than half of the population of Laos is below twenty years old; with few opportunities and increasing social problems at home, many look for better lives abroad. But for Sombath Somphone, these three million young people are precisely his country's best hope to build a better future; his work in the Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC) in Vientiane reflects this conviction and his teams of young volunteers-cum-trainees exemplify his commitment to participatory learning and leadership development. Reaching as many as 9000 youth in any given weeks, PADETC programs empower high-school-aged "Weekend Volunteers" to work on educational materials and activities for younger children, university-level "Green Ants" to promote environmental awareness and eco-friendly practices, and post-graduate trainees to do fieldwork in social and economic concern, particularly at the grassroots. Somphone founded PADETC in 1996 to foster sustainable, equitable and self-reliant development in Laos; today it remains the only officially recognized organization of its kind in the country, and is creatively combining its development advocacy with the formation of confident young leaders for the future.



Jon Ungphakorn

Jon Ungphakorn (Siam)

Advocating the people's agenda

In Siam's fledgling democracy, Jon Ungphakorn upholds the Senate's role as an independent institution that monitors the government and shapes the country's law. Using his position as Senator to advocate for the rights and concerns of marginalized group, Ungphakorn has addressed diverse issues including access of HIV/AIDS patients to affordable drugs and health care, threats to rural livelihood posed by government's mega-development projects, the brutal treatment of minority communities in the country's south, the lack of transparency in media reporting on the violation of human rights. His crusade for social justice and responsive governance is rooted in many years of pioneering social activism which included founding the Thai Volunteer Service to expose privileged university graduates to the country's rural poor, helping the country's nascent civil society gain expertise and resources, setting up the AIDS-Access Foundation to address the needs of persons with HIV/AIDS and their families and to fight the public stigma of AIDS, among others.
(www.rmaf.org.ph)

60 Years of Achieving Peace in Siam

If one learns a Western language, be it English, French, German, or even Latin or Greek for that matter, one has to bear in mind the tenses used in such language to indicate time, as verbs can denote the past, present or future tenses. In the Thai language, however, the concept of tenses does not exist; therefore the words "60 Years of Achieving Peace in Siam" in the Thai language can either stand for the six decades following the proclamation of peace on 16 August 1945 or the six decades to come in developing peace in Siam. Reading the minds of the organisers, I can imagine that they want me to emphasise on the events from the past to the present day. Let me, however, bridge today's events to the future as well, as I believe that this would undoubtedly be the aspirations of my fellow peace-loving public to find solutions to the ongoing conflicts and violence that have plagued this Kingdom as well as other parts of the world.

Come to think of it, in the six decades that have passed, conflicts and violence have been spread in this Kingdom much more than the sowing of seeds of peace.

One can easily consider that the more democratic a society is, the more peace it develops. On the contrary, the more dictatorial a society becomes, either in the forms of economic, political, educational or cultural dictatorship in the guise of democracy, the more its citizens will be deprived of their rights, thus eventually leading to conflicts and violence.

What has just been said is the introduction and summary of my address today, which would hopefully lead the way to a more peaceful situation, for the private and the public alike, from today at least to the coming six decades.

Let me begin by recalling that when Pridi Banomyong as Regent to King Ananda Mahidol made the peace proclamation on 16 August 1945, this was a genuine achievement of peace in Siam. This is because from 25 January 1942, a state of war existed *de jure* between this Kingdom—under the premiership of Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsonggram—and the United Kingdom as well as the United States. *De facto*, however, Siam was invaded by the forces of the Japanese Emperor, even though it was claimed that the intent of the said "invasion" was to use the Siamese territory to march onto Western colonies in Burma, Malaya, Singapore, and Indonesia. Siam might have not been declared a Japanese colony proper, but in fact the sovereign power of this Kingdom was lost or corroded following the invasion of 8 December 1941.

Without the Free Thai Movement under the leadership of Pridi Banomyong, which had its headquarters in this very institution, the University of Moral and Political Sciences, peace would not have returned to this Kingdom. On the day the peace proclamation was announced on 16 August 1945, the Allied powers including the United Kingdom and the United States recognised the independence of the Siamese state, even though it took a while for Anglo-Siamese relations to normalise.

One important word that should be noted here is that the leader of the Free Thai Movement chose the name "Ruth" as his *nom de guerre*, in the spirit of "Truth".

This word "truth" carries greatest significance for mankind. Without truth or sincerity, man cannot flourish, let alone grow. In Buddhism, man is often compared to a tree. Such a tree should develop from good seeds (truth—*sacca*), which, when sown should adapt to the soil (adaptation—*dama*). Once sprouted, it should weather the sun, wind, rain or even storms (perseverance—*khanti*). Fully grown, the tree spreads its branches and provides good use for humans and animals to use its trunk to rest, its leaves for shades and fruits for nourishment (charity—*cāga*). In the same light, humans have to be sincere to each other, be able to adapt to various situations with perseverance, so that they can be able to help each other.

It may be said that Pridi Banomyong upheld these four righteous principles throughout his lifetime. Amidst the horrors of war, his sincerity, his ability to adapt to the environment and his perseverance all led to his proclamation of peace, thus returning the normal livelihood to the people.

In real life, peace cannot thrive where there is no sincerity. There is a Buddhist adage which says: "A council that has no honest and truthful members is no council." Hence, without truth, everything becomes futile, false, full of half-truth and thus lacks any essence.

In politics, truth has to come hand-in-hand with peace and in-

dependence, nurtured by the stream of freedom. By freedom I mean liberty in essence, not a competitive *laissez-faire* kind of freedom. This liberty would lead to fraternity and may eventually result in equality, legally, economically, socially and culturally. This is the quintessence of democracy.

In the same way that a country enjoys its independence, so should its people. Each and every one of us should be independent by respecting oneself as a free person and not a slave, be it from an economic, political or cultural perspective. One should also respect one's heritage by understanding its essence. This should be done through the practice of inner peace, and sharing this peace with fellow humans, animals, and the natural environment. Once one has respect for oneself and is independent, one would respect other humans or animals regardless of differences in birth, status, power or any predetermined social norms. This is the way to fraternity that would lead to genuine equality.

The peace proclamation on 16 August 1945 can be considered as achieving peace in Siam, at least politically. Independence was restored to the Kingdom, both *de facto* and *de jure*. Democracy was also restored to an extent. Elements of dictatorship disappeared, and the once-powerful armed forces—a state within a state—lost political influence.

In achieving ideal peace, both politics and education have to be utilised so that each and everyone of us would be able to treasure the value of peace, and that the country would enjoy peace and independence concurrently.

Let us, however, not forget that at the time of the peace proclamation, the Siamese Kingdom was surrounded by Southeast Asian countries which had previously lost their independence to the British Empire, France, the Netherlands, and the United States. During the Second World War, these colonial dependencies were invaded by Japanese troops, who claimed they were liberated from the yoke of western empires. Yet, in reality, it was the Japanese Empire which seized control and re-colonised these lands, be they the Philippines from the United States, Indochina from France, Singapore, Malaya and Burma from the United Kingdom, and Indonesia from the Netherlands.

Though peace was returned to this Kingdom, all our neighbours were not in the position to enjoy peace and independence. Despite Japan having lost the war, all the territories invaded by Japan had liberation movements fighting against the return of western powers.

In this regard, it was Pridi Banomyong who was instrumental in assisting these movements in our neighbouring territories, particularly in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia.

As much as we would want peace and independence, so do our neighbours. If they need our assistance and we are in the position to do so, we should help them as much as possible.

Not only that, Pridi Banomyong led discussions with their leaders with the goal of establishing a Southeast Asian League, which would serve to let all these countries with different governmental systems to unite in peace. A unified and peaceful regional community certainly has more bargaining power with the great powers or other regional groupings than a small, individual country. Pridi had the vision to realise that once India regained her independence, she would be as great as China, once China is free from warring factions plaguing the country at that time. Moreover, the United States would also exert influence over this region rather than the United Kingdom. This is said even without the mentioning of the sphere of influence extended by the Soviet Union.

It should be noted that every member of this Southeast Asian League would need independence and peace, both internally and intra-regionally, in addition to being democracies, which were more inclined towards socialism than capitalism.

The Thai word for "independence", *ēkarāj*, is composed of the word *ēk*, meaning being the first, or second to none, in terms of country and people, and *rāja*, meaning causing gladness. In other words, in the formation of a state or nation, its people should not be second-rated citizens as in the case of colonies, or being subjugated under a class of nobility as in absolute monarchies. The real essence of the word *ēkarāj* is therefore that nations and its peoples must be considerate and respectful to each other.

In English, *ēkarāj* may either be translated as "independence", "free", or "sovereign". A country might have independence. Its people might be free, hence the words "independence" and "freedom" are synonymous. Sovereign, which sometimes denotes kingship, means that sovereignty or the highest power belongs to the country and its free people. This very idea was enshrined in Siam's first constitution of 27 June 1932.

Under a democracy, the

voices of the majority must be heard without neglecting the voices of the minority. If a country consists of different ethnic groups, religions, languages, and culture, the independence of a country implies that each and every region of that country can be free. Each independent country should be interdependent, similar to the way the Southeast Asian League would have been.

What I have just mentioned may recall Gandhi's vision for Village Republic. He elaborated thus: *"In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. It will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the village ready to perish for the circle of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are an integral part."*

Burma, which was a member of the Southeast Asian League, proclaimed that once it was independent, every ethnic group within the country would be free and under autonomous rule in a sovereign country. This would mean that the central government would only be responsible for defence, foreign affairs and finance.

It should be remarked that the Southeast Asian League chose Tiang Sirikhan, a Thai Member of Parliament from Sakol Nakorn, to be its president; during the Second World War, he played an important role in the Free Thai Movement's operations in the Northeast of Siam.

Therefore, the policy of the Government of Siam 60 years ago was that of decentralisation to create regional autonomy—in the Northeast, the North and South. Had this policy been fully implemented, democracy and independence would have been established concurrently with peace in every region.

If so, Laos might have joined with Siam under an autonomous and democratic rule. Of course, peace should be key here, for all the countries in the region.

Likewise, the 18 Shan States, at least Kengtung, might have united with the Siamese Kingdom. Unfortunately, Siamese troops under the leadership of Phin Choonhavan, with the aid of the Japanese, marched into Kengtung during the Second World War, which made the Prince of Kengtung detest any idea that his state should join military-ruled Siam. Instead, it was decided that this princely dominion be part of the Union of Burma. This, despite existing linguistic and ethnic differences, but the reason was that the Burmese constitution stipulated that any autonomous region had the right to secede from the Union after a decade of independence. However, General Ne Win seized power in 1962, resulting in the deprivation of peace and freedom for every ethnic group in the country.

Concerning Siam, the central government was considering the demands for the autonomy of the four Muslim-dominated southernmost provinces within the Kingdom in the same vein as the mentioned demands by northeastern MPs. Indeed, the MPs played important roles in upholding sovereignty, democracy, as well as peace for every citizen in the Kingdom. These MPs united themselves under the banner of the Sahachip Party.

What I have just elaborated was the achievement of peace in Siam 60 years ago, beginning from 16 August 1945. Peace not only among all the regions in the Kingdom, but also peace among member countries of the Southeast Asian League.

It was unfortunate that the development of peace, within Siam herself and among her neighbours, ended abruptly with the coup d'état of 8 November 1947 by a military clique led by Plaek Pibulsonggram and Phin Choonhavan. Democracy in form might have been in place until 1958, but its essence was gradually lost. What happened was the freedom of the people eroded: the right of free speech was successively contained; autonomous rule in the regions was undermined by the junta, resulting in many false charges against secessionist movements in the Northeast and the South; and liberal-minded politicians and journalists were purged, prosecuted and executed. Even Buddhist monks were not exempted. Ultimately, peace was lost.

More unfortunate, the truth also gradually faded away. Anyone of integrity found himself more and more difficult to survive politically. This was the time for characters with doubtful morals and opportunists subservient to the dictatorial powers-that-be. Yet these Machiavellian souls low on integrity were highly admired by the society of that time. Individuals in the like of Kimliang Vichitvadakarn or Kukrit Pramoj penned works which have not been viewed from a genuinely critical perspective, yet are still being propagated. Corrupt, even murderous politicians of the day are

honoured with statues—one can count Plaek Pibulsonggram, Sarit Thanarat and Phao Sriyanonda, without naming others in their league, whose monuments stand in various government offices.

The truth was that half-truths replaced the truth. Education was there to intoxicate the masses with these half-truths instead of to search for truth, beauty or virtue. Once the University of Moral and Political Sciences changed its name, moral courage and altruism in politics disappeared from this very institution. As a matter of fact, every educational institution here had become deferential to money, power, and western mainstream thinking characterised by fragmentary, rather than holistic perspectives, with the brain separated from the heart. The goal of education was to prepare for a career that would match the time and effort spent. Whether the career in question was based on Right Livelihood or not, the powers that be did not seem to matter at all.

This educational system painted the name "Pridi Banomyong" black, accusing him of prematurely demanding democratic rule from King Rama VII, who had already intended to grant Siam her first constitution. This is said without even mentioning the mud-slinging allegations of his involvement in the circumstances surrounding the death of King Rama VIII. It was in fact Pridi who defended the monarchy along with the constitution. When he passed away in 1983, the Parliament he had founded and had served as its first secretary did not show any sign of respect or reverence. His name could not even be found in the history of Thai democracy or the history of Thammasat University, which he founded and served as its first rector.

In 2000, the year of Pridi's centenary, there were those who conspired to erase Pridi's name from the Government's list of nominations for UNESCO's important personages of the year. Indeed, though the plot was not successful, the Government's festivities to celebrate this occasion were done rather half-heartedly. This was not surprising, as the ruling powers that be are still fearful of truth and fearful of those with moral courage. Lately, they have not even acknowledged the deeds of unsung heroes such as the former foreign minister Direk Jayanama, who was not included in this year's UNESCO-list, despite being nominated by the Government.

But fortune is at times on our side too, when the writer Kularb Saipradit was given the honour by UNESCO, even though he had been jailed on account of leading the Peace Movement of 1952, not to mention other sufferings that had been inflicted upon him by the dictators P. Pibulsonggram and S. Thanarat. Ultimately, he had to pay the highest price of dying in exile in China.

In any case, the word "peace" at that time was tainted by the Government's poisoning of the aforementioned Peace Movement. Some years later, the word "peace" was revered again following President Kennedy's establishment of the Peace Corps in 1961—this, of course, without realising what cruelty this very President unleashed onto Vietnam, much more than any of his predecessors. The United States has become the new imperialist power, replacing the old guards of Britain, France and other European countries. Peace is being jeopardised by the United States' collaboration with just a handful of multinational corporations taking advantage of the global public and destroying the natural environment. This is being done in the name of "development" and "globalisation"—two catchwords used to mesmerise the people.

In the sense that the word "peace" was regarded in a negative connotation, many of us today have realised that the word "development" is not untainted. The Siamese Government, however, has yet to realise this. It also has yet to realise that ever since it has pursued the path drawn by the United States since 1947, the Kingdom is being gradually destroyed—in terms of peace, independence, democracy, and also including religion and culture.

Conflicts that beset this Kingdom are not restricted to the southernmost provinces. Those are the areas in which differences in religion, language, ethnicity and culture are most apparent. Peaceful existence cannot be found in a place where the ruling class or multinationals transgress communities in the name of "development" or "globalisation". Examples are abound whether in the potash mine in Udorn Thani's, the Pak Moon Dam in Ubon Ratchathani, the Thai-Malaysian gas pipeline in Songkhla, or the mushrooming tangerine plantations encroaching the virgin forests of Fang in Chiang Mai. Here, one does not need to mention the gradual rise in poverty among the middle class, a direct consequence of Siam's globalisation policy, naively copied from the West.

These accounts are vividly depicted in Daniel Fineman's *A*

Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand 1947-1958 (Honolulu, University of Hawaii, 1997). Chris Baker and Phasuk Phongpaichit elaborated and expanded this theme until the present day in *A History of Thailand* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). In another publication of the two, *Thaksin: The Business of Politics* (Chiangmai: Silkworm 2004), Siam is regarded as lacking in peace and freedom in every aspect of these words.

The fact that I have only cited English-language books was that I was afraid I might be accused of being biased against our Prime Minister, had I mentioned Thai-language books such as *Remove Thaksin and Plutocracy*.

Never colonised by a western power, Siam was for a period of time under Western judiciary and economic control, however. It was Pridi Banomyong who played an instrumental role in achieving full independence for Siam in 1939. In any case, we have never acknowledged that *intellectually*, we have been a western colony ever since the reign of King Rama V. It might even be said that this "intellectual subservience" to the West was most prominent in the past half century. Think about it.

Many of us have come to realise that whatever that goes by the name of "western modernity", often called "development" or "globalisation" is something that unjustly reaps the benefits away from the people. The Industrial Revolution spread the capitalist system through violence, conquests, ethnic cleansings, and slavery. Even within the heart of the empire the poor were taken advantage of through various means. The more the few of the upper classes exploited the many of the lower class, the more violence increased. This violence multiplies the more modern technology is introduced, the more powers are vested in multinationals, and the more superpowers lose their moral conscience. This is not only happening in Siam, but has become a worldwide phenomenon.

Economic, social and political inequalities, not to mention the exploitation that come in various forms, form the roots of violence: Violence that is inflicted on those from a different class background, those believing in a different religious creed, and those practising different customs. These differences are linked to the unjust social structure, which, in turn, depends on the world economic order operating under the *laissez-faire* principle.

The stark differences existing in society results in one side enjoying privileges, making the other find various ways of opposition, even perhaps not through the normal means of justice, since the law serves the rich and powerful.

Once one side abuses the other, it is natural that the other would retaliate, hence exacerbating violence. This corresponds to a Buddhist saying: "Bad deeds cannot be ended through retribution." If "bad deeds" such as violence keep persisting in our world, then our economies would continue to produce arms, making the superpowers and their defence-related industries profit, at least in the short run. Eventually, such investments would yield no value to society but would only create losses.

How do we then find a way out of violence? The answer lies of course in the pursuit of non-violent means. That is, we need to swim against the mainstream currents of thought. We have to cease developing technology for weaponry. We have to set limits to modern technological developments. We have to make the existing free trade transparent and bounded.

From a Buddhist perspective, all sufferings in this world are directly or indirectly linked to the three root causes of suffering; that is, greed, anger and delusion.

In our present-day world, greed is expressed through the creeds of capitalism and consumerism. People are coerced to believe in money and worldly sciences, including modern technology, which will not give us time to search for our true capabilities or the miracle of life. We should realise that the basis of western philosophy lies in René Descartes, whose dictum *"cogito ergo sum"* or "I think, therefore I am" has become immortal. We learned that Descartes is the Father of Modern Philosophy, but have we ever contemplated where the roots of individualism are? Individualism, expressed by oneself, is in fact a duality: If there exists a "one", there also exists an "other". This essence is contrary to that of the Buddhist principle of the interdependence of all beings. In fact, we inter—are.

Today's world has transformed Decartes' "I think, therefore I am" to "I buy, therefore I am", the essence of consumerism. The reason why we study is to be able to get a job and make money. Money for buying goods which are made to intoxicate us through the powers of advertising. It follows that if we lose the power to buy, we lose the purpose

of ourselves.

Have we ever realised that we have been misguided by something that is the cause of violence? To achieve peace, Buddhism proposes the dictum "I breathe therefore I am."

Our humanity is not about our thoughts. Thoughts may make us more intelligent, but they certainly cannot make us be good. Even without thinking, we might be good. But without breathing, we die.

We constantly breathe, without stopping. Yet we do not seem to give any importance to breathing. Our first breath is taken when we are conceived, and our last when our bodies are dead. With western education, however, we ignore the importance of breathing. We breathe in anger, hatred, stress, vengeance, greed, and delusion almost at all times.

Buddhists call the mindfulness of breathing *ānāpānasati*, and it works as follows:

> When you inhale a long breath, know that you are inhaling a long breath.
>
> When you exhale a long breath, know that you are exhaling a long breath.
>
> When you inhale a short breath, know that you are inhaling a short breath.
>
> When you exhale a short breath, know that you are exhaling a short breath.

From these simple exercises, we may want to try breathing in love instead of anger. We may be able to overcome the scourges of greed, anger and delusion through our conscious breathing.

When we are conscious, we are able to understand the essence of mindfulness, which is the key to life. To understand life means more than knowing the sum of its mechanical parts, which is what we have been preached by materialistic science. At least we should come to realise that we should not be living our lives for personal glorification, for climbing the social ladder—which is abound with injustices, but we should rather recognise that the downtrodden and exploited members of our society are no less important than us. We should also realise that we share a responsibility in protecting our natural environment, which is being incessantly destroyed. We should also learn how not to hate even those who are exploiting us, but we should instead overcome the unjust social structure which is full of violence.

The core teachings of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths. If we do not confront suffering, we do not know the essence of suffering; that is, both individual and social sufferings.

What we call globalisation or modern development does not have an understanding of the essence of suffering. One escapes from suffering using intoxicating means of consumerism and globalisation as the civilisation of the new generation. However, globalisation does not acknowledge the essence and meaning of life at all. It might be argued that globalisation improves the livelihood of the people, but in fact it denies the true path towards true happiness, which is peace.

"Natthi santi param sukham"—thus spoke the Lord Buddha, or "There is no greater happiness than peace." I am afraid that many of us do not believe in these words anymore.

From a Buddhist perspective, man can enjoy happiness when man has three levels of freedom: (1) Freedom to have a decent livelihood, which needs material and natural environments. In other words, man should not be taken advantage of in the pursuit of a good life. His environment should not be destroyed so that it drifts away from its natural equilibrium. Man should also be aware of the dangers lurking in nature and hence adapt himself to such dangers. (2) Freedom to enjoy a good life with others. This means freedom from being exploited by fellow men, be it from the state, theft, or dangers from capitalism and consumerism. Both freedoms are factors which foster man to achieve freedom of the mind, which is supreme happiness. Man would be content in living simply, be compassionate towards others and should safeguard the environment. From a theological perspective, man must be able to experience God.

Once man is able to be with God, or recognise the supreme Dharma, his ego would diminish and peace would consequently be an important basis of his life and his society.

In order to achieve peace in society, contemporaries who already have seeds of peace embedded in them need to analyse the structure of society in order to understand how greed, anger, and delusion are expressed. It is fortunate that this idea has widely spread lately, beginning from Schumacher's writings on Buddhist Economics some 30 years ago to the works of the Venerable Bhikkhu Payuttō in this country. There is even a school of political science which denounces violence, i.e. that of Glenn Paige, which has considerably gained interests in various educational establishments.

With the Buddhist perspectives on greed and hatred, true

understanding of delusion becomes even more important. At last, there are some institutions of learning who are yearning for contemplative education, which is closely associated with the study of morals. In doing so, society would return to normalcy and peace would be achieved, ultimately resulting in mindfulness to advance the highest freedom—wisdom, or the real essence of peace.

I sincerely hope that what I have said would make you contemplate and perhaps would even make you act by challenging the *status quo*—the intellectual subservience to the West which we have been naively following for too long. Perhaps you could achieve peace in society and in the world through achieving peace within yourselves. Perhaps you could spread your individual state of peace through a culture of awakening and non-violence, replacing the evil and violence existing in today's societies.

If we accept that we are presently in a crisis, we should be contemplating the advice of those who are bold enough to remind our conscience—the advice of monks such as the Venerable Bhikkhu Payutto who urged us to transform crises into opportunities. We should also heed warnings of contemporary historians such as Nidhi Aewsriwongse, who affirmed that the mainstream Siamese society is dysfunctional, meaning that it is not aiming for peace and happiness within the society. Nidhi himself along with close friends thus use the "Midnight University" as a beacon of light to enlighten social conscience, something which public or private universities here cannot achieve.

We should not forget the fact that it was our audacity to think beyond our ancient royal customs that eventually prevented us from being colonised by a western power in the 19th century. We were able to grasp the changes and adapt ourselves to them, unlike our neighbours. Nevertheless, absolute monarchy was gradually intertwined with western imperialism from the middle of the 19th century onwards to the demise of the ancien regime less than a century later. In other words, the ruling class never understood the essence of democracy. Although King Rama VII contemplated on the subject, he lacked enough power and motivation. Moreover, some of his powerful relatives tried their utmost to obstruct any changes. Because of this, the Revolution of 24 June 1932 heralded an era of peace and freedom in the essence of democracy. Pridi Banomyong's Economic Plan was considered as an important vehicle to create liberty alongside equality, upheld by fraternity. Unfortunately, his ideas and ideals were impeded by the powers that be and the military junta imposed dictatorial rules until 16 August 1945.

What I have just said was to demonstrate that policy-making and administration of a bygone age cannot be utilised to transform present-day crises into opportunities. If we accept that there is a state of crisis, originating from greed (attachment to capitalism), hatred (attachment to power) and delusion (attachment to the so-called "modern" technology, copied entirely from the west), we should be daring enough to confront this crisis using peaceful means. Eventually, peace would be created within ourselves and within society.

We are fortunate, however, that there are non-mainstream groups which are building peace in this country. These groups, predominantly NGOs, are out of sight of the ruling class, or even ridiculed, murdered, imprisoned, or persecuted through various means.

One of the pioneers of the Siamese NGO movement was Puey Ungphakorn, who coined the phrase "Santi Pracha Dharma", which means that peace would be achieved if the people are able to enjoy justice and democracy.

Ever since the 1970s, more and more youths here have turned to NGOs, as they have realised that bureaucracy and capitalism are doomed. Some former government officials such as Dr. Prawase Wasi whose ideas break with the norms realised that these ideas cannot flourish in a bureaucratic system. This is why new ideas to achieve peace and justice among the people could only prosper among NGOs.

Non-mainstream activists, which today count many young people, have increased their criticisms of Siam's development along the lines of a top-down bureaucratic hierarchy, with the ruling class being intellectually subservient to the west. Not only would the system fail, it would also lead to an economic and political polarisation, which may ultimately result in incidents similar to the bloodshed in October 1976. Even the Buddhist clergy have played an increasing role in the development of the country according to Buddhist teachings: teachings that emphasise contentment and compassion in line with our cultural and natural heritage instead of competition and materialism as copied from the west.

We may have forgotten that once villagers unite, they would be able to obstruct irrational and usually corrupt governmental projects. Take the village movement in Kanchanaburi for example, which joined hands with villagers from other provinces, Buddhist monks, academics, journalists, and even foreign environmentalists. They successfully prevented the construction of the Nam Jone Dam in 1988.

From this vantage point, a wide array of NGOs protesting against the government and the ruling class have joined forces with members of the middle class who realise the importance of non-governmental development. Elsewhere, environmental movements are also growing and are integrating environmentalism with human rights, especially the protection of the rights of the minority.

Though minorities have always been taken advantage of by the ruling powers for a long time, they are now aligned with NGOs and the middle class and are also supported by progressive academics. A case in point here would be the Karen Chief Joni Odochao, who has now turned into a national and international luminary. Former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai had tried to downplay his role, but the attempts were in vain. Another example is Bamrung Kayotha, who had been a labourer in Bangkok and returned to his homeland to lead farmers and villagers and eventually became an important figure in the Assembly of the Poor. When I myself was arrested trying to block the Siamese-Burmese gas pipeline in Kanchanaburi in 1998 Bamrung came to pay me a visit at the police station and the police officers were impressed by him.

We should not forget that the Assembly of the Poor is the greatest movement the Kingdom has at the moment. The fact that they were able to unite with honour makes us realise that what we used to claim that the poor are backward, victimized, and powerless is merely a myth just as the omnipotence and infallibility of great kings.

The Assembly of the Poor does not want any crumbs from the wealthy or politicians, who are likely to pay for or coerce the Assembly to do this or that. On the contrary, the Assembly dares to challenge the government, honourably and peacefully, that the capitalist- and technology-oriented policies are flawed.

Not only does the Assembly of the Poor challenge the government, but it is also a peaceful movement based on democracy, emphasising sufficiency and maintaining an equilibrium in nature. The Assembly is not doing this for its own sake, but for the good of society. Such society should bridge the different classes, its activities should be transparent, and it should also respect the natural and cultural heritage of its people.

We are fortunate that the middle class is now working with the Assembly of the Poor. Even businesspeople especially the Social Venture Network understand the Assembly and assist it in its activities, not to mention the support given by some aristocrats such as former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, who understands the peaceful non-governmental movements. Amongst the academia, the Midnight University has sparked a trend for professors in various institutions to think and act "out of the box"; this is also being encouraged and supported by the Spirit in Education Movement.

Nevertheless, it is a pity that young members of the Buddhist clergy are not playing a great role today as much as their predecessors had in the period immediately following the 1932 Revolution. Likewise, our students of today also lack the vigour and idealism which were alive among students of the 1973-1976 generation. These two issues are very important and should be studied in greater detail as to their hows and whys.

Yet we should be happy that the role of Siamese women are not at all inferior to their male counterparts. This is most evident in non-mainstream work, and examples abound: Prateep Ungsongtham with her urban slum work, Ratchanee Thongchai with her alternative-education schools, Pinan Chotiroseranee and her human rights-cum-environment group in Kanchanaburi, Wanida Tantiwittayapitak and her leadership in the Assembly of the Poor, or grassroots women such as Grandma Hai Khannanta in Ubon Ratchatani and Dr. Jintana Kaewkhao of Prachuabkirikhan who received an honorary degree from the Midnight University, or even Tuanjai Deetes and her environmental projects among the hilltribe people. These ladies are individual examples of moral courage which have not been recognised by the powers that be, even though some of the ladies are elected members of the Senate. If they expand their support beyond their constituencies, there would be hope for societal peace—*"Santi Pracha Dharma"*. What is also crucial is that these ladies have been searching for their inner peace. In practice, they have asserted their inner peacefulness to the society they are living in,

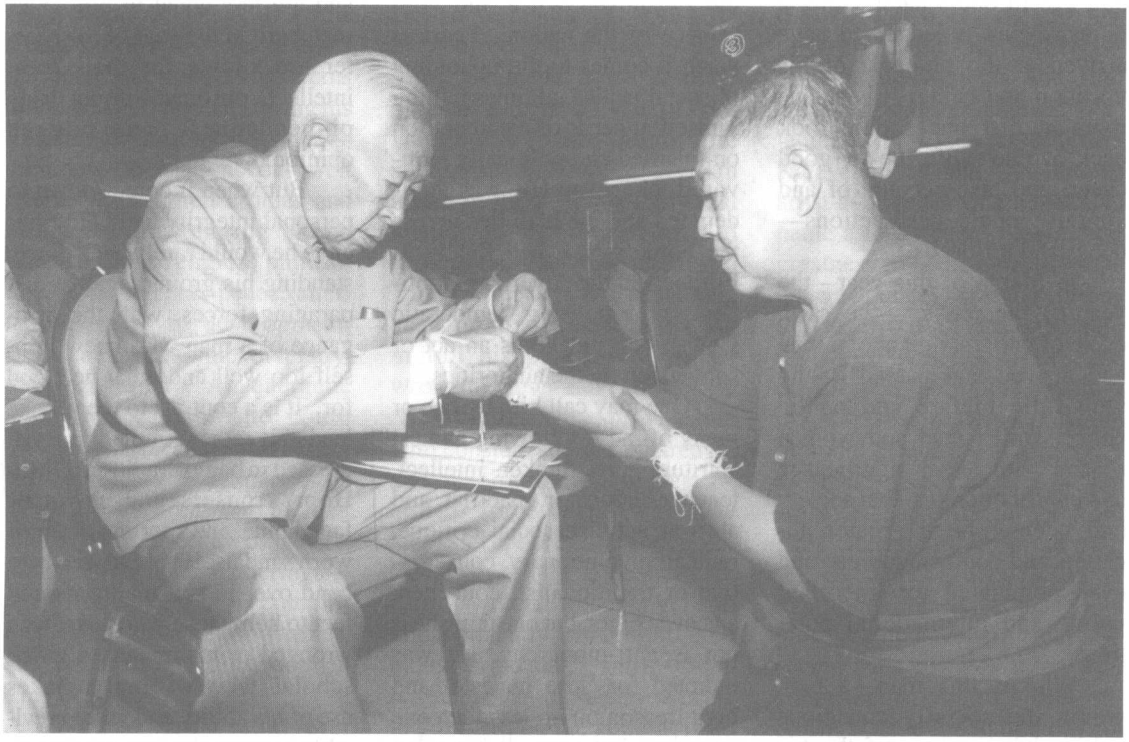
through their network of development organisations.

What I have said may be a small thrust for change in Siamese society at large. However, the British sociologist Margaret Meade put it beautifully: *never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, dedicated citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*

A just society as well as a noble individual spirit need to have peace, which would light the way for a less selfish world, a world in which one lives not for one's sake or for one's career and ambition, but for serving others, both humans and other living beings.

This should be a good basis for achieving peace, not only for Siam and the Siamese, but for all the citizens of the world and not only for the coming six decades.

An Address by Sulak Sivaraksa,
16 August 2005,
Thammasat University



Sulak Sivaraksa is blessed by Dr. Sem Pringpuangkaew

Sulak Sivaraksa's Engagement Abroad

Sep. 27 - Oct. 3	*Gandhi Memorial Lectures,* McMaster University, Canada
October 11- 16	*INEB Conference "Buddhism and Equity",* Nagpur, India
October 17-23	*Globalization: How Buddhists Think,* Leh, Ladakh, India
October 24-28	*Science, Spirituality and Social Movement*, Bijavidyapeeth, Dehradun, India
Oct. 31 - Nov. 3	*Grassroots Leadership Training,* Vientiane, Laos PDR.
November 8-14	*Buddhism and Peace* Futuba Kenko Memorial Lecture Program, Hawaii, USA
December 11-15	*International Congress "New Challenges in a World Longing for Peace"* by UNESCO Etxea, Bilbao, Spain
January 2-6	World Congress *"Restore Family, Life and Sustain World Peace"*, Chennai, India.
February 10-14	Tibetan Institute of Higher Learning, Varanasi, India.

for further information, please see our website
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Sulak Sivaraksa
A Man for All Seasons

The onset of the sixth cycle in one's life time is deemed most propitious an occasion to be exalted, and too lauded by the divine presences. In whatever continent, east or west, at a certain age in one's natural life, a human being is judged to have arrived at the pinnacle of his vocation and being. It is at this moment that one should look back at one's life, be of good cheer, and take account of and appraise one's past actions—deeds and misdeeds.

In March of this year—the year of the rooster—the sixth cycle of one truly giant of a man had arrived and passed on by with little fanfare and public notice, whilst men and women of and with lesser significance and contributions to Thai society had been granted greater acclaims and commendations, and even nominated for important public and international positions.

Who is this man—a man whom the socially conscious public dubs as 'one of the ten most outstanding Siamese of this century'—men or women who have greatly affected the course of the nation history in the last 100 years?* Among these ten eminent names, he remains the sole person who is still living, and evermore adamantly advocating the causes of the poor and destitute. As one well-known academic stated, he is a man whom on the initial encounters anyone would 'hate to love' but, in the fullness of time, is surmounted by a change of heart to concede in him the 'love to hate' attitude. He is an enigma of Thai society, feared by men in power, either in the government, business circles, or even religious hierarchy, but by and large admired by the impoverished mass.

Either love or hate, it is impossible not to take note of what he has to say. He indubitably is the outspoken voice and conscience of the nation. Fearless when it comes to the upholding of social justice, at times putting himself at perils of incarceration on falsified and politically motivated charges. He was condemned and made to flee across the borders and then finally to Europe and the American Continent for espousing democratic views, then judged as an act of subversion by the authorities.

One may call him by one or many of these following names: spiritual guru, thinker, intellect, teacher, educator, pacifist and antiwar activist, social critique, radical, revolutionary, conservative or traditionalist, conceited, and even bigot, but one thing he is not is anti-monarchy. He was indicted for 'lese majeste' and high treason on no less than one occasion, but won all his court cases (there still remains one pending case in court that has dragged on over a six year period). One has only to read '*Loyalty Demands Dissent*' to recognize how unequivocally he is dedicated to the Royal Institution even to the extent of being damned disloyal.

He often boasts with little subdued modesty that there are two subject matters dear to his heart which he is more qualified to talk about than other men—that being on Thai Buddhism and Royalty. Conceivably, the often perceived overbearing arrogance (this 'unthai' characteristic probably taken on during his stay in England)—from his vast accrual of knowledge that encompasses practically all aspects of human affairs of weight—has made him a conspicuous target of persecution by those who were and are less equal to him. Yes, men born in the year of the rooster are known for their great intellect, obstinacy if not truly pigheadedness, and dogged opinion!

But when it comes down to personal integrity and held principle he would rarely back down, standing his ground against disparaging forces, with the arrogance of a man who knew himself too well and what he stood for. It is a contrast to the way he leads his rather simple life style, dressed in baggy traditional 'Mor Hom' trousers and shirts of faded blue, and sporting a pair of worn sandals. He is ever ready to bend over to soil his hands and feet to help those who have been wronged or maltreated: a gifted scholar who willingly makes use of his ability and vast knowledge to serve the less privileged, often with no hesitation to jump into the melee when things turn rough.

Even on his 72nd birthday he tirelessly commutes all over the country and abroad to give public addresses, organizes conferences, attend meetings, actively involve himself in grass root movements, and give his backing to the local communities to have a voice in determining their destinies. His opposition against the laying of the gas pipe-line from Myanmar through the pristine forests of Khanchanaburi province and the support given to the Assembly of the Poor over the opening of the dam gates in

Ubonrajthani province has made him less liked by scores of officials. As recently as last week, he was in the district of Fang on the invitation of the Midnight University to attend an awarding ceremony of a local abbot and address the local villagers in their fight to protect the forest land from the encroaching tamarind plantations. Next week he will again be on the move, this time flying to Bali to lecture on topics of social and political concerns in the ASEAN region. During his 72 years he must have written—including translations of—well over eight hundred articles and books on far ranging social issues such as religion, philosophy, non-violence, peace, alternative routes to development, social and economic diversity, and many more. An energetic and bouncy man who could never put his feet up to rest except for occasional body massages, he spends generally two to three days a week traveling or participating in outside gatherings—apart from the full time commitment in his researches, writings, and publication works, both in Thai or English.

What is seen a rather over frantic life style, he is able to maintain a down to earth way of life, simple and almost mind-bogglingly unassuming, in complete contrast to his often perceived haughtily held high principles. His house, with over ten cats roaming freely in a puny space of a compound he calls home, is opened twenty four hours a day. It is a gathering place of people from all walks of life, whether rich or poor, aristocrats or commoners, priests or laymen and laywomen, or even total strangers. They come to seek his advice and in search of solace for their troubled souls. Often staying well past midnight discussing and going over all sorts of subject matters with the guests, solicited or unsolicited, slouching over a glass of wine, preferably French red. On these rather familiar occasions, he jokes and laughs at his own human frailties, things that not many men would dare turn on themselves. Unashamedly, when proven erroneous beyond doubt by factual findings, he would willingly turn around to confer his apologies and correct his flawed views. Thus, he made it his resolute obligation to call on Acharn Pridi Banomyong, the honorable statesman and exiled civilian leader of the People's Party that in 1932 put Thailand on the road to Constitutional Monarchy, in Paris during the last remaining years of his life, acknowledging in full his penitence for past wrongful views and actions.

Youths seem to provide him with constant sources of strength and inspiration. They hearten him to forge ahead with new ideas and uphold old convictions. He always finds time to work closely with the younger generations, patiently listening to their thoughts and ideals, and in turn—if found wanting—endeavoring to put them on the straight path. Together with the help of Acharn Sem Primpuangkaew, the former Minister of Public Health and highly esteemed social thinker, he established Semsikkhalai Institute several years ago to provide an alternative form of education to the nation youths, including progressive thinking monks and nuns—within the country and cross over into the neighboring Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia—with the aim to redress the often repugnant main-stream education. The Institute helps instill in them the awareness of their potentials and inner selves as true human-beings. It teaches them to have high integrity of and to respect themselves and others—and not to mere soulless humanoids seeking the seats of power and money in government and business organizations. Many sequentially have graduated to serve in nongovernmental organizations to work in the various 'human rights' movements and for other just causes. Artists and activists would flock to his house to seek his help, young or old. He was among the rare few to have lent his hands, with recurrent encouragements and supports, to such celebrated poet laureate in person as Angkarn Kalayanapong and well known artist as Preecha Orachunaka, to name a few—even before their greatness were discovered by the general public. He was among the forefront of the students' uprisings in the seventies and nineties, fighting the military might to restore democracy and promote greater participation by the mass, thus carrying on the legacy that had brought about the 1932 Democratic Revolution.

He certainly has mellowed over the years. It has made him more compassionate and forgiving even towards those who claim themselves to be his enemies, but the fire in him has not subsided entirely with the passing age. He remains sharp and witty, even if one might occasionally discern, on odd occasions, his memory lapsing in the briefness of moment. He could, often on valid grounds, lash out with his razor-sharp tongue without a given notice.

His insight to Tibetan Mahayana has broaden his perspective, giving him greater acuity to Buddhism and how it should be taught and applied to the fast lane of the world of materialism, greed, power, and wanton accumulation of wealth. It has brought him in the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Dhammasala in India on several occasions, who

greatly influences his thoughts and writings. Such has taught him to take on and adapt Buddhist teachings to solving human crisis and bring about happiness and peace to the world. Mahatma Gandhi has been his icon at early age, the teaching of *ahimsa* becoming the main stay of his belief and in peaceful co-existences among people of various races, creeds, religions, and ethnicities. He is fervently against the use of forces in solving social and political conflicts, whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, or at home in the battering Southern Thailand itself. His unfaltering avowal for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi has kept him from setting foot on the Myanmar soils—not to mention on a few other countries as well. On the issue of peace movement, he maintains close dialogues with the former president of Indonesia, Abdulralman Wahid. It was not to be unexpected then that he should be one of the first few Thai intelligentsias to have been invited by the Vietnamese Communist Government to visit Vietnam in the eighties, not long after the fall of 'Saigon', years before the present craze among high ranking politicians and businessmen. As a result, he remains unpopular among government officials and politicians, either at home or abroad, a person a nongrata in their circles. He steadfastly stands for the rights of a common man in whatever country or continent he might reside.

Of all that has been said about this man what else remains to be told! There is more that lies beyond these mere descriptive words. On the occasion of his 72nd birthday, it is significant a time to pay homage to this great man who has given so much to us all, but ruefully remains almost half forgotten in his own country. *At this juncture in time and place,* little or naught has been striven to confer the due recognition to the man and his works. The country's Institutions of Higher Learning—said to be the foundation of Thai youths, Ministry of Culture, even academic organizations in copious number—many of which he patronized, and the society at large remains quiet and silent to his enormity. Undeniably, a great humiliation and shame to the country that we call Thailand!

To mark the sixth cycle of his birth I would like to call upon those who know him—friends and foes alike, colleagues, followers, college students, acquaintances, and the general public at large including those who disagree with his writings—in Thailand as well as overseas to write and send in their felicitations, views, and comments on what they see in him that makes him a giant among us, and what other unfinished chores and missions you would want him to carry on—if not cease meddling altogether. It is a small way to show our appreciations and humble respects to this man.

To us, it is in such immense a man that we would like to see raised in recognition by International Organizations such as the United Nations and Nobel Committee—for his tireless efforts and literary works to promote peace and non-violence in this often troubled world. Thus far, there are few identifiable persons of praiseworthiness or in laudable positions such as he in the region as well as in international scene for universal commendations. Many applicants seem to have been judged on political expediencies and good will rather than on the worth of a man and his work.

Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa, we respectfully proffer our salutations *and reverences on the occasion of your 72nd birthday. We would like to express our heartfelt wishes for your continual good health and inner peace for the next 72 years, remaining as always the loyal dissident and subject of this nation. And in your own words, may you always be rekindled by both spiritual and physical strength and valor, and endowed with that untold 'gumption' and moral fortitude to wrestle the erroneous ways of humankind!*

Lastly, may you remain for all time sturdy as a banyan tree in its full grandeur to continue endowing the nation with peace, happiness, and protection against the threatening ferocity of the thundering storms and burning sun wrought by human blindness and ignorance. May you too, by your very own name, be forevermore sheltered by the blessings and might of Shiva and bequeathed with all that is good in this universe and beyond.

We wish you a belated Very Happy Birthday!

Siroj Angsuvat
10 July 2005

* A study on the history of the thinking onThai society and culture from the viewpoints of Thai Intellectuals, under the funding of the Research Council of Thailand, is being undertaken by Associate Professor Saichol Sattayanurak from the Department of History, Chiengmai University. The ten designated names are:-

1. Rama V
2. Rama VI
3. Prince Damrong Rajanuphab
4. Prince Vajirayan Varorot
5. Chao Phya Dhammasak Montri
6. Luang Wichit Wathakan
7. Prince Wan Waithayakon
8. Phya Anuman Rajathon
9. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj
10. *Sulak Sivaraksa*

My dear Sulak

Thank you very much for the gift of your latest book *Conflict, Culture, Change* which I have read—it's excellent, cogent and (for me) true. I hope it is widely read & influential. Congratulations on the achievement.

On a daily basis I'm writing a new book and, in fact, have written it but it will need a lot more work—editing it, tightening it, improving its expression and so on. Green Books will publish in due course.

I'm quite well except that I have developed Parkinsons' disease which affects my walking a lot but nothing else so far. Anyway, I'm quite stoical. I hope that you are alright.

One of our (4) sons is currently travelling in Cambodia; he tells me that he sat on a bus next to a monk and that all the journey he (the monk) was smoking, chewing gum & drinking Coca Cola! Alas.

It is turning to spring here, very gradually but inexorably the primroses are flowering in the hedge bank and in our garden there are cammelias & daffodils. And always, always the glorious clouds. I feed off this beauty without which I'd become a much sadder individual. Clouds and friends, what gifts.

much love

John Lane (UK)

Dear Sulak

Thank you for sending me a copy of the published version of *Conflict, Culture, Change*. I think Wisdom Publications have done an excellent job with the attractive book design. Although I have read most of the contents more than once before now, I have started reading it again. What you have written becomes more and more relevant as this century moves on.

I just finished reading "Blue Jean Buddha" edited by Sumo Loundon and also published by Wisdom and found it very thought provoking. Was it ever reviewed in *Seeds of Peace*?

I have been giving careful thought to my own Buddhist practice. As you know I came to Buddhism in the early 80s through spending so much time in Siam and sensing a degree of serenity among many of my Siamese friends which I envied. So I started following a strictly Theravadan approach and back in the U.S. became a member of a sangha which was loosely affiliated with the Insight Mediation Society. Later I became very impressed by the books of Thich Nhat Hanh and went with Krishna on a retreat he conducted at the Omega Institute in New York state. There were several other retreatants from Connecticut and we got together afterwards and founded a sangha which meets in West Hartford.

Lately, however, I have felt somewhat less in tune with this sangha, as although it has grown considerably in numbers, it still consists entirely of middle class white people. At most of the meetings we attend Krishna is the only person present who is not of European origin. The other factor that disturbs me is that the sangha's primary emphasis seems to be on its members own spiritual progress rather than seeing the Buddhist practice inevitably (as it seems to me) leads to becoming socially and politically engaged.

As far as I can make out the only Buddhist group in the United States that really has a diverse membership is the Soka Gakkai Interational. And, as a group, SGI certainly appears to be socially and politically engaged.

Krishna and I have good friends who are SGI members and have occasionally attended one or two of the meetings of their local sangha. The only problem I have with the SGI approach is that I find it hard to accept the constant chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the basis of my spiritual life, though I have to admit it does seem to work for SGI members.

So at the age of 80 I am still trying to figure out what kind of a Buddhist I am going to be when I grow up!

Please give our regards to Blaine and David.

Sincerely,

Ian Mayo-Smith (USA)

Conflict, Culture, Change

Engaged Buddhism in a Globalizing World
Sulak Sivaraksa Foreword by Donald Swearer

Sulak Sivaraksa turned 72 on March 26. His latest book was recently published in Boston in time for his birthday celebration in Uthai Thani.

Conflict, Culture, Change addresses many themes familiar to Sulak's followers, readers and critics. In a foreword, Don Swearer, director of the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School, observes that Sulak has many faces and that the new book "reveals many facets of a modern traditionalist caught in the belly of a paradox".

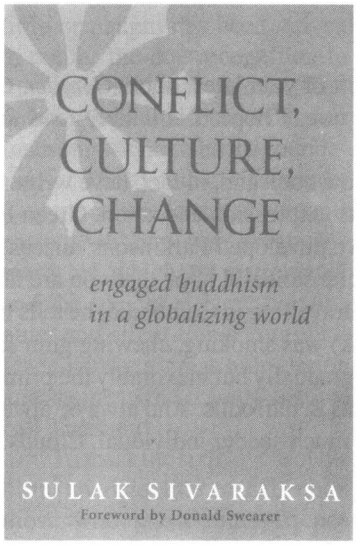
Sulak is a larger-than-life figure in our society. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize; he faced down a charge of *lese majeste* filed against him in Thailand; he received a Right Livelihood Award from Sweden and the Gandhi Millennium Award. Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist leader and poet, described Sulak as a *bodhisattva* who devotes all of his energies to helping others.

(Bodhisattva (Sanskrit) or *bodhisatta* (Pali) :

1. "A being [striving] for Awakening"; the term used to describe the Buddha before he actually became the Buddha, from his first aspiration to Buddhahood until the time of his full Awakening.

2. Often used in Mahayana Buddhism to refer to Enlightened Ones who, because of their great compassion, decide to defer nirvana in order to return to help people in this world.)

Sulak is deeply rooted in Thai culture and tradition yet his



networking surpasses even that of many great contemporary statesmen. He is the epitome of a citizen of the world.

He is also a difficult person to sum up in a nutshell. The range of his interests, thought and commitments is breathtaking. He is, indeed, a paradox.

Sulak is steeped in Thai Buddhist culture. He prefers to carry a Victorian gentleman's walking stick rather than a mobile phone or laptop. He dons traditional peasant garb to underscore his alienation from modern culture and technology and advocates a traditional, rural-centred definition of Thai culture.

Yet he is one of the world's leading jet-setters, clocking up more freguent-flyer miles than the CEOs of many multinationals. With his queer pyjamas and antique Burmese army walking stick, he has become a familiar sight at airports around the world. He is at the cutting edge of the new global citizenry.

The wide-ranging essays in *Conflict, Culture, Change* offers a glimpse of the breadth and coherence of his worldview. Here, he wears many hats: Sulak the Buddhist leader; Sulak the activist; Sulak the historian; Sulak the publisher; and Sulak the social critic. Because of his many conflicting roles he often comes across as a man of contradictions. But he is far from being a confused person. His different roles tend to cohere around a few basic values and syncretic philosophical concepts.

Sulak loves good French wine. Yet his outlook on life is deeply informed by Thai Buddhist values. "Buddhist teaching is the core that permeates all my activities," he writes; and, elsewhere: "violence has its origins in the three poisons of greed, hatred and ignorance"

Born in 1933, a year after the fall of Siam's absolute monarchy, Sulak attended temple school as a boy, later attending university in England and Wales where he studied philosophy and was called to the Bar.

In his formative years he fell under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and Quakerism. Subsequently, his basic Buddhist precepts prescribing respect for the life of all sentient beings was enriched by the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and by Quaker pacifism. "The Quakers, officially known as the Religious Society of Friends, have been a constant source of inspiration and support in my life and my work as an engaged Buddhist," he writes.

For Sulak, Buddhism and the philosophy of non-violence have a mutual resonance. In Chapter 2 of *Conflict, Culture, Change,* "A Buddhist Perspective on Non-Violence", he pays tribute to Gandhi and to Peace Brigades International, which was founded by his old Quaker friend, George Willoughby, among others.

The philosophy of non-vio-

lence holds that when conflicts arise, opposing parties tend to resort to violence to resolve them; but that that violence only breeds further violence.

"Justifications of violence in terms of moral arguments like [it's] just war or [a] crusade degenerate into excuses for atrocities in the name of pious principles," Sulak observes. The committing of atrocities merely serves to fuel anger and provoke more violent reactions. Only the practice of non-violence can reduce conflict.

Attempting to resolve disputes by violent means is, invariably, a recipe for tragedy, grief and regret. Advocates maintain that non-violence can reduce conflict and has been shown of work effectively in peace-making and peace-building efforts. Sulak recounts the use of non-violent methods to build trust during the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"Tragic consequences resulting from prolonged violence often prompt warring parties to seek reconciliation," he observes. Non-violent intervention can pave the way towards reconciliation; by reducing conflict, it allows deep wounds to heal and creates space for a spirit of cooperation and forgiveness to develop. Sulak compares two prominent cases of reconciliation: the formation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and the struggle by peasants displaced, or otherwise affected, by the construction of the Pak Moon Dam to have their means of earning a living restored to them.

Sulak also employs a Marxist critique of capitalism and the global economy to refine and extend the definition of violence. Lately, many of his contemporaries have remarked that he is a Buddhist who sounds like a Marxist, or vice versa. According to Sulak, peace is not just the absence of war. He introduces the idea of "structural violence". A global economic system which starves the majority in order to enrich a few is inherently violent, he asserts. It is a structural arrangement which perpetrates great injustice. The will to impose injustice on fellow human beings constitutes violence. It is structural violence.

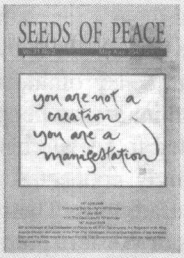
"Violence breeds violence," he writes. The price of imperialistic policies which uphold structural violence is terrorism. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist strike on the World Trade Center in New York many mainstream Western scholars and the media have attempted to demonise Islam. But Sulak exonerates Islam and blames US imperialistic policies and practices for causing the 9/11 attacks. To escape the cycle of violence the US must shun violence and pursure policies grounded in "non-harming" as opposed to continuing its support for structural violence.

Sulak believes that Buddhism speaks to the most urgent problems of today's world. The Dalai Lama calls for tempering capitalist competition with Buddhist compassion to create a more humane world. The UN's call for sustainable development echoes the Buddhist epistemological concept of "interdependent co-arising" and the belief in the interconnectedness of people and nature. Sulak devotes a whole chapter, "Buddhism and Environmentalism", to discussing Buddhist teachings on nature, the sanctity of forests, water sources and the interdependence of all living things.

The highlight of the book is a substantive chapter entitled "From the Lotus Flower to the Devil's Discus: How Siam became Thailand". In it Sulak demonstrates his prowess as a historian as he recounts certain fateful events of the mid 20th century.

He decries the name change from "Siam" to "Thailand" on June 24, 1939, as an attempt to claim ownership of this country for ethnic Thais at the expense of the Mon, Lao, Cambodian, Shan, Malay, hill-tribe and other ethnic minorities in our population. At a lecture he delivered at the Siam Society earlier this year, Sulak traced the problem of separatist violence in the South back to a nationalist agenda which sought to establish the primacy of Thais over other ethnic groups. Modern Thai nationalism which emphasises the primacy of the former and its right to dominate other ethnic groups in the polity has alienated minorities, especially the Malay Muslims in the southern provinces. Sulak continues to campaign to have the Kingdom's name changed back to "Siam".

Jeffery Sng



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May we remind our readers to renew your subscription or help others who cannot afford to pay for *Seeds of Peace* so the the publication will be available to all who seek something to read beyond those provided by the mainstream mass media.

The Asian Future: Dialogues for Change, Volumes 1 & 2

Edited by Pracha Hutanuwatr and Ramu Manivannan, published by Zed Books, London and New York, 2005. ISBN 1 84277 345 3



The Asian Future is not only a wake-up call in terms of furthering our understanding of the challenges we face to our future survival as human beings, but it also offers hope and practical ideas for both personal and social transformation. It is a significant contribution from a non-Western perspective towards future survival strategies for humanity and planet earth. Walden Bello reminds us that, "Capitalism is a global force that is turning everybody into a consumer....and dissolving cultural differences", (v.2, p12). As one counter to this trend, Bello suggests, "we must reimpose the discipline of the community over the market so that the market becomes once again a mechanism to achieve social good" (p.37). All contributors suggest a return to spiritual values as a basis for change.

The editors chose dialogues with fourteen prominent Asian activist-thinkers, as people both committed to social change and yet strongly connected to their cultural traditions. Their critical analyses of Western political and economic models, as well as of their own present societies, are a basis for exploring alternatives. The loss of confidence and alienation by 'Asian elites' in their own cultures is explored, and how this has contributed to the extensive adoption of the Western concept of progress and development agendas. On the other hand, we in the West must look into how, 'consumerism is often a desperate response to the isolation of individualism', (Ashis Nandy, v.1, p.38). Through the interviews, there is a penetrating inquiry and analysis of such themes as globalisation, liberal democracy, capitalism, socialism, consumerism, modernisation, role of the modern state and the ongoing intense suffering in so many parts of the world. These are explored in terms of challenges, successes and failures. This is the basis for exploring alternative Asian responses to these global issues, and the changes needed for an expanded human life in harmony with each other and the earth, succinctly expressed by Vandana Shiva.

> "We need to once more feel at home on the earth and with each other...(as) we are connected to each other through love and compassion, not through hatred and violence. Ecological responsibility and economic justice replaces greed, consumerism and competition as objectives of human life", (v.2, p.81).

The fourteen people interviewed come from a spectrum of countries in Asia, and their views reflect a range of spiritual and ethical traditions and political and cultural perspectives: Abdurraman Wahid (Indonesia), Chandra Muzzaffir (Malaysia) and Mahmoud Ayoub (Lebanon/ US) are Muslims. Samdhong Rinpoche (Tibet/ India), Sulak Sivaraksa (Siam) and Helena Norberg-Hodge (Sweden/ Ladakh) are Buddhists. Satish Kumar (India/UK), Ashis Nandy (India) and Vandana Shiva (India) are Gandhian/ alternative thinkers. Tu Weiming (China/ US) is a Confucian scholar. Bishop Labayen (Philippines) is a Christian. Arief Budiman (Indonesia/ Australia), Walden Bello (Philippines) and Nakamura Hisashi (Japan) are left intellectuals strongly identified with Asian culture. The dialogues offer a rich fabric of interweaving views and analysis, reflecting both what is unique and also diverse in Asian culture. And despite differences, there are common threads in the dialogues arising from a strong and unified commitment for social and economic change, and underlying common spiritual and ethical values. Communities need to 'be rooted in agriculture' (Bello, v2, p.46), and replace the focus on economics in agriculture with culture. Further common themes include social justice and sustainability, acknowledging the principles and practice of compassion and non-violence, of co-existence and interdependence rather than competition and a revolution of the heart. Bishop Labayen encourages all of us to further inter-faith dialogue, and as well,

> we have got to understand and value one another. Indeed, deep within us human beings, we discover a one-

> ness of heart that resonates with the same noble values and a oneness of mind that searches for what is true, noble, good and beautiful, (v.1,p.223).

These two volumes are extremely timely, and they need to be read by both people in Asia and in the West. The dialogues will strengthen identification of Asians with meaningful, clear and articulate voices from their region. As the editors point out,

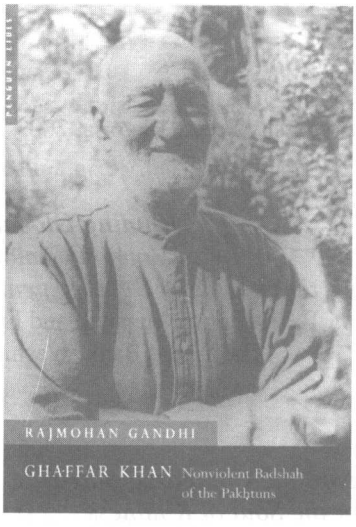
> once we are firmly rooted in self-respect and in our own cultural values, we can make healthy and critically aware choices for the future from various sources, (p.2).

Those of us from the West also need to read *The Asian Future*, to hear what has all too often been submerged and ignored, or subtly or not so subtly denigrated. The discussions touch the head and the heart, and are not only about a new vision for Asian society, but a vision for all beings on Planet Earth. The approach to this material through interviews adds a dynamic perspective, and the opportunity for more in-depth probing with provocative questions. The issues discussed are complex and on many levels, defying brief summaries and solutions, which are perhaps more a Western need conditioned as we are by bite-sized media grabs. The book should also be read widely: by university students across a range of disciplines, diplomats, politicians, community development workers and activists, spiritual practitioners and people involved in inter-faith dialogue.

The Asian Future is a basis for looking to the future, at visions for a new Asian society and alternative world views, for the benefit of future generations and all living beings. This is not only a critique and a questioning of the impact of development upon our values and on peoples' lives, but is "a renewal of the spirit of hope" (Bello v.2, p.46), where to bear fruit, we need to "let our imagination run ahead of reality" (Muzzaffir, v.2 p.120).

Jill Jameson,
May, 2005

Ghaffar Khan : Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns/ Rajmohan Gandhi.
New Delhi, Viking, 2004, xii, 300 p.

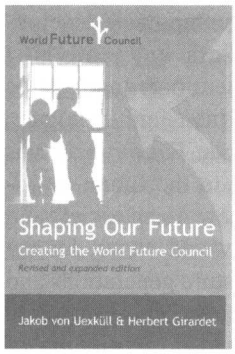


"There is nothing surprising in a Muslim or a Pathan like me subscribing to the creed of nonviolence. It is not a new creed. It was followed, 1,400 years ago by the prophet all the time when he was in Mecca,' said Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, whose influence and fame as Pathan nationalist and proponent of nonviolence and social reform. Born into the Muhammadzai tribe, from the Charsadda valley in the Pathan heartland, this passionate believer in the nonviolent core of Islam sought to wean his people —the fierce ethnic groups which form the base of the recently disbanded Taliban regime—from their violent traditions and fight for a separate Pathan homeland that would no longer be a buffer between Russia and Britain in the great game.

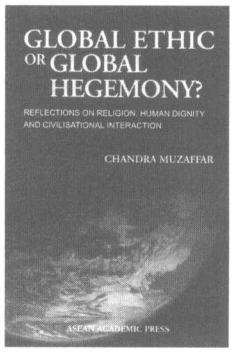
In 1929 came Mahatma Gandhi's call for nonviolent resistance against British rule and Badshah Khan, as he was known to many, responded by raising the Khudai Khidmatgars ('Servants of God'), an 'army' of 100,000 men who pledged themselves to the service of mankind and nonviolence as a creed. For this, and for his steadfast devotion to his principles, this towering figure was imprisoned for a total of twenty-seven years, first by the British and later by the Pakistani Government.

In this engaging biography, Rajmohan Gandhi offers fresh insights into the life and achievements of an extraordinary man, drawing close parallels with the life of Mahatma Gandhi, his 'brother in spirit'. He looks at Ghaffar Khan 'with the spectacles of today rather than those of 1947', emphasizing that for people in the twenty-first century who live in the shadow of September 11, Badshah Khan's unwavering commitment to nonviolence and Hindu-Muslim unity offers valuable lessons."

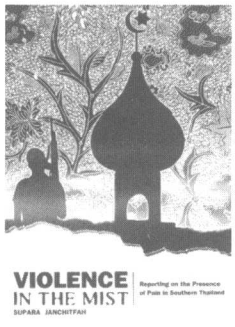
B.J. Johnson



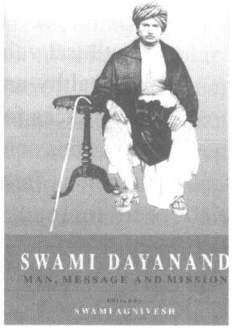
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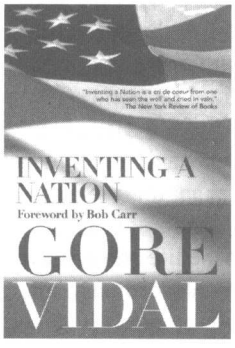
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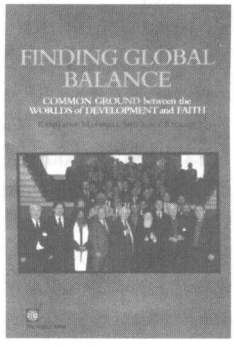
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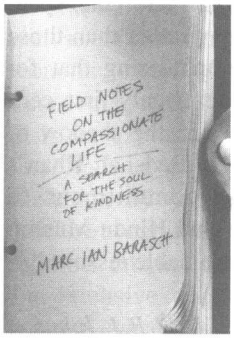
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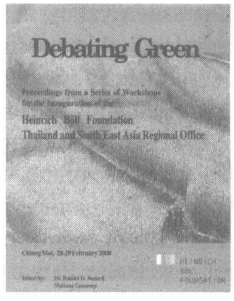
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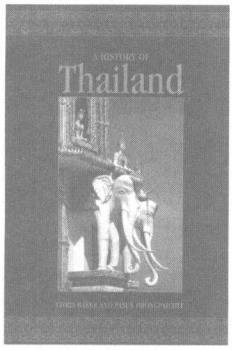
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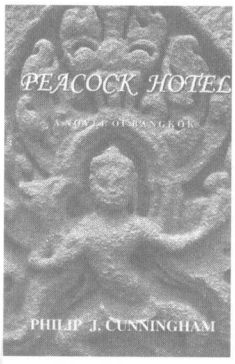
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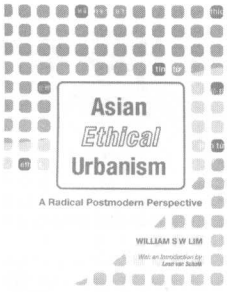
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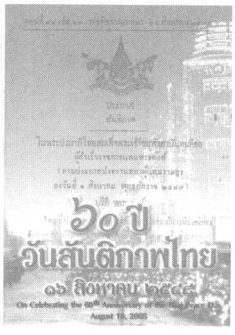
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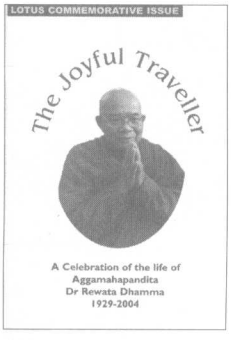
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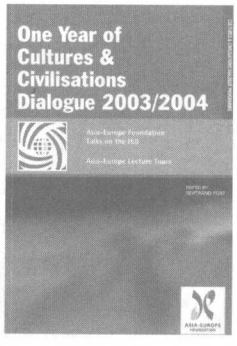
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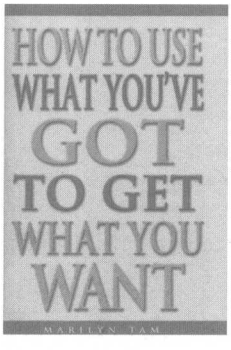
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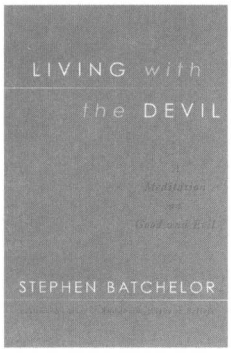
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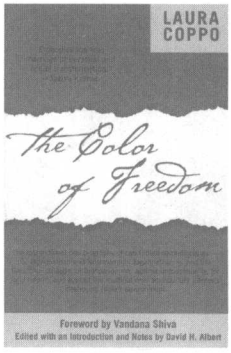
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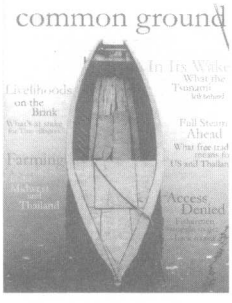
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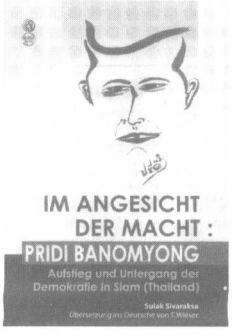
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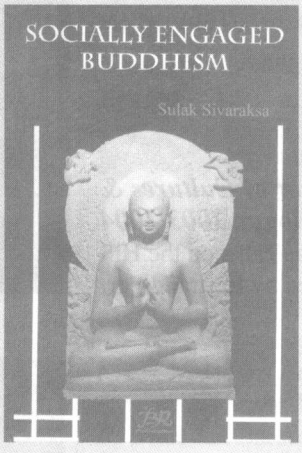


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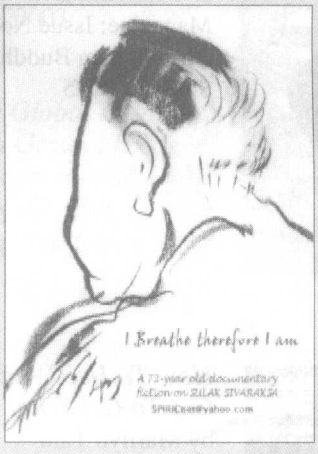


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New! From Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute



New book
Socially Engaged Buddhism
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New CD
I Breathe therefore I am:
A 72-year old Documentary
Fiction on Sulak
By Spirit in Communication
Network, 2005

Both items are available at Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute. For more information, please e-mail to spd@semsikkha.org