

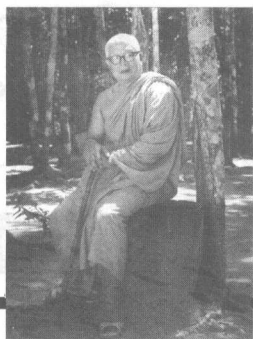
# SEEDS OF PEACE

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**Illegal “Laws”, Inter-“inter” Conflict  
The Desire for Absolute Power**



# SEEDS OF

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\* Bhikkhu Buddhadasa

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# PEACE

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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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**Bhikkhu Buddhadasa** (or the servant of the Buddha) was born as Ngeum Panich in Chaiya district, Surat Thani province in the southern part of Siam (Thailand). He became a Buddhist monk in 1926 at the age of twenty and was given the religious name "Indapañño". After a few years of study in Bangkok, he decided to quit his formal monastic education to pursue a more effective and appropriate approach. After returning to his hometown he began to investigate the teachings of the Buddha by going back to the original sources. At this time he made an effort to integrate Buddhist philosophical theory with practice, i.e. how to transform greed to generosity, hatred to compassion and delusion to wisdom. In 1932, he established a spiritual center in the forest called Suan Mokkhabalarama "The Grove of the Powers of Liberation". This center was the first of its kind in Siam or anywhere else in the world. The name *Suan Mokh* expressed the essence of Buddhist spiritual practice which is the liberation of all beings from ignorance, selfishness and suffering. After extensive studies, experiments and practices with the spiritual life, he declared himself as *Buddhadasa* and devoted his life to disseminating the essence of Buddhist teachings, and to bringing spiritual values back into the modern world. In his effort he always sought cooperation and understanding with other religions.

## His important work

**Restoration** - Bhikkhu Buddhadasa devoted himself to extensive research and sought to articulate the correct and essential principles of what he called "pristine Buddhism", namely the original realization of the Buddha which was later concealed under ritualism, nationalism, superstition, interpretations and commentaries, and politicization. He restored a number of profound teachings which had not been taught for a long time, such as the essence of interdependence of all. By reintroducing this concept as an active Buddhist teaching he challenged the modern concept of individualism.

He was skillful in elaborating the teachings of the Buddha and other spiritual practices to fit the traits and backgrounds of his audience without discriminating against nationalities, religions, beliefs, etc. His mastery over words in explaining the teachings attracted public attention, and even caused reaction, irritation and critique from conservative practitioners, particularly when he re-interpreted certain Buddhist teachings to encourage understanding between all peoples of the world.

**Writing and translation** - Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's important work is the collection of his lectures and writings called

“Dhammakosana”, comprising of 61 volumes at 500-pages each. These volumes have already been published; another 100 volumes await printing.

Some of his writings are quotations taken directly from the original Pali canon. These writings contain a biography of the Buddha and other profound teachings.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa was also a poet, writing poems using his pen name “Sirivayasa”.

In his time, Mahayana Buddhism was not accepted as equal to the Theravada tradition in Siam. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s interest in Mahayana teachings inspired him to do translations of the teachings from two teachers: Wei Lang and Huang Po. He was the first Thai monk to declare the Mahayana and the Vajrayana Schools of Buddhism as essential to the understanding of Buddhadhamma.

More than 140 of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s books have been translated into English, more than 15 books into French, and 8 into German. Some of his books have also appeared in the Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Lao and Tagalog languages. Moreover, his work is studied in practically every university in Europe and North America offering courses in world religions.

**Ecumenical activity and dialogue** - Bhikkhu Buddhadasa was always enthusiastic in his studies of the world’s religions. His areas of interest extended from Buddhism to Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. He gave a number of lectures to promote interfaith understanding and the comparative studies of religions. He also participated in ecumenical activities and interfaith dialogues.

With his deep respect for those spiritual values that contribute to the welfare of the world, he put forth the following “Three Resolutions”: to help everyone penetrate to the heart of their own religion, to create mutual understanding among all religions, and to work together to drag the world from materialism and selfishness.

**Establishment of Dhamma centers** - Suan Mokkhabalarama (or Suan Mokh) was established as a place for the investigation and practice of Dhamma. It was set in natural surroundings with minimum construction. In the beginning, only a few monks resided there, but later it became a gathering point for people of all walks of life, not only Thai Buddhists, but people of all religions and nationalities came there to live mindfully in simple conditions.

In 1987, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa established the International Dhamma Hermitage, located opposite the original center. Facilities offered included an introduction to the principles and practices of Buddhism, meditation courses for foreigners, simple facilities for foreign monks, and training courses for spiritual awakening. Shortly before his death, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa initiated a similar facility for women called Dhamma-Mata.

**Socially engaged Buddhism** - Bhikkhu Buddhadasa was very skilful in using age-old Theravada Buddhist principles to respond to the concerns of modern society. His sharp commentaries concerning social problems and his proposed guidelines were instrumental in raising public awareness to various issues such as violence and war, blind faith and indifference toward other faiths, struggles between political ideologies, consumerism and materialism, education, etc. He also envisaged the correction of social structures which are unjust and violent.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s work has always been in response to the concerns of modern society. His interpretations have inspired his disciples and other young people, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, who are active in social services and social change. Some of them have set up a local network of monks and nuns called Sekhiyadhamma Network to work in various issues such as ecology, cultural preservation, social services, education, poverty eradication, etc. The work of Sekhiyadhamma Network is now expanding to cooperate with other faith organizations in Thailand as well as to work with Buddhist monks in Laos, Cambodia, Burma and Sri Lanka. Likewise, he was patron of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists whose members are active in many parts of the world.

With his significance, UNESCO agreed to associate with celebraion of his centenary in the year 2006.

*Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's  
natal centenary  
27<sup>th</sup> May 2006*





## Editorial Notes

Last year, we celebrated the centenaries of Mr. Direk Jayanama (18 January 2005) and Mr. Kularb Saipradith (31 March 2005). We also had a big event on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Peace (16 August 2005)—not only within Siam. We sent a group of artists and intellectuals to London to conscientise the Thai public there to be aware of the three above mentioned dates. During WWII, a number of Thai patriots there joined the Free Thai Movement under the leadership of Mr. Pridi Banomyong, who was therefore able to proclaim peace in the name of H.M. King Rama VIII, which meant that the allies accepted our independence despite the fact that the dictatorial regime under Field Marshal Pibulsongkram had declared war against the UK and the US.

This year we will celebrate the centenary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa on 27 May 2006. He was the first Thai monk to be recognized internationally by UNESCO. Although H.R.H. Prince Patriarch Paramanujit had been honoured by UNESCO earlier, it was mainly due to his great talent as a poet, rather than as a member of the Sangha; whereas Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's role of a renunciate is most renowned, and he had challenged mainstream economism and globalism. We will dedicate the next issue almost entirely to the Servant of the Buddha.

Among laymen, the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation recognized Mr. Suchart Sawadisri as an exemplar among writers and intellectuals as well as among journalists. Besides he also stood firmly for peace. Yet his contribution has on the whole been ignored by the mainstream. (Please see page 35)

Suchart Sawadisri is an essayist, writer and editor. His wife and son are also well known in the Thai literary world. Suchart Sawadisri has now ventured to the realm of painting and drawing.

In fact the Foundation was the first to recognize Mr. Angkarn Kalayanapong's genius, as a poet as well as an artist. We are happy that his latest exhibition will be on display at the Queen Sirikit's Art Center in Bangkok from 1 February 2006 onward. We are proud to have Mr. Angkarn's drawing on our cover.

The cover for the next issue will be a drawing or portrait of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa. We will celebrate his centenary nationwide and internationally too.

In fact, 2006 is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar's conversion to the path of the Buddha. We will mark this great event as well as the centenary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa in India and elsewhere. To honour these two gentlemen effectively means bringing about social equality, as well as fraternity and liberation from greed, hatred and delusion to the majority of people, Buddhist or otherwise.

Last October, we paid homage to the place where Dr. Ambedkar had declared his conversion to Buddhism.

We had a very successful INEB meeting at Nagpur in India from 12-16 October 2005. We were blessed by the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama who participated eagerly with all members. The young were so impressed by his humility and generosity. We expect many good activities would follow from such a wonderful gathering.

In Siam, we started a Sekhiyadhamma group for monks and ordained women many years ago so that they would have opportunities to learn from each other to value the celibate life in the age of globalization and consumerism. On the other hand, the mainstream Thai Sangha seems to have lost its stand against the modern *Mara*. Members of the group have been exposed to social sufferings in order to find out their causes, which are linked directly or indirectly to capitalism (*lobha*), imperialism (*dosa*), and mainstream education and mass media (*moha*), and to overcome them skillfully through nonviolence. Recently, a member of the group (Phra Supot Suvajo) was murdered and another leading member of the group has alienated himself from the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, which has been the main lay supporter from the beginning. We have therefore called a general assembly of the Sekhiyadhamma group to revitalize it with skilful means. We hope the Sekhiyadhamma group will grow in strength and will continue collaborating with INEB as well as other activities of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation.

## Thailand's Deep South : Anand, Monks Exchange Words

**P**attani, Thailand. Senior Pattani clergy continue to argue the NRC is biased in favour of militants. Attempts by the National Reconciliation Commission to address the complaints of Buddhist monks in the restive South that it sympathises with militants at the expense of Buddhists, led to heated exchanges yesterday between senior monks and the NRC chairman.

Anand Panyarachun met the leader of the Pattani Sangha Council, Phra Udom Thammakani, and other senior monks to discuss the commission's role to restore peace to the southernmost provinces.

Monks in Pattani last month called for the dissolution of the commission, saying it has failed to contain the region's violence and sometimes speaks in favour of militants.

Anand explained that the violence was mostly caused by conflict between local Muslims and the government, while Bud-

dhist have no problem with the authorities. This leads the commission to pay much more attention to Muslims.

"Of course Buddhists have fears for their safety, as many are victims of the violence. But it is the government's duty to provide security for the people," Anand said.

"Furthermore, Buddhists feel good about the Buddhist-dominated government, while Muslims—who badly need justice—have no trust in the government," he added. "We see that as a problem, so we give more emphasis to Muslims."

Phra Udom, who earlier called for the dissolution of the NRC, stood by his position, saying Buddhist monks have to speak out on behalf of victims because no agency is protecting them. Some agencies have a bias against Buddhists, he said.

Anand argued that his commission had no bias against followers of any religion. In fact,

a majority of the NRC's members are Buddhists.

Another senior monk, Phra Kru Pipat, said Buddhist laymen and two monks—one from Chaiyaphum and another from Nakhon Si Thammarat—on the NRC were not residents of the deep South and did not know the real situation there.

"They don't know how local monks suffer from the violence. Many of us are killed, even in the temples. Of course ustads [Islamic religious teachers] are killed—but have you ever seen them killed in their mosques?" he said to Anand.

The monks' questions went on. "Who knows who is militant?" "The NRC is seeking reconciliation between whom and whom?"

Anand replied that even PM Thaksin Shinawatra did not know.

*The Nation*,  
12 November 2005

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## Thailand's Very Own 'French' Problem

**W**hile Thailand is wrestling with the southern turmoil that grows ever more widespread and more violent, the riots by ethnic youths in France remind us of a time bomb that could soon explode in our face. Look at how we are treating the hilltribe peoples in our country. And the immigrant workers from Burma. There are more than one million hilltribe peoples in Thailand. Only half of them are granted

citizenship. The rest are left stateless and denied of most basic rights although many of them are indigenous to this land.

Without an education or freedom of movement, they have little opportunity to get good jobs. Given their own fear of arrest, forget about their chances to demand their rights. Without citizenship, what choice do they have but bitterly endure the discrimination and exploitation.

Incidentally, one study found that the number one factor that makes young hill girls enter the flesh trade is the lack of citizenship itself.

Meanwhile, more than two million people from Burma have fled military brutality and economic hardship to seek greener pastures here. They often end up working in a slave-like environment. Their children are not allowed to go to local schools be-

cause they are “illegal aliens”. If these children are not sent home, they grow up with no education and no better future than their parents.

Can we blame them if these alienated youths grow up intensely angry with the system, and deeply hating us?

The ethnic youth riots in France, the violence in our deep South and the growing sense of alienation among our own immigrant youths are part of the ethnic violence that is erupting around the world.

Ironically, while governments are embracing global economic integration, globalisation’s necessity to impose uniformity on us all for the sake of efficiency has furiously reignited a strong desire to nurture ethnic identities and differences. If we believe we must fully integrate with the global economic system to avoid being left out of the race, we must accept that globalisation comes with an immense social challenge. And if we fail to undo ensuing religious and ethnic conflicts, our dreams of globalisation might be derailed

altogether.

For the Muslim minorities, the global media has effectively connected their anger in different locales into one strong stream of fury against the discriminating dominant cultures, which often subscribe to the values determined by the white, Western world. Globalisation has also dramatically sped up the mass movement of people across borders, resulting in rapid accumulation of ethnic immigrants, which poses an integration challenge.

The strife in the South and the French riots both confirm the urgent need to address racist nationalism which has effectively turned latent frustration into burning violence.

Both also point to the dangers unnecessarily caused by arrogant policy makers who use their acidic tongues carelessly. In France, the riots spiralled seemingly out of control after Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy had called the rioters, who are mostly children of Muslim immigrants, “scum”.

Remember what happened

after our own prime minister haughtily ridiculed those behind the January 2004 arms robbery in Narathiwat “cheap thieves”?

Meanwhile, harsh police and military measures followed by martial law have triggered even more violence from the militants, who consider themselves freedom fighters.

Will the French government’s use of curfews and harsh measures succeed in dousing the flames of ethnic violence in the long run? Without sincere efforts to tackle the roots of alienation and anger and to redefine Frenchness to embrace cultural pluralities, the Thai experience provides a clear answer.

Will Thailand face the same threats of urban violence caused by the failure to integrate immigrant communities? The French experience at least indicates we definitely have a time bomb in our hand if don’t rethink our racist nationalism.

*Sanitsuda Ekachai,*  
10 November 2005,  
*Bangkok Post*

## SIAM

### Same Old Royalism Hatches Again

The fad about Pramuan Rujanaseri’s book, *The Royal Power*, baffles me. It is an overly rhetorical book that happens to come out at the right timing, namely as the public is fed up with the Prime Minister’s enormous power and his arrogance.

Among the haphazard thinking and poor argumentation, perhaps one example is enough. “The fact is that His Majesty

will endorse every constitution before it can be implemented. His power apparently overwhelms what’s stated in the charters.” This is a quoted from the article in *The Nation*, Sept 5, but Pramuan himself is apparently very proud of this argument too.

This is perverse logic. Is a US president above the law since he signs it into law? Does having the authority to veto a law mean

he is above the law? NO and NO. How many orders and regulations Pramuan himself signed at the Ministry of Interior? Was he above those regulations? (Perhaps he was.)

It is irresponsible to mislead the public using logical tricks, especially as those tricks lead to the suggestion that the king is above the constitution. Pramuan’s book is nothing but a

popularization of the ideas held among the royalists after 1932 who had tried several times to revive the power of the monarch. The fierce struggle over this issue led to the Boworadet Rebellion in 1933—a civil war of sorts that cost dozens of lives, and the abdication of King Prachadhipok (Rama VII) in 1935 after he lost the political fight to have more power under the constitution.

The royalists were subdued during the first Phibun regime (1938-44). After WWII, it was Pridi Banomyong who allowed the royals to participate in politics (except the immediate family members of the monarch) and returned all the titles and privileges to the royals, including the chief of them, Prince Rangsit or Kromkhun Chainat Narendhorn, who was the last surviving son of King Chulalongkorn and who had been a leader of the royalists.

Pridi's compromise was the result of domestic politics during WWII when many royalists were among the backbone of the Free Thai movement against Phibun. What Pridi didn't anticipate was that the royalists began to plot revenge against him almost immediately, and to revive the king's power—not to the pre-1932 absolute monarchism but along the line that King Rama VII (ditto: the royalists) wanted. The wrongful accusation that Pridi had something to do with the assassination of King Ananda in June 1946 was the dirty work of these people. Pridi suffered tremendously from 1946 to the end of his life at the hand of these royalists in cooperation with the army.

The 1947 coup finished Pridi, even though he tried to come back a few years later. It ended the People's Party's era.

Historians usually pay attention to the role of the new generation of the army leaders, such as Phin Choonhavan and Phao Sriyanond. The fact is that the hand prints of the royalists were everywhere in this coup and a few years after, belonging to people from the high princes to energetic Pridi hunters like the Pramaj brothers, and more.

In March 1946, Prince Dhaniwat (Kromamun Phitthayalap Phrutthayakorn) delivered a historic presentation to the special audience that included the young King Anand, his mother and his brother (the present king). Prince Dhani played an important role in the Privy Council during Rama VII that blocked the King's efforts to "reform" Thai politics. He was a brilliant scholar who after the royalist set back during the first Phibun, spent time on scholarly works. He was among the Kings' teachers who quietly groomed the young monarchs from the late 1940s to the 1950s, and also became the President of the Privy Council after Prince Rangsit died in 1951.

Prince Dhani's presentation, "The Old Siamese Conception of the Monarchy", was a short but truly original work of scholarship. It laid the intellectual foundation for the royalist discourse to enhance the royal power in the post-1932 era, and the discourse originated by this article is the framework for the development of the monarchical institution in the past 60 years. (Historians who only see the rise of the monarchy from Sarit's era will find both Sarit's ideology and the king's activities the offshoots of the discourse begun by Prince Dhani. So was Kukrit Pramaj's idea on the monarchy.)

ALL the major points in Pramuan's book are merely de-

rivatives of this work by Dhani. (via the exegesis by Thongthong Jantharangsu's thesis in 1986). Pramuan only adds his own nonsense argumentation using up-to-date rhetoric and timely politics. Nothing more, really.

Pramuan's contribution to this royalist theory of the royal power is to popularize it for consumption by anybody who lacks historical perspective, has a short memory, or who want to appear more royalist than the royals themselves. Those people, including famous journalists, are doing a great service to the royalist efforts in trying to make the de facto royal power into de jure.

If concerned citizens of the present generation, like those at *the Manager* or at this newspaper *The Nation*, are fascinated and convinced by Pramuan's ideas, it reflects how superficial and uncritical they are and how poor their historical knowledge is. For the royalists, their responses to Pramuan's book are predictable. What else do we expect them to say, except not saying anything at all.

Before going crazy with Pramuan's book, we should study how horribly Pridi Banomyong had suffered at the hands of the royalists especially during 1946-49. The great irony is that some of the advocates for enhancing the royal power tell the story of Pridi working hand in hand with the royals for the enhanced royal power. "Ridiculous" would be my softest comment concerning these royalist pretenders.

Sorry, I am not Thaksin's supporter. I have written and talked in many places against the current government, especially its hopeless handling of the crisis in the deep South. But an effort



to undermine the government by reviving the old royalism is very dangerous and must be countered. It is easy to see short term benefits for Pramuan, and probably for those journalist critics of Thaksin, too. But this kind of short term tactic is extremely short-sighted and very dangerous, unless all of them truly want the royalist regime of democracy in Thailand.

By the way, you write, "more than 1,000 years of absolute

monarchy in Thailand". Can you tell me from when to when—since Thailand was a Happy Valley kingdom in the Altai Mountain in Mongolia when the Thai kings ruled over the whole Asia? With such a statement in your highly educated newspaper, I am not surprised that Pramuan's book is a fad among Thais. As a historian, I plead guilty for failing to make people intelligent about history. The absolute monarchy in Siam lasted less than 60

years—around the 1870s to 1932 only. Your statement makes the royalist ideas Paleolithic indeed.

*Thongchai Winichakul*  
Madison, Wisconsin

This article was supposed to be published in the Bangkok-based newspaper *The Nation* on 5 September 2005, but was ultimately turned down because the editors found its language "too strong."

## Suu Kyi's Detention Legally 'Incorrect'

The Political Party of Burma's detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi submitted an appeal to the junta claiming her house arrest was legally flawed, the party said yesterday.

"We have mailed a letter of appeal to the ruling government against the extension of restrictions imposed on Aung San Suu Kyi under the Law Safeguarding the State from Dangers of Subversionists," said a statement from Suu Kyi's opposition political party, the National League for Democracy.

The statement said Suu Kyi is not a "subversionist" as the government claims and that her detention—which was extended by six months in November—was "factually and legally" incorrect.

Suu Kyi has spent 10 of the last 16 years in detention. Under Burmese law, a person can be detained without trial for up to five years. She has never been tried.

A government spokesman could not be reached for comment.

Suu Kyi's party on Monday

urged a special envoy from Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar, to meet with Suu Kyi during his visit to Burma next month to assess the progress of democratic reforms in the country.

The junta has not said if he will be able to meet with her.

Burma's current junta has been in power since 1988 after crushing a prodemocracy uprising. They called elections in 1990 but refused to hand over power after Suu Kyi's party won a landslide victory.

*The Nation*,  
December 23, 2005



*Dissidents from Myanmar living in Japan stage a play in front of a portrait of Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi during a rally celebrating her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in Tokyo*  
([www.dassk.org](http://www.dassk.org))



## Diplomat Bemoans TRT's Populist Regime

**T**he Five-Year Reign of Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's administration has been all about "We and Others" politicking, said Surapong Jayanama, one of Thailand's top career diplomats who retired last September.

In a special interview with *The Nation*, Surapong, who was ambassador to Vietnam, Portugal, Greece, Germany, and South Africa, said, "A populist regime allows political space for only two: 'We and all the Others'."

"In this case, 'We' means the government led by the Thai Rak Thai Party and its bedrock supporters —predominantly its voters [who elected the party into office twice]. 'Others' represent antagonists, NGOs, international organisations, intellectuals, critics, members of the Opposition."

Surapong said he thought the TRT platform, which attracted an unprecedented 19 million voters in the general election last February, had key elements that were similar to those once propounded by failed populist regimes in Latin America.

"Brazil, Argentina, Peru and several other countries in the region had populist regimes from the 1970's onwards," he said. "All these regimes later became bankrupt."

Surapong went on to point out the differences between populism as once practised in South America and that practised by the Shinawatra regime.

"All Latin American populist regimes were staunchly anti-capitalists, anti-landlords, and anti-multinational corporations," Surapong said. "They allied

themselves with the poor and the underprivileged. The current Thai populist regime in turn is evidently linked with global capitalism and multinational firms.

"Foreign governments and multinationals are being invited in, in large numbers as we can see from the recent Thailand Grand Sale event," the veteran diplomat added. He was referring to PM Thaksin's invitation on December 14 for more than 40 foreign governments and private sector representatives to invest in the Thai government's so-called development partnership programme.

Yet for all the government's wooing of foreign investors, it has painted itself as a champion of Thailand's poor, Surapong said.

"Poverty eradication, for instance, has long been a prominent feature of government policies. It has resulted in members of the grassroots' identifying themselves closely with 'We,'" he said.

"People from low-income families have also been being cajoled by the government over the past five years by way of special political treatment as evidenced by many government policies and measures," Surapong added.

"On the other side are the 'Others,' whose criticisms are seen as antagonistic to the interests of the poor and as creating obstacles to the government's efforts to alleviate their situation."

As a result, the Thaksin administration portrays itself as the only legitimate advocate of

poor people's welfare, he said.

"Second, the 'Others' can also become handy political scapegoats, should they oppose a particular government policy or else when an important policy fails to bear desirable fruit," he said. "[Such portraying of the political landscape] is a form of populist opportunism. But it's not sustainable," Surapong added.

Surapong said that in line with his party's claim to be the only legitimate champion of the poor, Thaksin has long made a point of describing himself as a rags-to-riches provincial who had to work hard even as a child. Thaksin places heavy emphasis on such aspects of his life in his autobiography, "Ta Du Dao Tao Tid Din."

"His story is meant to illustrate that ordinary people can also become tycoons like him," Surapong said.

"This kind of rags-to-riches story tale was very well received by common people some five years ago when Thaksin was first running for office.

Thaksin's penchant for populism manifests itself in other ways as well, Surapong argued.

"The premier has demonstrated he is not really on the same wavelength as intellectuals and academics," he said. "He doesn't seem to favour the parliamentary system, either, in the sense that he prefers to communicate directly with his constituents during his weekly national radio broadcast rather than via Parliament," he added.

*Nophakhun Limsamarnphun  
The Nation, December 24, 2005*

## Letter from INEB Secretariat

Dear readers and INEB members,

Welcome to another new year.

In the last issue, I promised you the reports from The 2005 INEB conference. Now you can read the gist of the conference in the following pages. I also have a summary of Ven Samdong Rinpoche's keynote address on "Buddhism and Equality" delivered on the first day of the conference.

For those who are new to INEB, the reminiscing article of Jonathan Watts will give you idea on the evolution of INEB. I am happy to report to you that INEB is now active in bringing "young blood" into our network. Some alumni of INEB *Young Bodhisattva* met together before the conference in The INEB Youth Ashram. Well, it is a kind of youth version of the INEB conference. Not only is sister/brotherhood produced from the gathering; but some exiting action plans as well.

There are some changes in the INEB Executive Committee members. Old friends such as Jill Jameson and Jonathan Watts came back to the committee. New members are there, too. Please see more details inside.

For the year 2006, INEB will continue our *Young Bodhisattva* Youth Buddhist Leadership Program. Due to our new staff member Ms. Araya, a women's program was retrieved from the shelf. We plan a long term training program for lay and ordained women. Buddhist-Muslim dialogue is already in our action plan, to be held in next June. Our new website [www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org) will function from January.

There are many important events that await us in the coming year. The first one is the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conversion to Buddhism of Dr. Ambedkar in India. The event reaffirms us that Buddhism is a precious source for equality and liberation from discrimination, inferiority and ignorance. The second one is the Centenary of The late Ven. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa. When alive, he was our patron. He always called for the deep understanding of one's own religion, interfaith cooperation and renouncement of consumerism-materialism. INEB will organize some events in many places in honour of these two great Buddhists.

Please be sure that your membership is still on, so that we can keep you in touch. The information about renewal/subscription can be found inside. We rely on your sharing for the survival of INEB in cash or in kind. If you can share more than the subscription fee, the exceeding amount will financially aid Buddhists from poor countries to attend our activities.

INEB would like to express special thanks to our long-term sponsors, Tom Brown and Jon Isiri, who are very kind to mail *Seeds of Peace* to the readers in the USA. The money saved from the mailing cost also goes to support our program.

Finally, the end of the year 2005 reminded me of the tragedy of the tsunami in many parts of Asia on 26<sup>th</sup> December 2004. In the previous issues, we reported the activities of INEB on trauma healings. We would like to thank some members who donated money to the program, especially Ms. Susan E. O'Conner. The merit will of course be shared by other members as well.

Happy new year to you all.

Yours in Dhamma,  
Anne Lapapan Supamanta  
Executive Secretary

## Summary Report on The 2005 INEB Conference: Buddhism and Social Equality

Nagpur, the center of India, was chosen by Dr. Ambedkar as a place for his announcement of being a Buddhist together with his people 49 years ago. Such declaration began the journey seeking for equality and human dignity for the dalits who were the lowest born and the outcaste in the rigid social and religious stratification of Hindu society. The dalits renounced Hinduism to other religions with the hope to abandon the status of slavery by birth. Almost half a decade has passed, the plight of the dalits still continues, in spite of the new religious identity.

Taking the opportunity of the starting of the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the conversion, Buddhists from many countries expressed solidarity and moral support to the Buddhist dalits in the 2005 INEB Conference, which was appropriately entitled "Buddhism and Social Equality" at Nagaloka Campus in Nagpur.

### **Pre-conference Workshop "Transcending Barriers: Dr. Ambedkar and the Buddhist World"**

Preceding the main conference, Dhammacari Lokamitra, our host from Jambudvipa Trust, organized the pre-conference workshop from 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 2005 under the theme "Transcending Barriers". There were many obstacles to overcome. For the Buddhist dalits, it is the first time to meet with international Buddhist fellows to discuss nothing other than Buddhism which is social engaged. Likewise, it is the first time for many Buddhist friends to get to under-



stand the situation of the dalits.

The pre-conference workshop began with a keynote address by Dhammacari Lokamitra on Buddhist revival in India. He mentioned that the majority of people who took refuge in the Triple Gems are the slum people, the poorest. He called for their responsibility to learn Buddhism. Only then can we see that the teaching of the Buddha is fraternity, liberty and equality. The Buddha only showed us the way to liberation, he never bestowed liberation to us.

The mornings started with presentations from Buddhist dalits and others on the impact of Dr. Ambedkar on Buddhist communities in India and worldwide. In one presentation, we were reminded that conversion is in fact a process, not an event which ended in itself. It required a behaviour change not a symbolic action. It is an ongoing, radical, multi-dimensioned movement.

Jonathan Watts gave an

encouraging presentation on the skillful handling of identity. We learnt that everyone has both inferior and superior dimensions of identity. Only by cutting through the arrays of identity would we overcome all obstacles that bar our fraternity.

Participants got into small groups in the afternoon. During small group discussions, it was identified that poverty, human rights violation, discrimination, inferiority, weak leadership, discord among the dalit groups, and poor understanding of Buddhism were among barriers for the dalits to win over. Of course it is important for other Buddhist fellows as well to break into understanding the struggle of the dalits. Meanwhile the role of Dr. Ambedkar and lesson learnt from his action were analyzed during the discussion. He remained the hero and it is difficult to find anyone to replace him.

In addition to the discussion, we had a chance to visit a slum area where members of TBMSG

are working. All guests were impressed by the improvement of the quality of life in the slum with the inspiration of Dhamma in the heart of the *dhammacarinis* and *dhammacaris*

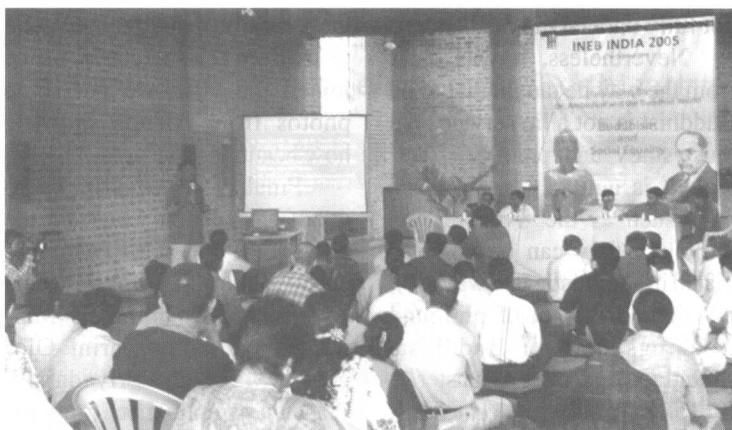
### The Visit to Diksha Bhumi

Diksha Bhumi is the place where the first mass conversion of Dr. Ambedkar took place. It became the pilgrim's destination for millions of Buddhist dalits all over India. Some even went there on foot. It is comparable to Mecca for Muslims. The crowd surrounding the stupa of Dr. Ambedkar was so huge that we need the help of young men from the karate class of the Nagaloka Campus holding hands to form an aisle for us on the night of October 12<sup>th</sup> on the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism. We thanked them for their strength and patience against the pushing-and-pulling mass that was loudly shouting "Jai Bhim!" all the time.

### The 2005 INEB Conference: Buddhism and Social Equality

The conference started with the blessing from many Buddhist leaders, including Ven. Pomnyun Sunim (South Korea), Ven. Samdong Rinpoche (in exile Tibet), Ven. Kuang Shin (Taiwan) and Sulak Sivaraksa (Siam). Then, the report on the last conference in Seoul, South Korea, was presented, followed by a short report on the Youth Ashram.

We were very honoured to have two special speakers. Ven. Samdong Rinpoche, the prime minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile gave the keynote address on *Buddhism and Equality* on the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> October. The next morning we had



Sulak Sivaraksa's *Buddhist Social Action and Skilful Means with Reference to Social Equality* presentation.

During the two days after the presentations, the participants joined one of the discussion topics that interest them. Issues discussed included Discrimination and caste prejudice, Social and ethnic inequality (the cases of Tibet, Burma, Bangladesh, and India), Issues for Buddhist women, Leadership in Buddhist community, Education, Responses to manmade and natural calamity, etc.

In addition to the program, everywhere we saw people grouped themselves informally to carry on the discussion. New friendship was also made over chitchatting. The INEB youth group met together almost every night to exchange their views on the topics that each of them joined. Their role as our hope for the future of INEB was recognized by the elders. Consequently, two representatives of the youth group were invited to join the Executive Committee.

### The Blessing from H.H. the Dalai Lama

As believed in many parts of Asia, Naga is related to rain. Therefore the last three days of our stay in Nagpur—the land of

Naga—were blessed by the rain, turning the beautiful Nagaloka into a muddy place. It worried us slightly since we wished to welcome H.H. the Dalai Lama in the best manner we could when he visited us on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October. Nevertheless, the muddy road seemed to be nothing to His Holiness. He still extended his compassion to us as ever.

His Holiness was with us during the afternoon of the 15<sup>th</sup> October in the question and answer session. He impressed us by his brilliance, humour as well as deep spirituality. Some questions related to the small group discussions, e.g. the role of Buddhist women and female ordination and natural calamity issues. Some were general.

The 2005 INEB Conference ended with the public teaching of H.H. the Dalai Lama. It attracted thousands of people. Many Tibetans traveled from afar particularly for this session. He even granted a special audience for them.

The lecture of His Holiness was very significant. It is in Tibetan with English and Hindi simultaneous translations. He started with simple teachings and then went deeper and deeper into important texts such as *Madhyamika* which stunned many participants. A lot of us did



not fully understand his lecture.

Nevertheless, it was clear from the way he taught that to be Buddhist is not a lip service. We must study and practice. Likewise it is not only citing basic ones such as the five precepts (although they can be contemplated in a sophisticated way too), but there are a lot of profound teachings that all Buddhists should try their best to master.

Some of us went on to visit the Ajanta and Ellora Caves after

the conference. Although none of us from the secretariat office joined the visit, we got some photos from friends showing how beautiful they are.

Finally we would like to thank many people who made the conference possible. Dhammacari Lokamitra, Dhammacari Vivekratna, Dhammacari Maitreynath, Dhammacarini Ojogeeta, Mangesh, Priyadarshi, Prashant, young men from the karate club at Nagaloka, the

cooks, the students who served at meal times, the cleaners, the guards, the participants from far away countries, etc. Due to limited space, all names cannot be mentioned. But one thing we can be sure of. It is the interdependence of many, many beings, we know and do not know, human and non human, that made our conference possible and successful, and we thank them, too.

Secretariat Office

## From the INEB Executive Committee Meeting

The Meeting was held on 15 October 2005 during the INEB conference. The important points from the meeting are summarized hereunder.

### New Executive Committee

With the addition and dropping of some EC members, the new list is as follows.

- \* The Venerable Sumanalankar Maha Thero (Parbatya Boudha Mission, Bangladesh)
- \* The Venerable Nun Lobsang Dhechen (Dolma Ling Nunnery, Dharamsala, India)
- \* Mrs. Dara Viravongse (Laos)
- \* Mr. Raja Dharmapala (Dharmavedi Institute, Sri Lanka)
- \* Mrs. Poolchawee Ruangwichatorn (Spirit in Education Movement, Siam)
- \* Prof. Donald Swearer (Harvard University, USA)
- \* Mr. Ha Vinh Tho (Eurasia Order of Interbeing, Switzerland)
- \* Prof. Park Gwangseo (Buddhist Solidarity for Reform, South Korea)
- \* Prof. Dr. Yo Hsiang-chou

(Lay Buddhist Association, Taiwan)

- \* Dhammacari Lokamitra (Jambudvipa Trust, India)
- \* Ms. Jill Jameson (Australia)
- \* Mr. Jonathan Watts (ex officio of Think Sangha, Japan)
- \* Ms. Anchalee Kurutach (ex officio of Buddhist Peace Fellowship, USA)
- \* Mr. Suresh Boudha (representative from Youth Group, India)
- \* Ms. Jennifer Yo (representative from Youth Group, Taiwan)

We also welcome The Venerable Sanghasena (Mahabodhi International Meditation Center, Ladakh, India) as the new member of the advisory board.

### The Next Conference

The next INEB conference will be held in Taiwan under the support of Dr. Yo Hsiang-chou. The tentative timing is 18-20 June 2007. The theme may be "From Social Welfare (*Dana*) to Social Change (*Sila*)"

### The Special Events in 2006

INEB will organize activities to celebrate the Centenary of The Ven. Buddhadasa and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Conversion of Dr. Ambedkar next year.

### Youth Programs

EC members agreed to support the INEB Secretariat Office's program on *Young Bodhisattva* Youth Buddhist Leadership Training. The training in 2003-2005 involved only young people from South and Southeast Asia. Next year it will be expanded to include participants from East Asia and the west.

The representatives from youth groups presented their activity plan, featuring: 1) Assistance in organizing capacity building program (The *Young Bodhisattva* training, The Youth Ashram Retreat and Local trainings according to members' need), 2) Communication (e.g. data base, e-mail list, website) and 3) First-Third World Bridging program.



## INEB Youth Ashram

“Reflection on Tsunami, Ecology and Response of Young Bodhisattva”

Before the INEB 2005 Conference, a group of young members from Asia met in Swastigram, a beautiful farm in Dehra Dun, India from 1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> October 2005. Almost all of them are alumni of INEB Young Bodhisattva Buddhist Leadership Training from previous years. Many of us were happy to see old friends again. There were only seventeen of us from Siam, Laos, Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka, Tibet in exile and Taiwan. It was unfortunate that despite all efforts to make it, our friends from Cambodia and Myanmar could not come.

Although our group was small, we expected that the gathering would offer us stronger fraternity as well as space for learning and spiritual practicing together.

### Tsunami as *devadhuta*

The tsunami devastation at the end of 2004 was picked up as an entry point of discussion. Our friends in Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Siam have done some activities in response to the natural calamity; short-term relief, trauma healing as well as community rebuilding for the survivors. We shared our work and hoped that we could work together in helping our people.

For example, in Indonesia, Jimmy Lominto mentioned the work of young Buddhists particularly those in Medan, Sumatra Island. In spite of being the minority, they have provided shelters for tsunami survivors regardless of religious denomination. His group also took care of some Buddhist orphans. In Siam, we focused on trauma healing consultation.

Then, we expanded to ecologi-



cal crisis. Some are manmade but some are natural. The first kind drew our attention to reevaluating our behaviour that might be harmful to the environment. But for the issue of natural calamity brought us to explore the Buddhist concept of karma. Thanks to our active coordinator Prashant Varma, we were very fortunate to have Ravi Gulati and The Ven. Ringgu Tulku with us for the two issues.

### The impacts on the environment

We had Ravi Gulati from a group called Menzil. He supported education for the youngsters from the working class who “walked out” from schools, such as English and computer skill. Another part of his work is involved with the environment. He started his presentation with the basic ideas on economics. Questions in economics are what, how much, for whom and how to produce. And production is connected with how consumption and natural resources are used.

Ravi provided a formula  $I = PAT$  to show the impacts of human beings on the environment

(I). He said the severity of the impact depends on the function of population growth (P), affluence (A) which means the rate of consumption, and T or technology. In the area where population growth is high, such as in the Third World, the consumption is low due to poverty. On the contrary high consumption is found in the area where population grows slowly. To him clean technology is a long way to go. Therefore, the most important factor that is critical to the health of the world is consumption. We witness the competition for resources—the raw material for products consumed—in many parts of the world. Such competition leads to conflict and war. The US invasion of Iraq is one example. The US president made it clear that the US is ready to protect the American standard of living, even with war. To Ravi, to secure peace implies the social awareness of appropriate consumption, namely the awareness of want vs desire.

Then, Ravi introduced an interesting concept of doubling impact based on an ancient fable in Brahmanism. It says that from the outset of the world, God

Brahma plays a game by removing 64 rings from one stack to make another stack. Once completed, it means that one round of the world is over. It sounds like a short period of time. But if one move takes one second, according to the formula  $2^{64} / 60 \times 60 \times 60 \times 365$ , it will take 584,942,417,355 years for the world to expire! Therefore, any action to save the environment, no matter how small it is, if we repeat it, it will multiply and become a big impact.

To illustrate his point of the delicacy and interrelatedness of the ecological web, he introduced an impressive game that may be called the "web of life". Each of us was made to represent one thing in nature, may it be animal, plant, mountain, snow, mineral, etc. Then one of us chose another friend by identifying the relationship of things that both of us represent, throwing a thread to him/her. After repeating for several rounds, the thread becomes a web that connects all of us.

Toward the end of Ravi's session, we became aware of the importance of personal choice in mindful consumption in daily life. Besides, we were convinced that we can also take strong action to reverse the structural forces that are damaging the world's ecological system.

The next two days we carried Ravi's presentation onward. We divided into smaller groups to discuss issues such as motivation of our thought-speech-action and the clash between economics and ecology. We also discussed on some alternatives from the Buddhist perspective and how to achieve them, especially through a network of young socially active Buddhists. Our brother/sisterhood has been developed so much that it could contain 'piping hot' debates such as on mainstream vs alternative education.

## Karma and ecological crisis

From the tsunami we became aware of the impermanence of both humans and other beings. We saw the suffering of lives. With understanding that everyone and every being share sufferings, we Buddhists should do anything within our capacity to help others.

The last part of the camp is the retreat with Ringu Tulku, a Tibetan monk from Sikkhim. It was not a silent retreat, but comprised of short teachings and meditation sessions. Although the participants belong to different traditions, it was a good opportunity to learn from a Dhamma master from Vajrayana. We hope to have more chances to meet masters of all Buddhist traditions in the future activities of INEB.

To the question of karma as related to the tsunami, Ringu Tulku explained that it is linked closely with "interdependence" (*paticcasamuppada*). Interdependence is the basic teaching, saying that everything evolves or changes. When looking at things, big or small, deeply, we found that everything that exists has to be "not one". Its change is dependent upon the causes and effects of many things. Then it comes to the dhamma of *sunyata*.

It is critical to understand karma as a system of causes and effects, he emphasized. On the contrary, other religions see it as judgment or punishment. With such realization, it is neither god nor our own self on which we would blame. The tsunami happens because of causes and effects. What we can do now is more on how to work on it to reduce negative results.

## Suggestions for the Young Bodhisattva

Ringu Tulku gave many teachings which are valuable

for young Buddhists who are socially engaged.

So long as we are *samsaric* beings, we are still defiled by destructive emotions and attitudes. We cannot look at each experience as what really happens. What we aspire for the society is still very far from complete perfection. We cannot hold fast to our static thinking or ideology. Rather, he suggested us to observe flexibility.

But at the positive side, when we know karma deeply, we understand that our action has effects. The more we do good, positive deeds, the better things would change.

The concepts of bodhicitta and bodhisattva were explained in details. He talked about the six paramita as fundamental to being a bodhisattva.

Toward the end of the retreat, he emphasized the importance of seven things. They are intention, sensitivity to problems or sufferings, patience, maintaining spiritual foundation, right effort and rest, caution on fame, and appreciation and readiness to learn. These, he said, are what he would like us to deeply contemplate so that we can serve our people, all beings and the world better. The participants are very grateful for his teachings and hope to have a chance to see him again.

In addition to planned activity, the participants found some time for joy. We went to see Haridwar, the origin of Ganges River, bathing and doing some prayer there.

After one week stay in Dehradun, we proceeded downward to Nagpur to attend the 2005 INEB Conference. We brought with us joy, friendship as well as some new activity plans to share with the elder members at the conference.

*Secretariat Office*

# Buddhism and Equality

Summary from the speech by The Venerable Samdong Rinpoche  
for the 2005 INEB Conference at Nagpur, India

## What does equality mean?

There are many attempts to define equality. Some characterize equality as similarity. Other may quote “equality in opportunity” and “equality before god”. The latter is familiar term when it comes to the legal system.

According to Samdong Rinpoche, if equality means similarity, i.e. the sameness in quality and quantity, it is not “equality”. It is only an interference of uniqueness of an individual onto others. The last two terms are doubtful. They create two basic concerns. Firstly the legal system implies the denial of natural law. Instead it resorts to manmade laws from which genuine equality is difficult to find. The legal system has been a commercial phenomenon. One can pay for justice.

Some may claim that equality should mean equality in opportunity. Samdong Rinpoche argued that opportunity is not enough for every individual. If it meant so, it would have only brought about comparison and competition. Only a few fortunate ones would be able to access to equality. Therefore, equality is not available for majority of people. Conversely, comparison and competition are root cause to destroy equality.

In the past we can blame some traditions and customs that created inequality, e.g. the caste system and colour discrimination. Such things are easy to be reformed. We witnessed that laws can be changed in favour of the suppressed. Unfortunately, it



is always substituted by other inequality.

There is an argument that globalization, liberalization and privatization would weaken the custom that maintained inequality. But to him, it is only another set of substitution. Globalization in cooperation with consumerism and individualism originates an exploitation by mass production. Mass production simply means to produce in the amount that is more than needed. It inflicts greed by using comparison and competition. It dictates people to have no other choices, but to inevitably consume. People become slaves of consumerism.

It is critical that, to promote genuine equality, competition must not be promoted. Ultimately that means modernization must not be promoted. For Samdong Rinpoche, modernity or modern systems of social organization, law, science, politics, education, etc., all of them lead to competition. As a result, equality is not found.

Samdong Rinpoche agreed

that equality should be a value. It is possible to be so, he emphasized, by abandoning commercialization of everything in every dimension. Without dismantling modern structures with their inherent violence, genuine equality will never come to pass. He then put forth another challenge : without localization, as oppose to globalization, how could we have equality?

## Equality from a Buddhist view

According to Buddhist teachings, each individual is unique. There is no equality in terms of similarity. Equality is seen in Buddhism as comprising of three categories.

Firstly, all sentient beings have common grounds of wishing for happiness, avoiding unhappiness or sufferings, and—to reach the first two points—cultivating equanimity (*upeksha*) or avoiding extremity. The third point means to give happiness to all beings and get rid of suffering permanently. Putting it another way, it is to establish nondiscrimination. It is the Buddhist way to equalize all humans and beings. *Upeksha* should be instituted in all societies.

Secondly, the basic potentiality to grow, to enlighten and to get liberation is equal in every individual. Samdong Rinpoche explained that every being has equal relationship in this ground. There is no otherness or differentiation.

Thirdly, with the principle of non-independence, there is no good nor bad, no high nor low.

Everything is possible because of the magnitude of interdependence. Without understanding this, the result is the conditioning of the mind which is the root cause of inequality. Otherwise, equality becomes reality without the effort to set it up.

### In search of equality

Samdong Rinpoche said that the search for equality is a two-way traffic. To him, the problems of today are that we do not search equality through duty or responsibility. People look instead from the perspective of rights. It only leads to confrontation of two rights. As a result, it never produces any positive possibility.

He pointed out that modernity talks about rights, but has never achieved it. Buddhism talks about responsibility to everything. He saw the latter as the beginning of social equality. He made reference to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's call for *universal responsibility*.

He suggested that the approach toward equality must start from each individual. The more one reduces attachment to one's own self, the more one sees the interest of others. Then, with awareness of universal responsibility, one would be socially active and at the same time one's mind is reconstructed.

To be socially active for the

issue of equality, as Samdong Rinpoche suggested, must comprise of three dimensions. Firstly, one must possess a strong spiritual base which comes from determined spiritual practice. Clarity of concept is the second one. It includes sound ideology and philosophy. One may add intellectual pursuit. The first two will not do without the third one, active action.

At the end of his speech, he reiterated that modernity creates contradictions and conflicts. It does not fit with the law of nature as well as the nature of human beings. To him, modernity cannot be the way out for the search for equality at all.

## Grassroots Dharma Activism Around the World

Looking back now 16 years later, the original goals for INEB remain intact. In these years, the membership and makeup of INEB has undergone great changes, yet the goals have remained steady. Although many people have come and gone through the center of the INEB circle, the commitment to sentient and human relationship has stood at the center of all the work.

This focus on relationship is what makes INEB unique and at times makes INEB as an organization difficult to understand. Most organizations build themselves around policies, administrative structures and budgets. For better or worse, INEB has focused more on the shared interests and activities of socially engaged kalyanamitra, rather than build itself as an organization. Therefore, it has often been

hard to show newcomers exactly what INEB is or what INEB does. However, when we shift our attention, we can begin to see an extensive network of relationships and shared initiatives that have developed through the forum of INEB over the years.

### 1. The Early Years (1989-1997)

Of course, the great agitator, initiator and energizer behind the INEB movement has been Sulak Sivaraksa. In the early years, he worked closely with a small group of radical and dedicated Japanese priests led by Rev. Teruo Maruyama to develop and support the organizational structure of INEB. With Sulak and his myriad Thai organizations providing office and logistical support and INEB Japan lending major financial support, the network was able to develop its basic foundations. This early develop-

ment work was principally in nurturing INEB affiliates in various countries, especially in key countries of concern at that time: Sri Lanka (Dhammavedi Institute), Cambodia (Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation), Nepal (INEB Nepal), Bangladesh (especially Chakma Buddhists), and Burma (various refugee groups). It was through the focused efforts of the network, especially the efforts of INEB Japan and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship U.S.A., that INEB acted as a link to international aid and support organizations. This was and remains vital work since there are numerous marginalized Buddhist communities in South and Southeast Asia that remain isolated and neglected by 1) secular development agencies, 2) relief agencies sponsored by other religions, and 3) most conspicuously, economically well-



off Buddhists around the world with a very poor awareness of their fellow dharma brothers and sisters in other countries. In this way, this year's conference in the heartland of the Ambedkarite movement in India with significant participation from new Korean and Taiwanese members marks the fruition of the commitment initialized by these early INEB founders.

The other important work of these early years was to develop workshops and qualified trainers at the grassroots level in various countries and regions. INEB has sponsored and helped organize numerous workshops and activities in South and Southeast Asian countries, empowering Buddhists and people of other denominations suffering under social, political, and economic duress. Supporting leaders at a local level skilled in nonviolent change, alternative economics, ecology and spiritual development, INEB has helped communities solve their own problems towards the creation of wholesome societies. Our effort over the last several years has been to decentralize, and to encourage local and regional INEB members to develop their own forms of training with advice and support from other members. Some of our earliest activities in this area were:

- In 1991, in coordination with the Dhammavedi Institute, INEB in the face of fundamentalist resistance courageously implementing a conflict resolution program based in Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, including a 6-week workshop in Siam for Sri Lankan monks. INEB continues to support the Dhammavedi Institute's work while

increasingly coordination efforts with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement to stem the tide of violent, fundamentalist Buddhism that supports the civil war in Sri Lanka.

- In 1992, through the sustained efforts of volunteer Jeffery Sager, INEB worked closely with Phra Alongkot Dikpanyo of Wat Phrabatnampu in Lopburi, Thailand to establish the first Buddhist AIDS hospice in Thailand. This was courageous work at the time as Thais were still largely uneducated about AIDS and certainly did not see the temple as a place to house and care for these social outcasts. The Dhammaraksaniwet Hospice became the model upon which numerous other Buddhist hospices have been created in Thailand and has influenced Buddhists concerned about AIDS around the world.
- In 1992, in coordination with the Coalition for Peace & Reconciliation and Ven. Maha Ghosananda, INEB began a series of training workshops on conflict resolution, active non-violence, Dharma instruction, and alternative development for Cambodian clergy and lay people. These culminated in Maha Ghosananda's initiation of annual Dharma Walks (Dhammayatra) within Cambodia, landmark events for the creation of peace in Cambodia, that have been adapted by Buddhists in other countries, especially the Japanese Nipponzan Myohoji's international peace pilgrimages.

From these early seminal experiences, INEB began to de-

velop a core group of individuals skilled in running various kinds of workshops from the basis of Buddhist teaching and practice. Learning and sharing with concerned individuals from other traditions, specifically our many Quaker friends in the U.S.A., this pool of trainers has grown. The variety and number of workshops has also grown widely to cover such areas as gender, youth, environment and deep ecology, alternative politics, alternative education, non-violence, human rights, development, and the integration of spirituality and activism. In this way, INEB has realized its goal to articulate not only a unique Buddhist perspective for the modern world but more importantly to develop a unique Buddhist praxis to confronting the modern world. In this case, it has meant renewing the ancient Buddhist pedagogy of acting ethically (sila) - training the heart/mind (samadhi) - developing understanding and wisdom (panna) to confront the modern world.

The final aspect of this early work was INEB's efforts to disseminate information on urgent action and human rights campaigns. The early years were very intense and active ones for the INEB Secretariat in Bangkok as it sought to survive the frequent coup d'états in Thailand and the persecution and exile of Sulak Sivaraksa. Further, the INEB Secretariat did its best to disseminate timely insider information on the situation of various groups inside Burma being persecuted by the military junta. Human rights abuses in Cambodia, Bangladesh, Tibet and Vietnam were also key areas of concern and information dissemination by the INEB Secretariat. Unfortunately, due to the vast scope of



the Buddhist world and the lack of emphasis on building a strong institutional core, INEB has not been able to fully realize its goal over the years of acting as a major archive and conduit of information on the great variety of issues that concern socially engaged Buddhists.

At the same time, again through the efforts and patronage of Sulak Sivaraksa, INEB has been able to sponsor various publications, most significantly our tri-annual magazine *Seeds of Peace*. Other publishing highlights have been:

- *Radical Conservatism* (1990), a collection of essays in honor of the late Ven. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, which has led to three other major compendia of collected essays, *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennia* (1999), *Santi Pracha Dhamma* (2001), and *Socially Engaged Spirituality* (2003)
- *Dr. Ambedkar: The Liberator* (1991), a biographical pamphlet commemorating the centenary of Ambedkar's birth.
- *Mindful Meditation: A Handbook for Buddhist Peacemakers* (1990) by John McConnell.
- *Entering the Realm of Reality: Towards Dhammic Societies* (1997), a collection of essays which led to the creation of *Think Sangha Journal* (1998, 1999, 2002, 2004)

## 2. Diversity and Dispersion (1997-2002)

Since the beginning, the INEB conference has been the core institutional structure for INEB. Every year from 1989 to 1995, INEB held its international meeting where new members

were welcomed and old members renewed their commitments to the network. However, by 1996 the network had grown both in the number of interested people and also in the demands for various sorts of programs. Unfortunately, INEB at this point had not been able to make enough of a commitment to secure material resources for the expansion of the Secretariat in Bangkok to take on this increasing workload. This was due to the fact that 1) most INEB members did not come from mainstream sanghas with significant financial backing, 2) securing such financial backing from a major funder might compromise the non-sectarian and independent identity of the network, and 3) the core membership had always felt that the network must be sustained first by relationships and secondly by material resources.

In the end, it was decided that the annual conference would be changed to once every two years so as to lessen the strain on the Secretariat and allow it to focus more on developing a core program of activities related to key issues. During alternate years, it was decided that the Executive Committee which was elected at each conference would meet to address institutional and program issues in the network. In this way, INEB developed a new institutional structure that would be less dependent on the early seminal efforts of Sulak Sivaraksa and INEB Japan. Instead of the Secretariat being supported by Sulak and a local Thai working committee, it was decided that the INEB Secretariat would be run more independently by the Executive Committee and the new Executive Secretary, a German and Christian born but long

time INEB member Martin Petrich. With the development of e-mail, it was planned that he would be sufficiently supported by the international Executive Committee which comprised members in America, Europe, Thailand, Japan, and other parts of Asia.

In this way, the growth and diversification of INEB led also to a dispersion of the original core membership. Although at times, this was a painful process, one can now look back and see the tremendous fruit that has been born from the new projects and activities that were initiated in this period.

- Sulak Sivaraksa went off to initiate the Alternatives to Consumerism project and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), the latter of which is still active today.
- Pracha Hutunuwat, who had been INEB's first Executive Secretary, took over leadership of the Wongsanit Ashram outside of Bangkok. Besides working on SEM activities, he also began extending activities he began in INEB concerning deep ecology walks connected with indigenous people's issues, alternative politics, and developing a network of spiritual trainers in Burma - all of which he continues today.
- Santikaro Bhikkhu - an original INEB member - along with other monks in southern Thailand used the Cambodian dhammayatra model to develop a series of annual walks to raise awareness and activism for environmental problems around Lake Songkhla.
- Ouyporn Khuankaew and

Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (now Ven. Dhammananda) began developing the INEB Women's Project which has now grown into its own organization called the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP).

- Jonathan Watts - who worked in the Secretariat for 2 years - began coordinating a group called Think Sangha which has been developing socially engaged Buddhist perspectives on various social issues such as consumerism, development, globalization, violence, etc.
- A number of ordained INEB members formed the Ordained Sangha Network which has unfortunately discontinued its activities at present.

These are just a few examples of the seeds that INEB planted in the beginning which have sprouted out in new places. Although these new groups are run independently of INEB, the bonds of relationship in many cases remain strong and various collaborative efforts have taken place over the years. For example, Think Sangha and Sulak coordinated efforts in 1998, 1999 and 2003 to participate in the World Developments Dialogue as the Buddhist representatives to the dialogue with religious leaders and the World Bank. Think Sangha has also collaborated closely with the International Women's Partnership for its last two meetings in 2003 and 2005. Further, Sulak has offered his continued support to bhikkuni movement in Thailand being headed by Ven. Dhammananda.

With this dispersion of the original core, there was of course space for new faces and new

initiatives to enter the network. This was fully shown at INEB's first conference held outside of Thailand. In 1999, the Dhammavadi Institute and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement hosted the INEB conference just outside of Colombo at Sarvodaya's headquarter. This meeting represented the fullest coming together of the old INEB and the new INEB. For the first time, the world renowned Sarvodaya movement participated in an INEB conference alongside long time member Dhammavadi Institute. Before the main conference, there was a short Think Sangha meeting, a non-violence training workshop by longtime INEB members Paula Green (USA) and Stella Tamang (Nepal), the first major training program by the INEB Women's Project which became a template for IWP's work, and the first meaningful participation from Korea with the presence of Ven. Pomnyun Sunim who would help host the next INEB meeting in Seoul, Korea in 2003.

This was indeed a transition moment for the network. After this meeting, Martin Petrich stepped down as Executive Secretary and the network sagged under the failure to find a long term replacement for him and the continued difficulties of supporting the Secretariat with a dispersed international Executive Committee. With old members immersed in new independent projects and new members not fully acquainted with the way the network functioned, INEB went through two years of inactivity during 2000 and 2001.

### 3. Renewal (2002-Present)

In February, 2002, a special Executive Committee meeting was convened at the Wongsanit

Ashram to resolve this issue and plot a new course for the network. Most of the early core INEB leadership attended this meeting such as Sulak Sivaraksa, Revs. Teruo Maruyama and Ryowa Suzuki of INEB Japan, Raja Dharmapala of Dhammavadi Institute, Ven. Sumanalankar of Buddhist Peace Fellowship - Bangladesh, Jill Jameson of Buddhist Peace Fellowship - Australia, Ouyporn Khuankaew of the Women's Project/IWP, Hkun Okker of INEB Burma, and Jonathan Watts representing Buddhist Peace Fellowship - USA. At this meeting it was decided that INEB would re-establish itself on the original working model of strong affiliation and support from Sulak's groups in Thailand with continuing backing from INEB Japan. Meanwhile a new Executive Committee was elected with some of these old members deciding to take a step back from central involvement and others continuing on. Unfortunately, the untimely death from cancer by Rev. Ryowa Suzuki in 1994 who coordinated all of INEB Japan's efforts has severely curtailed their continued involvement in the network. Indeed, the last few years have marked the passing of other dear members of the network, including in 1993 Supaporn Pongpruk - INEB's second Executive Secretary - and in 1994 David Chappell - a new Executive Committee member who had been instrumental in developing INEB inter-religious dialogue activities. These friends will be dearly missed but their commitment to the bodhisattva way remains strong inspiration to those of us who lived and practiced with them.

With a new organizational structure and a new Executive

Secretary, Anne Lapapan Supamanta, INEB has experienced renewed vigor in the last three years. Much of this has come from the influx of new significant members from Korea, Taiwan and the Indian Ambedkar community, which were communities that INEB had struggled to integrate into the network before. However, with the hosting of the 2003 meeting by the Koreans and the 2005 meeting by the Ambedkar community, we can see that they are coming to the forefront of a new INEB leadership. However, the new vigor also comes from the re-integration of those groups that dispersed in the late 1990s to created their own independent organizations. The lack of a strong organizational center over these years forced a number of groups to develop on their own. It is hoped that these new groups will find their way back to meaningful involvement in INEB affairs. Certainly Sulak Sivaraksa's continuing energy and vigor have meant much to

the revitalization of INEB and the creation of new meaningful initiatives by the network.

Together with David Chapell and others, Sulak has worked on developing inter-religious dialogue through INEB auspices. Specifically, through connections with Chandra Muzaffar in Malaysia and the former president of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, INEB helped run a series of Buddhist-Muslim dialogues in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the US and the beginning of the second Gulf War in Iraq. Further, Sulak's shared initiative with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Ariyavinaya project in 2000 has spawned an inter-religious and inter-Buddhist network of young activists. First established as the Interbuddy network at the 2001 Ariyavinaya meeting, this initiative has grown through various meetings such as the Interfaith Dialogue for Youth in September 2003, a Socially Engaged Buddhist Leadership for Youth training in December 2003, a follow

up in November 2004, a month long training in June of 2005, and coordinated with this year's conference in India a one week exposure and training called the INEB Youth Ashram "Reflection on Tsunami, Ecology and Response". In accordance with increasing demands and interest from various INEB and socially engaged Buddhist groups in other countries, INEB in the next year will attempt to create a comprehensive, long-term training planning for developing young engaged Buddhists. Indeed, in light of the difficulties in creating a strong independent institutional foundation for INEB and the eventual limitations of Sulak Sivaraksa's ability to sustain the network, INEB and its affiliates need to build for the future by passing on their wisdom to a new group of young bodhisattvas.

*Jon Watts*

written for

The 2005 INEB Conference

## Peeling the Hero's Mask

"Several hundred AIDS infected Brazilians sued the government for the right of access to medication and won," said the Brazilian speaker, in Portuguese, to a workshop full of AIDS infected participants, activists and foreign observers.

Who is this small-built, tanned, bespectacled stranger, with close cropped crew-cut hair, sporting a bright orange T-shirt addressing the crowd?

He was introduced by the organizers as none other than Mr. Jose Araujo, the hero of

Brazil's successful campaign to secure the right of access to medication, for people living with AIDS in Brazil and the idol of the global movement of people living with AIDS, otherwise known in AIDS circles as PLWHAs.

Jose addressed Thai activists from Thailand's leading AIDS organizations, including the Network of Thai People Living with HIV/AIDS, Life and Hope Club, Saraburi AIDS Education Center and other individual human rights advo-

cates, at Bangkok's Asia Hotel on 21-22 September 2005.

The 2 day workshop was organized by the Francois Xavier Bagnoud Foundation (FXB Thailand) to promote the globalization of the movement in support of the basic rights of PLWHAs. FXB is a Swiss based humanitarian organization operating in 17 countries including Thailand. FXB(Thailand) has become one of the leading organizations working on AIDS issues affecting women, children and orphans.



In the eyes of Brazil's largely Catholic PLWHAs, the sin of the government was to make Brazil become a signatory to the International Patent Rights Law in 1995. As a signatory to the International Patent Rights Law Brazil lost the right to import AIDS medication from low cost producer countries; like India. Brazil also, could no longer produce most types of generic AIDS medication after 1995.

"As a result PLWHAs, in Brazil could not obtain access to AIDS medication for the simple reason that most of the patent AIDS medication marketed by the giant multi-national pharmaceutical companies was too expensive for poor people to afford," thundered Jose.

Thus, the Brazilian courts made the government pay for the sins of depriving people of their basic human right of access to medication at reasonable cost.

Over 40 people, including leading Thai AIDS infected activists and foreign participants, hung on the words of the passionate speaker, who spoke in delicious Portuguese with a Brazilian accent.

The Brazilian Embassy offered its invaluable good offices, by sending Mr. Puchong Dejar-khom, a polyglot, embassy, linguist fluent in 7 languages to handle the triangular intermediation between Portuguese, English and Thai. The multi-lingual engagement enriched the sharing of ideas and cultural experiences among the participants.

Throughout, the intense discussion about the politics of AIDS and its related technical and legal issues, the nagging question remained. Who is this interesting Brazilian person behind the hero's mask? Little is known about who Mr. Jose Araujo really is in Thailand.

I could not resist the temptation to pry open the hero's mask with personal questions, intimate questions, intrusive questions and sometimes annoying questions, I asked him about his thoughts, his feelings, his childhood, his dreams and his ambitions.

He answered most of my questions with refreshing candor and even allowed himself to enjoy being led into an intellectual dance. He offered to share

with me some of his early childhood memories which he seldom spoke about. "Perhaps, it is because they were unhappy memories," Jose reflected.

Life had not been kind and gentle to Jose. He was abandoned by his parents two months after he was born and raised by his grandmother in Valparaíso, a very poor Village five hundred kilometers from the big city of Sao Paulo. The year was 1957.

Jose has no memories of his parents. He remembered his grandmother as an illiterate simple woman. "She gave me a special love. It was a harsh love," said Jose.

They lived in grinding poverty where there was no room for gentle and affectionate niceties. She beat him severely when he was naughty and said cutting things to a child who already felt unwanted. "You are so bad that is why your parents left you," his grandmother used to say.

"But I know that she loved me. Often she did not eat to let me eat because there was not enough food," said Jose. "She also expressed her love by telling me stories," he added. His grandmother's bedtime stories became one of his most treasured memories of her.

But life in Valparaíso was too harsh. When he was twelve years old, in 1969, he ran away from home. "I left home because life was too hard. I wanted to find a better life," said Jose. But he did not find a better life. He ended up in the streets of the great city of Sao Paulo.

At that time Sao Paulo was larger than Bangkok today, with eleven million people. Those were turbulent times in Brazil, when the Cold War struggle between East and West was reflected in the streets of Sao



Paulo and urban guerillas applied their hit and run tactics, against the security forces in the urban jungles of Brazil's mega cities.

Jose did not go to school. The streets of Sao Paulo became his school of life. "I learned everything about life from the streets," said Jose.

Jose witnessed human nature's capacity for sacrifice as well as brutality in the streets. He saw a man occupy a shelter, which belonged to someone else. The owner returned and found his usual sleeping space occupied by a stranger.

The owner asked the intruder to leave but the latter refused to budge. The owner left but soon returned holding a discarded plastic ball point pen which he had picked up from the ground. He went up to the man who continued to sleep in his shelter, held up the pointed plastic pen over the head of the sleeping man and drove it deep into his ear.

Jose was treated to a glimpse of Hobbes' vision, in the lawless streets of Sao Paulo where life was "nasty, brutish and short." He said he recoiled from the experience and vowed to reject brutal violence as a means to settle conflicts.

"In the streets you cannot live alone. Children live in groups to share shelter and protect one another," said Jose. In Sao Paulo, he joined a gang of street children and lived by stealing food, clothes and shoes for survival.

There he learned how to work and live in groups, how to lead and how to fight for his place. He felt nostalgic and grateful to the streets of Sao Paulo for preparing him to become the street smart national leader of the movement of Brazilian PLWHAs later in life.

I tried to take in the whole

of this man, in my mind's eye, as he continued to tell his story and could not conceal my admiration for what he had gone through. You would feel the same too.

This Brazilian hero with a battered body and indomitable spirit is idolized by AIDS fans around the world, somewhat in the manner of Sylvester Stallone's legendary film character "Rocky." Bashed up in the ring of life, Jose had lost all his teeth through tooth decay and poverty when he was a homeless boy eking a precarious survival in the pitiless streets of Sao Paulo's concrete jungle.

He has only one kidney left. His liver is wrecked by the deadly HIV virus. Yet life has not lowered him to his knees. His glowing energy, capacity to love and his impulsive generosity touches the hearts of everyone around him.

As I learned about his life I could not help thinking here is the stuff that saints are made of. Who, but a saint, would donate his kidney to a friend so that the couple could be married. Jose was happy to have one kidney less so that his friend could live happily ever after with his beloved sweetheart.

Later he offered to donate a part of his liver to save the life of another friend only to discover that he had already contracted HIV.

"The revelation that I had AIDS struck me like a death sentence," recounted Jose. At that time AIDS had just been discovered as a new deadly disease. ARV had not been invented yet. "So if you have AIDS, you die. It was as simple as that," said Jose.

He sank into utter despair. Fear of social stigmatization also contributed to his sense of desolation. He withdrew into himself. For five years he lived like a her-

mit and avoided social contact with people.

Five years passed. He found himself still alive. Although, when he had AIDS he was told his number was up.

Hope returned and he began to come out of his shell. "I decided to join a group of people living with AIDS," he said. He felt things began to change. Suddenly, he was in a group again, helping one another, fighting together, saving one another, just like the good old times in the streets of Sao Paulo.

Working and living in groups was what the streets of Sao Paulo had taught him well. It was something he knew how to do. He was in his element.

He resolved to dedicate himself to helping people who have AIDS like himself. He soon found that he had a natural talent for public speaking and organizing. It was as if his trials and tribulations in the streets of Sao Paulo were all part of a divine plan to specially prepare him for his new vocation in AIDS advocacy.

The print media, the voice media and the image media all came to love him. The homeless street kid from Sao Paulo, who had risen to become a leader of Brazil's PLWHAs, had captured the imagination of the Brazilian media.

"The rest is history," said Jose, rising from the table, signaling that we had to end the conversation. He had to go. It was time for him to take his AIDS medication.

As I shook his hand, I felt I had cut through the walls of time which tend to hide a person's heart. When I walked out of Asia Hotel, I felt like I had discovered a long lost friend.

*Jeffery Sng*



## Women of Religion: Amidst Conflict in the Deep South

At Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani province, in November, 2005 a number of female representatives from Buddhist, Muslim and Christian communities join the 3-day workshop with beautiful sharing on healing and peace based on teachings of their respective religion and their own experience of applying the teachings in daily life amidst the violence in deep South of Siam. The event was hosted by INEB and its local chapter TICD as a part of Peace Festival jointly organized by National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) and many other civil movements to promote non-violence.

Everyone agreed that "All religions talk about virtue. The difference from observing different faiths is not the cause of violence. We have to realize that violence has been occurring due to many complicated factors based on the unjust social structure."

Mrs. Marium Samoa, a member of NRC, who dedicated her life to practicing Islam, said, "In general, Muslims are trained to be afraid of evils. The teaching said about *Malaijat* which are on both of our shoulders all the time. The right one will record the virtue we commit, while the left one will record the vice. These records will be counted at the court in front of Allah when we die.

All things are given by Allah, therefore what we should do is to work out on the crisis and benefit from it instead of passively accepting it. This includes the violence we are facing right now in the south.



The scripture said about 3 kinds of situations given by Allah with different purposes, which are.

*Bala*: will be given if we do something wrong. The action will bear fruit to the one who directly does it. Even others may get impact from such action.

*Kikarat*: when someone did wrong in the past which one cannot know. It might be any kind of temptation: drug, gambling, sex, etc. To correct such situation one has to do good things.

*Ujian* (Examination/test): We did not do anything wrong but it occurs for the advancement of our minds.

Even those who are not involved in violence directly may be affected in some ways. So, we are definitely linked to each other. That is why Muslims always encourage all people to do good. The point is to look to ourselves deeply, review our own misdeeds and virtues, realizing how far we as human beings go toward the wish to be with Allah

forever."

Mrs Pranom Keawkaew, a Buddhist practitioner talked about her own experience when facing fear. "I practice loving kindness meditation. It is based on Buddhist teachings, that we all are friends, staying in the same cycle of *samsara*. I also felt fear when the 3 bombs exploded in the area where I live. That night my husband was not home. I asked my children to sit together. We did not know what to do, so we chanted. After that I was able to bring my mind back. I realized that the fire was far away even though it was very loud and awful. I prepared for whatever may happen and kept chanting. I did not even know if my husband is still alive. I let go all my thinking and try to be in the present moment, trying my best to protect my children. We were still lucky. My husband did not get injured."

Mrs. Sutin Raknim told another interesting story: "One day, every house in our village turned the light off. Everywhere

was dark. We heard strange voices *hu-hu*. We first felt fear but we had better try to search what it was. There was a conscript who ran away from the military camp, hiding himself in the banana trees. He screamed. His body shook. We took him into a house, consoled and made him feel comfortable. He said he came from the Northeast. He was so scared of being trained by the military. Very poor young man! Anyhow, we had to send him back."

Sr. Nara Niyomthai, a catholic sister who spends many years in Pattani province, working as a teacher in a private school said, "Love is the important teaching in Christianity. We can say that it is the ground of peace. Although I am a Christian, I am affected as well. In our school, the students and staff members are Buddhist and Muslim. When they are affected, it is like we are, too. Some staff said they do not want to go out due to the security reason. Some told me of the troubles they faced when they called public minibuses which run in their village. Sometimes the drivers would not stop and pick them up. They thought it might be because the drivers (most of them are Muslim) recognized that they are



Buddhist. A situation like this makes them fearful.

I have to realize that I also fear. I do not believe when some say that they don't fear. The situation here is covered with that atmosphere.

What I am concerned about is the education issue. Because of the violence, we can't bring the students out. In the public school, teachers ask to be transferred to other places. The students can't get the opportunity to learn as much as it should be."

Other participants shared their feelings about losing their loved ones who were killed. Some said that deep down inside, they fear and are suspicious of

each other. They could not trust even their neighbor as before. While listening to these stories, some cried. Then we sat together in silence, realizing both grace and grief.

The important emphasis was that "Whatever religion we take refuge in, we should study and practice it and get to the core of the teaching. We must cultivate inner peace. If our minds are contaminated by negative things such as anger, discrimination, etc., we need to be healed. Only practicing can heal us. We should try to realize the interrelation between a discriminated society and our own discriminated mind separating us from others especially those who belong to different religions." Besides, cultivating the culture of sharing is very important, such as in a dialogue among people from different faiths.

The closing circle at the end of the workshop gave everyone a chance to thank the person standing next to her. We appreciated very much to be in the blessing circle of sisterhood. May peace prevail on Earth.

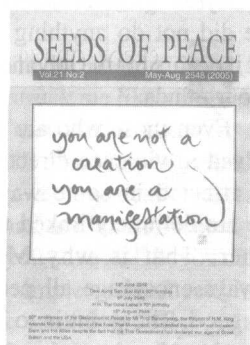
Araya Payungpong  
INEB/Buddhist Women  
Empowerment Program

*Seeds of Peace* is approaching its 22<sup>nd</sup> year!

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

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**New Website  
of INEB**

[www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

**launched in  
January 2005**

# Idappacayata

A Lecture in “The Dhammakosana Series of Lectures”  
to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa

**T**his 2-day lecture and seminar was led by two resource persons, Dr. Prawes Wasi and Mr. Santisukh Sophonsiri at Wongsanit Ashram. The main idea of Prawes’ talk was idappaccayata as an approach to knowledge, while Santisukh focused on its importance as the essence of the Buddha’s teaching.

## ***Idappaccayata as learning/ thinking approach***

Dr. Prawes Wasi started with his current mission called “silent revolution”. It means to change the thinking approach non-violently. One of his works is to establish the “Institute for Buddhadasa Studies” attached to the Prince of Songkhla University. The institute will train students to understand the dhamma of the late Ven. Buddhadasa.

A lot of knowledge had its origin in science 400 years ago. Knowledge from science to a large extent is for power. Guns, cannons, aircrafts are examples of power. But knowledge alone is not wisdom. It lacks ethics, which is the right relationship between the self, the other and the environment. Westerners exercised the new ‘scientific’, unchallengeable, incomparable power to colonize small countries, and later on to impose the so-called development to the rest of the world. With “development” which is proved to be unsustainable, there arises unequal relationships, mental illnesses and social pathologies.

Einstein once said, “We shall need a radically new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive”. This would be agreed by some western scholars such

as Peter Russell. In a discussion two years before the 9-11 tragedy, they pointed out that the western civilization would lead the whole world to an unavoidable crisis, should consumeristic, materialistic civilization remain fundamental to development.

Prawes concluded that the ways the Asian and the westerner think are different. The Asian way is rather ambiguous, while the westerner thinks in terms of “digital”, either one or zero. The latter would lead to conflict and violence. Quoting Krishnamurti, he said thinking which is based on remembering of what happened in the past would blind people from seeing the present. It would only lead to contradiction with reality and to violence.

That people nowadays learn many things outside themselves, does not always mean that their inner quality has changed. Considering the extremely high learning potentiality of human beings, the appropriate way of learning should give them more knowledge, more happiness, more friendship to all beings, and more goodness.

*Tipitaka* provides a different approach. This approach can be explained as the eight-fold path or as the three-fold learning mode (*sila, smadhi, panna*), namely the middle path. It can also be explained as *idappaccayata* (conditionality) because the existence or non-existence of anything depends on causes and conditions, not on its own self. In the whole universe, nothing exists in the static manner. If so, it would have been fragmenting and polarizing. On the contrary, everything is dynamic or *anicca*, inter-con-

nected according to causes and conditions. It has no beginning and no end. Nature is the flow of causes and conditions. Even if the world or the universe disappears, such flow continues. Therefore, the *idappaccayata* way is unlike the western one. It’s the non-compartmentalized way of thinking.

In *idappaccayata* or the middle path, extremity is avoided. This approach does not deny anything. Instead it makes us observe, learn from everything and move on. Moving in the middle path can break through everything. The compartmentalized thinking is like the proton vs. electron. It cannot go very far before being captured by the opposite electric charge. It is true for both protons with too many positive charges and electrons with too many negative charges. But a neutron, because it is neutral, can move across the space. Similarly the *idappaccayata* way of thinking is neutral. It can move continuously and in a penetrative manner.

## ***Idappaccayata as selflessness***

With science, the body comprises of many cells, enzymes, etc. But with *idappaccayata*, we see the body as a composition of five aggregates. With science, we learn for scholarship, egoism and ignorance. But with Buddhism, we learn for practice.

*Idappaccayata* and its twin *pativcasamuppada* constitute an extremely profound Buddhist teaching. It comprises the 12 steps of conditioning, according to Bhikkhu Buddhadasa’s explanation. The late Bhikkhu Buddhadasa taught that once the

sensual contact with defilement happens, feeling (*vedana*) arises, causing craving (*tanha*) to arise. Once craving arises, attachment (*upadana*) arises, followed by *bhava*, decay, and finally suffering. He interpreted it differently from the *Visudhimagga* an important text written in BE1000 (or AD457) by the Ven. Buddhaghosacaraya. For the former, '*bhava*' means the becoming of self which happens straightaway due to causes and conditions, and the attachment to self. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa explained that the cycle of 12-step *idappaccayata paticcasamuppada* can be completed in a short moment, while the latter saw it as the next birth after this life.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's explained that *nibbana* is just under our nose. This is very encouraging. In fact, he said that everyone experiences the specimen of *nibbana* in daily life when the mind is temporarily free from selfishness. It is true that the human being is selfish. But selfishness is not human nature. The inherent nature of human beings is goodness or the light of the Buddha.

#### **New social structure based on *Idappaccayata***

At present people live under pressure from social structures of power and money. These structures cause depression, disempowerment, frustration, hopelessness, and damages to human dignity and creativity.

Prawes suggested a resolution or what he called INN. "I" means individual. Each of us must maintain our learning mind and free ourselves from the eight worldly vicissitude. "N" means nodes. When 4-5 people with a common interest voluntarily join together as a group and regularly meet, their creativity would be fostered. Node softens

the pressure from the vertical social structure. The second "N" is network. It can connect people or nodes. INN is a kind of structure with informal relationship. It will give freedom to members. INN will support the silent revolution in which everyone performs positive deeds and supports one another.

#### ***Idappaccayata* is the heart of the Buddha's teachings**

Santisukh, a disciple of the late Bhikkhu Buddhadasa mentioned that his master studied the dhamma for a long time. But because of its profoundness Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, like the Buddha himself, decided to teach it seriously only after the year BE25 14 (AD1971). His master taught that the heart of the Buddha's teaching is *idappaccayata* which was strange to people at that time. He insisted that this term and its meaning should be known by all Buddhists.

*Idappaccayata paticcasamuppada* is a specific term coined by the Buddha to explain what he experienced from enlightenment. It is found only in Buddhism, although the Buddha shed new light on many Brahmanist terms, i.e. *brahma*, *sila*, *smadhi*, *panna*, etc. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa considered *idappaccayata paticcasamuppada* as the primary dhamma. Even *tilakkhana* is secondary. Without a thorough understanding of *idappaccayata paticcasamuppada*, it is difficult to understand *tilakkhana*.

*Idappaccayata paticcasamuppada* is related to voidness or *shunyata*. Many people misunderstand and misuse the word. Some use it as an excuse to avoid responsibility. The present Thai Prime Minister, for example, suggests this dhamma when the public is about to scrutinize him.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa pro-

pagated *idappaccayata* in order to correct human beings from holding the wrong views, i.e. attachments to the self, to I-and-mine, and to good-bad. Without a solid ethical ground, such idea can be abused. In *patimokkha*, his first sermon, the Buddha encouraged us not only to abandon unwholesome deeds and cultivate wholesome deeds. He went further to tell us to purify our minds. In so doing, we must master *idappaccayata paticcasamuppada* otherwise we would get stuck in the worldly duality of good-vs-bad.

It is regrettable that Thai Buddhists do not emphasize on *idappaccayata paticcasamuppada*, although it is the second of the four noble truths. The focus has been on *dana* or *sila*. Even in meditation, Thai Buddhists prefer *samatha* to *idappaccayata*-based *vipassana*.

Santisukh continued the discussion on science as started by Prawes. He said all theories of science are under *idappaccayata*. They cannot exist on their own. The phrase "cannot exist on one's own" or *anicca* is sometimes misunderstood as "decay". *Anicca* does not mean to decay, but to be according to causes and conditions.

In the present world full of competition, it is hard to understand the causes and conditions that lead to non-attachment. For example, when growing trees, if we do not water them well, they will die and we are upset. Even if we take good care, the trees can also die due to some factors beyond our control, e.g. flooding. The understanding of *idappaccayata* helps us maintain our equanimity.

#### ***Idappaccayata* from other traditions**

The one who continues to explain *idappaccayata* after



Bhikkhu Buddhadasa is Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, the well known Vietnamese monk. He draws his teaching from the Mahayana text *Avatamsaka Sutra*. The sutra mentions the dependent arising of things. He emphasizes that the teaching is not a philosophy. Rather, it is for contemplation and daily practice. If we cannot adopt the *idappaccayata* approach, we could only think fragmentarily, destructively and selfishly. He once simply raised a piece of paper as an example. If we see it as only a paper, we would continue to consume it carelessly. But he said paper is made from many things that are non-paper such as a cloud. This is not a poetic discourse, but a truth. Once *idappaccayata* is understood, people are aware that they exist because of many things other than themselves. In order for a person to survive, others have to survive, too. Tendency to harm one another should be resisted.

Another Buddhist scholar from the Zen tradition in ancient time who taught *idappaccayata* is Wei Lang. His fellow monks once argued that the mind is like a mirror while kilesa is like dust. They concluded that the mirror must be cleaned everyday. Hearing this, Wei Lang said that since there is no mirror, where does the dust fall onto? A book on Wei Lang was translated by Bhikkhu Buddhadasa because he felt that it is beneficial to learn *idappaccayata* from another perspective.

#### ***Idappaccayata*, dhammic socialism and non-violent peace work**

In his famous book *Dhammic Socialism*, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa shows that the principle of *idappaccayata* is an appropriate way to organize a society. Buddhist socialism will not only deal with reconciliation among human beings, but between hu-

mans, nature and the universe. The general socialist idea is central around human beings. It aims to abolish the rich-poor division. But to be dhammic, it must go further to connect humans, all beings and nature.

Then, Santisukh related his experience of using *idappaccayata* in peacemaking, when joining the demonstration in May 1992 against the non-elected premier representing military junta General Suchinda. His group wanted to stop the demonstration after some time and submit a petition to the King. The intention was to raise public awareness on the process of democracy. But other groups denied and continued the demonstration until the bloody crackdown broke out. A journalist asked him what he meant by non-violence. He said for him non-violence simply means to stop polarizing during demonstration or campaigning. The journalist then wondered how the fight would be done without polarization. He answered that it is important to stop division. He suggested looking at the improper action of the government, instead of at the prime minister as a person. Though it is difficult, we must try our best.

It is extremely difficult to justify killing with Buddhist teachings. We found many stories in *jataka* that deny killing, even as a duty of the rulers to maintain righteousness. Some commentaries such as from Lanka may provide excuses to kill, but not in *Tipitaka*. Holding fast to *idappaccayata*, we are aware that everyone is related to one another. We cannot kill even the most 'evil' one because it means killing our own relatives.

As P.A. Payutto, another famous scholar monk, often says, people tend to see the permanence rather than the imper-

manence. A person, be him an evil man, a low caste, etc., remains the same without changing. Such perception is not Buddhist. With the right understanding of *idappaccayata*, everyone can improve oneself by understanding the rising-and-going of causes and conditions. After that, he may even be able to help the society.

Santisukh ended his presentation by emphasizing once again the importance of *idappaccayata*. He referred to the Buddha's words that, once the *idappaccayata* principle is mastered, one will completely possess the right view. From the right view one starts to get into the stream of reality, of noble livelihood. The nobleness is not only for oneself, but other beings, too, could benefit from one's liberation from unwholesome roots.

Prawes Wasi  
Santisukh Sophonsiri

Note: 27 May 2006 will be the centenary of the late Bhikkhu Buddhadasa. The Dhammakosana Lecture Series is organized to discuss his *magnum opus*, *Dhammakosana*, consisting of more than 70 huge volumes on Buddhism.

#### **Sulak Sivaraksa's lectures on the centenary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa**

- 24 December at Suan Mokh, Chaitya and at Rajapat University Suratdhani, Siam
- 24 January at Luang Phra Bang, Laos
- 10 February at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, India
- 25 February at Khon Khaen, Siam—not on Bhikkhu Buddhadasa but on Asabha Maha Thera and their most senior senators of the Northeast
- 4 March at Phnom Penh, Cambodia
- 10 May at Kyoto, Japan
- 28 May at Uthaidhani, Siam

# Love Is the Answer

Violence not only damages lives, bodies and property, it also brings out the worst in all concerned—whether receiver or doer. The dark side of humanity involves anger, hatred, piercing resentment, vengefulness and the dehumanisation of the other side, as if they were mere objects or animals.

Even those who are not directly involved or those who observe violence externally through the media cannot escape its dark power. People who agree with the use of violence feel satisfied or even delighted to see the other hurt. People who disagree feel resentful and hateful, even wishing for the destruction of the other side.

The opponents are on different sides, but both are in the same trap. They are drifting toward inhumanity because they are intent on hurting each other. This dark side will gush out violently until friends and friends, fathers and sons, and teachers and students are killing each other—not to mention Thais killing Thais.

But we human beings also possess inner light and beauty. This quality helps lift us to the spiritual plane and fills us with happiness. We then must do our best to nurture this inner beauty while containing and limiting our dark side so that it is under control and not breaking loose. If not, it will dominate our life and our mind, pushing us deeper into inhumanity. Eventually, it will make it difficult for us to find peace and happiness; it will also lead to mutual destruction.

The present situations are extremely worrisome because there are so many forms of on-

going violence that are increasingly drawing our dark side. This puts urgent demand on us to be ever mindful. We should not let our dark side come out and take delight in violence. For the more we do so, it will feed our inner violence until it grows into our master, controlling our life and mind.

Mindfulness is very important because what draws violence within us often comes under the name of nation and religion—powerful tools that can be manipulated to bring out the darker nature of man.

But as long as we remain mindful, we will not let ourselves be manipulated. We will be able to keep our mind from falling under dark powers. But if we lack mindfulness, we can be a part of the factor that engulfs the country in fire, as has happened in other countries.

Instead of letting our dark side be our master, we should strengthen our faith in the positive aspects of our mind—love, compassion, empathy and patience. Instead of letting the dark side run loose, we should counter it with love and compassion.

When there is a fire, what we need to extinguish it is water, not fuel. When our deep South is on fire, throwing in matches or fuel will only aggravate the situation. Our country now wants water to put out the fire. We need loving kindness and empathy to end violence.

For a country to exist, a common land mass is not the only necessary factor. More important are the bonds that weave peoples' minds across the country into one. It is important to

preserve land in the three southernmost provinces. But it is still not as important as to preserve the mental bonds and relationships that make people in the region feel that they are fellow countrymen.

What is the point of keeping the land if we cannot keep the bonds and relationships among peoples there? The best that the employment of military force can do is to keep the land. But it cannot preserve the bonds of relationships between peoples in these three provinces. To be able to preserve these human bonds, we need compassion, love and empathy from the Thai citizens in the other 73 provinces.

If you love the country, don't love only the land mass. You must also love the peoples who live on that land. If you want to keep land in the three southernmost provinces as part of the rest of the country, you must connect the people-to-people relationships of the deep South with the rest of the people in the other 73 provinces.

Only love and compassion from the Thais in the 73 provinces will win the hearts and minds of the Thais in the three southernmost provinces. Don't generalise that all Muslims there are sympathisers of the separatist movements. Don't take delight in the destruction and death that befall them. Violence, anger and hatred will only push them further into the arms of separatists.

That is why we should not fan the flames of hatred towards these people. On the contrary, we should find a way out through non-violence. If there are mistakes in the government's use of

force, we should dare to caution it—as good friends should for one another. We should not support or ignore their mistakes.

The more the state uses non-violence, the less mistakes will occur across the board and the less chances terrorists will have to win have to win sympathisers and the more they will be isolated.

Fish out of water are easy to catch. The solution to the problem in the South should therefore begin with efforts that don't endlessly push innocent people into the arms of terrorists.

Being Thai came about and is sustained by mutual bonds of love, not by hatred. A nation without love will only be on fire.

In the same manner, being Buddhist is proven by one's compassion and forgiveness, not by anger and revenge.

If we are loyal to Buddhism and do not want Buddhism to decline, we must start bringing Buddhism into our hearts and securely sustain it by nurturing the growth of wisdom and compassion.

What else is the meaning of being true to the Three Gems if not our efforts to seek guidance from the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha when we face problems?

At a time when violence and hatred is so widespread, let's take the following words of the Buddha to heart:

"...Even when decadent

outlaws use the saws to cut our organs, those of you who bear vicious thoughts against these criminals are considered not true to our teachings.

"When you feel you cannot resist the urges, you should remember this: We should never let our minds fluctuate nor we should emanate compassion to those people [who hurt us] and amplify our compassion so it becomes borderless and non-exploitative in benefit of all forms of beings, and every group of people.

"This is the state of a compassionate mind."

*Phra Phaisan Visalo*

## 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thailand Peace Day

Why the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thai Peace Day? How important is it to Thailand today?

To give the exact answers to these questions we have to fill our memory lapses to the point in time 60 years ago when in 1945 WW II came to an abrupt end for Thailand.

In no unmitigable terms, while under the suzerainty of the Japanese Imperial Army, the country then ruled by Field Marshal Phibulsongkram, was virtually enunciated as the public enemy of the world by the advancing Allied forces. It was only through the strong interventions of the Free Thai Movements formed by and through the foresight of the National Statesman, Pridi Banomyong, the then acting Regent, along with political and armed branches set

up in London and Washington under the Thai Ambassador, Seni Pramoj, to train recruits to be secretly dropped in Thailand to work undercover with the local Free Thai forces scattered over the rugged countryside that Thailand's name was kept from being included as one of the defeated nations who sided with the Axis Power. On August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Free Thai Movement came out in force to parade along the Royal Avenue in Bangkok to celebrate the end of the war, turned in their arms and by their own accords disbanded themselves as combat units—each enlisted member returning to civilian life once again.

It was on this very day that the royal message was delivered by the Regent declaring the day to be Peace Day for Thailand,

openly announcing to the world its neutrality and nonviolent stance.

Later Thai governments judiciously were to adopt and declare that August 16<sup>th</sup> 1945 was to be recognized by all Thai citizens as Thai Peace Day.

Not surprisingly, following the end of WW II, the nations of the world were in unison in the formation of a world body known today as the United Nations to ensure eternal peace throughout the world, and that the cataclysm of WW II would never recur again.

It was an appropriate occasion then that the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Thai Peace Day organized by the Thai government at Thammasat University in Bangkok to be carried over to the Thai community and

students in London. Led by Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation a troupe of artists, writers, and puppeteers on Sunday October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005 in cooperation with the Thai Embassy in London, Anglo-Thai Foundation who offers annual educational grants to poor students living in the northeast of Thailand and Samakee Society (Thai Students Association of England) with sponsorships from Thammasat University Students Alumnae, Office of Government Lottery and Thai Airways International flew to London to celebrate the event. The event was held at the Imperial College, University of London attended by almost 200 Thai and English audience.

The keynote speech was delivered by Suchart Sawadisri, the well-known writer, critic and

artist. He dwelled on the roles of three eminent Thai personalities whose roles influenced and charted the outcome of the events in Thailand that led up to the end of WW II and finally the proclamation of Thai Peace Day—Pridi Banomyong, the highly revered National Statesman who was and is often misunderstood, even today, still remains unacknowledged for his role in endorsing the democratic principles in the country; Direk Jayanama, the first Thai to assume the ambassadorial post to England after WW II; and the celebrated writer and newspaperman Kularp Saipradit. Suchart's address was followed by a poetry recitation and flute solo by Nawarat Pongpaiboon, the National Artist; then came the staging of the puppet show by Sema Puppetry Troupe of young

avant-garde performers. Dhepsiri Saksopha and Pratheep Saksopha together closed the show with animated poetry recitals whilst sketches of traditional Thai drawing were being put on the paper canvas. It was a success!

I would like to convey our thanks to all the people, friends and organizations that made this special event possible, particularly Siriwan Sripetchan from the Tonkla Institute. Without her tireless work and efforts organizing, coordinating and putting together these events and performers it would not be possible to travel and perform in England.

*Sirote Angsuwat*

## Social Venture Network Growing in Asia, Europe and the USA

**Life is not easy for business people who want to do 'good business'. But creative meetings among kindred souls strengthen the inspiration and determination to make a difference in a competitive global environment. Recent Social Venture Network meetings in Thailand, Japan and Italy set the tune for the second part of the 21st century's first decade: economic globalization can be mastered from within. Interaction with NGO's and governments is essential for the business sector but ultimately it will be the business leaders, entrepreneurs, labour groups, consumers and awakened economists themselves who will**

**determine new directions in local and global economy.**

The SVN annual conference in Thailand focused on a new stage in the development of Corporate Social Responsibility. An earlier meeting of the Working Group on Social Responsibility of the International Standards Organization (ISO) in Bangkok determined that it will be 6 stakeholder categories who equally take the lead in consensus building: industry; labour; government; consumers' associations; NGOs; and service, support and research groups. While this consensus building process, in order to comply with the reputation of the authoritative ISO world body, will be extremely formal and time

consuming (the end result is planned for 2008) experiments in 'multi-stakeholder communication' are being undertaken all over the world. This was also the case at the SVN Asia (Thailand) conference in an organic resort at Petchabun, the mountaneous area of Central Thailand.

In case studies of individual companies like a recycling company; a pig farm with growing care for animal welfare and renewable energy production from bio-mass; and a leading garment manufacturer and retailer introducing personal dialogue as missing dimension in business communications, new approaches to social and environmental responsibility were presented





for critical exchange and brainstorming. Moreover in a role play the six acting stakeholder groups were challenged to articulate their respective positions towards ethical dilemmas incurred in the launching of a fictitious new herbal energy drink.

Although the role play ended in a hilarious situation the long term implications and deeper dimensions of the trend towards consensus building between stakeholder groups could be anticipated. While the senior presence of both H.E. Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister, and Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa throughout the conference highlighted the importance of creative communication between business persons and the deeper sense it makes to openly explore trends and transformations within a long term perspective.

Earlier in the year the 3<sup>rd</sup> SVN Asia conference had been organized, after Bangkok and Singapore in Japan at a diversity of locations. The ultimate meeting took place in Tokyo including internet-conference connections with simultaneous gather-

ings elsewhere in the country.

SVNJapan in Tokyo brought an interesting group of Japanese experts from the financial sector together to discuss opportunities for alternative banking in Asia across national boundaries, particularly tailored to initiatives of young people. Young entrepreneurs from China, the Philippines and Thailand, in a panel discussion hosted by Miyako Nishimura who manages the Third World Shop in Tokyo, submitted the daily challenges of entrepreneurship to the attention of the bankers.

The genuine value of innovations in the banking sector can only be fully understood against the background of social transformation and human evolution. Ken Shibusawa, an experienced financial consultant with Goldman Sachs Group Inc., JP Morgan and LLC, and professor at Bukyo Gakuin University—the venue of the SVN Asia meeting—pictured the development of Japanese society after World War II as follows: from a government ruled military force Japan is now moving to a civil society driven non-military organism. He

characterized this pattern of social change as “from hard power to soft power”. Young people anticipate this trend and that is why they want to shape their professional careers in different ways. They don’t want to be lifelong employees of the big conglomerates anymore. Community business initiatives and projects undertaken by social entrepreneurs are concrete social innovations that embody the trend “from hard power to soft power”.

How can banks and financial institutions respond to this trend? According to the school of thought around Masaru Kataoka, pioneer of the ‘Citizen’s Bank’, the fundamentals are formulated as follows: “Investment → Raising business → Marketing → Job creation”.

Bankers like Atsuto Sawakami and Mitsuhiro Ohashi responded positively to the ‘Citizen Bank’ approach but also raised questions. How to select promising initiatives with a healthy perspective on feasibility? Much attention is given to the mission, the will, speed, ability to cooperate, concreteness

(more than dreams) and ability to listen to advise and learn. "*Profit comes later*" the title of a popular book of Kataoka expresses the common philosophy.

In all cases training and coaching is essential. The training should be rather informal and participants can mature in their own speed till the moment that the enterprise can start. In incubation centers participants can shape simulations of their business initiatives.

Community business should not only be a subject of private financing. Tadahiro Sakamoto of the Ministry of Finance started the WHY NOT Administrative Reform Network for Taxpayers. Citizens should ask themselves how their tax contributions are spent. How much does it benefit local development?

Case studies on small-scale enterprises in some Asian countries underlined the need to explore community banking without borders in Asia. New skills can be learned through exchanges. The Thai SVN Junior group explored bamboo craftsmanship in traditional communities in Japan while Japanese entrepreneurs showed interest in bamboo technology in Thailand and in mud-house building.

In Chiba the SVN Japan meeting focused on community business to complement or replace mainstream health care: in more and more private houses home hospices are organized for the elderly and terminally ill. The patients do not want to become subjects of technology and prefer the personal care of young volunteers who combine this service with studies in sciences or art. Medical professionals like Take-toshi Matsumoto, a cancer specialist and the chairman of SVN Japan, support this community

based approach with their expertise.

Also at the SVN Europe conference in Italy the participants included health care and care for the handicapped into possible purposes of economic activity. The title of the conference was 'THE ART OF GOOD BUSINESS. Adding value through corporate social responsibility'.

Is it possible to perceive business as an Art?

Ervin Laszlo, Founder of The Club of Budapest, a leading global think tank, introduced the dialogue. We live in times of unprecedented challenge: the challenge of meeting the increasing unsustainability of the world as created and operating in the span of the last fifty years with the likewise unprecedented opportunity to create a different, more sustainable, peaceful, and equitable world. According to Laszlo, the possibilities for renewing the operating structures and principles of our economic, political and social systems exist. There are physical and social technologies available and waiting to be activated. The requirement is to come up with responsible thinking and acting before the window in time closes—as long as major thresholds of irreversibility in social and ecological processes are not yet breached.

Corporate Social Responsibility is one of the movements that respond to the unprecedented challenge of our time. 'CSR' is no longer limited to manufacturing and labour standards in the supply chain, it also addresses marketing philosophies and strategy. Johnny Johanson, author of *In Your Face: How American Marketing Excess Fuels Anti-Americanism* perceives in his consultancy for major

companies in Europe, the USA and Japan that a course correction is already taking place. Ethics-based marketing is not less effective or less fulfilling as long as the limits of sustainability are accepted. Ethics can be translated in art; and art in communication.

Reino Fridh, who held leading positions at IKEA, Sweden, for 25 years, including the development of IKEA's Code of Conduct, as well referred to the importance of the ISO guidance standard on Social Responsibility, ISO 26000. Multi-stakeholder dialogue requires a degree of creativity and awareness beyond rational management, towards a new skill of *social art*. This was illustrated by Cornelius Pietzner who was the financial manager of the Camphill movement—for children in need of special care—in the USA. In his present position as manager of the Goetheanum in Switzerland, a centre for alternative culture, he introduced a course for Young Entrepreneurs who see spirituality as the leading impulse for economic development.

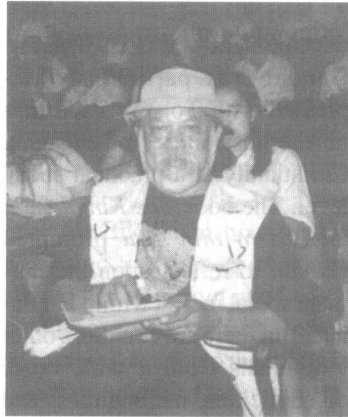
'The Art of Good Business' extended its wave of inspiration to cross-cultural communication between continents. Mal Warwick, founder of Warwick and Associates, fundraising and marketing for non-profits, on behalf of SVN USA; and Prida Tiasuwan, Pranda Jewelry Public Company in Thailand, for SVN Asia joined SVN Europe in a vision towards a global network that responds to the question of Ervin Laszlo 'What we can All do to be Part of the Solution and not of the Problem'.

*Hans van Willenswaard*

## In Honor of Suchart Sawadisri

On the occasion of the centenaries of Sri Burapha (31 March 2005) and Direk Jayanama (18 January 2005), the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) decided to present Suchart Sawadisri with a merit award of 100,000 baht. Since Suchart was not considered a worthy recipient of the Sri Burapha Centenary Award, he should be duly recognized in his various roles as a thinker, writer, journalist and peace activist. Even though the three awardees are all widely known throughout society, there are still lingering questions. Weren't there more suitable recipients of the award? Moreover, the composition and the quality of the Sri Burapha committee members are questionable. To what extent did each individual committee member employ discretion, wisdom, or prejudice in his or her judgment? However, this very problem can also be found in other committees especially the ones deciding on the National Artists and the SEAWRITE Awards.

As a thinker and a writer, Suchart's writings are always astute and never morally half-baked. As a journalist, he has always defended the freedom of expression. Lamentably, the journal in which he served as editor (*Social Science Review*) was eventually usurped by quack academics; sponsors withdrew their support from *Lok Nang Sue* due to financial losses; and he was compelled to leave the platform of *Ban Mai Roo Roi*. Suchart has consistently fought for peace, independence, and freedom, operating outside of the bureaucratic system and



mainstream institutions. It seems that many do not have the eye to see this fact.

His independence comes with a hefty price: the lack of security in life. However, his wife and son understand and support him and follow his footsteps in the world of literature. Now, he also seeks to express himself through paintings. Undoubtedly, he is dedicated to beauty, which is linked to his stance on truth and goodness. It is hard to find any contemporary who has led a comparable life.

Furthermore, SNF selected him to deliver the keynote address on Sri Burapha and Direk Jayanama in London on 31 October 2005—to commemorate their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries and the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 'Thailand' Peace Day.

On the basis of these reasons, SNF decided to award 100,000 baht to Suchart Sawadisri to acknowledge his outstanding achievements, a ceremony which took place on the opening day of his painting exhibition (2 December 2005) held at the Art Center of Chulalongkorn University. (The Art Center is located near the old office of *Social*

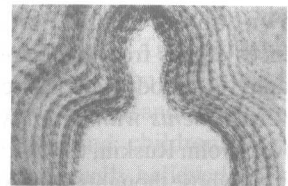
*Science Review*.)

It is pertinent to add that SNF was the first organization to grant Angkarn Kalayanapong with a literature award of 40,000 baht in 1972 (which is perhaps equivalent to more than 400,000 baht in the present). At that time, he was hardly known at all.

With hindsight, SNF's previous decisions to honor three other writers (Plueng Wansri and Supoj Dantrakul in 1996 and Taweep Woradilok in 2004) also challenge the thinking of the Sri Burapha committee. Both Pleung and Taweep passed away soon after they received their awards. SNF had therefore made the right move of honoring them when they were still living. Subsequently, Supoj Dantrakul went on to receive the Apiwat award in 2002 (commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution in Siam) in recognition of his struggle for democracy.

I hope you all will agree with me that Suchart Sawadisri is at least as admirable as the three individuals who won the Sri Burapha Award on 26 November 2005.

*Sulak Sivaraksa*  
President, Sathirakoses-  
Nagapradipa Foundation



## Building a Culture of Nonviolence: Sixty Years after Hiroshima

It is a great privilege to be called upon to deliver this lecture which I dedicate to the memory of the 300,000 victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago. I am also very honored to address this forum named after Mahatma Gandhi, who, in my mind, was the most powerful individual force for good this world has seen for nearly 20 centuries. Like any great historical personality, Gandhi's worth is found not only in what he accomplished during his lifetime, but also in what has been accomplished by those he influenced. Practically every Nobel Peace Laureate since Gandhi has been inspired in some part by his work, although the Mahatma was not a Nobel Laureate.

But we must be careful. As we spotlight "Gandhi the messenger" we must not cast his message into the shadows. We must also take care not to neglect those that contributed to the development of that message. Perhaps too often we speak of who Mahatma Gandhi was, but we seldom speak of why he was, and how he became the *mahatma*, or great soul. Without doubt Gandhi was a catalyst to many great historical events and ideas, but what do we know of those who influenced him?

Most of what is popularly known about Gandhi's influences comes from his autobiography. Anybody who has read his *Experiments with Truth* will know of John Ruskin, the British art critic whose thoughts on beauty and economy inspired Gandhi's constructive program. Also prominent in Gandhi's intellectual

development was Leo Tolstoy. Gandhi was particularly impressed with Tolstoy's writings on the possibilities of engaging Christianity at a practical social level. The book *The Kingdom of God is Within You* prompted Gandhi to reflect upon the dormant social inertia within Hinduism. But there are countless other individuals from a wide range of ethnicities, nationalities, and spiritual traditions that contributed to Gandhi's work. Before advancing to the theme of this lecture I would like to highlight the life of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, one of the many personalities that helped forge the nonviolent politics of Mahatma Gandhi.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan's beginnings were not too different from Gandhi's. Both men were born into homes of respected community leaders. Both were deeply affected by the unwavering spiritual faith and practice of their parents, and were anxious to respect fully the wishes of the mothers. However, upon becoming more independent and experiencing the realities of the world beyond the hearth of their childhood homes, they became aware of inequality, suffering, and the faulty political constructs that perpetuated them. Both Gandhi and Khan were particularly offended by injustice, in particular they were shamed to see their people kept ignorant by the policies of an oppressive external colonial rule. Unable to bear these offenses, both Gandhi and Khan resolved themselves to action.

Interestingly enough, both Gandhi and Khan were not always fully committed to nonvio-

lent action. Khan was born and raised in the formidable frontier of the Indian Subcontinent. The Pushtun tribe he was born into was well-known for their fierce sense of independence and their unwillingness to be subjected to foreign rule. The Pushtuns were skilled warriors and were quick to defend to the death their land and heritage. Khan, raised in this environment, was naturally prepared to courageously fight against injustice. And Gandhi, surprisingly, also had his doubts about the effectiveness of nonviolence. After a relatively successful campaign for the rights of the colored people of South Africa, Gandhi returned to India. Once back in his homeland he began experimenting more seriously with nonviolent action. Gandhi was however initially distraught when he realized that often those who adopted nonviolence did so out of fear of facing their oppressors. In such, there was no real display of courage, and no real willingness to sacrifice for the cause. This flaw led Gandhi to doubt the effectiveness of nonviolence. He questioned whether nonviolence could be an effective instrument to forge courageous and brave individuals. He feared nonviolent approaches might only serve to make his people stubborn cowards.

But Gandhi found inspiration in Ghaffar Khan who had successfully mobilized a nonviolent army—100,000 strong—of Pushtun tribesmen and women. At that time no one would have thought it possible to convince some of history's most ferocious



warriors to set aside their weapons with a vow of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence. Upon hearing of Ghaffar Khan's feat, Gandhi remarked that it was no less than a miracle, and at that moment Gandhi knew that nonviolence was not a tool for the weak, instead it was a tool that could only be effective in the hands of the most courageous. He travelled with Ghaffar Khan to the North-western frontier and witnessed first hand the social work and activism of the Khudai Kidmatgars (or Servants of God). Hundreds of these unarmed peace soldiers had been shot dead by British soldiers while peacefully protesting the injustices of the British colonial rule, but they remained steadfast in their objective to achieve independence through nonviolence. The sacrifices of so many people who had no fear of dying for their cause inspired Gandhi to persevere with the larger nonviolent movement in India.

Although, sixty years later, this case may seem to be just a curious footnote in history, we can extrapolate the power of Gandhi and Khan's work into our present era. It is surprising that much of the violence presently taking place in Afghanistan and Pakistan has arisen from the very villages where Ghaffar Khan recruited his nonviolent peace army. The Taliban regime was made up predominantly of ethnic Pushtans and many of the insurgents who are fighting the Allied forces in the area are Pushtans. Yet once again, just as in the days of Ghaffar Khan, most analysts do not believe that nonviolent methods could be applied in Pushtan areas. The same holds true in most cases where nonviolence has succeeded, Gandhi in India, Martin Luther King in the

United States, the OTPOR movement in Yugoslavia, The Free Thai Movement in Siam during World War II. Teach people the truth about violence and nonviolence and they will surely understand the proper course.

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.

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. We don't have to dig too deep to uncover falsity and dishonesty amongst the highest courts and councils. As we celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we must not be afraid to be publically critical of the UN Security Council's abuse of facts to bolster the interests of certain member-states. Can anyone accept that the Chinese government, which has been responsible for abhorrent acts of genocide in Tibet, is given a vote on

matters of global security? Should we remain silent as superpowers like China, the United States, Britain, and even my own country twist intelligence and truth into ignorant half-truths simply to meet their political agendas? I find it curious that despite all the advances in science and technology, intelligence gathering bodies seem to be arriving at false conclusions. This is due in part to the fact that these multi-billion dollar institutions too often lack sincerity, and therefore the so called 'intelligence' that they construct cannot always be trusted.

In politics, truth must rest hand-in-hand with aspirations for peace and independence, nurtured by the stream of freedom. By freedom I mean liberty in essence, not a competitive *laissez-faire* kind of freedom. Too often the truth gets skewed by good intentions. For example, before giving the order to drop the bomb on Hiroshima, Harry Truman wrote a letter to his wife saying that what he wanted most was world peace and that he would do whatever could be done to get it. This of course meant dropping atomic bombs on two Japanese cities. He was pleased that the use of the A-bomb would bring the war to an end one year sooner than expected. "Think of the kids who won't be killed!", he told his wife. Of course, Truman was referring to American soldiers, and not to the 300,000 Japanese that died in the bombings three weeks after he penned the letter. It wasn't until after the bomb was dropped that Truman realized that his decision had killed hundreds of thousands of innocent women and children. Perhaps Truman really believed that such a display of destructive force would bring peace to the world. Perhaps the Bush Administration

really believes that preemptive war and sustained violence will actually bring democracy and freedom to the Middle East.

But just as with Truman, it does not look like history will support the Bush Administration's good intentions. More coalition forces have died in the response to 9/11 than died in the World Trade Towers. More innocent Iraqis have died through sanctions and military operations intended to depose Saddam Hussein than were actually killed by Saddam Hussein. When we allow our good intentions to be influenced by hatred, greed, and delusion they become subject to manipulation. We will err in our actions. We will compound the very problems we are trying to resolve. "Little Boy," the name given to the bomb dropped on Hiroshima 60 years ago, did not bring an end to war. "Shock and Awe," the name given to the operation to topple Saddam Hussein, did not bring an end to the deaths of innocent Iraqis. 9/11, the attempt by a group of scattered fundamentalists to avenge the wrongs committed against their people and beliefs only served to intensify misunderstandings of their culture and religion. When will we understand that violence does not beget peace? Violence cannot make wrong right.

Fortunately, many do understand, and they are speaking out. There is a steady undercurrent flowing beneath the storm of terrorism and counter-terrorism, countering the mainstream academic currents. Glenn Paige's latest book, *Nonkilling Global Political Science*, is one example of the beginnings of a sea-change in how we will build democracy and freedom in the near future. Paige insists that a nonkilling

society and nonkilling political science is possible, not unthinkable. Paige paints a picture of a human society that refuses to disavow the possibility of cultivating peace and human security. For instance, he points out that "73 of the world's 195 countries and territories had abolished the death penalty by 2000 and 27 countries were without standing armies by 2001." He also details the development of various political institutions and movements devoted to nonviolence and nonkilling like the Friendship Party of Britain, the Green Party of Germany, and spiritual institutions like Jains and Quakers. Paige further highlights the importance of educational institutions like Deemed University in Tamil Nadu, India; and economic institutions like United Farm Workers of America and Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya in Sri Lanka. And, of course, there are research institutions like the Albert Einstein Institution, Cambridge, USA and the Gandhian Institute, Varanasi, India; problem solving institutions like Amnesty International, Greenpeace International, Peace Brigade International and War Resisters International.

I also call your attention to the tremendous work of two nonviolent revolutionaries, S. Jagannatham and his wife Krishnammal who, despite being over 80 years old, are still actively working to bring justice and equality to the untouchable classes of India. A biography of their work entitled *The Color of Freedom* and published by the Gandhian Foundation in the USA is most inspiring.

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.

But even though we mostly acknowledge our failings in educating the public, we still aren't spending enough on education. Instead, resources are still being channeled into more weapons, more war and more violence. For instance, every year most developed nations spend more on their military budgets than they do their education budgets. And we may be hard pressed to find a so-called Third World country that is "third world" militarily. Martin Luther King Jr. was straight to the point when he stated: *our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.* It does take a bit of a talent to imagine otherwise. If similar investments were made in educational infrastructures, especially in the areas of peace and nonviolence, the results would be beyond our imaginations. We may well learn to imagine peace rather than war as the natural state of human affairs. As Mahatma Gandhi said, *We are constantly being astonished these days at the amazing discoveries in the field of violence. But I maintain that far more undreamt of and seemingly impossible discoveries will be made in the field of nonviolence.*

Throughout his book Paige offers insights in nonkilling transformation through education and training, nonkilling knowledge in applied practice, transforming and creating institutions to facilitate nonkilling, and creating and adapting methods of inquiry, analysis and action most suitable for nonkilling transformational tasks. Paige puts it well when he writes, *Violence-assuming political science tends to discourage non-violent creativity. By dismiss-*

*ing it in professional training as devianly 'utopian', 'idealistic' and 'unrealistic', political science intellect is condemned to confinement in perpetual lethality. Nonkilling creativity offers promise of liberation.*

For a violent action to occur there must first be a desire or intention in one's mind to commit the action. This desire arises as a result of greed, hatred or ignorance. Some people may commit a violent action because of ignorance—they do not know what is right or wrong. Others may do it out of hatred. There also needs to be an object for an act of violence to occur. Finally the person committing the act of violence must carry out the action against that object. An action can be either partially or completely fulfilled.

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

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

Buddhism also has the concept of Karma, which can be very

helpful, when we try to understand the eruption of violence. Everything we experience is the result of previous causes and conditions. As the opening verses of the *Dhammapada* teaches us, "If one acts with a corrupt mind suffering follows. If one acts with a serene mind peace follows." We must be aware that how we act now will affect our life in the future. We reap what we sow and we cannot avoid the results of our karma. If we have this awareness then we will try our best to sow some seeds of peace.

For Buddhists the law of karma reminds us that when faced with violence we must not react against it violently. To quote a famous verse from the *Dhammapada*:

Hatred does not eradicate hatred.

Only by loving-kindness is hatred dissolved.

This law is ancient and eternal.

Nevertheless as Sallie King has pointed out, there is still some ambivalence in the Buddhist community's attitude towards warfare. King writes, *It is quite obvious that offensive warfare is unjustifiable. The question before the Buddhist world is to what extent one can justify engaging in self-defensive warfare. The Buddhist tradition, in the end, offers no clear answer to this question.* For instance, there will be deaths during and after a defensive war—war continues to kill after the cease-fire—and thus at the very least there will be negative karmic consequences.

Buddhists like many others may assert that having no war is the best goal. However they were—and still are—Buddhist armies, and many Buddhist communities were and have been warlike. Many Buddhists take

war as a necessary evil especially in the context of the modern world's preoccupation with statism, nationalism, secularism, realpolitik, rationalism, etc.

Sallie King argues that *One can make some headway in balancing Buddhist nonviolence ideals with the pragmatic need for protection by means of two devices: intention and degree.* King goes on to write, *Probably putting together an intention to defend, rather than destroy, with actions that seek always to minimize violence is the best one can do in adjusting Theravada Buddhism to a perceived need for self-defense.* But then as King also observed, how do you square Buddhism's objective to reduce people's propensity for violent action but as well as justifying the concept of "just war"? This is among the pressing questions that must be thought over, especially in the light of the war against terrorism. For instance, what is minimal or proportionate violence? Is preventive war a form of self-defense? Since knowledge is always linked to power, we must conquer knowledge in order to resist power and violence.

Thich Nhat Hanh says, *To prevent war, to prevent the next crisis, we must start right now. When a war or crisis has begun, it is already too late. If we and our children practice ahimsa in our daily lives, if we learn to plant seeds of peace and reconciliation in our hearts and minds, we will begin to establish real peace and, in that way, we may be able to prevent the next war.* So this idea of peacebuilding, preventing conflicts before they begin, is very important. This work attracts no headlines; in fact nobody may even notice it, but it really is crucial to uprooting violence.

Peacebuilding might begin with resolving the economic, social and political inequalities that 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 with a Buddhist saying that: "Bad deeds cannot be ended through retribution." If such "bad deeds" as violence persist 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 the suffering that arises from violence? From a Buddhist perspective, all suffering in this world is 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, which includes modern technology which will not let us

time to search 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 the Buddhist principle of interdependence of all beings. In fact, we inter-are.

Today's world has transformed Descartes' "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 produced 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 do not make us 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 breaths come 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. At least we should come to realise that we should not be living our lives for our self-glorification, for climbing the social ladder—which abounds with injustices, but we should rather recognise that the downtrodden and exploited members of our society are no less important than we are. 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 must rather work together to gain independence from the unjust social structures which are full of violence.

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 United Nations is supposed to function.

What I have just mentioned may recall Gandhi's vision for *Village Republic* which 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.*

I hope what I have said will encourage you to contemplate and perhaps even provoke you to act by challenging the *status quo*—the intellectual subservience to violent social and political ideologies which we have been naively following for too long. The false ideologies that flourish as a result permit that permit mistakes like Hiroshima, 9/11, and Iraq. I sincerely hope

that the work of great souls like Gandhi and Ghaffar Khan will inspire you to work nonviolently for justice and equality in this new era. Perhaps, like them, you can achieve peace in your community amongst your people by first achieving peace within yourselves. Then you could spread your individual peace through a culture of awakening and overwhelm the evil, tyranny and violence existing in today's societies through nonviolent compassionate action.

May the truth speed us along in this effort.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Mahatma Gandhi  
Lecture on Nonviolence  
McMaster University, Canada,  
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## My Personal Experiences in Building Peace Locally and Internationally

I am very honored to give the lecture here in honor of the late Professor Kenko Futaba, a noted Shin Buddhist scholar, President of Ryukoku University from 1983 to 1995 and then became Chancellor of Kyoto Women's University. I myself was privileged to be a visiting professor at Ryukoku University in 1993 during my exile from Siam because of the political unrest in my own country. I met him then and was inspired by him.

A pioneer in what today is called "engaged" Buddhism, Kenko Futaba campaigned passionately for the rights of minorities in Japan and was actively involved in enactment of the law liberating Japan's untouchables, the burakumin.

He was a prolific writer. Among his many publications are *Investigations in the History of Ancient Buddhist Thought in*

*Japan; Shinran's Humanity; Shinran's Social Practice; and Shinran's Transmission of No-self in Buddhist Thought—History.*

In our modern philosophical and religious age, marked by constant, aimless spiritual wandering, we must again affirm Dr. Futaba's endeavor to seek after the essential nature of Buddhism, restoring the conviction and the commitment to support it.

This lecture series hopefully will be a continuing inspiration for the nurturing of American Buddhism.

I have been asked to give a broad overview of 'my' thoughts and activities, which are often put in the file of "socially engaged Buddhism or spirituality." This is a difficult topic for many reasons. To what extent can I talk about "myself" without talking about others, for what is consi-

dered "me" is always partially or wholly formed in relation to others, including culture and society? It is impossible yet necessary to talk about oneself. And, of course, I have often talked about humility and simplicity—for instance, that the Buddha and His Holiness the Dalai Lama are role models, not because they possessed supernatural powers but because they are simple monks. Now language is often assertive and affirmative. Meditative silence may better capture humility and simplicity, but then I wouldn't be saying anything to the audience. And conspicuously striving hard to portray or maintain humility and simplicity may generate the very opposite outcome: unabashed self-promotion, turning oneself into a trademark.

The "Sulak" whom you see and hear speaking in front of you is a septuagenarian Siamese Bud-

dhist who wears funny (or exotic) clothes, talks about religion, spirituality, peace, and local and grassroots wisdom, and is a mileage plus frequent flyer who travels several hundreds of days a year to numerous destinations worldwide on his lecture circuits.

Some of you know that I speak a lot about religion and spirituality, especially Buddhism, and how they are linked to peace, environmental sustainability, education, and so on. I think spirituality and religion is pertinent to politics nowadays, especially when religious platitudes such as God, Good, and Evil can be easily witnessed on both sides of the War on/of Terror. There's a certain moralization of politics at the global and national levels, but not in the sense that politics is becoming or has become more moral. Rather political antagonisms are often represented in moralistic terms, breeding violence. We are always Good and they are always Evil, and they must be destroyed.

On the contrary, I believe that religion is highly beneficial to politics, if by "religion" we focus on spirituality and by "politics" we mean our relations to others—the demands others pose to us. Personally, I prefer the word "spirituality" to "religion." And spirituality is inextricable from politics, which I will discuss in greater details below. So that will be the topic of the bulk of my talk. I will dedicate the remaining part of my talk to highlighting some of the spiritual and political activities that my network of nongovernmental organizations has done in recent years.

So let us start with spirituality, a word that is often confused with mysticism or other-worldliness. For me, spirituality is not a

transcendental state, but it is in the here and now for it is primarily about cultivating relations with our self and the Other. Spirituality posits a relationship between the self, truth, and goodness in a distinct way. Spirituality is linked to philosophy, or at least the philosophies of the so-called Antiquity in the East as well as the West. Broadly speaking, philosophy is about access to the truth, the various conditions that enable as well as inhibit the self or the subject to have access to the truth. Spirituality, on the other hand, is about the necessary transformations that the self has to go through in order to have access to the truth. The being of the self requires an ethical conversion or change. For instance, it involves practices, exercises, and experiences that the self must undertake in order to have access to the truth, which can save the self. In other words, spirituality suggests that left to itself, the subject cannot know or understand the truth; there are no intrinsic qualities in the self that enable it to have access to the truth.

Modern philosophy, especially since Descartes, has eclipsed the spiritual dimension of the pursuit of the truth. The Cartesian "I" is ossified, as it is the ultimate and unquestionable knower. On this view, the self does not have to be transformed in order to have access to the truth; the self is inherently capable of the truth. Here, the change in the conduct of the self can only come from true knowledge. Put differently, knowledge is de-linked from ethical transformation, philosophy from spirituality, and truth from goodness. One can know and speak the truth as well as act unethically, so to speak. This is for instance the case of 'scientific' knowledge.

Once disconnected from spirituality, modern philosophy is about discovering or amassing true knowledge in order to perfect knowledge and the mind. Thus, G.E. Moore writes in his *Principia Ethica* that Western thinking, by which he probably meant the Cartesian method, is not only unable to teach ethics, it also cannot define morality or goodness.

As a philosophy that is inseparable from spirituality, Buddhism focuses on fostering the conditions of right conduct vis-à-vis the self and the Other rather than on perfecting knowledge. To prepare the self for acting correctly with regard to events, passions, and other sentient beings—in both positive as well as negative contexts—is at the heart of Buddhism, not the improvement of one's mind via the accumulation of true knowledge. Buddhism is a form of *performativity*. It is about being for another, about eliminating self-attachments to conduct the self correctly—hence the Buddhist conception of *anattā* or non-self.

In Hellenistic philosophy, spirituality comes in the form of the care of the self. We see in Socrates, the Cynics, the Stoics, and so on. To know oneself requires that one first care about the self, which is a spiritual exercise. In Buddhism, which is also a philosophy of Antiquity, we can see it in the form of right understanding or, even better, nonviolence. A Buddhist education is therefore more of a technique or an art than a body of knowledge or ideas. It is an art of happiness, a happiness that is realized through various achievements: achievement of persistent effort, achievement of protection, good friendship, balanced livelihood, achievement of faith,

achievement of virtue, achievement of charity, and achievement of wisdom. For those who have achieved a higher education they will experience the cessation of defilements and sufferings, resulting in a condition that may be described as *nirvana*. It is an art that spans throughout one's lifetime—not something that one does in a particular phase in life.

Meditation is central in Buddhism. "I breathe therefore I am" may be the Buddhist response to Descartes. The purpose of meditation is for the transformation of our being, away from the five hindrances, namely sensual desire, hatred, indolence, anxiety, and uncertainty, and toward compassion, generosity, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. In other words, meditation leads to wisdom, which enables one to act appropriately in response to events, passions, and other reactions.

Buddhism suggests that without training, which leads to the conversion of the self, one will never be able to confront personal as well as collective sufferings, contemplate their causes, which are linked directly or indirectly with greed (*lobha*) and/or lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) or ignorance (*avijja*), and work toward their cessation. The cessation of suffering is possible if we train ourselves properly in morality (*sila*) mindfulness (*smādhī*) and understanding or wisdom (*paññā*). In Buddhism *sikkhā* refers to the training that entails developing oneself so that one is able to lead life in a beautiful and correct manner, pursuing the Path (*magga*) that will lead to the cessation of suffering. *Sikkhā* and *magga* thus can be seen as one. Ultimately the path leads to a noble and celibate way of life or

the Noble Eightfold Path, which begins with Right Understanding or the recognition of the interdependence of things and being for another as opposed to the view of an autonomous or fortress self. The Noble Eightfold Path is as follows: 1) Right Understanding; 2) Right Thoughts; 3) Right Speech; 4) Right Action; 5) Right Livelihood; 6) Right Effort; 7) Right Mindfulness; and 8) Right Concentration. The Buddha grouped points 3, 4, and 5 as morality; points 6, 7, and 8 as concentration; and 1 and 2 as wisdom.

The transformations that Buddhism is looking for are as follows: One, the transformation of greed into generosity. This not only means the giving of basic necessities—the redistribution of rights and resources—but also entails speaking the truth to power and to a society full of lies, distortions, and half-truths. By giving more than taking, one reduces self-attachments. Simplicity, humility, and self-reliance will serve as one's guidelines. Buddhism sees self-attachments as a major cause of fear. Practiced seriously and consistently, generosity contributes to the absence of fear, and without fear one will have no enemies: one will not see "the others" as enemies, and one will be able to truly forgive the wrongs that others may have done toward oneself. Remember the war cry "If you are not with us you are against us"?

Two, the transformation of hatred into compassion, which is akin to a flame of love without the smoke of jealousy, possessiveness, anger, etc. Gradually reducing self-attachments, one relates to all sentient beings and the natural environment mindfully and harmonically. One nurtures rather than oppresses them. Jus-

tice and equality will guide one's conduct, physical as well as mental. Generosity may be about the provision of equal opportunities, but compassion is also concerned about equal outcomes.

Three, the transformation of delusion or ignorance into wisdom. Buddhism points out that wisdom emanates from reflexivity or critical self-reflection. One must have time to cultivate inner peace and reflexivity through mental training or meditation. And one must try to expand one's circle of virtuous companions who act as one's external voices of conscience. With wisdom one does not fear to admit one's wrong doings and offenses: one develops responsibility for the consequences of one's actions or inactions—that is, for both commission and omission. And one confronts and works to dismantle the hindrances in one's mind and the structural violence that accommodates it. Without wisdom, the oppressive structures will remain intact, and generosity and compassion will be merely palliatives.

I can go on and on. I have spoken and written a lot about this matter elsewhere, so I won't dwell on it any longer. The point of my digression is to show the spiritual dimension of Buddhism, and how it seeks to transform our relations to the self and to others. This therefore leads to another important practice: nonviolence.

It is therefore vital to reaffirm a central tenet or message that the Buddha had conceived more than 2500 years ago: *ahimsa* or nonviolence. It is a short and simple but profound message, reasserting the interconnectedness of all human bodies—a message which is often neglected or forgotten, leading to grave sufferings. Nonviolence affirms our common vulnerability. It is a

reminder that life is precarious, and the precariousness of life is an inescapable human condition. Various forms of self-attachment, feeding on greed, hatred, and delusion, have been relied on to construct an air of invulnerability or invincibility, severing the deep ties that bind human bodies together. Militarism, which is deeply entwined with *inter alia* sexism and racism, is one of the starkest manifestations of this attempt to overcome vulnerability at all costs, of the failure to transform vulnerability into a positive resource for life. The logic of militarism suggests that the “others” must be exploited, oppressed, or killed for “us” to go on living, and so on.

On the contrary, nonviolence, which is the recognition of *anattā* or “non-self,” seeks to foster conditions that will cultivate or nurture precarious lives throughout the world. This calls for an engagement with others based on interdependence, compassion, generosity, understanding, and mindfulness, for an enjoining of knowledge and spirituality. And this is not a matter of choice, for a choice implies the presence of a fully autonomous self. Rather, it is because we are nothing without the others.

Now let me be a little more concrete and specific by pointing to consumerism, the ideology of sport cars, designer clothes, fancy condominiums, etc that is incessantly produced and circulated in the virtual economy. I’ve spoken a lot about the perils of consumerism, claiming that it is a new demonic religion and that the shopping mall has become the new temple. I’ve suggested that development is literally devoid of spiritual dimensions as it simply means flooding the world with material things, and have pointed

to the tense relations between Buddhism and capitalism. I hold these views because capitalist development and consumerism do not entail the care of the self, as mentioned above; they are merely concerned about wealth, money, property, status, and reputation. But perhaps a caveat is necessary. Nominally, capitalism stresses the care of the self in a peculiar way; that is, by cultivating a ceaseless sense of depriuation and anxiety, which is known as *tanha* in Buddhism. And like quack doctors, it provides pseudo-remedies—often at hefty prices. There are always products and services to be purchased to “improve” us. There are always big brothers or experts everywhere to look up to for advice, guidance, and tips—ones equipped with modern and ‘scientific’ knowledge that will help improve our work performance, sex and marital life. So we accumulate more materials and better bodies of knowledge without really caring about ourselves, without undertaking spiritual exercises. In so doing, we can “improve” ourselves while remaining immoral. To be loved or to be “normal” we turn to consumerism or modern knowledge, but rarely to spirituality.

So the self, driven by materialism and the greed fostered by capitalism is constantly craving to fill a void, a bottomless pit so that it will feel invulnerable. Why invulnerable? *Tanhā* is manifested in the three unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*): greed, hatred, and delusion. We crave more wealth, power, status, and sensual pleasure to make us feel whole or invincible. We have to deny others these things. We feel anxious to acquire them and fear losing them. Therefore, we hate

others, fearing or simply deeming that they will steal our enjoyment and property. We have to undermine, regulate, control, or kill them to feel sovereign. And we don’t mourn for their losses. Instead we rejoice, making the wheels of violence and hatred spin indefinitely. We fantasize that our self is our own in absolute terms and we compete ever more aggressively to attain and retain the objects of our craving, oppressing others, denying the precariousness of life, and severing human interconnectedness along the way. So with our fortress mentality, we live in secluded high security neighborhoods, or uphold militarism, or think about launching “pre-emptive strikes.”

Craving has existed in all societies at all times. The solution that capitalism provides to craving is however more cravings; that is, attaching value to something that is said to be natural: consume more, immediate gratification, and so on. Craving does not hurt, so to speak. You can put more cream in your coffee because there is always cream with no fat or cholesterol. You can smoke more cigarettes because there are ones with ultra low tar. You can have more debts because the more debt you are in, the better credit you have. Modern war with smart bombs and precision guided weapons even promises zero casualty—on our side at least. Indeed, “There is no river bigger than *tanhā*,” as the Buddha declares. Buddhism and spirituality, however, take the opposite view. *Tanhā* has to be reduced or minimized to pose the least harm to oneself and especially to others. The idea is to cultivate a lifelong spirituality that aims to reduce unwholesome aspects of life and society and



conversely to nurture wholesome ones. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa once described it as a process of "simple living, higher thinking." And this path has a universalist ring to it: it is open to everyone; anyone can awaken the intrinsic Buddha nature in himself or herself.

As a form of spirituality as well as philosophy and as a path for the transformation of the self to make it mindful of right conduct vis-à-vis oneself and others (e.g., the correct conduct of conduct), enjoining truth with goodness, Buddhism is about social engagement. I have pointed out numerous times that there is no idea of individual salvation in Buddhism. Buddhism is about personal and collective transformation, and hence the idea of inter-being. As David Loy suggests, *I am not in the world, I am what the world is doing right here and now*. And, Loy continues, *The world begins to heal when we realized that its sufferings are our own*. It is in this sense that Buddhism, as a form of social engagement, should also be involved in politics.

So let me devote the remaining part of my talk to give a brief sketch of the activities that my network of socially engaged Buddhists have been doing. We have attempted to expose the Thai public to spirituality and alternative visions of leading life as well as politics by translating works by Mahatma Gandhi, E.F. Schumacher, Vandana Shiva, Noam Chomsky, Ivan Illich, Thich Nhat Hahn, the Dalai Lama, Staish Kumar, Helena Norberg-Hodge, David Korten, and numerous other authors into the Thai language. We regularly hold seminars, talks, and workshops on various issues from economic development to art and culture,

generally from a Buddhist or spiritual perspective, to engage with progressive elements in Thai society. One of our NGOs, the Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development has been effective in supporting grassroots leadership among monks and nuns to promote sustainable development at the village level. Generally respected in society, monks and nuns are vital agents of empowerment and community development. In addition, we are trying to renew Buddhism by clarifying and elaborating on its democratic roots. The Sangha as a possible model of a democratic community is what I have striven to highlight. Through another NGO, the Spirit in Education Movement, we aim to develop a comprehensive educational movement to counter the trends of consumerism, using spiritual strength to empower individuals and communities to choose alternative ways of development with confidence and full awareness. The Spirit in Education Movement is also involved in grassroots leadership training program for fringe or marginalized communities in the Thai kingdom as well as in neighboring countries such as Laos, Cambodia, and Burma. The aim of the training is to empower communities to be more self-reliant, to help protect the local natural environment, and to maintain cultural integrity.

SEM and Wongsanit Ashram group, which is an alternative community that fuses Buddhism, spirituality, and ecological awareness, are working closely with the Assembly of the Poor. At the core of the Assembly are rural and urban poor from various provinces and regions, largely small farmers and agriculturists. But many non-governmental or-

ganizations, academeses, and businesspersons are also part of it. The Assembly has held a series of non-violent demonstrations against the government's development strategy and against socioeconomic inequalities. Now the Assembly is promoting greater cooperation between rural and urban communities, and via the Midnight University, it is helping to empower marginalized and dispirited communities nationwide.

Needless to say, our network has actively combated consumerism and sought alternatives to it. At the individual level through, SEM and TICD, we have organized numerous workshops and courses that seek to cultivate mindfulness, contentment, and compassion; that is, the antidotes to the acquisitiveness and selfishness that consumerism created. In our view, happiness arises from 'more being' not 'more having'. At the community level, we advocate economic localization, which is based on empowerment and sustainable development. Through the courses and field activities of, for example, the Ashram group and TICD we have helped foster strong communities. In other words, communities that are by and large self-reliant, self-sufficient, and participatory; that live in harmony with the natural environment; and that foster the diversity of cultures, identities, and (as it turned out, more appropriate) lifestyles. At the national level, we keep a wary eye on the government's economic and development policies, making sure that they are not implemented at great human and environmental costs. The protest over the construction of the PTT-UNOCAL-TOTAL gas pipeline from Burma to Siam is but one

example manifestation of our activities. Moreover, we try to hold transnational corporations accountable for their activities in Siam.

Lastly, at the international level, we started the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) almost two decades ago. We urge Buddhists not only to sit for meditation but to get up and confront social suffering as well as to find out

their causes and to overcome them nonviolently. We are part of many transnational alliances. We closely collaborate with other NGO movements that are scattered worldwide and maintain direct links with institutions such as Schumacher College in Britain and the Naropa University in the United States as well as the Gandhian movement in India. We are helping to redefine progress and find ways to help

rebuild human solidarity that has been split by colonialism, imperialism, science, war, development, racism, and various other isms. These divisions and the hostility and antagonism that they entail may be healed or bridged by social engagement derived from spirituality.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Futaba Lecture  
Honpa Hongwanji, Hawaii, USA,  
12 November 2005

## Challenges to Governance in Southeast Asia

Governance implies a relationship of power between the governor and the governed; and there is no such thing as permanence in the relationship because it is always subject to changes. Sometimes the governor plays the role of the parents or the father, while the governed, the children. Sometimes the governor is the allknowing technocrat, and the governed becomes a bunch of witless rabble.

In any case, good governance is opposite to domination, which is a relationship of violence. It should nurture an egalitarian relation, such as the one between virtuous companions or what the Buddhist calls "kalyanamitta." The Sangha was once a model of good governance. And the Sangha once served as a virtuous companion of the ruler or the governor.

Good governance must have a place for politics, which entails critical resistance: people think and feel, and of course they do not necessarily have to like the way they are being governed. Nowadays, politics is often confused with merely dialoguing or

supporting tolerance for a diversity of viewpoints, which are often ignored by the state anyway. Politics is simply about maintaining or finding consensus or creating unity, especially through parliamentarianism. Or, it has become confused with technocratic management and the provision of stability and security, especially economically. I don't deny the importance of debates or the freedom of expression. But let's not forget that politics is about changing society or the world, and about disrupting the unjust order, for instance. So politics is about social engagement, and it may be disruptive. The Buddhist would say politics should be geared towards egalitarianism and should be fused with spirituality; that is, affirming compassion and nonviolence.

Put differently, governance without politics becomes unreflective or unthinking, and a 'post-political' order is therefore oppressive and dominating. If the ultimate objective of governance is simply to uphold security and stability, then its human cost

would be horrific. Many governments in the region as well as worldwide are fighting Evil in the form of terrorism. In negating the negation, they present themselves as "Good" disregarding the human cost; the war on terror thus becomes the war of terror. Another instance of "post-political" governance is the rush to mindless development along capitalist-consumerist lines without regard to environmental degradation and life, especially at the grassroots level. "There is no alternative," the governor consoles the governed. There is no alternative means what is, is already good, and therefore politics is dead. Resistance is dead. There is no alternative because we don't have the tools to even think about it. As long as "I shop therefore I am" there will be no alternative because we will be able to talk only about cars, long vacations abroad, houses, and so on. But if we say "I breathe therefore I am" then there will still be a place for thought, for politics, for nonviolent social engagement.

From the perspective of a

socially engaged Buddhist or spiritualist, good governance must rely on the Wheel of Dhamma. On the one hand, the Wheel of Dhamma will roll in compassion and nonviolence through social engagement, emphasizing our shared humanity. Thich Nhat Hanh says we are all “inter-being.” Let me elaborate on this view. We are all in our skins. We all rely on the kindness of strangers since our earliest days. We are all physically vulnerable, and nothing will ever erase this condition. These are our shared humanity, meaning that our primary relations to others—including all sentient beings—are that of interdependence—not war, aggression, or violence. The master precept in Buddhism—if there is such a thing—is therefore *ahimsa* or nonviolence, which is not a matter of choice. Nonviolence does not mean passivity or inaction. Rather, it can be a powerful political resource. Nonviolence affirms our inter-being, our common vulnerability or precariousness, which cannot be willed away. Therefore, we need to nurture interdependence and cultivate seeds of peace. Vengeance, hostility, and militarism adhere to the very opposite condition: invulnerability—the dream of the superpower. We can only be invulnerable at the expense of our humanity. The State often fuels these divisions in the name of invulnerability or absolute security. Enemies and Evil are seemingly everywhere.

Inter-being not only questions the feasibility of a fortress mentality but also unravels the whole idea of an autonomous or Cartesian self (“I think therefore I am”). There is no such thing as an individual salvation in Buddhism, hence the Buddhist asser-

tion of non-self. This not only means the reduction of self-attachments in the forms of greed, hatred, and delusion, but also an acknowledgement of opacity of the self, which cannot be willed away. Hence we need virtuous companions, and hence nonviolence as our primary relations to others. This transparency opens up the possibility of an ethical relation with the other. Here ethics may be broadly defined as an obligation that is un-enforced. It is a gift we owe to one another because of our opacity and “shared humanity.” It is the responsibility that grows from the lack of complete self-certainty. And, so good governance cannot choose not to acknowledge this ethical relation. Many weeks ago Buddhist monks in the deep south of Thailand mindlessly forgot about this aspect of the Wheel of Dhamma and became cheerleaders of state violence.

The Wheel of Dhamma also serves as a brake to the Wheel of the State, which is often unthinking. Challenges to governance in Southeast Asia are numerous. We can talk about corruption, environmental degradation, mega-development projects, mainstream education, structural violence, terrorism, media censorship, ethicism, consumerism, neoliberalism, and so on. But I will focus on state power and violence. And I will direct my attention at Siam, especially its implementation of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situations since 16 July 2005. Why this emphasis? On the one hand, this is the paradigm of sovereign power that is globalizing. On the other hand, it is a—if not the—major challenge to egalitarianism and the principle of shared humanity.

Let me begin with the obser-

vations of Brad Adams, Executive Director of the Asia Division of Human Rights Watch, in his letter to the Thai Prime Minister dated 4 August 2005. Among other important points, Adams stresses, and it is worth quoting him at length, the following:

- the lack of appropriate judicial supervision of arrests and detentions and summons, which heightens the risk of torture or other mistreatment of individuals in custody or while under interrogation;
- the lack of appropriate judicial authorization or supervision of searches and seizures;
- the removal of jurisdiction of the Administrative Court and its procedures for human rights violations committed by state agents;
- limitations on the ability of victims of human rights violations to use civil, criminal, or administrative remedies to gain redress; the possibility of blanket state censorship, after years of progress in Thailand towards greater media freedom;
- the requirement that suspects not be detained in police stations, detention centers, penal institutions, or prisons, raising the prospect of the use of secret, undisclosed, or inaccessible places of detention where detainees may be mistreated and where monitoring is impossible;
- unnecessary restrictions on the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, assembly, association, and movement; and

- the broad provision allowing the Prime Minister to “issue a notification not to perform any act or to perform an act to the extent that this is necessary for maintaining the security of the state, the safety of the country or the safety of the people.” This apparently can be applied to any person or institution. This is a broad and shocking assertion of governmental power in a free society, more reminiscent of totalitarian regimes than a democracy.

From the above mentioned observations, we can deduce that the Emergency Decree is not really a new law, but rather a suspension of the law. Hence, as Adams puts it, the “Emergency Decree Violates Thai Constitution and Laws.” We can further point out that the suspension of the law brings into force a lawless sovereign power, which is subject to neither constitutional nor international laws. With this lawlessness comes an arbitrary, errant, and excessive power on the part of the premier and the executive wing. Since it is boundless, the real excess of this power is best viewed from the side of the governed, from those subject to it—in particular, what will be done to them and how much they will suffer. So this climate of unaccountability and impunity establishes a relation of violence between the governor and the governed. It opens the avenue for “preemptive strikes” against the designated enemies of the State. Who are the enemies? How do we detect the enemies? Here ethnic or racial profiling comes into play. The enemy (however remotely) looks ‘Indian, Arab, or Muslim.’ For instance, several

months ago Thai security officials detained and interrogated a few teenage tourists from the South who traveled to a Bangkok theme park because they were acting suspiciously—they had a marked map of the leading tourist attractions in Bangkok. So much for the government’s campaign to encourage Thais to travel in the kingdom.

Life in the suspension of the law is not life, only something less. It seems that the Emergency Decree heralds a pre-modern form of sovereign power where there is no separation of power, no checks and balances—and this is being done in the very heart of a highly modernist state, a state overcome by modernity: witness its obsession with mega-projects, bilateral free trade agreements, and rapid economic growth. The lawlessness of this power becomes most apparent when the premier and his officials promised to use the Emergency Decree with utmost care.

The Emergency Decree was modeled after the USA Patriot Act. The United Kingdom also has its own anti-terror legislation. The Thai government weakly reasoned that since the major democracies of the world are implementing similar decrees, it has to be all right or legal. But something that is legal may nonetheless be morally indefensible or outright violent. After all, the Emergency Decree operates by the security paradigm, and not the paradigm of justice—hence the suspension of the law. Again reflecting its unthinking and superpower nature, the Thai state is oblivious to the threat to civil liberties and the principle of shared humanity that the Decree entails.

Perhaps, “oblivious” is not the correct adjective. Arrogant

and smug seem to be better defining characteristics of the modern State. In the absence of any competing ideology or alternative, the State simply says, “You can say whatever you want but I won’t listen to you for the absolute power of preemption is on my side.”

Inter-being comes with a sense of humility and the willingness to take back one’s commitment to a course of action or to be open to other possibilities should one decide to persist in that course of action. So the challenge of governance as I see it is to make this relation of violence and this lawless power visible—to demystify its logic and make it reveal its violent nature or excessiveness through compassion and nonviolence. (The invisibility of this lawless power is apparent in the talks about secret detention centers. In Siam, the same concern seems to be whether or not there is an American, CIA-run secret detention center, and not whether or not the Emergency Decree requires the construction of these centers. In the suspension of the law, the subject of power is protected by neither constitutional nor international laws. And therefore s/he cannot be detained in ‘ordinary’ military prisons or police stations.) In other words, we must not only condemn violence and its institutions, but also its very nature. The Wheel of Dhamma must be used to put a brake on the dreadful long-term impacts of this lawless power, bringing about a three-fold transformation of greed into generosity, of hatred into compassion, and of delusion into wisdom. These are the ‘miracles’ of Buddhism.

Nonviolence is the recognition of *anatta* or “non-self,” which seeks to foster conditions



that will cultivate or nurture precarious lives throughout the world. This calls for an engagement with others based on interdependence, compassion, generosity, understanding, and mindfulness, for an enjoining of

knowledge and spirituality. And this is not a matter of choice, for a choice implies the presence of a fully autonomous self. Rather, it is because we are nothing without the others. In sum, the main challenge to governance in

Southeast Asia and elsewhere is how to rejuvenate politics and spirituality.

Talk given at the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Pataya, Siam, 17 January 2006

## Time for PM to Go: Sulak

The Time has come for people to organise themselves to oust the Thaksin Shinawatra government, leading social critic Sulak Sivaraksa said yesterday.

Sulak told about 400 people at Thammasat University, where symposiums took place to celebrate his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday, that the time had come.

"We must organise ourselves to overthrow Thaksin," he said.

Sulak was a supporter of the prime minister five years ago as he thought Thaksin would listen to the poor and their representatives, such of the Assembly of the Poor.

He later told *The Nation*, however, that the Assembly of

the Poor, which had representatives present at Thammasat yesterday, would play a key role in bringing down this administration. "Populism means the government in control of the public sphere."

Asked if he would join with Sondhi Limthongkul, media mogul turned critic of Thaksin, Sulak said: "That's bastard against bastard, evil versus evil. Sondhi would sell himself at any time if the price was good enough."

Vanida Tantiwithyapitak, an adviser to the Assembly of the Poor, said a congress will be held in February to demand the government solve many lingering problems.

"We don't care if some

people interpret that as a move against the administration," she said, adding that so far the government had filed more than 1,000 lawsuits against leaders of the Assembly and that none of the promises Thaksin made to the group had been honoured.

Surapong Jayanama, a former top diplomat, said the Thaksin administration's populist policies had become a threat to intellectuals. "Citizens are being treated like children under [this government's] patronage," Surapong said.

*Pravit Rojanaphruk*  
*The Nation*,  
December 20, 2005

## The Visit to Ladakh

After the INEB conference, Sulak Sivaraksa paid a visit to Leh, Ladakh on invitation from The Ven. Nun Tsering Palmo from 18th - 22nd October. The nun has a strong connection with Sulak and many people in Siam, especially those in the field of gender issues. Sr. Palmo organized meetings between Sulak and many groups such as Youth Wing of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, The Women Alli-



ance of Ladakh, and renowned Ladakhi Buddhist scholars. The last day activity was hosted by the Venerable Sangha-

senas of Mahabodhi International Meditation Center who offered Sulak and his team cozy accommodations at the center. Sulak gave a speech to the people who reside in the vast area of MIMC including schoolboys and girls, the elders, monks, novices and staff in MIMC hospital. Despite the freezing climate, Sulak and his team were given warm welcome and friendship.

## Critical Juncture

**Sulak Sivaraksa, the outspoken social critic, has taught generations of students to think outside the box so it was hardly surprising that at a recent series of events to mark his auspicious sixth-cycle birthday not all of the tributes were fulsome**

If his face registers any emotion, it is only for a fleeting moment. Sulak Sivaraksa sits quietly, much of the time all by himself, listening to a series of speakers talk about his legacy to Thai society.

There are, naturally, the expected eulogies, the fluent delivery of beautifully crafted words. Every now and then, though, some of the more daring will attempt to make negative comments about this venerable man—his personality flaws, the insecurity that occasionally peeks out from underneath his famously formidable appearance, the “failures” of his life-long mission. The master reacts with a flash of tenseness: The lips purse slightly; there’s a certain glare in the eyes. But Sulak remains composed; shortly after hearing some criticism he may even break into a smile, or a chuckle. Hard to understand but the man seems to be satisfied with the way things are going. But then hasn’t he spent all his life grooming people to be critical, to debunk the myth that Establishment figures, whether they reside in the temple, the palace or elsewhere, are untouchable? And now it’s his turn to be on the receiving end: The more critiques his own students and associates deliver, the more successful a teacher he is deemed to have been—or so it would seem.

The occasion is Sulak’s birthday; he turned 72 on March 27. But instead of the typical rituals of blowing out candles and singing celebratory songs, Thailand’s leading social critic has chosen a different, pathbreaking way of marking the end of the sixth cycle of his life: Making his own existence a lesson for all to delve into. A few of the speakers confided that, before they had mounted the podium, Sulak had specifically urged them to “say something bad about me as well”.

The venues chosen for this innovative series of “birthday parties” are all symbolic. Wat Thong Nopakun, which hosted the first leg of the celebrations, was Sulak’s abode during his apprenticeship as a novice

monk. The Sri Burapha Auditorium at Thammasat University is named after the late Kularb Saipradit, the progressive writer to whom Sulak feels his compatriots have not accorded due recognition (as was the case with Pridi Banomyong, the founder of the same third-level institute, whom Sulak successfully re-introduced to his countrymen a few years ago).

The finale of the event was held at the Siam Society, the—some say elitist—“fortress” which guards everything deemed as high culture. Four decades ago, Sulak staged a “mini-coup” against the society’s old, aristocrat-dominated administration, launched the first of numerous conservation projects and began a series of stimulating essays and other written work which gave impetus to the historic mass uprising of October 14, 1973.

The hodge-podge of speakers and the varied backgrounds of the people listening to them reflect the astounding range of friendships which Sulak has cultivated over the years. On the man’s 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, historian Nidhi Eoseewong remarked on Sulak’s “rare and impressive prowess”, noting that the *acharn* (teacher, professor) had inspired such a profusion of networks, all working independently in different areas, that he might not be able to recognise the full extent of the impact he has had.

“Sulak’s influence on Thai society thus stems from this networking,” Nidhi said. “These groups have presented them-selves as alternatives to the Establishment, which in turn makes Sulak a symbol for those [who follow] unconventional paths.

“Will Thailand have a greater need for these alternatives in the future? Personally, I believe so. There are no signs that attempts to reform the [social] system will be successful, so people will continue seeking other choices. And as long as they keep on searching for what might be available outside the mainstream, they will always find Sulak Sivaraksa standing prominently there.”

And this was not an overstatement. In a comprehensive study on the history of Thai intellectuals, Sulak was the only one of those chosen who did not come from an aristocratic or high-ranking background. Saichon Satya-nurak, a historian from

Chiang Mai University who did research for the study, picked 10 individuals she considers to have had an important influence on Thai society; apart from Sulak, this group includes King Chulalongkorn, Prince Damrong Rajanuphab and MR Kukrit Pramoj (Sulak admires the prince, often referred to as the “father of modern Thai history”, but was antagonistic towards the latter).

Saichon said that, in retrospect, Sulak had a lot in common with Kukrit, a former prime minister: Both men placed great emphasis on the importance of good leadership to steer the nation. But Sulak had never advocated blind reverence to any leader, no matter how capable. The monarch is not a holy institution, he often declares in public, but simply a “chief among equals”.

“Acharn Sulak wants to see the king as a human being who can be subjected to criticism, as an institution that is transparent and accountable to society. He believes that through criticism the monarchy will [develop] greater adaptability [to social change].”

Recent years have seen the emergence of an even more vociferous critic. In an interview he gave to the *Fah Diew Kan* (Under the Same Sky) journal (December, 2005 edition), Sulak went a step further: He proposed the repeal of the Kingdom’s *lese majeste* legislation—a charge he has faced on two separate occasions—arguing that “a *kalyanamitra* [true friend] is someone who speaks what we don’t want to hear”.

“Lord Buddha said that the most important thing for every human being is to have a *kalyanamitra*,” Sulak noted. “Critiques should be considered as the voices of conscience—without them, no one can grow. Any human institution that is deprived of critical voices and of genuine friends is, sooner or later, liable to fall.”

But what about the archcritic himself? How does Sulak respond to negative comments from his own friends? The man’s fiery temper is legendary, so much so that several people who respect him as a teacher and mentor have said they’d rather not have him as a boss. Peacestudies scholar Chaiwat Satha-anand noted, however, that “Acharn Sulak has noticeably mellowed over the last

couple of years.”

Interestingly, one trait of Sulak's character that has remained constant throughout the past four decades—and which has been praised by many of his former students and co-workers—is the free hand he gives to those he trusts. Once Sulak assigns responsibility to someone for a project—a book, campaign, organisation—then that person can be assured there will be no interference from Sulak whatsoever.

Literary critic Suchart Sawadisri attests to the veracity of this. He initially squirmed at the idea of taking over from Sulak the job of editing the now-defunct *Sangkham-sart Parithat* (Social Science Review).

“But Acharn Sulak told me something which immediately calmed me down. He quoted Phrya Anuman Rajadon [foremost 20<sup>th</sup>-century authority on Thai culture, language, and literature] who said that in any succession, it is impossible to do exactly the same as the predecessor: You will either do better or worse.

“For the whole eight years that I ran the journal, he never once exercised his right to censor me and always gave me lots of support. Basically, Acharn Sulak wants us to be able to think independently, critically and creatively.”

In the opinion of Phra Phaisan Visalo, the respect that Sulak shows to subordinates has allowed his disciples to grow and to eventually stand on their own two feet. And there is no age barrier: Phra Phaisan was himself appointed editor of another progressive periodical, *Pacarayasara*, when he was barely 18.

“Admittedly, my first piece of work was lousy. But Acharn was willing to risk his reputation on our

behalf,” said Phra Phaisan, now a widely respected monk. “Sometimes, he'd even *theeb* [push] to get us out from under his shadow. But, of course, we mustn't stay too far away for too long as he might start feeling slighted [smiles].”

Blunders are part and parcel of life, and Sulak, being the outspoken person that he is, has certainly committed a few of his own. But Suchart pointed out that his predecessor at *Sangkham-sart Parithat* has the moral courage to accept his faults and to make amends.

One of the more noteworthy transitions in Sulak's beliefs concerns Pridi Banomyong, the late statesman. He once unleashed a series of harsh verbal attacks on Pridi (especially in regard to regime: Pridi was prime minister in June, 1946 when King Rama VIII met his death under mysterious circumstances and Pridi, because of his perceived antiroyalist sentiments, was widely suspected at the time of being responsible, either directly or indirectly), but later acknowledged that he had misunderstood the situation and duly made his apologies. Suchart reckoned that, without Sulak's active campaigning, Thais might already have forgotten the existence of Pridi, a man who was utterly devoted to the welfare of his country and his fellow citizens.

But will Thailand remember Sulak himself? Pracha Hutuanuwatra, another close disciple, remarked on an uncanny paradox in his mentor's career.

“All through his life he has been promoting other people—and quite successfully, too. But when it came to crucial turning points, Acharn Sulak would often find himself on his own. That might be why he has had to resort to self-publicity, time

and time again,” he said smiling.

Perhaps it's simply a matter of timing and factors beyond one's control. Phra Phaisan said that Sulak's contributions reached their peak in the lead-up to the mass street protests of October 14, 1973.

“At that time he could have been called the light of the Thai [liberal] intelligentsia,” the monk stressed. “But since October 14, Thailand has witnessed the emergence of other ‘lights’ shining in different parts of the country.”

Sulak probably doesn't mind that. Centralisation of power, in whatever form, has always been anathema to him. Sulak has gone on to make his name known in international circles, establishing cordial relationships with people like the Dalai Lama, Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, ex-World Bank president James Wolfensohn and former Indonesian president Abdurrahman Wahid, to name but a few.

Back in his homeland, Sulak remains one of the few *panyachon* (intellectuals) to openly declare his affinity for marginalised folk. After their first meeting back in 1994, Vanida Tantiwittayapitak, an advisor to the Assembly of the Poor, revealed that Sulak had requested that he be kept updated about developments in the grassroots sector, a movement in which he actively participates whenever possible.

“He's a model for people from the city who have sympathy for the underdog. More than that, Acharn Sulak continues to make publicly known his steadfast belief in the power of the poor. Some social activists don't even share that quality.”

Vasana Chinvarakorn  
*Bangkok Post*,  
December 29, 2005

## The Many Faces of Sulak

He can make members of both the left-and right-wing feel uneasy, but to a few, the description “radical conservative” seems to fit this man to a tee. Sulak Sivaraksa is and has been many things to many people. An outspoken intellectual. A daring critic of the two national “pillars”—the monkhood and the monarchy. A teacher. A writer. A tireless campaigner. A proponent of inter-faith dialogue. A peace advocate who,

according to Dr Prawase Wasi, “talks about non-violence violently.”

How did he manage to achieve this variegated status? What exactly is Sulak—can anyone actually label him at all? Here are the views of some of his students and associates:

**Chaiwat Satha-anand, peace-studies scholar, Thammasat University**

“Sulak's works are very important for society. How? I'd like to call

him ‘the curator of an alternative memory museum of Siam’. He plays with, reshapes and enhances some quality of Thai people's memories of the past. He reminds us of people who would otherwise have been pushed to the margins, the likes of Pridi Banomyong, Puey Ungpakorn [economist, rector of Thammasat University, Central Bank governor], Buddhadasa Bhikkhu [the late reformist monk], Phrya Anuman Raja-

dhon, Prince Sitthiporn Kridakorn [pioneer of modern agricultural methods] and Direk Jayanama [foreign minister, ambassador to Japan during World War Two].

"Why is this set of non-mainstream remembrances crucial? The current surge of violence has much to do with the past. But we cannot change it. If we let ourselves be enslaved by the happenings of yore, however, we'll get stuck in an endless cycle of violence. The commendable role which Sulak plays is to show us alternatives, other possibilities, other sets of values.

"In a way, Sulak forces Thai society to rethink certain moral values. We cannot remember Puey without being reminded of his integrity, his courage and his philosophy of *santi-pracha-dhamma* (peace-people-morality). When we think of [Prince Sitthiporn] we are at the same time reminded of an aristocrat who devoted himself to [improving the lot of] farmers.

"Thailand should thus feel indebted to Sulak. The kinds of [alternative] memories, and values he has tried to revive have helped Siam to get healthier. They may feel uncomfortable, even cause annoyance but, like the mites on a horse's back, they'll keep you in good shape, won't they?"

#### Nidhi Eoseewong, historian, Mid-night University

"When I think of Sulak vis-a-vis other Thai intellectuals of the last century, the very first thing that occurs to me is how unique he is in having refused to be part of the system—any system; be it the bureaucracy, business or politics. But unlike other non-mainstream intellectuals, he succeeded in not being purged.

"What are Sulak's contributions to Thai society? First of all, he tried to raise the issue of 'Thai-ness', but initially from an upper-class viewpoint, and later shifted to espousing a simple way of life in accordance with Buddhist teachings. His views about the aristocracy have undergone a transformation as well. From reverence [for the monarchy], Sulak has turned to cherish Buddhism as the answer to democracy. And, at least in my interpretation, Buddhism [in Thai society] is considered even more important than the monarchy. This is then a turning point for both Thailand and Sulak; [the new paradigms] are not

just outside, but totally in opposition to, the system.

"Another key contribution is how he tries to link grassroots simplicity and Buddhist teachings to the global crisis. Most other Thai intellectuals look only at the issue of the nation's survival but fail to see the linkages between 'Thai-ness' and the larger problems of the world. Sulak, on the other hand, tries to seek answers from Thai culture.

"But one thing that Sulak has not yet completely broken away from is the traditional respect accorded to the elite. He has placed great emphasis on personal virtue—be it when he wrote about Prince Damrong, the senior statesman [Pridi Banomyong] or MC Sitthiporn Kridakorn.

"Thai society has a lot of channels to purge radical thinking: Castigation as a lunatic, or for having ulterior motives or through exposure of one's sexual misbehaviour—ways that will make a speaker's words meaningless. But they [society] couldn't apply those means in Sulak's case. One of his shields is that part of his reputation has been bestowed by farang (Westerners) and Thai people tend to respect those farang who in turn respect him. Sulak is an intellectual with lots of networks and it's hard to deal with such a person. This makes him a more serious threat to the system."

#### Phra Phaisan Visalo, monk and scholar

"The title of one of his books, *Radical Conservatism*, can represent Acharn Sulak very well. He wants to preserve our valuable heritage—temple, palace, village. In later life, he has come to cherish the value of nature as well. Sulak probably knows more about the Temple and the Palace than anyone else in the country. And in depth, too. He was one of the very first people to talk about the importance of *phumpanya chao ban* [local/folk wisdom] three decades before [the concept] became fashionable.

"But his ideas on conservation are 'radical'—which, here, means going back to the roots of a problem. He tries to challenge and criticise the political elite, capitalism, consumerism and, in particular, 'structural violence'. Most importantly, though, he goes all the way to the spiritual dimension. Social justice in itself is not enough to bring about peace. Sulak values Buddhism, indeed any religion, as the source of spirituality

in a society."

#### Pracha Hutauwatr, writer/translator on alternative social issues

"Acharn Sulak once told me that if there were to be an epithet on his grave, he would like to be known as a 'translator': He translates from English into Thai, and vice versa, and from the past into the present—reviving the values of old for the younger generations.

"He has groomed people, nurtured their growth. He has opened up space for the civil society movement. One of his merits is that whenever he sees that a [key] issue has garnered [sufficient] attention from a lot of people, he will take a back seat. But if that issue is being ignored, he'll champion it.

"Somebody once accused him of not having any [definitive] standpoint. He replied that that wasn't true, for 'I always take sides with those from below' [the underclasses].

"He has been trying to counter—but unsuccessfully, I'd say—the trend for people to value capitalism and feudalism. What he has succeeded in doing, though, is to make some members of the new generations cherish the roots of what it is to be Thai."

#### Khongpob Sutthithamwasee, traditional masseur

"Sulak has been using his own money to pay for me to study massage therapy since 1979. More than that ... for almost a quarter of a century now he has been sacrificing his own body for me to practise on for two hours every week. Often he has to bear aches and pain for the sake of my studies—and he does so with patience, endurance and forgiveness. This is the most important point. For only if there is an ability to forgive, especially on the part of figures in authority, can we hope to see the realisation of peace on this earth."

*Except for Nidhi Eoseewong's comments, which were made as part of a keynote speech on the occasion of a previous birthday of Sulak's on November 2, 2003, all the other quotes were extracted from a series of talks given during "The Breath of Life"—celebrations to mark Sulak's sixth-cycle (72<sup>nd</sup>) birthday held between December 17 and 21 this year—and from a book entitled 'Six Cycles of S.S.S. (Sulak Sivaraksa)', published this month by Sangam.*

**Bangkok Post,**  
December 29, 2005



Dear Sulakji!  
Greetings from Abhivyakti!

We returned to Nashik from our Thailand visit rejuvenated with fresh insights and ideas about development, spirituality and community living. It has opened our hearts and minds and helped us reflect about our approaches to our work and life. We deeply appreciate the contribution and support of SEM, and especially that of yours in making this possible. Our stay at SEM was peaceful, productive, and helped us experience joys and adjustment of community living. The SEM staff was most supportive and helped us adjust to its serene environment. We also feel highly indebted and grateful to you for sharing your thoughts and experiences with our team.

We felt blessed after the interaction with you and think that it was the highlight of our Learning journey. Our team felt assured and comfortable after the session; particularly the path on which we have embarked, to create meaning and justice in this world, seems challenging but less difficult to travel. We are of course thankful to Chee and Nye for having introduced us to you. They are wonderful friends and have played a big role in making our learning journey to Thailand so vibrant and meaningful.

We take this opportunity to thank you and friends at SEM for your generosity, kindness and warmth which we experienced during our stay at SEM. We think we have found a genuine friend in you. At the same time, we also ask for your forgiveness for surely some mistakes might have occurred during our stay.

We hope you are well and we pray for your good health, and also take this opportunity to invite you and your colleagues to Abhivyakti, Nashik. Please try and visit us sometimes.

Yours Cheerfully,  
Abhivyakti Parivaar.

Dear Mr Sulak Sivaraksa,

I did carefully read some of your different writings. And I 100% agree with you. In fact, I think the same since a long time ago. Buddha Dharma has two sides and I refuse to separate the world and the spiritual. Mahatma Gandhi is for me another example in the same direction. But if I say I am leftist, it would be misunderstood because I am not for proletarian dictatorship or against religions. Cooperation, self-management, mutual respect, culture and knowledge are the best ways to help all mankind and each member of it. And it is also the first step to preserve Earth. I am ready to help your noble cause, but what should I do, I don't know anybody in France involved so strongly.

Jean Luc

Respected and Hon. Ajhan Sulak Sivaraksa,  
Greetings from ADECOM Network!

I had the great opportunity to meet you all in International Network of Engaged Buddhists Conference (INEB) from 9<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Oct., 2005. It is a great pleasure to talk with you and share my ideas to you on our activities on empowerment of dalits, women and children.

Personally I would like to share my greetings to you all because I had the great opportunity to express my views and learned many things (at INEB). My first experience to participate in this conference on transcending barriers, Dr. Ambedkar and the Buddhist World, Buddhism and Social Equality strengthened my inner capacity. I really learned many things from this conference and exchanged my views with various groups, individuals participating from different places.

I observed that there are many possibilities to eradicate the caste system and to empower Dalits in India, and oppressed peoples in other Asian countries. In our Dalit network activities we have to create

new strategies to educate the community people to live with harmony and peace. Hope that the collective way of sharing and exchange will build strong approaches in our life to reach our mission for liberating Dalits, women and children to access human rights for all.

I talked with you for a few minutes and you mentioned to me the possibility to meet in our place in Pondicherry in the month of Dec. I am very much pleased to receive you in our place. I visited the website details and got much information on your actions in Thailand and other places. We are very interested to know about your experiences and to initiate the process of Dhamma and Buddhism in the Southern part of India. Hope that you will plan to visit our organization to strengthen our activities in the near future.

Hope that we will keep in regular contact and exchange our views for the development of the Oppressed Communities.

Herewith I enclosed some photos for you.

Thanking you,

In Solidarity,

PLALIDA

ADECOM Network.

## The German Translation of Powers-that-be: Pridi Banomyong through the Rise and Fall of Thai Democracy translated by Tilo Wieser

Published by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, Bangkok, October 2005

It was back in 1983—the year of Pridi Banomyong's death—when Sulak Sivaraksa's essay "Pridi Banomyong whom I knew" was first published in Thai. Over twenty years have passed, and editions of this very essay in a handful of languages have appeared, with the German edition being the most recent one. Meticulously translated to German by Tilo Wieser, the essay chronicles Sulak's initial negative predisposition towards Pridi in Sulak's formative years and, later on, his change of heart towards the Senior Statesman. This could be considered as a milestone in the intellectual development of Sulak himself, as Sulak's ability not merely to accept his faults but to devote himself to right what was



wronged has long been much admired by friends and critics alike.

Much has already been written on the original essay including its many incarnations in various languages, so perhaps some words of mention should be put in context of this German edition. One may ask what good would a Siamese intellectual's account of a Siamese Senior Statesman do for a German readership?

In the preface of the work, the late Michael Baumann—a key figure in the German civil

society movement—draws striking parallels between postwar Siam and the Germany during the interwar years, the fledgling democracy of the so-called *Weimarer Republik*.

In the immediate years following World War Two, even though democracy was restored in Siam, it was very fragile. The collaboration between conservative and progressive forces under the umbrella of Pridi's Free Thai Movement became brittle and eventually fell apart with the sudden death of King Ananda Mahidol in June 1946. Mud-slinging rumours were abound of Pridi's involvement in the case, which had clouded Sulak's and the general public's initial perceptions towards Pridi and led to a general purge of progressive-minded politicians.

In a stunning historical parallel of post-World War One Germany, the progressives which formed the first republican government of the *Weimarer Republik* were wrongly accused of having been responsible for the German defeat of the Great War. These progressives, social-

ists, and Jews were targeted as scapegoats merely because they did not believe in or were not fervent supporters of the nationalist cause. These malicious rumours and conspiracy theories came to be known in German history as the "*Dolchstoß legende*" or the "stab-in-the-back legend" because they were considered to have stabbed the country from behind.

It is not surprising that the conspiracy theories in both countries were embraced without question by the polarised and emotionally volatile public. For Siam, the myths surrounding the regicide would culminate in the successful coup of November 1947, which Sulak regards as the watershed event of the downfall

of democracy. For Germany, the legend took hold among the public which was much hurt by the country succumbing to the Versailles powers (which incidentally, also included a small country named Siam). These sentiments eventually paved the way for the rise of the National Socialist regime in 1933.

Unfortunately, parallels of the German *Dolchstoßlegende* and Siamese history did not end there. Merely twenty years after the regicide myth, it was not Pridi, but Sulak himself who was among the many intellectuals of the country stigmatized as "communists" during the ideological clashes of the day. Virtually anyone who did not proclaim himself as a zealous nationalist

was branded as being "red" and whose actions were tantamount to treason. History has repeated itself, the virulence of these conspiracy theories ended with 6 October 1976, the bloodiest and darkest day of democracy in Siam.

The Germans have learned their history the hard way through the painful experience of the war and are bound not to repeat the same mistakes. Siam, however, is a country suffering from chronic historical amnesia—be it intentionally or not—and one could only hope that for this country, such fabricated legends would remain a thing of the past.

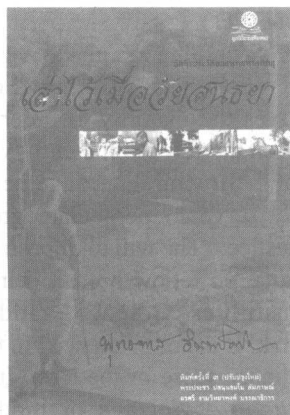
P. Kanithasen

### Lao Wai Mua Wai Sonthaya (Telling it in the Twilight Years)—An Autobiography of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu

Interviews by Phra Pracha Pasanthammo. Edited by Orasri Ngarmwittayaphongse. Komol Kheemthong Foundation, Bangkok (3rd edition)

An enriching read for both historical and spiritual reasons, *Lao Wai* retells the life's work of one of the most remarkable figures in modern-day Thailand—the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, founder of Suan Mokkh Forest Monastery.

A prolific writer, Buddhadasa was initially against the idea of talking about himself. However, after repeated requests by his then-disciple Phra Pracha Pasanthammo, the revered monk consented to a series of interviews in which he revealed details about his early life, how he turned his back on the main-



stream Buddhist establishment, his subsequent founding of Suan Mokkh in Chaiya, Surat Thani, and his continuous research into different religious faiths and inner spiritual development.

The conversation is delightfully peppered by chuckles and laughter from Buddhadasa. (He mentions a fellow monk whose "lungs were never put to exercise through laughing".) Another interesting point, one that Buddhadasa repeats several times,

is his view that all that transpired in his life was simply the result of a "fluke", "accident" or "coincidence". The modesty of the man is obvious—and *Lao Wai* is especially touching because it brings out that quality. Buddhadasa recalls how scores of villagers pooled their labour and resources to build Suan Mokkh, an exemplary temple run by and for the people.

Since the centenary of Buddhadasa's birth falls in 2006, this might be an opportune time to read *Lao Wai*, get a bit closer to the thoughts of this highly respected monk and learn how he strived throughout his life to be a servant of the Buddha. We may even come to agree with something he once said, that "indeed, Buddhadasa has never died ... nor ever will".

Vasana Chinvarakorn  
Bangkok Post,  
December 24, 2005

## Socially Engaged Buddhism

By Sulak Sivaraksa

431 pages

B.R. Publishing Corporation

Delhi 2005

(Available at Suksit Siam

Bookshop: tel; 02-222-5698)

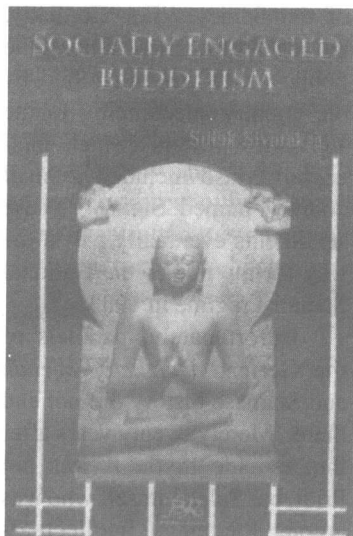
Sulak has been nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize. However, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2005 went to Mohamed El Baradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It is highly likely that Sulak will be nominated again for the Nobel Peace Prize next year. Sulak has already received the Right Livelihood Award and the Gandhi Millennium Award.

The timely publication of Sulak's new book, during the third quarter of 2005, titled *Socially Engaged Buddhism*, underscores his lifelong commitment to the cause of Peace and Non-Violence. *Socially Engaged Buddhism*, is a collection of essays, speeches, newspaper articles and obituaries written by Sulak over a span of twenty years.

The reader may expect to find, in the collection, many of Sulak's classic essays as well as, some of his most current writings. "What unites this diverse collection of my writings, which almost span a generation, has been my apparent unwavering preoccupation with the issues of peace and non-violence," said Sulak.

The book is also a fitting reminder that Sulak is the founder of *The International Network of Engaged Buddhists* and more than a dozen other international organizations.

In the first half of the book (Part I and Part II), Sulak addresses issues of war, peace, violence and Buddhism from a



global standpoint and offers a Buddhist critique of the world economic system. The engaged Buddhist critique of mainstream development paradigms and globalization employs the neo-Marxist concept of *structural violence*.

According to Sulak, "A global economic system which starves the majority in order to enrich the few is inherently violent." Structural arrangements may serve to perpetuate great injustice. "The will to impose injustice on fellow human beings constitutes violence," added Sulak. It is not "violence" in the ordinary sense of the term. It is *structural violence* or hidden violence.

Sulak's criticism of globalization and the international economic system is not without irony. Despite his celebration of sustainable development and ecological self-sufficiency he himself has become an epitome of global man.

He is one of the world's leading jet setters, known at airports around the world. Sulak is at the cutting edge of the new global citizenry and nominated for the world's Nobel Peace

Prize. In some ways he is the human counterpart of the Multinational Corporation (MNC) that he bitterly criticizes.

Speaking as global man, he offers a Buddhist response to the prevailing paradigms of development, globalization and modernization and suggests Buddhist inspired values that should inform an alternative politics and economics. His advocacy for peace and sustainable development reflect a global earth standpoint.

What is good for Sulak as global man is nothing less than what is good for planet earth as a whole. Buddhism, religion, politics and economics must all contribute to the making of a better world and save the earth from the relentless march of folly.

But Sulak is not only a global man. He is also, a Thai Buddhist intellectual. As a Thai, his concept of Buddhism is inevitably intertwined with the idea of "Thai-ness." In the second half of the book (Part III), Sulak discusses the concept of "Thai-ness" and Thai identity. Here Sulak demonstrates his prowess as a historian and biographer as he discusses the meaning of Thai identity through the lives of prominent Siamese personages.

I personally regard Part III as the most interesting part of the book. In fact, the book is not simply an interpretation of *Engaged Buddhism*. It is also a re-interpretation of Siamese history and what it means to be a Buddhist nation. "If I have to put it in a nutshell, I would say that it is about creating a Buddhist culture of peace," said the venerable 72 year old founder-leader of the *Movement of Engaged Buddhism* in Thailand.

As a Buddhist intellectual Sulak ranks with the Dalai Lama,



Thich Nhat Hanh and Samdong Rinpoche, the Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in exile. They are not only profound exponents of Buddhist philosophy. They are also popularizers of

Buddhism.

Like the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak's legacy is that his writings, including his ideas on engaged Buddhism, go a long way towards creating inter-

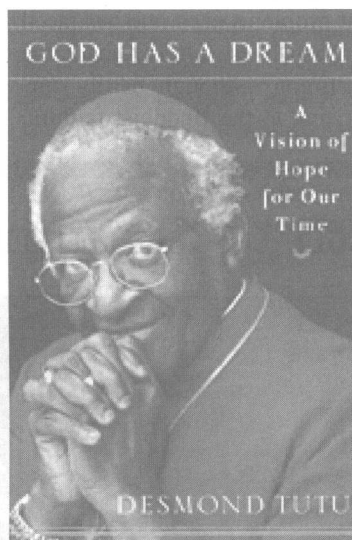
national awareness and understanding about the relevance of Buddhism in a world threatened by terrorism.

Jeffery Sng  
11/7/05

### God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for our Time

By Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams, Image Books, 2004

It might seem a little strange that two of the four endorsements on the back cover of a religious book by one of the great Christian leaders of our time should come from Buddhists. But one does not have to read far into "God Has a Dream" to fully understand why H.H. the Dalai Lama and Jack Kornfield should both warmly recommend this book. The basic truths of both Christianity and Buddhism have seldom been put in such clear language and with such a direct personal challenge as Archbishop Tutu has managed to do. The photo of this small but heroic figure on the cover shows him with his big nose (to which he refers several times in his book) and mischievous twinkle in his



eyes. His sense of humor keeps popping up in his book, which no doubt endeared him to both the Dalai Lama and Jack Kornfield, since both of them share this puckish sense of humor with the Archbishop.

Tutu draws on his personal experiences as a man under constant threat during the apartheid

era and also from his African culture. He often mentions the Nguni word *ubuntu*, which indicated the sense of our common humanity, which readers of Thich Nhat Hanh's books will identify as being virtually identical to "interbeing."

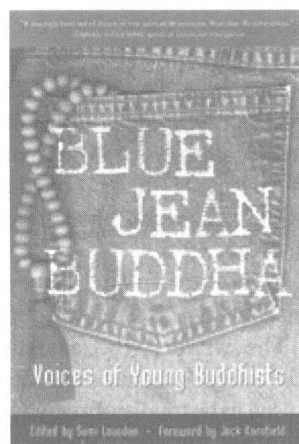
This is a book by a man without pretensions but with great wisdom. I read it aloud to my wife as part of our morning meditation over a period of several days. Often as I reached the end of a chapter, we would stay silent for some time, the only comment coming to mind was, "Wow!" Seldom had we seen or heard great spiritual truths articulated with such clarity. Written with gentleness and humor, yet extremely challenging, this book has as much to say to any aspiring Bodhisattva as it does to a committed Christian.

Ian Mayo-Smith

### Blue Jean Buddha: Voices of Young Buddhists

edited by Sumi Loundon, with foreword by Jack Kornfield, (Shambala)

What will happen to Buddhism in America after the current leadership of all the various traditions, mostly now past middle age, are gone? An excellent indication to the answer to this question is provided by *Blue Jean Buddha*, a collection in



which the editor, Sumi Loundon, now at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Massachusetts, has collected accounts from 28 young Buddhists whose ages ranged at the time of writing from 20 to 33. The contributors come from just about every Buddhist tradition and widely varying backgrounds. Some have Buddhist parents; some are still full time students; others are in full time employment. A few are ordained, a few are monastics but

the majority are lay Buddhists. They have diverse and refreshing stories to tell about their experiences, their insights and their reasons for becoming Buddhist practitioners.

To me, an elderly Western Buddhist who did not encounter Buddhism until the latter half of life, the stories taken together are inspiring and hold out great hope for the continued transmission of the truths of the Buddha's teach-

ings in the USA and by extension to the whole of the western world for the foreseeable future. Each of the contributors to this book had discovered the relevance of Buddhist dhamma to twenty-first century life in the United States. Given the difference in their backgrounds and of the particular problems each one has faced in their lives, this is remarkable testimony—though hardly surprising to the Buddhist faithful.

The book obviously has much to say to people in their twenties and thirties but it also had much to say to this reviewer, so it seems fair to say that it will have much to say to spiritual seekers of all ages. For a refreshing new perspective on Buddhism and its future in the West this book is to be warmly recommended.

Ian Mayo-Smith

## Path to dhamma

Thailand's bookstores boast hundreds of books on Buddhism, many of them penned by monks. While fascinating reads, they all too often provide overly complicated explanations of the Lord Buddha's teachings.

Others, such as the Dalai Lama's popular works, offer the reader a more realistic approach to dealing with everyday problems.

None, however, address *dhamma* in quite the light-hearted way as Phra Paisarn Visalo does in his just published books "Path of Life" (*Maka Hegn Cheewit*) and "Before Sunset" (*Gon Atit Asadong*).

Phra Paisarn believes that while more Thais are practising Buddhism than ever before, most are actually ignoring the religion. Today's society, he says, is ruled by worldly goods.

"We are consumed by *kilesa* [desire]. We want and we take. We are not interested in doing anything that goes against the current of consumerism."

So, the 48-year-old monk has decided to fight the war of materialism by quietly revolutionising Buddhism with his simple and easy-to-understand stories that



make the point without preaching.

In "Path of Life" he tells the story of a princess who marries a criminal to save him from prosecution only to be robbed of all her riches and threatened with death.

It's a tale with which Anothai Ciensathwong can easily identify.

The writer, who assisted Phra Paisarn with the books, says she used to be totally obsessed by wealth but turned to Buddhism

after going through a major crisis in her life.

"I made millions every month selling marbles. It was a very competitive environment and after a while I no longer wanted to live.

"Then a friend took me to a *vipassana* [insight] meditation session, and I started to grasp the concept of Buddhism, which simply tells you to let go of all your desire."

A former Catholic, Anothai

is now a committed Buddhist but says there are no major differences between the two faiths.

"All religions teach you to be a good person. The main distinction of Buddhism is that it talks about being free from all suffering."

Today, she makes a modest income from writing about *dhamma* and leads a happy and fulfilling life.

Actress and former Miss Thailand runner-up Surankana Soontonpanavate has also found a new life thanks to *dhamma*.

"I was deeply caught up in the *maya* [illusion] of the entertainment business and could no longer see reality. When I became famous, people catered to my every whim. They all knew what was best for me. I was a heavy smoker and partied all the time. It reached the stage when I had visions of myself on my deathbed. A friend led me to Buddhism.

Phra Paisarn, who has talked to several troubled souls, says friendship offers the best way out of suffering.

"The reason most people try to commit suicide is because they don't have true friends. Most people today have more acquaintances than actual friends. No one really wants to listen so they keep it all inside. Without friends life can seem pointless."

Friends also bring happiness and happiness, stresses the monk, acts as a magnet for modern people to bring Buddhism into their lives.

He doesn't accept the argument that because Buddhism has no theology as such it cannot be practised in the same way as other faiths.

"That's not true. With Buddhism you have to practise it with body, words and soul. The problem is that there's no push to make people practise the religion. There is no control or persuasion within society or the community [social sanction] to pressure people. Buddhism is weak in this point."

And although practising Buddhism does not guarantee happiness, Phra Paisarn says both monks and lay people have gained enlightenment in the form of being calm and peaceful without wanting anything more but to be beneficial to society.

Anothai says that she's nowhere near enlightenment, but she believes she can control

herself in most situations.

"The happiness I experienced in the days when I had lots of money and the feelings I have now are very different. With money I was always competitive, but now that all the money is gone, I am happy. I feel like there's a light inside me. It's like being born again."

Phra Paisarn says there's a distinct difference between happiness and having fun.

"When you're happy, you escape from all worldly desires. You see the sky and stars, the sun rising. It's not fun but it makes your soul calm. If the soul can see that, it's closer to *dhamma* [and hence closer to achieving happiness]."

Yet, in today's world there are still many people who prefer to have fun consuming rather than finding true peace and happiness.

Phra Paisarn has a message for them.

"You can fear *dhamma*, but don't fear suffering."

Lisnaree Vichitsorasatra

*The Nation*

November 3, 2005

## Conflict, Culture, Change

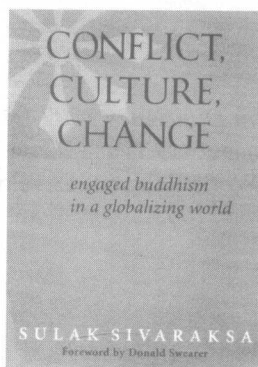
Sulak Sivaraska  
Wisdom Publications,  
USA, 2005, £8.00

This is a collection of sixteen essays on the application of Buddhist principles to the social, political and environmental issues of our time.

Sivaraska, a former Thai monk, BBC commentator, prolific writer and ardent advocate of nonviolent activism, is direct and uncompromising in his criticism of contemporary capitalism

and imperialism.

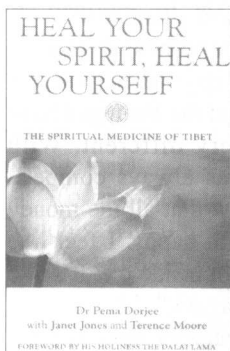
His focus, however, is not on vilifying the people/institutions based on these 'isms' but on



understanding them and using skilful means, nonviolence and compassion to bring their rule of power to an end. As he points out, "Overcoming dualistic thinking that sees the world as good or evil, friend or foe, is the basis of non-violence, and non-violence is the basis of peace."

I particularly liked his explication of the differences between peacemaking, peace-building and peace-keeping. It shows that there are peace-related tasks for everyone, not just the UN.

*Resurgence* Sep/Oct 2005



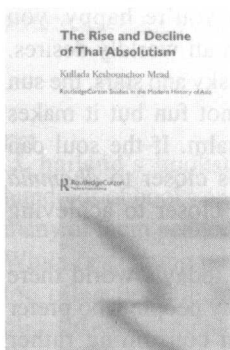
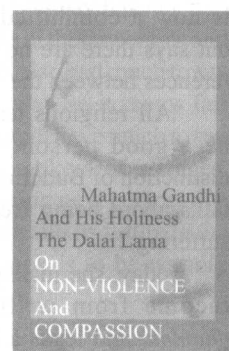
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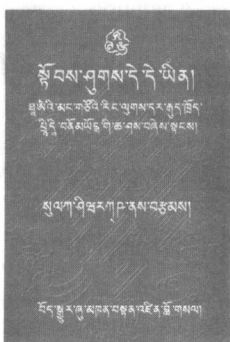
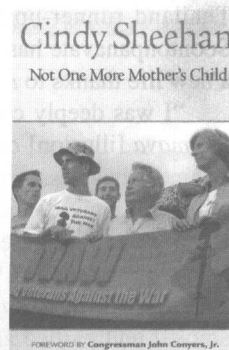
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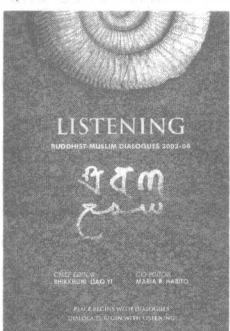
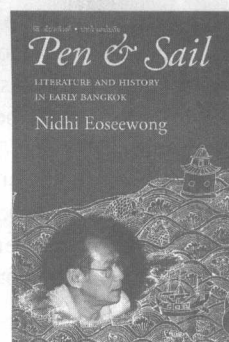
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