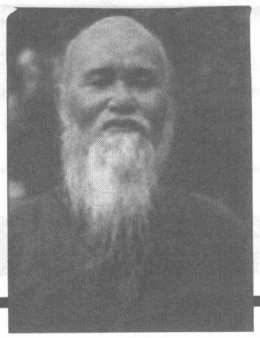
SEEDS OF PEACE

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75th Year of Thai Democracy!
Is Buddhist Democracy Possible?



SEEDS OF

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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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6 November 2006

RE: Dropping the charge of lese majeste against Sulak Sivaraksa at the level of inquiry officials

Dear Prime Minister,

Concerning the case of Sulak Sivaraksa, who is charged with lese majeste pertaining to his interview published in the magazine *Fah Diew Kan*, Bangsue Police Station's inquiry officials, headed by deputy police chief Pol. Gen. Priewphan Damaphong, are in the process of further inquiring the alleged offender's witnesses.

As the accused, I want to point out that the witnesses' statements expressed during the inquiry process may impact every side and that the charge of lese majeste has been abused to reap political ends. Concerning the latter point, I faced the charge of lese majeste in August 2006 because I had criticized the administration of the Thaksin Shinawatra government. My interview in *Fah Diew Kan* was published since October 2005, and this issue of the magazine had been in circulation for a considerable time. The interview was also translated into the foreign languages, and likewise was circulated in intellectual circles worldwide. I affirm that the views I expressed there concerning the monarchy are academic and sincere. I wanted to protect the monarchy from being exploited as a political tool by numerous groups, and wanted to point out the threats (symbolic as well as concrete) undermining the monarchy. For this I was accused of lese majeste. The complainant did not carefully examine the whole interview, for it is clear that if the interview was fully read my intention to academically analyze the facts in order to protect the monarchy could not have been missed. Most importantly, in the royal speech delivered on 4 December 2005 H.M. the King expresses his desire to terminate the charge of lese majeste. In one part of the royal speech, the king states :

> If the king is violated, the king himself is in trouble....in trouble in many ways. One, foreigners say in Thailand one can't criticize the king, that if they can't criticize and go to jail. There are some who go to jail, which troubles the king, who must say, after the jailing, to forgive them for insulting me severely. *Farangs* say in Thailand, when the king gets insulted, [the offender] must go to jail.
>
> Indeed, they should go to jail. But because the *farangs* say so, [we] won't let them go to jail. Nobody dares put the guy who insults the king in jail, because the king is troubled. They say the king is a bad person, or at least easily excitable. When someone criticizes [him] a little, [he] says to put them in jail. In fact, the king's never said to put them in jail. In previous reigns, rebels were not even jailed...not punished. King Rama VI did not punish, did not punish the rebels. In the Ninth Reign, rebels...are treated in the same way...not put to jail. [They are] released or are first imprisoned but then released.

Seen in its entirety, the royal speech shows that the king does not want to institute actions against those charged with lese majeste. In my case, since Pol. Gen. Priewphan Damaphong, the head of the inquiry panel, is a relative of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra the dice is already loaded. Moreover, in the eyes of the international community, the reputation of the kingdom in terms of human rights will be severely impacted because the case was instituted under the former government, which greatly limited academic freedom or the freedom of expression in general. International human rights

(continue to p.17)

Editorial Notes

The 24th of June 2007 will mark the 75th anniversary of Thai democracy. Unfortunately, the country has been ruled more under dictatorship despite being called a democracy. The last coup on 19th September 2006 should be a clear sign of backwardness, despite the fact that it got rid of the worst Prime Minister ever in the last 74 years. Let us hope that by the time our democracy reaches its centenary in 25 years, we may really be democratic in essence as well as in form. (see p.43)

Dr. Pimro Ambedkar was in fact the first to state that the Buddhist Sangha was the first democracy established in the world over 2500 years ago. Dr. Ambedkar was also mainly responsible for the drafting of the Indian Constitution since its independence in 1948 and India remains the oldest democratic country in Asia, despite some dictatorial interruption by Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

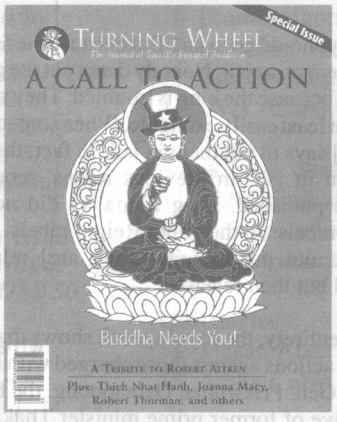
If we Thais learn from our Asian neighbours more than blindly following the western model, we may even see that in India, the Tibetan Government-in-exile is also experimenting with a kind of Buddhist democracy, while the Kingdom of Bhutan is leading the way on Gross National Happiness instead of Gross National Product.

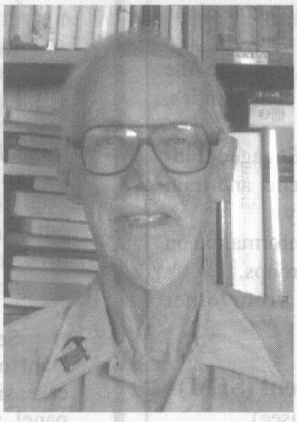
Our Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation will have the honour to host the Third International GNH Conference with the Royal Government of Bhutan towards the end of this year.

As for our publisher, Sulak Sivaraksa, despite his letter to the present prime minister (see page 3) and the cordial response of the P.M's office, the case of lese majeste against him is still proceeding. The police even wanted to charge him again on a similar case. The police have tried to stir the legal case from our first issue of *Seeds of Peace* for the year 2005. If the charge is ever made, it will be the first time that the Thai Police Authority gets itself muddled in an English publication and they had started the process a day before the last coup, which means that it was instigated by Thaksin Shinawatra, the then acting Prime Minister. Yet the new administration has not stopped the charge. Mr Sulak has now become our editor and publisher to take the sole legal responsibility of our publication.

Being a socially engaged Buddhist, one must learn to be patient with compassion. Indeed, our sister publication, *Turning Wheel*, has now produced the double issue in honour of Robert Aitken Roshi, who calls for an engaged Buddhist response to our current planetary crisis.

This is very encouraging for an octagenarian master of Zen meditation to lead the way for us. We should all follow his leadership for peace and social justice.





This year will not only mark the 75th anniversary of Thai democracy, but it will also be the good occasion for the next INEB international conference in Taiwan. Hopefully, we will celebrate dhammic democracy in meaningful ways.

TIBET

Seeking Unity Through Equality: The Current Status of Discussions Between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Government of the People's Republic of China

The Dalai Lama is widely recognized and admired for his honesty and integrity. He has been pragmatic and flexible in wanting to negotiate with the leadership in Beijing on the kind of status Tibet should enjoy in the future and has held steadfast to his commitment to non-violence and dialogue as the only logical means of resolving the issue of Tibet.

Every Tibetan, including communist cadres as well as independence advocates, reveres His Holiness. It is a reality today that in spite of their tremendous suffering resulting from some of China's policies, the Tibetans have not resorted to non-peaceful means to respond to this injustice. This is largely because of the unwavering insistence on peace and reconciliation by the Dalai Lama and the hope he provides to his people.

Some detractors in the Chinese Government seem to believe that the aspirations of the Tibetan people will fizzle out once the Dalai Lama passes away. This is a most dangerous and myopic approach. Certainly, the absence of the Dalai Lama would be devastating for the Tibetan people. But more importantly his absence would mean that China would be left to handle the problem without the presence of a leader who enjoys the loyalty of the entire community and who remains firmly committed to non-violence. It is certain that the Tibetan position would become more intractable in his absence, and that having had their beloved leader pass away in exile would create deep and irreparable wounds in the hearts of the Tibetan people.

In the absence of the Dalai Lama, there is no way that the entire population would be able to contain their resentment and anger. And it only takes a few desperate individuals or groups to create major instability. This is not a threat, but a statement of fact.

The Dalai Lama's world view, his special bond with the Tibetan people and the respect he enjoys in the international community all make the person of the Dalai Lama key both to achieving a negotiated solution to the Tibetan issue and to peacefully implementing any agreement that is reached. This is why we have consistently conveyed to our Chinese counterparts that far from being the problem, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the solution.

Providing genuine autonomy to the Tibetan people is in China's interest as it makes efforts to create a peaceful, stable and harmonious society. But resolving the Tibetan issue is also important to the international community, particularly to our region. The historically volatile Central Asian region has revived and has already become an area of conflict. Here Tibet can play a stabilizing role, which is important to the countries in the region such as India, China, and Russia, as well as to the United States and other countries. Tibet, which for centuries played the vital role as a buffer in the region, can help create a more cohesive and stable region by serving as a valuable bridge. A number of political observers from the region also acknowledge that resolving the Tibetan issue is an important factor in the normalization of Sino-Indian relations. Understanding the great mutual benefit for all concerned, His Holiness has consistently supported closer Sino-Indian relations.

There is also an increased awareness of the vital importance of the Tibetan plateau from the environmental perspective. Just on the issue of water alone, it is an undeniable fact that over the next few decades water may become as scarce a commodity as oil. Tibet is literally the life-source of the region, serving as the source of most of Asia's major rivers. Therefore, protecting Tibet's fragile environment should be accorded the highest priority.

To date, the Chinese authorities have resorted to political and military pressure, and intimidation to stifle the Tibetan people. This is clearly demonstrated by some of the recent actions by the top Party leader in the Tibet Autonomous Region as well as the persistent attempt to deny the

Tibetan people of their religious freedom and other human rights. These actions cannot only harm the sincere efforts by both sides for a mutually beneficial reconciliation, but also create embarrassment and difficulty to the Chinese leadership; they will do substantial damage to China's efforts to be a peaceful and responsible power internationally and the creation of a harmonious society at home.

As my colleague, Envoy Kelsang Gyaltsen, and I have conveyed to our Chinese counterparts during our meetings, the task before us is not impossible. The seemingly insurmountable gaps between us can be diminished through honest discourse and hard work. With His Holiness' unambiguous commitment to the integrity and sovereignty of the People's Republic of China, China's leaders must recognize the aspirations of the Tibetans to survive as a distinct people, a commitment that is already enshrined in China's laws.

We have no illusion that coming to a negotiated solution will be easy. Having identified each others' position and differences, it is now our sincere hope that both sides can start making serious efforts to find a common ground and to build trust. In furtherance of this goal His Holiness has made the offer to go personally to China on a pilgrimage. This has met with considerable opposition from Tibetans, both inside and outside Tibet, as well as from friends in the international community who are not convinced of China's sincerity. But His Holiness is committed to doing everything he can to dispel the climate of mistrust that continues to exist.

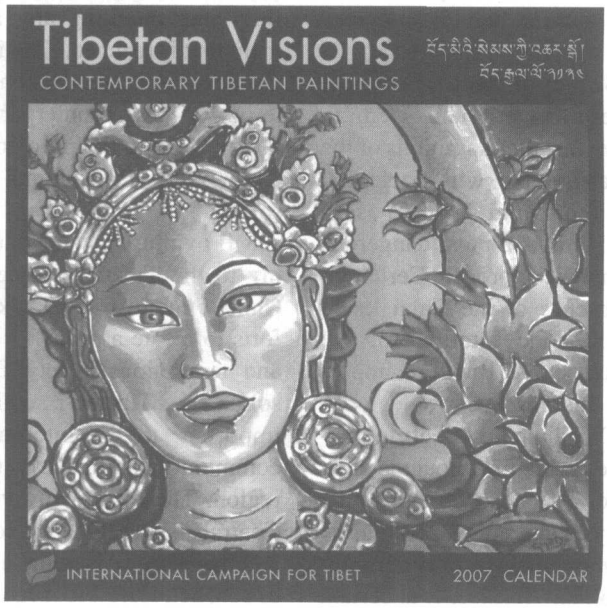
We fully support China's effort to create a harmonious society as well as its aspirations for a peaceful rise. After all, its successful, peaceful rise will depend on internal harmony and stability, which can hardly be achieved without the Tibetan issue being resolved. The People's Republic of China is a multi-ethnic nation state whose internal diversity is a reality. It is based on this reality that a harmonious society needs to be created. And in looking forward to finding a solution for Tibet, it is in China's best interest to have the Tibetan people accept their place within the People's Republic of China of their own free will.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people are deeply grateful for the outpouring of interest and support from the international community. It is an invaluable source of inspiration. At the same time, we are fully aware that ultimately the issue needs to be resolved directly between the Tibetans and Chinese. It is my sincere hope that the day will come soon when His Holiness the Dalai Lama can come to you with his usual humble, Buddhist gesture of folded hands to thank you, instead of seeking your help.

I also want to share with you that my delegation has received the warmest hospitality and the highest courtesy from every level of the Chinese government during our visits. Similarly, the personal conduct of our counterparts has been exemplary.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has a vision of the Tibetans being able to live in harmony within the People's Republic of China. Today's China was born out of an historical movement for the people's self-determination and the Constitution asserts that it is based on principles of equality. Let us build our relations on this equality and give the Tibetan people the dignity to freely and willingly be a part of this nation. We cannot re-write history, but together we can determine the future.

Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari
Special Envoy of
H.H. the Dalai Lama
14 November 2006



BANGLADESH
Microcredit, Macro Issues

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus, regarded as the father of microcredit, comes at a time when microcredit has become something like a religion to many of the powerful, rich and famous. Hillary Clinton regularly speaks about going to Bangladesh, Yunus's homeland, and being "inspired by the power of these loans to enable even the poorest of women to start businesses, lifting their families —and their communities—out of poverty."

Like the liberal Clinton, the neocon Paul Wolfowitz, now president of the World Bank, has also gotten religion, after a recent trip to the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. With the fervor of the convert, he talks about the "transforming power" of microfinance: "I thought maybe this was just one successful project in one village, but then I went to the next village and it was the same story. That evening, I met with more than a hundred women leaders from self-help groups, and I realized this program was opening opportunities for poor women and their families in an entire state of 75 million people."

There is no doubt that Yunus, a Bangladeshi economist, came up with a winning idea that has transformed the lives of many millions of poor women, and perhaps for that alone, he deserves the Nobel Prize. But Yunus—at least the young Yunus, who did not have the support of global institutions when he started out—did not see his Grameen Bank as a panacea. Others, like the World Bank and the United Nations, elevated it to that status (and, some say, convinced Yunus it was a panacea), and microcredit is now presented as a relatively painless approach to development. Through its dynamics of collective responsibility for repayment by a group of women borrowers, microcredit has indeed allowed many poor women to roll back pervasive poverty. However, it is mainly the moderately poor rather than the very poor who benefit, and not very many can claim they have permanently left the instability of poverty. Likewise, not many would claim that the degree of self-sufficiency and the ability to send children to school afforded by microcredit are indicators of their graduating to middle-class prosperity. As economic journalist Gina Neff notes, "after 8 years of borrowing, 55% of Grameen households still aren't able to meet their basic nutritional needs—so many women are using their loans to buy food rather than invest in business."

Indeed, one of those who have thoroughly studied the phenomenon, Thomas Dichter, says that the idea that microfinance allows its recipients to graduate from poverty to entrepreneurship is inflated. He sketches out the dynamics of microcredit: "It emerges that the clients with the most experience got started using their own resources, and though they have not progressed very far—they cannot because the market is just too limited—they have enough turnover to keep buying and selling, and probably would have with or without the microcredit. For them the loans are often diverted to consumption since they can use the relatively large lump sum of the loan, a luxury they do not come by in their daily turnover." He concludes: "Definitely, microcredit has not done what the majority of microcredit enthusiasts claim it can do—function as capital aimed at increasing the returns to a business activity."

And so the great microcredit paradox that, as Dichter puts it, "the poorest people can do little productive with the credit, and the ones who can do the most with it are those who don't really need microcredit, but larger amounts with different (often longer) credit terms."

In other words, microcredit is a great tool as a survival strategy, but it is not the key to development, which involves not only massive capital-intensive, state-directed investments to build industries but also an assault on the structures of inequality such as concentrated land ownership that systematically deprive the poor of resources to escape poverty. Microcredit schemes end up coexisting with these entrenched structures, serving as a safety net for people excluded and marginalized by them, but not transforming them. No, Paul Wolfowitz, microcredit is not the key to ending poverty among the 75 million people in Andhra Pradesh. Dream on.

Perhaps one of the reasons there is such enthusiasm for microcredit in establishment

circles these days is that it is a market-based mechanism that has enjoyed some success where other market-based programs have crashed. Structural-adjustment programs promoting trade liberalization, deregulation and privatization have brought greater poverty and inequality to most parts of the developing world over the last quarter century, and have made economic stagnation a permanent condition. Many of the same institutions that pushed and are continuing to push these failed macro programs (sometimes under new labels like "Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers"), like the World Bank, are often the same institutions pushing microcredit programs. Viewed broadly, microcredit can be seen as the safety net for millions of people destabilized by the large-scale macro-failures engendered by structural adjustment. There have been gains in poverty reduction in a few places—like China, where, contrary to the myth, state-directed macro policies, not microcredit, have been central to lifting an estimated 120 million Chinese from poverty.

So probably the best way we can honor Muhammad Yunus is to say, Yes, he deserves the Nobel Prize for helping so many women cope with poverty. His boosters discredit this great honor and engage in hyperbole when they claim he has invented a new compassionate form of capitalism—social capitalism, or "social entrepreneurship"—that will be the magic bullet to end poverty and promote development.

Walden Bello,
October 21, 2006

SIAM

Thailand's Thaksin Had Clashed With King

BANGKOK, Thailand—For many in Thailand, it was a clash between two images: an arrogant prime minister who hates to lose, and a humble king who always wins.

Simply by endorsing the general who has seized power, revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej has essentially given his blessing to the bloodless Tuesday night coup that ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The 78-year-old monarch has shown that despite age, frailty and constitutional powerlessness, he remains the most powerful man in Thailand.

The coup is also a response to the Islamic insurgency raging in southern Thailand, and public displeasure with Thaksin's strong-arm tactics. Gen. Sondhi Boonyaratkalin, the army commander who led the coup, had advocated a peaceful solution. As a Muslim, he was long seen as a force for healing whose hands were tied by Thaksin's policies.

It remains unclear what role, if any, the king played in removing Thaksin. What is clear, however, is the chain of events that led to Thaksin's ouster—a series of missteps that prompted accusations he was challenging the king's authority, an unpardonable act by Thai standards.

Thaksin had taken a defiant stance under mounting pressure from street protests and demands for him to resign amid allegations of corruption, election violations and mishandling the southern insurgency.

In April, the king made a rare TV appearance, prodding the courts to intervene to resolve a political deadlock that had left the kingdom with a caretaker government and no working legislature.

The judges duly ruled, paving the way for new elections. But Thaksin angered many by refusing to bow out.

"The anti-Thaksin forces in the top levels of government—and perhaps in the palace—realized that Thaksin could still be prime minister after the new election and there was no way out, and they were fed up," said Paul Handley, author of *The King Never Smiles* a biography that portrays Bhumibol as a major player in Thai political developments over the decades.

Many say the palace was infuriated by Thaksin's apparent attempt to steal the spotlight during the lavish June celebrations of Bhumibol's 60 years on the throne. By greeting visiting royals before they got to meet the Thai royal family, 57-year-old Thaksin was seen as having committed a crowning and highly public act of insolence.

Then there was the insurgency, which has killed more than 1,700 people in the past two years.

Thaksin flooded the south, the only Muslim-dominated area of the Buddhist country, with 20,000 troops and imposed a

state of emergency that empowered authorities to detain suspects without charge, tap telephones, ban public gatherings and suppress publications deemed inflammatory.

Thaksin was also accused of stifling Thai media, once regarded as among the freest in Asia, and of allowing his cronies to reap enormous gains from corrupt policies.

Chief among Thaksin's flaws, in the eyes of the palace and many Thais, was his personality. Critics called him self-centered and arrogant. The tycoon-turned-politician proved to be ambitious, conservative and strong-willed, refusing to correct himself when his policies backfired—particularly regarding the insurgency.

Sondhi, who is thought to be close to the king, said the coup he led was needed to end the political crisis and restore "harmony among the people." He put Thailand under martial law and installed a provisional authority loyal to the king. He pledged elections would be held by October next year.

The coup was denounced by the Bush administration and the European Union as a setback for the thriving democracy that has taken root in a country once prone to violent coups. But the royal statement read on television said the king had appointed Sondhi as head of the provisional council "in order to create peace in the country."

While the palace insists it was not involved in the coup, many political and monarchy experts see another example of the monarch's behind-the-scenes power, which he has exercised sparingly but effectively over six decades.

"If the king didn't give a nod, this never would have been possible," said Sulak Sivaraksa, an author of books on the Thai monarchy.

The king is venerated for his Buddhist principles and his common touch, manifested in decades of tireless face-to-face work among the rural poor. He rarely enters the political arena, but when he does, everyone listens and obeys—something Thaksin was seen as reluctant to do.

"Thaksin failed to realize that the king has been on the throne for 60 years and he's no fool," said Sulak. "The man is old and Thaksin thought he could play around with him—and it was a dangerous game."

Jocelyn Gecker,
Associated Press,
September 20, 2006

SIAM
What the Thai Coup Was Really About

Who gets the kingdom's sceptre when Bhumibol leaves the stage?

It's beginning to sink in now in Bangkok that the September 19 military coup which ousted Thaksin Shinawatra just a few months before elections was not really about corruption or democracy or rule of law. Nor was it, as some have claimed, a "different" (somehow more virtuous) coup.

As with US President George W. Bush and the Iraq invasion, slowly the justifications for the putsch are shedding away, showing that the military's righteous claims of a determination to eliminate corruption and right the constitution are empty: when you have those motivations, you have ideas on how you will go about it.

Even those supposedly shrewd mass media opinion leaders who cheered any action to rid the nation of Thaksin—going so far as to generously print by the score baseless rumors—are now finding fault in their white knights.

The coup was about Thaksin's ambition and misrule, certainly, but what really got General Sonthi Boonyaratklin and his cohorts to move was the issue of succession to the throne. There was a clear meeting of minds between the crown and the military, through King Bhumibol Adulyadej's number one aide Prem Tinsulanonda, that they did not want Thaksin in a position to exert influence on the passing of the Chakri Dynasty mantle to Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn.

Theoretically the mechanism for the handover when King Bhumibol, nearly 79, passes away, is clear and simple. By a long tradition of primogeniture, by the 1924 Palace Law of Succession and by the pattern established in the pile of constitutions crafted, eliminated in army coups and crafted again over six decades, the crown should go in the first place to a

son of the king—and Prince Vajiralongkorn is his only son.

In the absence of a son—and 'absence' can give way to multiple interpretations—it can go to a daughter of the king. Recent constitutions have also allowed that the king can both make his own decision whatever the law, and he can also unilaterally change the 1924 law, with the approval of the privy council. (The post-coup interim constitution doesn't address succession, leaving it, ironically, to "constitutional practice".)

But the Thai monarchy is no different from other monarchies in history: in human hands in a secretive palace and government, all these principles give way to power politics. The first reality of succession is that it will be in the hands of the king's Privy Council. They are empowered to implement the orders the king leaves behind or carry out the succession on legal principles if the king hasn't given instructions.

In fact, there will be no way of knowing whether the privy council does act in this way or makes its own decisions. The legislature will have to sign off on it though, so whatever decisions is made must be firm, convincing and acceptable.

The second reality of succession is that the military has to agree. As they showed again in September, for the 11th time in 60 years, they can decide who runs the country. And so who controls the military can have a big impact on succession.

The third reality is that Prince Vajiralongkorn is widely disliked and feared, while his sister is very popular. That might not matter, since royal sovereigns are not elected. But in the 1980s Princess Sirindhorn was given tenure as a history lecturer in the Chulachomklao Military Academy, the training ground for Thailand's brass, and by now an entire generation of officers has passed through her classes. The bonding that has taken place is well known.

By comparison, the prince, himself a military officer by substantial training, has not developed such relationships. Very possibly, the Thai military leadership is biased in favor of the princess, though with significant elements who for various reasons ally themselves with the prince.

These factors in succession began to come into focus when Thaksin began spending money in the 1990s on the royal family, to the point, as he allegedly boasted in private, that he had at least some of them in his pocket. But they became strikingly clear to the palace and its allies when Thaksin began putting his own men in the top command positions of the military. Amid all the political infighting last year and early this year, the key indicators of what was going on were Thaksin's fight with coup leader General Sonthi on staffing key positions, a battle Thaksin lost—ensuring the coup was successful.

The palace has long used its own proxy generals to maintain sway on the military, and that has been the key role of Privy Council head, General Prem Tinsulanonda, since he was King Bhumibol's hand-picked prime minister in 1980. His first duty on the privy council is to keep the military locked in step with the palace. To that end Prem has recruited a number of his own loyal followers from the military and civilian bureaucracies to back him up on the council. Unsurprisingly, one, General Surayuth Chulanont, was made prime minister after the coup.

With a Thaksin-cleansing operation still going on in the military and bureaucracy, the effect is to make sure the army and the political leadership are lined up behind the privy council and do not pose a threat to whatever Prem and his fellow king's councilors do when King Bhumibol passes.

That doesn't guarantee everything, given the possible divisions between pro-prince and pro-princess factions, or even the potential for a "monarchist" uprising like that of the past year to make demands on the process. That means that it is ultimately up to Princess Sirindhorn to send the right signals if tensions arise at any level.

All that makes this coup no different from nine of the 11 successful putsches of Bhumibol's reign. Aside from the 1951 and 1977 coups—they were against royal power—these coups have always been about ensuring the solidarity and strength of the royal-military alliance in the face of potential challenges, be they pro-democracy students, communist insurgency, or a headstrong elected prime minister.

In each, as this time around, the coup leaders showed no real agenda for sorting out national economic or social problems, no sense of what they wanted the constitution to achieve, no guidance for Thai society going into the future. But in the absence of any such agenda, they point directly to what it was all about.

Paul Handley,
6 November 2006

SIAM
Coup d'etat by 'Invitation'?

The September 19 military coup d'etat in Thailand that ousted caretaker Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra did not come as a complete surprise to many close observers of Thai politics. In fact, many anti-Thaksin protestors would agree with the coup makers, or the Democratic Reform Council (DRC), that it was a military coup by 'invitation'. Witness the sight of many citizens bringing flowers, food, and beverages to the DRC troops surrounding Government House and other strategic areas.

The DRC cited the numerous and sustained calls by many figures and groups in Thai society for the military to act as a political deus ex machina and topple Thaksin, or more specifically "Thaksinocracy." Hence the coup—however swift and bloodless—is democratically illegitimate, but may be ethically justifiable for reasons that will be clearer below.

In his 'personal' letter to US President George W. Bush dated 23 June 2006 Thaksin states, "There has been a threat to democracy in Thailand since early this year," referring to the mass rallies held by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the boycotting of the April 2 national elections by the oppositional political parties. On this view, democracy has been blossoming in Thailand until recently—despite the fact that the executive power has been largely unbridled, checks and balances have been weakened, the workings of independent organizations have been interfered by the government, massive anti-defamation lawsuits have been filed against government critics, media figures who should have known better about the virtues of self-censorship have been silenced; extra-judicial killings have been carried out in the 'war on drugs', emergency power has been used in the South, leading to many unaccountable "disappearances" of local inhabitants, etc. during the past 5-6 years. Thaksin has also been accused of nepotism and cronyism in various state-initiated mega-projects, including the construction of the new Suvarnabhumi Airport. And above all, from the perspective of many urban citizens, Thaksin's adamant refusal to pay taxes in the sales of his Shin Corp to Singapore's Temasek Holdings (a 73.3 billion baht deal) in late January 2006 was the capstone of a corrupt and 'tyrannical' administration. They fear a corrupt leader on the rampage more than an incompetent or inefficient one.

Earlier in the year Thaksin threw down the gauntlet, insisting that he would allow the oppositional parties in Parliament to grill him over the shady Temasek deal provided that there would be no subsequent motion of no confidence. He eventually chickened out and abruptly dissolved Parliament, leading to April 2 nation-wide elections, which the oppositional parties duly boycotted. To him Parliament is not a place of deliberation but merely a rubber stamp. At the same time, PAD's mass rallies in Bangkok, which were held over several months, attracted hundreds of thousands of protestors, demanding for his resignation.

But the Teflon prime minister persisted in office, insisting that all accusations against him or his administration did not stick. His Thai Rak Thai party, as the single major party running in the April elections, won 16 million votes and virtually all the seats in the lower house of Parliament. Roughly ten million voters ticked the "no vote" box on that day to express their dissatisfaction with the election.

The Constitutional Court subsequently annulled the results of the April elections, declaring them illegitimate. And the 3 members of the Election Commission, an independent agency, were later sentenced to four-year imprisonment for their secret maneuverings favoring the TRT in the election.

Thaksin was looking forward to winning in a new round of nation-wide elections that were set for mid-October. This is characteristic of his conception of democracy, which is nothing more than winning elections. Thaksin prefers plebiscitary democracy with its occasional public to a 'deliberative' or radical pluralist democracy with its robust constituencies. During the past 5-6 years, he consistently emphasized the virtue of "calm politics." In the letter to Bush, Thaksin (qua the savior of Thai democracy) poses Dubya with an either/or question: "the country's [Thailand's] political future will be decided through the ballot box or in the street." Why not the ballot box **and** the street? By favoring the ballot

box over the street, Thaksin expresses his hatred and fear of democracy. He wants to eclipse the public or the *demos* by single-mindedly focusing on *cracy*, which doesn't simply mean "government" but also "the force of the greatest number." Thus Thaksinian democracy is really (demo)cracy. Small wonder that he often autistically boasted about winning 19 million votes in the first election and another 16 million votes in the second in order to silence his critics. He believes that having the force of the greatest number in his hand gives him the absolute mandate to rule. In a way, like President Bush, Thaksin is saying "you are either with us or against us." But democracy shuns absolutes, for it values debate, persuasion, and the agonistic respect of political adversaries. In sum, throughout his administration Thaksin tried to put democracy as a form of politics to the backburner and instead foregrounding management. After all he once stated, "A company is a country. A country is a company. They are the same. The management is the same." Under Thaksin the *demos* thus loses its ability to change the world; indeed there's great equality in Thaksinian democracy in the sense that everyone is equally powerless.

A paralyzed Parliament. Unbridled executive power. The mainstream mass media acting as a lapdog but masquerading as a watchdog. Independent agencies that possess independence nor agency. An eclipsed public. These are just some of the nondemocracies in Thai democracy under Thaksin.

In this context, it is not surprising that many Thais 'invited' the coup d'etat, seeing it as a breath of fresh air. While attending the UN General Assembly meeting in New York City, Thaksin tried to preempt the coup (his preemptive strike at his opponents) by declaring the state of emergency—but it was too late. Is it democratic to employ undemocratic means to rejuvenate democracy? The coup will never be democratically legitimate. Whether or not the DRC coup is ethically justifiable depends on the extent it is able to deliver tangible democratic promises and the duration it takes to achieve them. The more the promises are unmet and the farther they recede into the future, the less the coup will be justifiable.

Soravis Jayanama
21 September 2006

SIAM
The September 19 Coup: Legitimacy and Justification

One month has passed since the September 19 coup. Whether one chooses to call it a "coup de grâce" or, in my words, a "coup by invitation" does not legitimize it. It is also not legitimate because it was clinically swift and bloodless. Nor is it legitimate because of the past abuses and nondemocracies of the Thaksin regime, however true they are. But arguing thus does not make me Thaksin's devil's advocate.

On the one hand, this does not mean that the ousted prime minister was democratic (nor was he an innocent political victim), and, on the other hand, that the September 19 coup is completely unjustifiable. Thaksin Shinawatra's hatred of democracy, aside from its plebiscitary form, is all too familiar, and I have dealt with it elsewhere.[1] Here I will focus on the conundrum concerning the legitimacy and justifiability of the military coup.

Legitimacy and justification are not the same. Here I am not trying to be academic, but Hannah Arendt's distinction between power and violence and subsequently between legitimacy and justification is useful. Arendt sees power as a social thing, not a property of an individual: "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert...; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together."[2] Violence, on the other hand, is instrumental; "like all means, it stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues."[3] If power is a social thing, then it "needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy." Here the difference between legitimacy and justification is that the former is a priori—it relies the "initial getting together"—while the latter

is a posteriori—it "relates to an end that lies in the future." Arendt insists, "Violence can be justifiable, but it never will be legitimate. Its justification loses in plausibility the farther its intended end recedes into the future." "No one," she continues, "questions the use of violence in self-defense, because the danger is not only clear but also present, and the end justifying the means is immediate."[4] She also points out that "the loss of power becomes a temptation to substitute violence for power...and that violence itself results in impotence."[5] So violence reveals the powerlessness of power.

Iris Marion Young further develops the Arendtian insight on power and violence. Given that violence may be morally justifiable but never legitimate, Young contends that "each act of violence must be justified on its own, on a case by case basis, not by appeal to similar acts from the past, but by argument about its particular unique circumstances and consequences." She further claims, "While there may be very general moral principles and criteria that can be used in such arguments, no institution or authority can produce a set of rules that morally legitimate acts of violence in advance."[6]

Among other things, the corruption and nondemocracies of the Thaksin regime contributed to the loss of power as 'the group' was no longer able to keep together, as the "initial getting together" was broken. As a form of violence, the military coup d'etat (launched by a political deus ex machina like the army) that followed reflects the powerlessness of power. If it is proven that Thaksin planned to "substitute violence for power" by declaring a state of emergency and strike back at his political opponents (and it surely would be brutal and terrorizing), then the violence of the coup may perhaps be justifiable. More important, the September coup will be justifiable if it is able to deliver its democratic promises in the near future—not simply by citing the unique circumstances that allegedly led to the coup. The promise of democratization may fail, but it may *fail better* than in the previous regime. The coup will be completely unjustifiable if it is transformed into a 'controlled revolution' from above leaving intact the nondemocracies of the previous administration and merely substituting a new equally or more oppressive head for the decapitated one, once again subduing the power of the multitude—*plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose*. Thus some fear that the September coup will repeat the mistakes of the National Peace-Keeping Council in the early 1990s—that we are living in the Long 1990s.

That the coup may be justifiable does not make the coup-makers heroes and saviors. I personally do not identify with them. Rather they must be made accountable to and held responsible for their actions, in particular subsequent ones. At this point, despite some distressing signs such as the nomination of various cabinet positions in the new government, the failure to lift martial law, and the composition of the National Legislative Assembly, attempting to justify the coup is not yet (too optimistic?) redeeming the irredeemable. My simple argument is: In a democracy, all military coups are illegitimate, but some may be more justifiable than others. A corollary is: A legitimately elected government (like Thaksin's) may act in democratically unjustifiable ways. Legitimacy and justification do not form an unbreakable double.

Unlike several observers I don't see the coup as illegitimate *and* unjustifiable because it violently "ripped apart" the 1997 Constitution, which is widely considered to be the best constitution of the kingdom thus far. I think a major problem with this view is that it sees force and law as two completely separate realms. The 1997 Constitution itself was founded on violence. Think of law without law en**forcing** mechanisms. Think of law that has driven families off their lands and sent numerous bodies to prison. Where would the law be without force? We can turn to Walter Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" to realize that violence (what he calls "mythic violence") en-**forces** the law (i.e., law preservation) or founds the law (e.g., the American revolution founded the American constitution). Or we can turn to Jacques Derrida's provocations in his "Force of Law" that law enforcement and law founding are not only contaminated by force but also contaminate one another. Law and force are not diametrical opposites. An act of law preservation also re-founds the law.

Another major concern especially for western pundits is the toppling of a "democratically elected prime minister." Here, the assumption is that since Thaksin was democratically elected and hence a legitimate leader, the coup was necessarily unjustifiable. We know that this is not necessarily the case. Also, this assertion confuses between choice and freedom, elections and political freedom. Perhaps

these pundits have equally misunderstood the state of many western democracies, which are increasingly "post-political"—and increasingly exhibiting nondemocracies. (Would they express their grave concerns were Dubya and Co. the ones to oust Thaksin, declaring him a corrupt tyrant—the tyrant of Bangkok?) Elections are necessary but not sufficient for democracy. For there to be political freedom public deliberation, agonism, fallibism, an open mass media, etc. are also required. This has been pointed out for the nth time. Needless to say, they were found seriously wanting in the Thaksin regime; market values (competitiveness, efficiency, productivity, etc.) displaced other virtues in Thaksinian democracy, and the legitimacy of the government was evaluated more by the health of the economy than by, for example, the magnitude of its corruption and the vibrancy of political freedom.

Pundits who argue that Thaksin was (and still is) popular because of his populist programs cannot see the wood for the trees: Thaksin's populism must not be dissociated from his neoliberal agenda and from his developmetalism, which is perhaps best dubbed "authoritarian high modernism,"[7] both of which would be detrimental to democracy and the demos in the long run. And among the populist programs was the "war on drugs" in which more than 2000 lives perished. Failing to mourn these losses is not healthy for the ethos of democracy. Moreover, isn't it revolting that massacres became essential to win the hearts and minds of the voters? It must also be reminded that tyrants may appear affable in nature, but as Arendt reminds us, "they all have in common the banishment of the citizens from their public realm and the insistence that they mind their private business while only 'the ruler should attend to public affairs.'"[8] This makes the citizens equal in the sense of being equally powerless in terms of public affairs. Arendt continues, "This, to be sure, was tantamount to furthering private industry and industriousness, but the citizens could see in this policy nothing but the attempt to deprive them of the time necessary for participation in common matters. It is the obvious short-range advantages of tyranny, the advantages of stability, security, and productivity, that one should beware, if only because they pave the way to an inevitable loss of power, even though the actual disaster may occur in a relatively distant future."[9]

Ridding Thaksin through the ballot box would have been ideal. The problem of voting fraud aside, isn't this aspiration really an unequivocal affirmation of plebiscitary democracy? Isn't it an expression of the fear of the multitude and of democracy? Here democracy refers to a polyversal and sporadic rupture or eruption, an arrow that pierces through the unjust status quo, opening a space for resistance: "democracy should be about forms rather than *a* form or constitution; and instead of an institutionalized process, it should be conceived as a moment of experience, a crystallized response to deeply felt grievances or needs on the part of those whose main preoccupation...is to scratch out a decent existence."[10] On this view, the mass protests that erupted in Bangkok for many months prior to Thaksin's removal were democratic. Were the September 19 coup-makers also fearful of this democracy, and hence they sought a 'controlled revolution' from above? If this is the case, then the September coup will be an apolitical tragedy—apolitical because politics in its generic sense is about changing the world. And so the rejuvenation of politics is the only way to make the coup justifiable.

Soravis Jayanama,
24 October 2006

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[1] See my articles "The Teflon Prime Minister and Democracy" and "Debating Thaksin between the Li(n)es" for this website and "A Coup by Invitation?" at www.ohmynews.com.

[2] Hannah Arendt, "On Violence," excerpted and reproduced in The Political, ed. David Ingram (Black well Publishers, 2002), p.77.

[3] Ibid., p.79.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., p.80.

[6] Iris Marion Young, "Power, Violence, and Legitimacy: A Reading of Hannah Arendt in an Age of Police Brutality and Humanitarian Intervention" in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p.99.

[7] See, for instance, James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), Chapter 3.

[8] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), p.221.

[9] Ibid., pp.221-22.

[10] Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, Expanded Edition (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.603.

USA
Donald Rumsfeld: The War Crimes Case

As the Democrats took control of the House of Representatives and were on the verge of taking over the Senate, George W. Bush announced that Donald Rumsfeld was out and Robert Gates was in as Secretary of Defense. When Bush is being run out of town, he knows how to get out in the front of the crowd and make it look like he's leading the parade. The Rumsfeld-Gates swap is a classic example.

The election was a referendum on the war. The dramatic results prove that the overwhelming majority of people in this country don't like the disaster Bush has created in Iraq. So rather than let the airwaves fill up with beaming Democrats and talk of the horrors of Iraq, Bush changed the subject and fired Rumsfeld. Now, when the Democrats begin to investigate what went wrong, Rumsfeld will no longer be the controversial public face of the war.

Rumsfeld had come under fire from many quarters, not the least of which was a gaggle of military officers who had been clamoring for his resignation. Bush said he decided to oust Rumsfeld before Tuesday's voting but lied to reporters so it wouldn't affect the election. Putting aside the incredulity of that claim, Bush likely waited to see if there would be a changing of the legislative guard before giving Rumsfeld his walking papers. If the GOP had retained control of Congress, Bush would probably have retained Rumsfeld. But in hindsight, Bush has to wish he had ejected Rumsfeld before the election to demonstrate a new direction in the Iraq war to angry voters.

Rumsfeld's sin was not in failing to develop a winning strategy for Iraq. There is no winning in Iraq, because we never belonged there in the first place. The war in Iraq is a war of aggression. It violates the United Nations Charter which only permits one country to invade another in self-defense or with the blessing of the Security Council.

Donald Rumsfeld was one of the primary architects of the Iraq war. On September 15, 2001, in a meeting at Camp David, Rumsfeld suggested an attack on Iraq because he was deeply worried about the availability of "good targets in Afghanistan." Former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill reported that Rumsfeld articulated his hope to "dissuade" other nations from "asymmetrical challenges" to U.S. power. Rumsfeld's support for a preemptive attack on Iraq "matched with plans for how the world's second largest oil reserve might be divided among the world's contractors made for an irresistible combination," Ron Suskind wrote after interviewing O'Neill.

Rumsfeld defensively sought to decouple oil access from regime change in Iraq when he appeared on CBS News on November 15, 2002. In a Macbeth moment, Rumsfeld proclaimed the United States' beef with Iraq has "nothing to do with oil, literally nothing to do with oil." The Secretary doth protest too much.

Prosecuting a war of aggression isn't Rumsfeld's only crime. He also participated in the highest levels of decision-making that allowed the extrajudicial execution of several people. Willful killing is a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions, which constitutes a war crime. In his book, *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*, Seymour Hersh described the "unacknowledged" special-access program (SAP) established by a top-secret order Bush signed in late 2001 or early 2002. It authorized the Defense Department to set up a clandestine team Special Forces operatives to defy international law and snatch, or assassinate, anyone considered a "high-value" Al Qaeda operative, anywhere in the world. Rumsfeld expanded SAP into Iraq in August 2003.

But Rumsfeld's crimes don't end there. He sanctioned the use of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, which are grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, and thus constitute war crimes. Rumsfeld approved interrogation techniques that included the use of dogs, removal of clothing, hooding, stress positions, isolation for up to 30 days, 20-hour interrogations, and deprivation of light and auditory stimuli. According to Seymour Hersh, Rumsfeld sanctioned the use of physical coercion and sexual humiliation to extract information from prisoners. Rumsfeld also authorized waterboarding, where the interrogator induces the sensation of imminent death by drowning. Waterboarding is

widely considered a form of torture.

Rumsfeld was intimately involved with the interrogation of a Saudi detainee, Mohamed al-Qahtani, at Guantánamo in late 2002. General Geoffrey Miller, who later transferred many of his harsh interrogation techniques to Abu Ghaib, supervised the interrogation and gave Rumsfeld weekly updates on his progress. During a six-week period, al-Qahtani was stripped naked, forced to wear women's underwear on his head, denied bathroom access, threatened with dogs, forced to perform tricks while tethered to a dog leash, and subjected to sleep deprivation. Al-Qahtani was kept in solitary confinement for 160 days. For 48 days out of 54, he was interrogated for 18 to 20 hours a day.

Even though Rumsfeld didn't personally carry out the torture and mistreatment of prisoners, he authorized it. Under the doctrine of command responsibility, a commander can be liable for war crimes committed by his inferiors if he knew or should have known they would be committed and did nothing to stop of prevent them. The U.S. War Crimes Act provides for prosecution or a person who commits war crimes and prescribes life imprisonment, or even the death penalty if the victim dies.

Although intending to signal a new direction in Iraq with his nomination of Gates to replace Rumsfeld, Bush has no intention of leaving Iraq. He is building huge permanent U.S. military bases there. Gates at the helm of the Defense Department, Bush said, "can help make the necessary adjustments in our approach." Bush hopes he can bring congressional Democrats on board by convincing them he will simply fight a smarter war.

But this war can never get smarter. Nearly 3,000 American soldiers and more than 650,000 Iraqi civilians have died and tens of thousands have been wounded. Our national debt has skyrocketed with the billions Bush has pumped into the war. Now that there is a new day in Congress, there must be a new push to end the war. That means a demand that Congress cut off its funds.

And the war criminals must be brought to justice—beginning with Donald Rumsfeld. On November 14, the Center for Constitutional Rights, the National Lawyers Guild, and other organizations will ask the German federal prosecutor to initiate a criminal investigation into the war crimes of Rumsfeld and other Bush administration officials. Although Bush has immunized his team from prosecution in the International Criminal Court, they could be tried in any country under the well-established principle of universal jurisdiction.

Donald Rumsfeld may be out of sight, but he will not be out of mind. The chickens have come home to roost.

Marjorie Cohn,
November 11, 2006

USA

Let's now charge the accomplices

In a show trial whose theatrical climax was clearly timed to promote George W Bush in the American midterm elections, Saddam Hussein was convicted and sentenced to hang. Drivel about "end of an era" and "a new start for Iraq" was promoted by the usual false moral accountants, who uttered not a word about bringing the tyrant's accomplices to justice. Why are these accomplices not being charged with aiding and abetting crimes against humanity? Why isn't George Bush Sr being charged?

In 1992, a congressional inquiry found that Bush as president had ordered a cover-up to conceal his secret support for Saddam and the illegal arms shipments being sent to Iraq via third countries. Missile technology was shipped to South Africa and Chile, then "on sold" to Iraq, while US Commerce Department records were falsified. Congressman Henry Gonzalez, chairman of the House of Representatives Banking Committee, said: "[We found that] Bush and his advisers financed, equipped and succoured the monster ..." Why isn't Douglas Hurd being charged? In 1981, as Britain's Foreign Office minister, Hurd travelled to Baghdad to sell Saddam a British Aerospace missile system and to "celebrate" the anniversary of Saddam's blood-soaked ascent to power.

Why isn't his former cabinet colleague, Tony Newton, being charged? As Thatcher's trade secretary, Newton, within a month of Saddam gassing 5,000 Kurds at Halabja (news of which the Foreign Office tried to suppress), offered the mass murderer £340m in export credits.

Why isn't Donald Rumsfeld being charged? In December 1983, Rumsfeld was in Baghdad to signal America's approval of Iraq's aggression against Iran. Rumsfeld was back in Baghdad on 24 March 1984, the day that the United Nations reported that Iraq had used mustard gas laced with a nerve agent against Iranian soldiers. Rumsfeld said nothing. A subsequent Senate report documented the transfer of the ingredients of biological weapons from a company in Maryland, licensed by the Commerce Department and approved by the State Department.

Why isn't Madeleine Albright being charged? As President Clinton's secretary of state, Albright enforced an unrelenting embargo on Iraq which caused half a million "excess deaths" of children under the age of five. When asked on television if the children's deaths were a price worth paying, she replied: "We think the price is worth it."

Why isn't Peter Hain being charged? In 2001, as Foreign Office minister, Hain described as "gratuitous" the suggestion that he, along with other British politicians outspoken in their support of the deadly siege of Iraq, might find themselves summoned before the International Criminal Court. A report for the UN secretary general by a world authority on international law describes the embargo on Iraq in the 1990s as "unequivocally illegal under existing human rights law", a crime that "could raise questions under the Genocide Convention".

Indeed, two past heads of the UN humanitarian mission in Iraq, both of them assistant secretary generals, resigned because the embargo was indeed genocidal. As of July 2002, more than $5bn-worth of humanitarian supplies, approved by the UN Sanctions Committee and paid for by Iraq, were blocked by the Bush administration, backed by the Blair and Hain government. These included items related to food, health, water and sanitation.

Above all, why aren't Blair and Bush Jr being charged with "the paramount war crime", to quote the judges at Nuremberg and, recently, the chief American prosecutor—that is, unprovoked aggression against a defenceless country?

And why aren't those who spread and amplified propaganda that led to such epic suffering being charged? *The New York Times* reported as fact fabrications fed to its reporter by Iraqi exiles. These gave credibility to the White House's lies, and doubtless helped soften up public opinion to support an invasion. Over here, the BBC all but celebrated the invasion with its man in Downing Street congratulating Blair on being "conclusively right" on his assertion that he and Bush "would be able to take Baghdad without a bloodbath". The invasion, it is reliably estimated, has caused 655,000 "excess deaths", overwhelmingly civilians. If none of these important people are called to account, there is clearly only justice for the victims of accredited "monsters". Is that real or fake justice?

John Pilger,
November 10, 2006,
www.johnpilger.com

(from p.3)

organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch will surely protest against the case and publicize it worldwide. Therefore, should this case drag on indeterminably, the masses may be incited and mobilized (both supporting and protesting against the case), leading to hostility, social antagonism, and even violence, thereby jeopardizing the peace, orderliness, and security of the country.

Therefore, I write to ask you to find a way to end the case at the level of inquiry officials by terminating the inquiry process or ordering the discontinuation of the prosecution of the case. Relevant officials should inform the inquiry officials to drop this politically charged and spiteful case, a case that will adversely impact the monarchy. The charge of lese majeste must no longer be used as a tool to silence or destroy political opponents.

Furthermore, the country now requires a favorable climate for reconciliation. Carrying on with the case will surely be detrimental to society at large.

Yours sincerely,

Sulak Sivaraksa
(The alleged offender)

Letter from INEB

Dear INEB members and readers,

Happy New Year to all of you.

Though I wished you thus, we all know that suffering is still present. And it can't be a happy new year without our Bodhisattva-like effort to put an end to suffering. Let's keep our spirit and health in good shape so that we can make 2007 a step towards a peaceful and righteous world.

In this issue, I summarized the activities we did in the year 2006, and the 2007 plan. I welcome your suggestions to help me improve the work of INEB. Also, financial support is important, because it is difficult for some projects to get funding. We have to rely on your donations, big or small.

The highlight of this year is the INEB Conference. Dr. Yo Hsiang-Chou will be our host in Taiwan. In 2005, we had a very successful conference in Nagpur led by Dhammacari Lokamitra.

You can find two questionnaires in this *Seeds of Peace*. One is the survey for the INEB members' database. Another one is the feasibility survey for the new project — the INEB International Internship Program. I see the latter as a part of the empowerment program for young socially engaged Buddhists in addition to the annual leadership training. In fact, I remember that after the 2004-2005 training, the idea of a Buddhist volunteer exchange program came up. So it is a good chance, and I am hopeful of positive responses to this feasibility survey.

Many friends expressed their concerns to me about the coup d'état in Siam last September. I thank you so much. *Seeds of Peace* was disturbed due to some controversial articles, but INEB itself is safe. Articles in this issue will give you a better picture of what happened here.

What concerns me more is that recently we received sad news about Buddhist communities being attacked in many countries, like India, Bangladesh and of course Siam. The community conflicts have become more accentuated in the settings of politico-economic injustice. I hope that INEB would contribute something to reverse this trend.

You can support INEB a great deal by renewing your subscription to *Seeds of Peace* or through donation. You can specify what particular activity you wish to sponsor, or participants from a particular country you wish to support. And, I would thank you very much in advance.

Yours in Dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary

Please mark your diaries
THE 2007 INEB Conference in Taiwan
6-8 July
ENGAGED BUDDHISM : Social Welfare & Social Change

INEB in the year 2006

Last year was another active year for INEB, both at the secretariat office and in the INEB circle. Our activities are regularly reported in *Seeds of Peace* in more details. Here is a short review of what we have done during the year 2006.

A. Socially Engaged Buddhism

1. *The Young Bodhisattva* Youth Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation

INEB takes as its primary concern the reaching out to the new generation of socially engaged young Buddhist activists, university students, monks and nuns. From 16 May - 24 June 2006, the *Young Bodhisattva* Youth Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation was organized as usual. The six-week program accommodated the learning of thirty people from South and Southeast Asia about the analysis of globalization and how Buddhism is applicable for personal and social transformation. Some participants were sent by old INEB members/organizations such as Dharmavedi Institute (Sri Lanka), Bikalpa Gyan Tatha Bikas Kendra (Nepal), Phaung Daw Oo (Myanmar), HIKMAHBUDHI (Indonesia), etc. INEB also welcomed participants from new connections such as the Ladakh Buddhist Association (Youth Wing) from India and Shem Women's Group from China.

2. The Celebration of Buddhadasa's 100th Anniversary



Participants of Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue visiting Masjid Ton Son in Bangkok, June 2006

The late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu had devoted his life to the revitalization of Buddhism to be relevant in the modern era. His writings on politics, education, world peace, inter-religious understanding won him the UNESCO recognition on the occasion of his 100th birth anniversary on May 2006. INEB joined the celebration by organizing a number of international activities. Firstly, his important book *Dhammic Socialism* is going to be translated into Asian languages, such as Tibetan, Indonesian, Burmese, etc. Secondly, his English book *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures* is reprinted. Thirdly, INEB co-hosted several international seminars in different countries (May 2006-2007). Fourthly, the philharmonic orchestra of dhamma music by Nawang Khechog, the internationally renowned Tibetan flutist, and other Thai musicians was held in July 2006. The Thai Ministry of Culture also assisted us in a national dhammic concert in Bangkok on 1st November 2006 Finally, the modification and modernization of Buddhist rites and rituals is now in process.

3. International Meeting on Mahayana Buddhism: Its Role in Building Social Harmony and Global Peace

This is another activity that reflected the value of Buddhism in social engagement. It was co-organized by INEB during 16-17 January 2006 in Bangkok. Buddhist scholars from China, India, USA and Thailand joined this small but important meeting. The participants explored the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism to be applied in peace building, nationally and internationally.

B. Inter-religious Activities

1. Inter-religious Dialogues

This year, inter-religious activities are another main theme. INEB and its sister organization in Siam felt the importance of sharing between people of different religions. We

started with three inter-religious seminars in Bangkok. Social activists and scholars in Buddhism, Christianity and Islam were invited to share their ideas in the discussions on *Women and Spiritual Movement for Social Justice and Peace* (23 February 2006), *Politics of Fear and Religious Approach to Freedom from Fear* (11 March 2006), *In search for Ethical Society* (25 March 2006). The topics were appropriately chosen and responded to the political turmoil at that time when there were mass demonstrations against the morally deficient Thaksin Shinawatra administration and populist policy, lasting for months in early 2006.

2. Creation of Peaceful Multi-religious Communities

INEB is confident that Buddhist teachings can contribute a great deal in the effort to achieve inter-religious peace and harmony. For this mission, Buddhists must prepare themselves by cultivating open-mindedness and mutual-understanding. Teachings such as non-attachment, interdependence, the four noble truths, compassion, awareness of mental unwholesome roots of biases and discrimination, etc. are useful. Hence, a pilot training was held in the first week of July 2006 in Siam based on such teachings. The participants of this small training are Buddhists who are concerned about the increase of inter-religious hostility that might occur due to the unrest in the three Muslim dominated southern provinces of Siam. They also learned about social injustice and other social problems that have pervaded that region for decades and how the majority of Buddhists would play the crucial role in the restoration of peace, justice and harmony in Siam which will benefit other religious minorities.

3. The Regional Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue: "Buddhists and Muslims in Southeast Asia: Working towards Justice and Peace

The Buddhist-Muslim dialogue was held during 26-28 June 2006 in Bangkok. The internationally well-known Dr. Chandra Muzaffar led the Southeast Asian Muslim scholars in International Movement for a Just World to share ideas with Buddhist counterparts led by Sulak Sivaraksa, Phra Paisan Visalo, Pracha Hutanuwatr, etc. The dialogue provided a friendly ground of discussion on contemporary issues of religious conflicts as well as exploration of religious teachings on critical concepts such as peace and justice.

C. Activities of INEB Members/Alumni

The secretariat office is very proud of the activity of many of our members/alumni. Throughout the year, we received news from alumni in Indonesia, Cambodia, India, Nepal and Myanmar. They are working in education for social change, peace building, relief for victims of earthquake, etc. Their stories are regularly published in *Seeds of Peace* and our website www.inebnetwork.org. INEB would be much delighted to hear from the senior members about their work and situation in their countries, so that the younger generation would get inspired.

D. Cooperation with other Organization

During 2006, INEB also lent support to other organizations in several events. We are still part of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum which is active in South and Southeast Asia. We participated in some meetings, conferences and paper presentations, spreading the perspectives of Buddhism on various issues.

The complete annual report will be posted on our website. It will also be available in hard copy on request.

Planned Activities for 2007

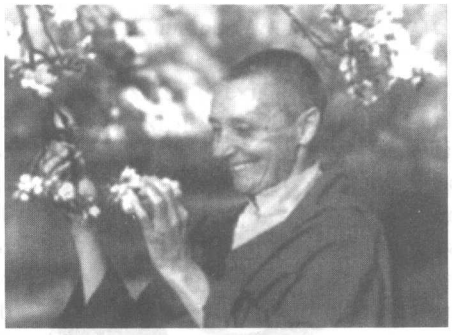
This year, many activities will be continue from 2006. The youth training program will start with the *Young Bodhisattva* Alumni Follow-up Meeting, and then INEB will continue the 6-week *Young Bodhisattva* Youth Leadership Training in June - July. The celebration of the 100th anniversary of Buddhadasa is also carried on with the book translation and other events.

We are going to have The 2007 INEB Conference in Taiwan from 6 - 8 July hosted by our Executive Committee member, Dr. Yo Hsiang-Chou. The theme is Engaged Buddhism: Social Welfare and Social Change. Taking the chance to be in Taiwan, a group of Buddhist women will have a separate Pre-INEB Conference seminar on strengthening sangha of the women spiritual leaders

From the Muslim-Buddhist Dialogue in June 2006, we are hopeful to have a Muslim-Buddhist youth camp and more in depth dialogues.

If you feel that the INEB activities are beneficial, please support us. We are in need of funds, particularly to support participants from poor countries to join the INEB activities. Thank you.

Announcement



Ven. Tenzin Palmo's visit to Siam

Ven. Tenzin Palmo, the Irish bhikkhuni from Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery Monastery, India, will visit Siam and give dhamma talks from 4-18 January 2007.

5 Jan	Seminar for Buddhist bhikkhunis, nuns and laywomen "Woman Dhamma Masters: Opportunity, Obstacles and Future"
6-7 Jan	Dhamma talks at Songdham Kalyani Bhikhuni Temple, Nakorn Prathom Province
8 Jan	A Dhamma talk at Suan Mokkh, Surat Thani Province
9 Jan	Sem Pringpuangkhaew Lecture "Woman Dhamma Masters and the Healing of the World" 18.00 - 20.30 hrs. Auditorium, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok
10 Jan	A Dhamma Talk to Social Venture Network (Thailand) "The Six Paramitas: Applying Buddhist Principles to Everyday Life"
11 - 14 Jan	Meditation Retreat Wongsanit Ashram, Nakorn Nayok Province
15 - 18 Jan	Meditation Retreat at Chiang Mai Province

The International Conference Religion and Culture will be held from 24-30 June 2007 by Payab University's Institute for the Study of Religion and Culture, supported by INEB. The conference will welcome speakers from many countries and religious background. For more information, please contact the Institute directly. [email: isrc@csloxinfo.com website: http//isrc.payap.ac.th]

The 2007 INEB Conference "Engaged Buddhism: Social Welfare and Social Work" will be in Taiwan from 6 - 8 July 2007. Topics to be discussed include spiritual consumerism, perpetuation of sufferings, from social welfare to social change, etc. For more information, please contact the INEB Secretariat Office in Bangkok at ineboffice@yahoo.com [website: www.inebnetwork.org]

The Pre-INEB conference seminar "Strengthening Sangha of the Women Spiritual Leaders" will also be in Taiwan from 1-5 July 2007. The Buddhist ordained and lay women will learn from the experience of Taiwanese Bhikkhunis in education, community building and social engagement. For more information, please contact the INEB Secretariat Office.

Buddhism and The Challenges of The Modern World

It is a great privilege for me to be here with you today to remember and honor Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on the occasion of his birth centenary. It was my good fortune to be introduced to the writings of Than Buddhadasa nearly fifty years ago. On the eve of returning to the United States after more than two years as a teacher of English at Bangkok Christian College and Mahachulalongkorn Rajavidayalai, several Mahachula students I was tutoring kindly gave me a Dhammadana gift of Than Buddhadasa's published books. My reading of Buddhadasa beginning at that time has had a lasting influence on my thinking and my life. Subsequently, I had the good fortune of meeting Than Buddhadasa several times at Suan Mokkh. Discussing the Dhamma with him as we strolled through the natural surroundings of the Garden of Empowering Liberation (Suan Mokkhabalarama) is an experience that continues to linger in my memory.

The topic of "Buddhism and The Challenges of the Modern World" suggested by Phra Phaisal is very timely but also very broad. It is timely because the global challenges confronting us today seem to be countless. Everywhere we look there is a crisis: the crisis in the Middle East, the global environmental crisis, the global AIDS crisis, the cultural crisis created by globalization; the political crisis in the United States, the political crisis in Thailand, the crisis in the Thai sangha, and so on. On this occasion honoring Than Buddhadasa it is appropriate to look to Than



Ajaan for help and guidance in the face of these challenges and crises.

Buddhism teaches that all things are subject to change. This truism has two important implications for the challenges we face today. First, with right knowledge, right mindfulness, right intention, and right effort we can improve our own lives, our societies, and the global community. The law of karma is not a fatalistic doctrine even though it has been interpreted that way. Rather, karma teaches that we are conditioned but not determined by the past, and that we can influence our future by our actions in the present. Second, we should realize that although the today's global challenges are unique, other people, in other times and places, have also faced challenges that may have seemed equally daunting. If we are to solve the problems of the present we must learn from the past if we are to have a future.

It is a truism that economic, political, social, and cultural changes over the past half-century associated with globalization have profoundly affected Thailand (as well as other countries). In several areas, including religion, it has createad greater diversity and fragmentation. Different visions of Thai Buddhist identity are competing with one another today: some from within the national sangha; others semi-independent such as the vision set forth by Wat Dhammakai; still others outside the national sangha such as Santi Asok; and, the one conceived by NGOs led by Buddhist laity.

Ajaan Buddhadasa has been a seminal influence on the development of Thai modernist Buddhist thought and socially engaged Buddhism in Thailand. Phra Phaisan, Phra Payom, Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, Dr. Prawet Wasi, S. Sivaraksa, and many others, have expressed their indebtedness to Than Buddhadasa. Some such as S. Sivaraksa also identify with the international, ecumenical perspective of socially engaged Buddhism associated with H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Vietnamese Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. Socially engaged Buddhist leaders emphasize universal Buddhist values and principles: wisdom, compassion, mindful awareness, peace, non-greed, non-violence, and the inter-dependent, inter-becoming nature of all things. These values and principles constitute what some scholars see as a new form of international (global) ecumenical Buddhism with which Than Buddhadasa has

been identified.

This afternoon I shall not be looking at Than Buddhadasa specifically within the competing voices of contemporary Thai Buddhism—that will be the subject of an October panel honoring Than Ajaan at the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions in October. Rather, in this context I want to emphasize the *universality* of his vision *(wisayathat sakhon)* as being a major contribution that Buddhism can make to addressing the challenges of the modern world. The universality of the vision represents an antidote to narrow understandings of personal, communal, and national identity that have contributed to the anger, hatred, violence, and conflict not only in the Middle East but globally.

To address the theme, "Buddhism and the Challenges of the Modern World," I propose to focus on four topics of Than Buddhadasa's thought that are relevant to four major global challenges of the 21st century. The four topics are: (1) *phassa khon/ phassa tham* (everyday language/truth language; (2) *mai mi sasana* (no religion); (3) *thamma pen thammachat* (the dhamma as nature); (4) *thammika sangkhom* that I translate as the "righteous community." The four challenges they address are the challenges of social justice, the environmental crisis, ideological absolutisms, and religious idolatry.

Although I shall discuss each topic separately, they are closely interrelated because Than Buddhadasa's thought is a unified system. Different concepts such as *phassa khon/phassa tham* and *thammika sangkhom* are closely interrelated even though they may appear not to be. Than Ajaan's thought is unified because it is grounded in the concept of *dhamma*, and the *dhamma* is nothing other the principle of co-dependence and co-arising *(paticca samuppada)*. All *dhammas*, (i.e. everything) and interrelated. Nothing exists independently and in isolation. For example, in his essay, "Phraphutacaw Ku' Krai?" (Who Is the Buddha?) Than Ajaan states that at a superficial level of understanding Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, are separate; however, at a deeper level of understanding they are one. For the average Thai Buddhist (if there is such a thing as an average Thai Buddhist!), Than Buddhadasa's statement that Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha are one, must be startling and confusing.

Phasa Khon/Phasa Tham: The Challenge of Ideological Absolutism

Those who predicted the demise of ideology with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War were sadly mistaken. Political and religious ideologies flourish today as does the scriptural literalism of fundamentalist religion in many forms and manifestations —Christian, Muslim, Hindu, and even Buddhist. Ideological fervor often leads to absolute distinctions: "My belief is absolutely true; therefore, your belief must be false. My way of life, my religion, my nation is good, therefore, your way of life, your religion, your nation must be an 'axis of evil'." Ideological absolutism always leads to intolerance, an "ends justifies the means" mentality, and often to violence.

Than Buddhadasa's theory of two languages or two levels of language—an outer, physical, literal, conventional dimension and an inner, spiritual, symbolic dimension challenges textual and doctrinal literalism, and simplistic, doctrinaire ideologies. As such, it can be seen as one antidote to today's ideological battles.

Because Than Ajaan's views were novel, he was attacked as a Mahayana heretic by some Theravada critics for several of his teachings such as Nibbana is in Samsara, and the true Buddha is not the historical person but the Dhammakaya who is with us here and now. To his critics, the distinction between *Phasa Khon/Phasa Tham,* was a Mahayana doctrine—the two truth theory. Labeling Ajaan Buddhadasa a heretic or Communist were strategies to attack him. He recognized labels as a source of attachment that blind us from seeing the truth. Labeling Than Buddhadasa as a Communist or a Mahayanist is a way of rejecting him, and dismissing the power and complexity of his thought.

In his essay, "Phasa Khon/ Phasa Tham," Than Buddhadasa analyzes the meaning of many words, some specifically religious terms such as Buddha, Dhamma, Nibbana, God, but also ordinary words, for example, the word, "person," As a word from common discourse we use, 'person," all the time without thinking about its meaning. Similarly, we often use the name of a person in a mindless way. The name becomes merely a lable that hides the complex nature of the individual that we perceive only when we strip away the label. Likewise, in everyday language, "person" refers to the outer form as in the sentence, "We see a person walking down the street." But, in

Ajaan Buddhadasa's view, to limit our understanding of "person" to the superficial, outer form ignores the profundity of the Dhamma level meaning of the word. For Than Buddhadasa, "person" refers specifically to special qualities implied by the word, "human;" in particular, the mental qualities of a lofty mind or high mindedness. To illustrate his point, Than Ajaan uses the example of someone who criticizes a friend by saying, "You're not a person!" What is implied by "person" in this case is not the superficial, outer form but, rather, that the individual lacks the special qualities of what it means to be human, that is, the deeper or Dhamma level of meaning of the term.

What about the word, "enemy"? From an ideological perspective we label the enemy as the "other," someone we reject, hate, or want to destroy, but for Than Buddhadasa that is the conventional or everyday interpretation of the word. From a Dhamma level of understanding the "enemy" is our mind, a mind deluded by ignorance and misguided by blind attachment. He maintains that, "With the mind well-directed and fixed on Dhamma, the enemy is absent and the friend in there instead." In today's ideological wars, Than Buddhadasa challenges us to the difficult task of transforming "enemy" into "friend." His challenge may be idealistic but even Pogo, the cartoon character, said, "We have met the enemy and he is us!!"

Than Buddhadasa's teaching about *phasa khon/phasa tham* reminds me of Thich Nhat Hanh, one of he founders of socially engaged Buddhism during the Vietnam war. During that time, Nhat Hanh organized the Tiep Hien Order ("being-in-touch/present time") or Order of Interbeing. The first of the fourteen precepts of the Order of Interbeing is the following: "Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. All systems of thought are only guiding means; they are not absolute truth." In explaining the precept, Nhat Hanh points to the well-known metaphor that the Buddha's teaching is a raft to cross the river of samsara to the farther shore; the raft is not the shore and if we cling to the raft we miss everything. He continues, "The Order of Interbeing was born in Vietnam during the war, which was a conflict between two world ideologies. In the name of ideologies and doctrines, people kill and are being killed. If you have a gun, you can shoot one, two, three, five people; but if you have an ideology and stick to it, thinking it is the absolute truth, you can kill millions." *(Being Peace)*

Nhat Hanh and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu are constructive critics of ideological absolutism and sciptural literalism—a urgent, crucial message for our times.

Mai Me Sasana (No Religion): The Challenge of Religious Idolatry

Unfortunately, religion has become a major factor contributing to violent conflict globally. The examples are manifold: Sinhalese Buddhist vs. Tamil Hindu in Sri Lanka, Shi'a vs. Sunni in Iraq, Protestant vs. Catholic in northern Ireland: Hindu vs. Muslim in India; Catholic vs. Eastern Orthodox vs. Muslim in Bosnia; and so on. To be sure, violence and conflict in these and other situations has many causes but religion, along with ethnicity, place, and nationalism, are among the main culprits. Transforming intra-and inter-religious divisions and hatred, into a positive, reconciling force to resolve conflict and violence is one of the major challenges of the modern world. Such reconciliation requires open, inclusive, tolerant attitudes towards one own religion as well as the faith of others.

Ajaan Buddhadasa held the view that the world's great religions, while different historically, share a common ground. In his provocative Dhamma talk, *No Religion! (Mai Me Sasana)* Than Ajaan startled his Thai Buddhist audience by saying:

> The ordinary, ignorant worldling is under the impression that there are many religions and that they are all different to the extent of being hostile and opposed. Thus one considers Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism as incompatible and even bitter enemies. Such is the conception of the worldly person who speaks according to ordinary impressions. Precisely because of such characterization there exist different religions hostile to one another. If, however, people penetrate to the fundamental nature *(dhamma)* of religion, they will regard all religions as essentially similar. Although they may say there is Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on, they will also say that essentially they are the same. If they should go on to a deeper understanding of the *dhamma* until finally they realize the absolute truth, they will discover that there is no such thing called religion—that

there is no Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. Therefore, how can they be the same or conflicting? *(Mai Me Sasana)*

He expressed a similar point of view in his Sinclair Thompson lectures delivered at McGilvary Theological Seminary in 1967 (B. E. 2510):

> Christianity and Buddhism are both universal religions; they exist wherever truly religious people practice their religion in the most perfect way. If religious persons show respect for each religion's founder and for the Dhamma-truth at the core of each religion, they will understand this interpretation. Devotion to a religion results in the cessation of self-interest and self-importance and therefore leads to a realization of the universality and unity of all religions. *(Buddhism and Christianity)*

Than Buddhadasa often used similies and metaphors to illustrate his points. His discussion of religion was no exception. In *Mai Me Sasana* he illustrates his inclusive universalism with the simile of water:

> Let us consider a simile, something very simple—water. Most people think there are many different kinds of water and will view various kinds of water such as rainwater, well water, water in swamps, water in toilets as if they have nothing in common. This judgment is based on external criteria. A person with more knowledge, however, realizes that regardless of type or kind, pure water can be distilled and filtered out of it. If we proceed further in our analysis we shall conclude there is no water—only two parts of Hydrogen and one part of Oxygen. What we have been calling water is void, empty. *(Mai Me Sasana)*

It is the ethical implications of Than Buddhadasa's understanding of religion that I wish to emphasize. What I characterize as Than Ajaan's inclusive universalism is an expression of his conviction that nonattachment lies at the heart of Buddhism and all religions. Preoccupation with the external trappings of religious institutions and their ritual ceremonies represents a particular form of attachment and, consequently, obscures the true meaning of religion which is to *transform egoism into altruism*. In the case of conventional Thai Buddhist practice, Than Buddhadasa directs especially sharp criticism at the practice of merit-making rituals: "the perception of most adherents of Buddhism is limited to what they can do to get a reward. While supporting the temples or monks and observing the precepts, they have only the objective of getting more in return than they give...The heart of Buddhism is not getting things but getting rid of them. It is, in other words, nonattachment..." In the area of inter-religious relationships, Buddhadasa believes that those for whom religion is a matter of external form and practice will have a narrow, exclusivistic understanding of their religion that inevitably leads to inter-religious conflict. Here Buddhadasa makes a connection between the terms "outer" and "outsider." Those who see their religion in terms of *outer* form fail to understand its essential nature. Consequently, "they look down upon other religions while praising and supporting their own, thinking of themselves as a separate group. *Outsiders* and not part of our fellowship. They are wrong; only we are right." For Buddhadasa, when attached to external, outer, physical forms we see everything in dualistic terms—good or evil, merit or sin, happiness or unhappiness, gain or loss, is or is not, my religion versus their religion. Such dualistic thinking is at the heart of religious conflict. Buddhadasa's universalism counters such a view.

Thamma Pen Thammachat (The Dhamma Is Nature): The Challenge of Environmental Destruction

The news media and television coverage confront us daily with the extent and complexity of the environmental crisis: global warming, draught in Africa, the melting of the polar ice caps, rising sea levels, erratic temperature change, increase in violent storms, ocean and water pollution, and so on. For over 50 years science has made enormous contributions to our understanding of many aspects of environmental problems. Without collaborative scientific research we would be unaware of the nature of global warming, species extinction, or the effects of pollution on health. However, despite our increasing knowledge about the *facts* of environmental problems, they have not altered the kind of human behavior that is exploiting nature, nor have the facts affected human habits of addictive consumption. Environmentalists increasingly realize that science and public policy are not sufficient to transform human consicousness and behavior for a

sustainable future. Ethics, religion, and spirituality must be engaged to transform our understanding, attitudes, and actions in regard to our patterns of consumption and care for the earth.

I believe that Ajaan Buddhadasa's concept of nature *(Thammachat)* as the Dhamma can contribute toward transforming our understanding attitudes, and actions regarding the care of the earth. It was Than Ajaan's perception of the liberating power of nature-as-dhamma that inspired him to found Wat Suan Mokkh as a center of teaching and practice. For Than Buddhadasa the natural surroundings of his forest monastery were nothing less than a medium for personal transformation:

> "Trees, rocks, sand, even dirt and insects can speak. This doesn't mean, as some people believe that there are spirits *(phi)* or gods *(thewada)*. Rather, if we reside in nature near trees, sand, rocks we'll discover feelings and thoughts arising that are truly out of the ordinary. At first we'll feel a sense of peace and quiet *(sangopyen)* which may eventually move beyond that feeling to a transcendence of self. The deep sense of calm that nature provides through separation *(wiwek)* from the troubles and anxieties which plague us in the day-to-day world serves to protect heart and mind. Indeed, the lessons nature teaches us lead to a new birth beyond the suffering that results from attachment to self. Trees and rocks, then, can talk to us. They help us understand what it means to cool down from the heat of our confusion, despair, anxiety, and suffering."
> *(Siang Takon Jak Thammachat)*

For Than Buddhadasa, it is only by being in nature that the trees, rocks, earth, sand, animals, birds, and insects can teach us the lesson of self-forgetting. In what I call, Than Ajaan's "spiritual biocentricism," being attuned to the lessons of nature is being at one with the Dhamma. The destruction of nature, then, implies the destrucition of the Dhamma, and the destruction of the Dhamma is the destruction of our humanity.

Toward the end of his life the degredation of the natural environment became a matter of particular concern for Than Buddhadasa. One of his talks at Wat Suan Mokkh in 1990, the years before his death, was titled, "Buddhists and the Care of Nature" [*Buddhasasanik Kap Kan Anurak Thammachat*]. This essay provides insight into both the biocentric and ethical dimensions of his environmental concern. The essay might be read as Than Ajaan's plea for nature conservation and sustainability.

From an environmental perspective, I render the Thai term, *anurak,* as "conservation." As you know, many Thai monks are involved in efforts to stop the exploitation of forests in their districts and provinces. They have been called "forest conservation monks" *(phra anurak pa)*. Wat Suan Mokkh exemplifies Than Ajaan's dedication to preserving a natural environment. *Anurak,* as embodied in his life and work, moreover, conveys a rich, nuanced meaning close to its Pali roots: to be imbued with the quality of protecting, sheltering, and caring for. By the term, *anurak,* Than Buddhadasa intends this deeper, dhammic sense of *anu-rakkha,* an intrinsic, active "caring for" that issues forth from the very nature of our being. Caring, then, is the active expression of our fundamental empathy for all creatures and the earth that we discover by hearing the Dhamma in the "voices of nature." One cares for the forest because one empathizes with the forest just as one cares for people, including oneself, because one has become empathetic. *Anurak,* the ability to be in a state of empathy, is fundamentally linked to non-attachment or liberation from preoccupation with self which is at the very core of Than Ajaan's thought. Caring *(anurak)* in the Dhammic sense, therefore, is the active experssion of our empathetic identification with all life forms—sentient and non-sentient, human beings and nature.

Dhammika Sanghom (Righteous Community): The Challenge of Social Justice

Than Ajaan's teachings challenge mindless attachment to parochial religious practices directed toward self-aggrandizement as, for example, his critique of merit-making and the veneration of amulets. He saw doctrinal literalism as a *phasa khon* level of understanding often hiding the inner, deeper meaning of words and doctrine. The universal *dhamma* is not an ideology dividing "us" from "them" but the basis of an inclusive, pluralistic *dhammika sangkhom*. Than Ajaan's vision of *dhammika sangkhom* offers a global, cosmopolitan understanding of what it means to be not only a Thai Buddhist in the 21st century but to be fully, truly human being.

Time and again in his writ-

ings Than Buddhadasa challenges conventional, literal, narrow understandings *(Khwam kawcai thi pen thamniem, tam tua nangsu', khap)* of Buddhism and all religions in favor of univesal principles of human development *(lak sakon khwam charoen pen manut)*—not just identifying oneself as a Thai Buddhist, an American Christian, or an Iranian Muslim but as a human being. For example, in his essay, "The Technik (Technique) of Being Human," *(Technik Haeng Pen Manut)* he reinterprets the Four Noble Truths as: nature *(thammachat)*, the laws of nature *(kot thammachat)*, the duty of humankind to live according to the laws of nature, and the consequences of following the laws of nature. His interpretation reflects his view that all human beings share a common natural environment, and are part of communities imbedded in the natural order of things *(kot thammachat)*. This interconnected universe we inhabit is the natural condition of things *(pakati)*. To act contrary to this law of nature is to suffer because such actions contradict reality. Consequently, the good of the individual parts is predicated on the good of the whole and vice versa. Practically speaking it means that a just, equitable, peaceful, and happy society must balance *(tham hai somboon)* the good of the individual and the good of the whole *(khwam di suan ton lae khuam di suan ruam)*.

The ethical principle of the good of the whole is based on the truth of interdependent co-arising *(paticca samuppada)*. Nothing exists interdependently as part of a larger whole whether human, social, cosmic, or molecular: *(paticca sumuppada)*. Nothing exists in isolation; everything co-exists interdependently as part of a larger whole whether human, soical, cosmic, or molecular: "The entire universe is a *dhammika sanghkhom*. Countless numbers of stars in the sky exist together in a *dhmmika sangkhom*. Because they follow the principles of a *dhammika sangkhom* they survive. Our small universe with its sun and planets including the earth is a *dhammika sangkhom*."

Than Buddhadasa's view of a *dhammika sangkhom* reflects his persistent emphasis on overcoming attachment to self, to "me-and-mine" *(tua ku khong ku)*. Fundamentally, both personal and social well-being *(khwamcaroen khong tae la khon)* result from transforming self-attachment and self-love to empathy toward others and sympathetic action on their behalf. A *dhammika sangkhom*, then, is a community that is based on the fundamental equality of all beings, a community that both affirms and at the same time transcends all distinctions—be they gender, ethnicity, or class. Such a view does not deny the existence of differences among individuals or groups; however, all people, regardless of position and status, should understand that their own personal well-being depends on the well-being of the everyone else. Thus, for example, a person of wealth should not be a capitalist *(nai thun)* who hoards wealth for his own pleasure, but a *sresthi*, one whose high position enables him to be a benefactor to laborers, workers, and common folk.

In *Lokawiparit: Hua Kho Loi Ayu 2519 Laew Raw Ca Yu Nai Lok An Saen Wiparit Ni Kan Yangrai*, a collection of Than Buddhasa's thoughts published for his centenary, Than Ajaan spells out *dhammika sangkhom* in ordinary, common sense terms. Because all of us inhabit the same world *(chaw lok)* we have a responsibility to act for the benefit of everyone, not just one person, group, or nation. To solve today's challenging problems we must realize that fundamentally all people share a common human nature *(tuk khon mi thammachat khong khwam pen manut muankan)*. To be sure different members of a family, groups, nations will disagree about many things. For example, for the standpoint of religious belief some may believe in not-self *(mai me atta)*; others that there is a self; that one dies and is reborn *(tai lae kert)* or that one dies and is not reborn; however, these beliefs need not result in conflict. These and mere differences in views *(pien dithi khad yang kan)*. When different beliefs and ways of life become the cause of conflict it is a consequence of being so blinded by our own self-interest that we ignore the deeper truth of our shared humanity *(yu ruam kan santi)*.

Ajaan Buddhadasa saw conflict among individuals and groups based on religion as especially heinous *(laew rai)*. He considered it to be a rejection ofthe fundamental truth of the world's religions which is to overcome acquisitive self interest, to respect others, and to act out of loving kindness *(metta)* for the well-being of all. Religion in this ideal sense should be at the foundation of *dhammika sangkhom*. (Were he living today, Buddhadasa would be deeply saddened by the increasing intensity of religious conflict globally.)

Than Ajaan recognized the validity of different religious worldviews. He argued for the freedom of religious choice on the grounds of a person's back-

ground *(phu' n than dae la khon)*, nature *(lakhana sua tua)*, heart and soul *(daung cit, duang winnyan)*. For Than Buddhadasa the democratic principle of the freedom of religion was an important personal, social, and ethical value. But, above all, the freedom of religious choice reflects the pluralism human diversity *(lak lai qwam tak tang kan khong manut)* that is the nature of reality *(pen pakati)*. Respecting the religious traditions of others is an ethical value, but it is also consistent with Than Ajaan's understanding that diversity—in this case diversity of religious choice and expression—is in the nature of things.

In the face of political and religious conflict and violence around the globe, Ajaan Buddhadasa's vision of the *thammika sangkhom* challenges not only Thai Buddhists but each of us to commit ourselves to the task of living lives in ways that benefit all, not simply ourselves individually, our group, our religion, or our nation. He challenges us to dedicate ourselves to peace and reconciliation, and to building righteous communities *(dhammika sangkhom)* on which the future of humankind *(manut)* depends.

Danald K. Swearer's
lecture at Chulalongkorn University
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Buddhadasa's Dhammic Socialism: Contexts and Contents

Actually Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhadasa were contemporaries, with the former 15 years older. Both have contributed greatly to the social thought of Buddhism today. Though they came from very different contexts and backgrounds, they both chose to go back to the original teaching of the Buddha and reinterpret it so that Buddhism can be a vital force to encounter social illness their respective societies were and are facing. The challenges facing Dr. Ambedkar and fellow Buddhists in India are related to tyranny of caste system with the ethos of Hindu religiosity. Acariya Buddhadasa faced the challenges of the American version of modern capitalism in the ethos of declining and outdated traditional Theravada Buddhism.

Their commonalities and differences in their social teaching can be a rich background for our generation to study and apply for the betterment of our society. Here are some examples:

Both used scientific approach and critical thinking



intensively. Buddhadasa clearly renounced materialistic aspects of western science.

Both believed in some form of socialism. Dr. Ambedkar was a democratic socialist insofar as he believed that redistribution of wealth and opportunity in a society needed some direct government intervention such the nationalisation of keys industries. Buddhadasa's dhammic socialism draws heavily from the principles of ideal Sangha of the Buddha's time in term of communal ownership, simple living, collective decision making.

Dr. Ambedkar made intensive use of modern Western thoughts such as fraternity, equality, liberty, democracy and rationality to revitalise Buddhism. Acariya Buddhadasa was very critical of Western modern thoughts and made intensive use of Buddhist values to redefine or give new meaning to those terms.

Both believed in a revolution in the sphere of values as a base for social restructuring so that all members live together with respect and compassion for each other as all have Buddha-nature within. Dr. Ambedkar wants a casteless society; Buddhadasa wants a non-capitalist, non-exploitative society.

Both see the important of education as a base for social change. Both want education that empowers students to serve society with self-respect and self-confidence. Buddhadasa criticised the present classroom

type education for its narrowness and encouragement for development of greed, hatred and self-conceit. He redefined education in term of the eightfold path.

One thing that we can be sure of is that both are great thinkers, formidable critics of their own societies and stubborn rebels who devoted the whole of their life for social and spiritual reform of their respective society.

So in the light of this background let me introduce the contents and contexts of Acariya Buddhadasa's Dhammic Socialism.

Introduction

During sixty years of teaching, Buddhadasa expressed his thinking in many lectures, books and articles on a wide range of topics. Thousands of books have been published and there are many more to come from the transcriptions of his lectures. This paper focuses on Dhammic socialism, one of the important themes of his teaching. However, to understand the subtleties of Dhammic socialism we need to look at the influences and context for his thoughts, personality, approach of teaching and other related key concepts. If we do not have a good understanding of this background information it is easy to miss key points or interpret the ideas in an unbalanced way. To apply these ideas to the present and future situation of our society, we also need to see the relevant weaknesses. Buddhadasa would be the first to agree with a critical approach to his thinking.

The context of his teaching

The first relevant influences in his life were from the rural environment he grew up in. He was born in 1906 and spent his childhood and youth in a small country town on the eastern coast of the gulf of Siam called Chaiya. Here the traditional way of life with strong Buddhist influence was still intact. People lived a subsistence economy with small-scale agriculture and small local trades. The values and good practice of these communities had a strong and favourable impression on him and this fed into his idea of Dhammic Socialism. In those days when people planted trees and grew vegetables, they still believed in the saying *"kon gin pen boon, nok gin pen tan"* which means if other people come and take our crops, it is our charity, if birds and animals come and eat them it is our generosity. Sharing is a key value in Thai Buddhism. Buddhadasa saw an interesting practice of a watermelon farmer and took this as an example of life according to Dhammic Socialism. The farmer's land was near a forest, when the fruit was ripe enough, the wild monkeys would come and eat them. So when he planted the melons, he planted a normal variety in the outer circle and the good ones in the inner circle. When the monkeys came, they ate the ones in the outer circle and they were of course happy and he had the good ones in the inner circle of the farmland for consumption and for sale. So he was happy too.

His native town was typical in the sense that the natural environment was rich and abundant. When people put bamboo traps in the canal for fishing, there were so many fish that they broke the trap. If you wanted to go for a picnic, you only needed to prepare cooked rice and sauces and go out into the surrounding wilderness where you could pick vegetables from nature, lotus stems from ponds and fish were abundant in the streams or the sea. People took from nature only as much as needed. It was a bad deed to pick more wild vegetables than you could eat and throw away the leftovers.

In this village-town, the relationship between the monks and the lay-people was very cordial. All the monks were related to the villagers in one way or another. Villagers provided them with the four basic needs of food, shelter, medicine and robes and the monks gave the Buddhist teaching and looked after the boy's education. The monks were highly respected for their simple life and had no extraordinary magic powers. Buddhadasa witnessed his grandmother's graceful death and this influenced his teaching on how to die. Around seven days before she died, she stopped eating solid food but still took water and herbal medicine. Four days later, she stopped the medicine and took only water. The last three days she gathered her sons, daughters, grandsons and grand daughters around her and gave her last teaching and said farewell. When the moment of death came, she sat up, followed her breath and passed away in the sitting position. *These are the examples of good life and good practices in society that Buddhadasa saw when he was young and I believe that they influenced him deeply and are key factors in his thinking of what a good society would be like.*

The second relevant influences were his experiments with monastic life to 'following the footstep of the *arahants*

(enlightened disciples)'in Suan Mokkha, a monastery he founded. From the very beginning of Suan Mokkha in 1932 until he died in 1996, Buddhadasa lived a very simple life close to nature and practiced being happy with a "free mind"(Jit wang) and minimum material comfort as well as enjoying working as a way of practicing Dhamma. Through many periods of his life especially when he was still a young monk, he practiced severe austerity of Thutanga such as eating once a day, sleeping under trees or in the open air without a mosquito net. Normally when he took a bath, he made sure that the used water refreshed the trees or plants. He played with wild animals and had all kinds of pets in Suan Mokkha as well as carefully watching how nature operated in that small forest where trees and plants grew naturally. He was able to call wild lizards to eat wild berries from his hand. Poisonous snakes, especially the งูสามเหลี่ยม often more than two meters long, crept around Suan Mokkha freely without hurting anyone. These practices deeply influenced his teaching especially the emphasis on being comrades with nature and seeing nature as existing in a cooperative way. It also laid the foundation for his ideas of living a good life with limited material development.

We should also see Suan Mokkha and Ajarn Buddhadasa's teaching and activities as a response to the declining Sangha in Siam. The structural reform of the Sangha during the reign of King Rama V and the secularization of the teaching of Buddhism by his brother, Prince Vajirayanvarorot , though in some ways helpful in uniting the country in times of crisis, had many negative effects for the whole Sangha. The main one being that secularization resulted in most monks no longer taking the practice of overcoming suffering (Nibbana) seriously. Yet this is really the heart of the Buddhist teaching. For the Prince monk Vajirayanvarorot and the educated monks in his reformed system *Nibbana* was no longer a realistic goal of monks and lay Buddhists. Buddhism became only moral teaching with ordained teachers and ritual performers. Meditation was no longer taken seriously anymore by the clergy. It was these kind of monks, the majority of the Sangha, whose loose behavior Ajarn Buddhadasa saw in Bangkok in the late 1920s and early 1930s. That encounter shocked the young Buddhadasa and he turned his back on the mainstream Sangha and started anew.

What makes this situation worse is despite huge changes in society there has been no further reform in the Sangha structure or education system of the monks. Bangkok has changed from a small town to a cosmopolitan mega city within the last 75 years, yet the Sangha system has been conserved as it was 150 years ago. The result is that the gap between the lay society and the Sangha is getting bigger and bigger. Monks no longer understand what is going on in the lay-people's world. The glimpse of the deterioration Buddhadasa saw 70 years ago has continued on a downward spiral and at the turn of the 20th century, there is no hope for any real reform. I believe that one main purpose of Ajarn Buddhadasa was to show the mainstream Sangha an example of a possibility of authentic Buddhist reform. This is where I disagree with Louis Gabout who too quickly equates Buddhadasa's work as Western Protestant reform. If we are going to compare at all, it is more a spiritualised reform of the secularised Protestant reform of Prince Vajirayanvarorot.

The next big influence on this teaching was the rapid and negative westernisation of Thai society since WWII. Politicians especially the military dictators imposed strong policies that compelled Thai society to closely follow the American development policy in the 50s and 60s. The military government, following the advice of American 'experts' forbade monks to teach contentment, a key concept in Buddhism. Day and night public TV and radio promoted a new American style social ethos appeared notably ' Money is work, work is money and it makes you happy' and "the government wants to develop the country so that our people can live a high standard of living". A main part of Buddhadasa's teaching is to challenge these moves towards materialism and consumerism and propose a Buddhist alternative.

Then came a short period of left politics with the student movement in 70's. This had a strong influence on national politics and led to the first mass democratic movement of the country. It was powerful enough to over-throw a military junta that dominated the country for decades. Sanya Thamasak, one of Buddhadasa's close dhamma friends became an indecisive Prime Minister for a short period of political vacuum. From then the national politics was very

chaotic and culminated in the bloody coup of 1976 after which students joined the underground armed struggle of the communist party until the collapse of the whole left movement in early 80's. The Thai left of this period had a strong Maoist inclination and it shook Thai society to the core. Some of Buddhadasa's young disciples joined in. This is the time that he coined the word 'Dhammic Socialism' to challenge Marxist socialism from a Buddhist perspective.

He also lived to see the Thai experiment with chaotic parliamentary semi-democracy after the 1976 coup until the end of his life. He responded to the political situation at this time with a lecture on politics and dhamma including a criticism of his present day democracy.

His responses to both right and left political ideas from the west had a strong connotation of going back to Buddhist and Thai cultural roots which he often referred to the good old days of his home town. However, it was his style to be challenging and he used the word 'toy lang khow klong – step back into the canal' which has the connotation of regress and being regressive while the society of that time talked so much about progress and being progressive. This is why it is important to understand the style of his approach in order to understand his thoughts.

His Buddhist alternative vision has many profound and valuable aspects. However, his understanding of new ideas from the west such as democracy, Marxism, socialism, human rights, dictatorship and capitalism was limited in the sense that he was not informed of the essence of the whole debate of these key concepts in the modern world. Thus some aspects of his criticism are sharp and to the point whilst others are too generalised, miss the point and are too simplistic.

Another context of his social teaching that is less known to the public is that he was influenced deeply by Gandhi's idea of a village republic.

His personality

Before talking about his style it is helpful to understand aspects of his personality that influenced his approach. I understand that he was born with an analytical mind and was very observant. He used these skills in every day life. When he was young he analysed how to cook good food and how to train a good fighting fish. As he studied to prepare himself to be a monk for three months according to the tradition, he read the basic Buddhist textbooks (Nakdham 1, 2 and 3) and earned respect in his articulation on the teaching among the elders in his community. He used his sharp observant and analytical mind all through his career of teaching and might have overused it in his arguments. He also had good concentration powers and as a boy he used this power to hold a clear vision of the colourful fighting fish in his mind to detach from the fear when he walked through scary places like graveyards. This observance, analysis and concentration made a formidable force when combined with the sense of excellence implanted by his mother and his attentive attention to his intuition. Thus his sixty years of teaching produced many wonderful thoughts and actions that will have long lasting effect on Buddhism and society.

The next aspect of his personality to shape his approach is being *nak-leng*, a quality in Thai traditional culture whose positive meaning is a combination of being upright, open-minded, courageous and not afraid to be seen as being rebellious and notorious. Thus from early on in his teaching, he challenged the traditional Thai Buddhist audience by saying that the way they respect the Buddha, dhamma and Sangha was an obstacle for them to realize the essence of the teaching. All through his life he issued this kind of awakening challenge to Thai society again and again. He even made his sickness and death an issue to awaken modern society to the over-artificial medical process that prolongs life. He advocated that we should be allowed to die naturally and was critical of the wasteful ways of funeral ceremonies. For his birthday celebration he fasted and taught for three days and asked people to join him in fasting rather than organize parties or give gifts.

Another personality trait that influenced his teaching is his authoritarianism. He ran Suan Mokkha that way and did not build up a participatory culture in that community. He once said "Suan Mokkha believes in a democracy with dhamma as a dictator. Kindness and compassion are dictators like parents who care for their children but sometime must punish them." This kind of authoritarian approach led to disastrous results after his death. The abbot he chose to replace him did not have the calibre to carry on the work and all the good disciples left Suan Mokkha. Moreover, his nephew who took over the lay foundation that supported Suan

Mokkha's work is mediocre with little confidence. Both key leaders want only yes men and women around them. Sadly, Suan Mokkha as a place and an institution has no future until these two dictators have gone or changed their dictatorial style.

However, Buddhadasa had a wonderful sense of humour and was always able to laugh and criticize himself unpretentiously. He admitted that he misunderstood *vipassana* in his early days of searching and teaching. He admitted that he is not a polite speaker and used harsh words. I like Louis Gabout's description of him as authentic. Once I asked him whether he was enlightened. He paused for a minute and said 'I don't know whether I am enlightened, but I do not have suffering'.

Approaches of his teaching

There were several approaches related to his personality that came out in his teaching. To understand these may help us understand his thinking more clearly.

No 'invented' teaching. He never claimed that he invented anything new. His source of authority and legitimacy go back to the original teaching of the Buddha. So he spent a lot of time in his life studying the *Tripitaka* thoroughly and critically. For him the Buddha did not invent anything new either but he discovered the natural truth. So the teaching of the Buddha is the disclosing of the laws of nature for those who want to live a life free from suffering. Thus for him loving kindness, compassion, contentment, non-self and precepts are natural laws to make individual's and society happy if we operate accordingly.

Redefinition of Buddhist Terms. Secondly, in his teaching he often redefined existing terms so that they made sense in the frame of Buddhist values. Hence, his redefinition of Socialism, Democracy, the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, just to mention a few. The Buddha also used redefinition and many terms in the Buddhist scriptures were common words in the society of those days, but the Buddha gave a new meaning or deeper meaning to them when he used them for his teaching. This included words like nibbana, bhrama, etc.

Interpretation from diverse schools of political thought. In using key concepts such as dhammic socialism, dictatorship, cooperative, he was also cautiously making sure that there would be enough room for interpretation from diverse schools of political thought. The left, the right, the conservative, the military can all make use of the four mentioned terms and claim that they are applying his teaching in their practice.

Challenging fashionable belief systems. Another factor is his tendency to be controversial and challenging to fashionable ideas or belief systems that he did not feel right about. Sometime he would use very strong words to counter balance the existing ethos. For example in his eighties when he had gone through the *Tripitaka* time and again for more than half a century he made a public speech that 70 % of the *tripitaka* can be thrown into the sea as that part is useless for coping with suffering. This is partly because the teaching of Buddhism in Siam was so conservative and uncritical that he felt that it was useless study. When the military government busily promoted the American idea of 'development', he said that in Pali the root of the word Pattana, a Thai translation of development, means to make things messy.

Alternative approach. The personality trait we call in Thai 'swimming against the stream' also influenced his teaching. He kept a good distance from both government authority and Sangha authority. He lived an alternative life to the mainstream monks, he founded Suan Mokkha as an alternative monastery, he initiated new ways of teaching and new ways of interpreting dhamma as well as criticizing many existing institutions in society. His message is alternative is possible. I understand that the Buddha also used this approach when he started the Sangha.

Some Key Concepts to understand Dhammic Socialism

Simple Living – Higher Thinking. Before he talked about Dhammic Socialism in response to the left-right political debate of 70s', Ajarn Buddhadasa laid down solid ground for what is a good life for an individual. His socialism would be a kind of society that provides an environment for individual growth so that one can be fully human. This process means that the main purpose of life is to fully develop our wisdom, compassion, generosity or the Buddha nature within by reducing and getting rid of greed, hatred and self-conceit which causes affliction in life. When I intensively read his books in my late teens in the 60's, I came to realise that I had been pursuing the wrong path as the aim of my life then had been to get rich, be powerful and get recognition in

society—big house, big car, a lot of money, a highly paid career etc. It was clear that this aim created a lot of affliction in my life then. He talked a lot about 'simple living, higher thinking' as a more attractive ideal. A big part of his teaching is about how to live this good life including detailed methods of self-training in all aspects with full instructions about meditation techniques and different ways to look at the world and life with a free mind (จิตว่าง). It is clear that consumerism and materialism is not the answer. The aim of life is not to gain more wealth, power and fame as modern society tells us to do. On the contrary, being contented with minimum material needs and using the rest of our energy to cultivate our minds and hearts so that we can serve others is the real aim to make us a fully human and happy person. This teaching is a main foundation for dhammic socialism.

Live simply, eat simply. During the 1960's he expressed strong criticism against the American promotion of 'development for high standard of living'(*yuu dii kin dii - live well and eat well*). Instead he proposed moderate standard of life *(kin yuu po di - live simply, eat simply)*. Thus emphasizing on taking enough for needs but not greed. It is clear that for Buddhadasa society does not need to pursue endless material development or progress. A life with limited but just enough material well-being is more conducive to develop full human potential than a life of too much material concern. I am sure that his experience in his home village and his experiment of good life at Suan Mokkha, at least partially informed this aspect of his teaching which is in harmony with the teaching of the Buddha.

Befriend rather than conquer nature. The key notion for his development of dhammic socialism is that human beings should live a life close to nature, befriend nature and not try to conquer nature. His favorite saying is that the Buddha was born, got enlightened, lived and taught and died in nature. So a good society is not one full of artificial artifacts that separate life from the natural environment. In short the ideal human habitat for Buddhist culture is not city life like Bangkok but rural and semi-forest life like Chaiya and Suan Mokkha.

Nature. Another related and very central concept of his is nature. He used this in both metaphysical and empirical ways. As his life was close to nature, he observed his natural surroundings and came to the conclusion that nature existed and worked in a cooperative way. To prove this to visitors, he always pointed to a big tree in front of his hut. Many small trees and plants live and grow together with it plus a number of wild animals such as birds, squirrels, lizards etc. Hence for him human society can and should be similarly organized in a cooperative spirit.

For him everything in all the universes is nature. If god exists, if other worldly beings like devas, angels, miracles, etc. exist, they are also natural phenomena. There is nothing that is not natural. This nature operates with laws, the most important being Itappaccayata-that there is no separate self in all beings. Everything is inter-dependent. The other one is the 4 noble-truth.

So as human beings if we understand these natural laws and behave accordingly then a natural result of our practice will be a good life and good society. According to the Cakkavatti-*sutra* that he often referred to, the human practices and the function of other natural phenomena such as the moon, the stars, the sun and the seasons are very much related and influence each other. If the leader of a community is not behaving according to dhamma (laws of nature) the participants of that community will have a tendency not to behave according to dhamma. If the behavior of the whole community is motivated by greed then the behavior of natural beings such as the celestial beings and the seasons will not follow the proper rules and disaster will be unavoidable. So for Ajarn Buddhadasa the cultivation of a free mind, cooperative spirit and simple living close to nature are practices that go in harmony with the laws of nature.

Working is Practicing Dhamma. The other concept that is relevant here is that to work is to practice Dhamma and to enjoy life. If you work mindfully, that work is self-training to cultivate wisdom and compassion. Another favorite motto of Suan Mokkha is 'do all work with a free mind, don't attach to the result of your work. Take in the joy of detachment and die before you die.' I believe that this idea is derived from his experiments with his life in Suan Mokkha. If we follow this logic can we interpret it as a protestant work ethic for an early capitalist society or can it be interpreted very differently? If we put this thinking of his in the context of the society he admired and knew as well as his central idea of fully cultivated human potential, it can definitely be interpreted that

work should enhance wisdom and compassion, joy and dignity rather than endless accumulation of wealth. Work and play are not two separate things. We don't have to work hard feeling bitter or bored only looking forward to holidays to enjoy life. Hence we need the rethinking about the working atmosphere, working structures, ownership and decision-making processes as well as social structure to support it.

We should also ponder about Buddhadasa's controversial idea of Dhammic Dictatorship and democracy. Santikaro Bhikkhu tries to say that dictatorship here mainly means decisiveness. I agree with this to an extent and would like to say that this may be a response to one of his main lay disciples, Sanya Thammasak, who became prime minister during a crucial period of Thai history mentioned above. Due to his indecisiveness the opportunity for real political reform was missed and it ended up as the tragic bloody coup in 1976.

As mentioned earlier regarding his personality I think he believed that if you have a good leader with a deeply cultivated personality (unconsciously like himself?), he or she would be able to make a lot of positive change if he or she makes quick decisions and holds a lot of power in hand. This is not an alien idea in Buddhism, the ancient concept of *Dhammaraja* is very much in this line of thinking. However, in Buddhism, there is also strong support of democratic practice. The Buddha made a clear choice when he did not appoint anyone to be the leader of the Sangha when he passed away. He entrusted the decision making power to the community of monks and nuns who looked after the Sangha. During his lifetime, the Buddha gave dhamma teaching to both types of governance, the democratic republic and the monarchy. The Buddhist position is that either way dhamma is needed to be the base of the system. However, the Buddha seems to favor the former rather than the latter as we can see from the way he models the Sangha accordingly. Young Buddhadasa also seemed to favor this position as we can see from many of his lectures supporting democratic change. Though later in his life, his position seemed to shift to a more authoritarian tone and when pressed in private debate, he said "What about dictated by the Sangha?" Here dictatorship definitely means decisiveness. Sangha here means the decision of the whole community.

Again this brings us back to his approach that gives room for different interpretations according to different schools of thought. People who favor democratic processes of course can make use of his teaching in this regard. That is democracy needs to be based on dhamma that means nature and the law of nature as mentioned above.

Related to this is his idea of equality and social classes. He definitely did not believe in equality in terms of sameness except the sameness aspects of nature such as everyone is friends in suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death. Everyone also has the potential to realize the Buddha nature and be liberated from all this suffering. However, not everyone is at the same stage in this path. I think he also believed in equality in terms of fairness that included equal opportunities. In his ideal society, there will not be oppressive capitalists nor oppressed laborers, but there can or even will be good-hearted richer people (*Setthi-jaiboon*) who look after and care for poorer ones. For him people's abilities are not the same. So the more capable have to help the less capable, the stronger help the weaker, the more intelligent help the less intelligent. I am inclined to say that his vision, though egalitarian in a sense also has room for different social classes by merit. However, the relationship between classes should not be exploitative and antagonistic but cooperative and caring of each other. A Marxist friend of mine says that his social idea is class-compromising (as versus class conflict and class struggle in Marxism).

Then there is also the community of monks and nuns who are a classless proletariat in the sense that they come from all social classes but that background does not count, once they are ordained, as they have no personal belongings or private property. Their material well-being is taken care of by the community, they devote their life to cultivate their wisdom and compassion and work for the betterment of society as a spiritual guide in all aspects of life. For Buddhadasa, the lay community should follow the monks' simple way of life as much as possible.

He summarised the crux of this idea of dhammic socialism in a sentence: 'Everyone work to his or her best capacity, consume only the basic necessities and the surplus will be donated to the common good.' This may sound like the slogan of the communist manifesto but it is more from his way of life as a monk in Suan Mokkha where he practiced liv-

ing according to Buddhist ideals.

A Vision for A Dhammic Society

From the above context and key concepts, if we are to envision a good society according to him I would say the following:

In a dhammic society, we do not have to compete to be on the higher steps of social ladders in terms of wealth, power and recognition. We will be encouraged to cultivate our wisdom, compassion, open-mindedness, and generosity—not competition, greed and individualism.

Our education systems, formal, non-formal or informal including the mass media will facilitate us to understand our inner self as well as the external world. This will help us to discover our potential and talent as well as our Buddha nature. We would have plenty of time to meditate, practice yoga, exercise and do art as education is for the head, the heart and the body.

This process of education does not need to be separated totally from our family and community life. Children working with parents or other adults in the community can be part of the education and we learn how to do meaningful work since we are young. Since work and play go together, there is no question of using child labor. Work is not only for oneself but for the family and community as well.

When we are grown up, only a part of our time is to work to earn our living, we would have time for spiritual development, friends and family as well as others in the community. Material well-being is moderate with no-one encouraged to show off his or her wealth. Some of our friends may want to be more frugal than others. They will be more respected as they live closer to the ideal life of an authentic monk. There will be some who have more greed and want to live a more comfortable life than others. It is ok but they are not highly respected.

However, no one should own too much wealth and means of production such as land and money privately. When one has too much, other will have less. One should own only as necessary. Surplus should be share in community.

Overemphasis on unlimited private ownership that leads to exploitation of other and of nature in capitalism is against the laws of nature and will lead to social crisis. Overemphasis on state-mechanism to control and distribute wealth as in the state-socialism is also against nature and leads to oppression. Both don't take nature seriously and exploit nature destructively.

We should live very close to nature. There will be plenty of places of natural beauty around, or not too far from our community. Some of our friends may live harmoniously in forests and other natural places by choice either as lay communities of forest dwellers or as monks and nuns. Both types of communities are highly respected as they consume less and live naturally but are happy working for the betterment of the whole society. The town or village dwellers from time to time visit nature for renewal—charged from primordial nature. People who are highly evolved spiritually will be well respected as well as people who devoted their energy to improve the society and preserve nature.

As we do not believe in a linear kind of material progress, our society does not encourage endless development of industry and high technology without moral and spiritual guidance. An example of guidance is that people should be able to live in harmony with nature and make use of nature at the minimum level for human purposes. So we have to take care that we do not develop technology that allows us to over use or destroy nature. At the same time as we want to live with our human friends in a cooperative and compassionate way, we need a completely different kind of social structure and we do not develop arms-industries at all. Chemical fertilizers and insecticide as well as well as biotechnology are not allowed for spiritual, human and environment reasons.

Politically we live and make decisions in a small community where every one knows every one else. We network with other communities through direct contact, other kinds of communication and internet and if decisions need to be made, we will discuss and come to an agreement. If any form of state or nation state still exists, we will try to bypass them as much as possible so that we do not depend on them. Some of our friends may want to work in the structures of state, but with a clear mandate that exists only to reduce its power. That means to empower local communities as much as possible. People who work at the state structure do not get more recognition or pay than those working at community level.

Economically we all produce for our basic consumption mainly from agriculture and crafts. The surplus can be shared with those who need them anywhere.

In reality we have to live in a

world that has different or opposite values, so we can create a small community of resistance in whatever area we can to show the world that an alternative is possible. As we know there are like-minded people around the world who see the problem of the mainstream system and are working for alternatives we will keep in touch with them and share information. We will also help and encourage people who want to create a good society as we are trying to do. If the collective karma of human society is ripe for a move to a better one more and more people will join hands in this new venture. Otherwise we are happy to be a minority who live a different life according to our belief but we are not going to be exclusive. We will keep interacting with the mainstream and engage in dialogue with them.

Pracha Hutanuwatr
Jane Rasbash

Speech delivered at
"Dr. Ambedkar and the Modern Buddhist World" Conference
30 October 2006
Nagaloka Campus, Nagpur, India

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[1] Fitzgerald, Timothy, "Politics and Ambedkar Buddhism in Maharashtra" in *Buddhism and Politics in Twentieth-century Asia*. Edited by Ian Harris; Continuum, London and New York, 1999.

Dhamma Samgiti Project

The occasion of the 100th anniversary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa in the year 2006-2007, provided chances for people of all sectors to be aware of his life, his works, and his resolution for cultivation of spirituality, inter-religious co-operation and the withdrawal from materialism-consumerism.

The late Buddhadasa and Pridi Banomyoung (the Thai former regent, prime minister and statesman, recognized by UNESCO in 2000), once thought that Theravada Buddhism should make use of music and songs as an instrument to bring people toward the teachings of the Buddha. They called the project "***Dhamma Samgiti***" which was regrettably left undone because of Pridi's political problems.

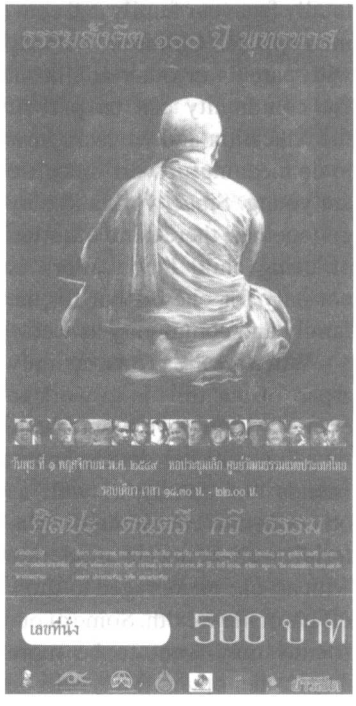
Buddhadasa, however, continued to write many poems. Some of his poems became songs to be sung in ceremonies in his temple, together with folk songs and traditional chanting.

Music and songs if performed skillfully is a powerful instrument to cultivate beauty, then goodness (kusaladhamma) and truth (paramatthadhamma) for general public. In the present time full of entertainments that stimulate lust and craving, the dhamma samgiti is urgently needed. Therefore, the *Dhamma Samgiti* Project is proposed by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation as a part of the 100th Anniversary of the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu.

At the beginning stage, the project will start by making music and songs from Buddhadasa's poems, Theravada chanting, sutta and dhammapada. The next stage would be training, performing, and making a dhamma music library. Then, the foundation will go on with production, marketing and advertising.

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation welcomes donations from anyone who is interested in dhamma music as a means to carry the valuable teachings of the Buddha to the wider audience.

You can send your check payable to "Sulak Sivaraksa" and mail to *Dhamma Samgiti* Project (Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation) 666 Charoen Nakorn Road, Klong San, Bangkok 10600, Siam (Thailand).



Activities to Celebrate the Centenary of Buddhadasa

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation organized many international activities to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the UNESCO-recognized late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu during 2006-2007. The activities so far that we have done from May - December 2006 are the following.

Translation of *Dhammic Socialism.* We started the process to get this book translated in Indonesian, Burmese and Tibetan. We are prepared to translate it into other Asian languages.

Reprinting of *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*. The reprinting of the English version is finished. The review of this book can be found in the book review section. The Indonesian publication is in process.

Seminars and lectures. Sulak Sivaraksa and others traveled to give lectures or led the seminar on the spirit of Buddhadasa in different countries, e.g. Laos, USA, India. More will be done in the next year.

Muslim-Buddhist dialogue in 26 - 28 June 2006 is another seminar that exhibited the hope for inter-religious understanding of Buddhadasa. The full report was in the Sept-Dec 2006 issue of *Seeds of Peace*.

In the Youth Buddhist Leadership Training from 19 May - 24 June, Buddhadasa's teachings on socio-political aspect of Buddhism was integrated meaningfully so that the young people would be aware of their role in social engagement.

International Philharmonic Orchestra During 14-15 July 2006 organized by The College of Music, Mahidol University. Nawang Khechog, the internationally renowned Tibetan flutist joined the university's band Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra (TPO). The program included the ancient song *Sadhukan* to pay respect to teachers and masters in musical circle, Nawang Khechog's solo on *Homage to Buddhadasa* and *Universal Love*, Thanit Siklindee's *River Line* and Atibhop Bhatradejpaisan's *Samveja Samvasa*, reflecting the feeling towards the memorial places of the Buddha.

Redesigning and revitalizing Buddhist rites and rituals The program is to make Buddhist rites and rituals more meaningful and able to communicate its essence to the new generation. It is underway now for a few months, and in the process of collecting chanting from different traditions, poems, and new *gathas* that reflects modern issues of consumerism, ecological crisis, etc.

Nawang Khechog was also invited to celebrate the centenary of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu at Phuket and Krabi in Southern Siam.

National Concert in honor of Buddhadasa was organized at the Thai Cultural Center (Small Auditorium) on 1 November in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. Many artists from various provinces took part in the grand event.

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation supported a group of artists to exhibit 100 paintings accompanying 100 poems in honor of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in various provinces.

Mr Dinpa Jeevan reproduced drawings and paintings from the Spiritual Theatre at Suan Mokh to exhibit at the National Gallery in Bangkok from 27 May to 30 June 2006.

On 14th December 2006 Sulak Sivaraksa gave an English lecture on Buddhadasa Bhikkhu at the Siam Society, which elected the Venerable as the first Thai monk to be its honorary member.

From a Happy Country to a 'Democratic' Country?

This is my first visit to Bhutan. When I heard the word 'Bhutan', it sounds like a paradise especially with the King of Bhutan's declaration that 'the country should develop on Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than Gross National Product (GNP)'. This statement impressed and inspired me as well as all people like me who are working on the ground for sustainable lifestyle, society and nature.



Sulak Sivaraksa with The Queen Mother of Bhutan

This study trip brought together social thinkers, NGO workers, businessmen, and even a young boy. All together 11 of us traveled, learned and shared with likeminded people from 22nd to 29th of August 2006. It is a result of a long relationship between Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and people and institutes in Bhutan dating back to the late 80's. This time the Center of Bhutan Studies (CBS) invited him to give a public talk at the CBS Conference Hall on *"Problems that Buddhism Confronts during Modernization"*. Sulak's talk provoked the Bhutanese to look thoroughly at development and modernity.

Most Bhutanese still live the traditional way of life that leads to well-being and happiness. But in the process of development, simplicity has become inferior to modernization in the eyes of the people. Although the King of Bhutan has warned his own people to be cautious of materialism, many people still simply aim at the materialistic world.

His Majesty has mentioned that 'Bhutan can be a model for the world by preserving the core elements of Buddhism and updating the tradition, customs and rituals for the contemporary world. Bhutan is a small country, a beautiful country, and it is easier to have a change for the better than in a big country.'

Throughout our visit, we had an opportunity to meet, observe, listen, share and discuss with authorities such as the Minister of Home Affairs, Chief Justice, Secretary of the Education Department, government staff, researchers, businessmen, tour guides and ordinary people to see and understand Bhutan from different angles and also to see how the concept of GNH works in practice.

To me, the contribution of GNH in terms of a sparking idea for people to re-think other developmental possibilities is the most crucial aspect. Such a ground-breaking idea makes people question the present trends of development and globalization. I myself will continue the dialogue on this issue, integrating it in my work in Southeast Asia.

Bhutan already enforced some interesting concrete policies, such as banning plastic (2002), phasing out reliance on logging as income for the country, stopping the use of insecticide (2001), limiting tourists to Bhutan, encouraging people to wear traditional costume and bilingual learning.

In the political sphere, Bhutan has an interesting model that might have been opposite to other countries. In many countries, the attempt to hinder the civil society can be found. It's because, unlike the government of Bhutan, the governments or those in power do not want positive changes or lack vision. But Bhutan, at the policy level, has shown a green light for a sustainable way of living although some people want to follow mainstream development and modernization. It means that the civil societies should focus their effort on working with and advocating for

the people.

Bhutan will change the regime from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in the year 2008. There may a change of the policy soon after the election. The civil societies in Bhutan must prepare for the change. They must be ready to play a stronger role in checking and balancing those who come to power and also the power of business that become stronger and more closely related to the government.

At the moment Bhutan is leaning vigorously towards the Thai model. This choice would have created some negative impacts on the policy and function of the country. The elites send their children to get educated abroad. The children would return with a different mind set of development. It is simply the replication of the modernization process in Siam in the reign of King Rama V 100 years ago.

There is also a feeling of 'insecurity' of some people under the monarchical ruling power. Public criticism can result in a life sentence. Rumor says that people are waiting for the year 2008. After the election, they will not need to bow and stand up when the King or high authorities are passing by any more.

Recently as a Thai newspaper mentioned, Bhutanese persons who are eligible to be nominated as a member of parliament must get at least a BA. It means that 2/3 of the present cabinet will be removed because of that criteria. Even though, Bhutan has become very close to Thailand and popular among Thai people, unfortunately it has yet to learn from our experiences after introducing and applying democracy for over 70 years.

Thai people have learnt recently that democracy does not mean only the election. This is one mistake that we have made. Now that we are drafting a new constitution, we are also talking about different means of getting members of parliament.

Bhutan will be or will not be repeating experiences that we had. Let's look at the Tibetans who have invented a system of election which is more appropriate and useful. Thailand and Bhutan should have learnt from the Tibetan government in exile on the idea of *'buddhist democracy'* rather than duplicating the western world.

I'm afraid that Bhutan, a lovely, beautiful and happy country will turn to the opposite after introducing democracy into the country. How can it be happy and "democratic" at the same time?

Somboon Chungprampree

Learning From Ladakh

Earlier this year, SEM's Advanced Grassroots Leadership Training programme (GLT) for Burmese community development workers took to the stark and isolated highland valleys of Ladakh to learn how Ladakhis are dealing with change in a modernizing world.

Twenty participants from Shan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Mon ethnic minority groups took part in the eleven week training, held in Thailand, and including a four week exposure visit to India and Ladakh.

With participants already alumni of previous GLT courses, this advanced level programme was to update them on development issues and challenges facing other communities in Asia, and to give them the confidence, skills and understanding to be able to work for the greatest benefit for the disadvantaged and marginalized within their communities.

This renewal of commitment in working for their communities was clearly illustrated by the participants themselves at the end of the training:

"In Ladakh we were able to see the people living in an extreme environment, but even so, they work for just six months and are able to sustain themselves. So in Burma we have the fertile soil and the ability to be able to grow for 12 months, to grow twice that of the Ladakhi's. So we should be grateful to live in such a land. There are many reasons for our life there to be meaningful".

"When we saw the Ladakhi people who are able to withstand the situation and the weather, we felt encouraged by them. Our spiritual and maturity level is stronger because of those people we were able to meet."

India itself is a land of contrasts, with a burgeoning new middle class built on the technological boom, set among the slums and pollution, the crumbling historical monuments, and the chaos of the streets with



beggars and sadhus and roaming holy cows. Yet the pressure of modernization on Indian communities has led to many innovative and traditional-based solutions to deal with change.

The group was able to visit Bija Vidyapeeth, an ecological college under the guidance of environmental activist, Vandana Shiva. Here, new organic farming techniques were learnt, as well as the opportunity to practice – weeding of the rice paddy illustrated the keen eye needed to distinguish between the weeds and the rice plants!

Before the long journey to Ladakh began, the group took part in a workshop on understanding the self, in order to see clearly the interdependence with society and nature. Being social workers, time for self-reflection can be very limited, and can lead to 'burn out', so this workshop was the perfect opportunity for the group to reflect not only on their work, but also on their relationships with fellow workers, family, and society, and how they can improve their understandings and actions to benefit others. Feeling renewed and ready to put into practice the insights learnt from the workshop, the journey to Ladakh began.

Ladakh – the land of high places – is set among the grandeur of the Himalaya and Zanskar ranges, with the mighty Indus river cutting its way through the landscape, bringing with it peoples who have settled on its river banks and farmed the marginal land for thousands of years. At 3 600 metres in altitude, the climactic change for those in the group from low-lying areas of central and southern Burma was a difficult adjustment. The two day journey over three mountain passes, along precarious cliff tops and bone-rattling dusty tracks, was both stunning and testing, and bought many to the realization of the strength and character that the Ladakhi people have developed, given the isolation and harsh conditions.

Helena Norberg-Hodge has articulated the situation of Ladakhis in facing the pressures of both modernization and globalization, in her book *Ancient Futures*. Her organization, ISEC, was set up to encourage respect for Ladakhi culture through the ecological need for the promotion of sustainable ways of living in such a fragile landscape. Through ISEC the group had the opportunity to stay with local families and experience first-hand Ladakhi cultural practices that have sustained them and their environment over thousands of years. A lot of interest and enjoyment was shared as both the Burmese group and the villagers exchanged their local knowledge and world views, the challenges they were facing, and their hopes for the future. But it was not all serious, with the exchange of songs and dancing which tested the shyness of the village girls in their attempt to follow the spontaneous and proud singing of the village elders.

Ani Tsering Palmo, from the Ladakhi Nun's Association also shared her experiences with the group, on gender issues within the monastic community, and the challenges faced by nuns. She also offered with her dedication and determination to promote the role of the nuns within the monastic community by creating a supportive environment for the nuns to dedicate themselves to learning and practicing the dharma without the distractions usually placed on them as servers to monks and lamas.

SECMOL is a movement based at a campus on the outskirts of the Ladakhi capital of Leh. It focuses on youth and education and was set up as an alternative school that embraces holistic principles of environmental sustainability and empowering education for its students. Here the group learnt about the failings of the Ladakhi education system that saw only a five percent pass rate, and the critical analysis of this problem by Ladakhis themselves, in order to create an education relevant to the students. Led by Sonam

Wanchuk, he explained to the group how they were able to identify the causes of failure, and how they rectified this. Ladakh is now one of the few areas in India that has its own education system, contextual to the environment and worldview of the Ladakhis.

Staying at the campus for three days, the group was able to see the ownership and responsibility that the students had over the school campus, with students running the accounting, cooking, cleaning, and maintenance of the campus. They were also able to learn solar-building techniques which allow the campus to open in the winter where temperatures reach a chilling 20 degrees below zero.

The final session in Ladakh was an exchange with the Women's Alliance of Ladakh, also part of ISEC. Here the group was shown a documentary on educational tours led by ISEC to western countries, where Ladakhi community leaders are able to see and experience for themselves the reality of modernized western life, rather than just the glossy version portrayed through movies, advertising and tourism. Community leaders visited to 'red light' areas, old peoples' homes, and experienced the mechanization of daily life, all alien to the concept of Ladakhi life which is based on social cohesion, morality and compassion, and meaningful work. The group was able to meet with two women who had taken part in this educational tour, and hear that by seeing these negative aspects of westernization and modernization, it had helped them to renew their respect and value for their own culture, and to educate others in their communities on what they had experienced.

The women from WAL talked about the psychological pressures that have been invading Ladakh, breaking down the traditional social structures and eroding the self-esteem of youth, and how the modern economy has marginalized and devalued a lot of women. Facing these challenges, they shared on how they educate and support on issues of shared labour, sustainable agriculture, and encouraging communities to maintain their cultural identity in the face of inferiority created by the pressures of media.

This session summed up the problems that Ladakhi's are facing, and the ways in which they are countering the negative effects and reviving their own cultural understandings to develop a sustainable future for their communities. For many of the group, the parallels with Burma were apparent, and the lessons learnt from the differing groups in Ladakh renewed and strengthened their own commitment to work against exploitation and degredation of their own communities.

"When we came I felt the high mountains and the narrow valleys were really dangerous, and those living on those mountains have to struggle a lot. So I think that God has blessed us to live in Burma. I saw before that we complained over little things, but I think after Ladakh, we can have perspective and be thankful for what we have."

Jessica Armour

Tibetan Medicine : Gentle and Holistic Treatment of Body and Mind

"Tibetan Medicine is one of the greatest legacies of Tibetan Buddhist civilization. It is a system that can contribute substantially to maintaining a holistic healthy condition. Like the traditional Indian and Chinese systems, Tibetan medicine views health as a question of balance. A variety of circumstances such as diet, lifestyles, seasonal and mental conditions can disturb this natural balance, which gives rise to different kinds of disorders." (Message from H.H. the 14th the Dalai Lama, http://www.tibetan-medicine.org/tibetanmedicine.asp)

Indeed, there is a variety of traditional medicine in different social contexts, especially in Asia but not many of them enjoy public acceptance nowadays. Tibetan Medicine – one of the most ancient treatments – has proved its quality to the world through empirical knowledge and has continued the scientific aspect of Buddhist philosophy for many centuries. Tibetan Medicine is a science, an art and a philosophy, providing a holistic approach



Dr. Namgyal Qusar is teaching pulse diagnosis technique.

to health care. It is a science because its principles are enumerated in a systematic and logical framework based on the understanding of the body and its relationship to the environment. It is an art because it uses diagnostic techniques based on the creativity, insight, subtlety and compassion of the medical practitioner. And it is a philosophy because it embraces the key Buddhist principles of altruism, karma and ethics.

One outstanding characteristic of Tibetan Medicine is kindness and gentleness. When being asked what qualification is needed to learn Tibetan Medicine, Dr. Namgyal Qusar, an internationally well-known Tibetan doctor said *"Being a good person. This is the most important character that learners should have basically. This is the reason why "Tibetan Medicine" is intentionally instructed through the lineage (of monks) so far. It is because the Gurus of Tibetan Medicine are afraid that if the knowledge is handed to bad people, it will harm a number of poor people finally."*

Besides, Tibetan Medicine is a science of understanding the body nature. It proposes how people themselves sustain the healthiness at the root causes of disorder, not totally depending on the doctor.

SEM as an organization that intends to disseminate spiritual education and alternative sciences stated that "Tibetan Medicine is a science of living not just a treatment." Many scholars criticize that the evolution on medicine in the west uprooted people from their wisdom and knowledge on traditional treatment that suit the nature of their body. Additionally, it convinces people to depend on the professional persons, not themselves as the owner of the body. With the awareness of the weaknesses of modern medicine, SEM has initiated Tibetan Medicine Workshops serving patients – who are disappointed by modern medicine – to learn how to take care themselves as well as educating the treatment professionals (doctors and medical staffs) who would like to extend their knowledge and apply this treatment dimension in their professional areas.

Hosted by SEM's Thai-exile Tibetan coordination team, the first program was held in Bangkok during November to early December 2005 with Dr. Pema Dorjee – a Chairman of the Central Council of Tibetan Medicine (C.C.T.M) from the Tibetan community in exile, as a resource person. In addition to lectures and workshops, he also conducted a health check-up for the patients. The program got a very positive response from the Thai people. Consequently, the second and third programs were run in 2006 led by Dr. Lobsang Soepa, Dr. Namgyal Qusar and Dr. Pema Yangchen respectively.

At the beginning of the program, the workshops are open for all people. However, the participants in the following workshops belonged to rather specific groups, such as Thai traditional medicine practitioners, therapists, doctors, etc. This is because SEM intends to provide more intensive courses for medical practitioners. This strategy seems to be sustainable way to disseminate this valuable knowledge in Siam.

In the near future, SEM wishes to see a network established among the participants, especially medical practitioners, and the exile Tibetan resource persons to develop this profound knowledge together. The practical option that SEM offered, based on its experiences can be the exchange of the medical students in the lacking aspects. It would improve the effectiveness, kindness and gentleness of the ancient treatment which have long served human beings with sincerity, not for selfish business interest.

Phornphan Seekattanaprom

SVN Asia in Vietnam

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Results in National CSR Platform

The establishment of a National CSR Platform was celebrated as a tangible result of the 5 day conference *Toward Multi-stakeholder Dialogue and Cooperation for Sustainable Development* held recently in Hanoi, Vietnam. Co-organizers of the conference were the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), Action Aid International Vietnam, and Social Venture Network (SVN) Asia. The platform will include representatives from the business sector, labour unions, government and NGO's.

The platform will be supported by international agencies while universities, within existing guidelines, will generate new skills and analytic thinking needed for managers to provide leadership in multi-stakeholder cooperation. The initiative to bring stakeholders together in a national platform offers an inspiring example for Asian countries.

Phan Van Ngoc, Country Director of Action Aid International Vietnam, in his opening address stated that new economic challenges facing Vietnam cannot be met by the government alone. Rapid economic growth brought more wealth but also created situations where rural migrant workers are exploited and exposed to labour conditions that are below minimum requirements. As was confirmed by Bui Sy Loi, the government's Chief Labour Inspector, the number of inspectors is not enough to visit all factories and workplaces in the country. Parties agreed that an important role is to be played by labour unions and NGO's. NGO's can both act as watch-dogs as well as training facilitators for exploited groups and initiatives for self-organization.

Regulations and pressure groups are not enough. Good employers make voluntary efforts from an inner drive to go beyond profit making, beyond compliance to regulations and towards the realizations of living values. This was the message of Prida Tiasuwan, SVN Asia President and Thai owner of a Pranda Group factory in Southern Vietnam. He made his remark in support of Madame Pham Chi Lan, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister. She reflected upon the period when the first signals of an emerging CSR movement reached her. She wondered whether CSR had to be understood as a non-tariff trade barrier imposed on developing countries by industrialized economies. She came to realize that often employers can make significant improvements in the work-place with relatively small investments. Better working conditions and a positive corporate culture lead to higher productivity.

Dr. Sopon Pornchokchai, President of Thai Appraisal Foundation, argued that only CSR by law will change industry.

Interesting CSR case studies from Cambodia were presented by Ms. Nguyen Thuc Quyen, Sustainability Team, of the Mekong Project Development Facility (MPDF). Social investments in the garment and leather industry resulted in improved reputation of both Cambodian business operators as well as international buyers with significant effects towards consumers' preference. An International Buyers' Forum was set up to balance out interests of brand owners with responsibilities of local suppliers. Multi-stakeholder engagement brought about monitoring mechanisms that serve common interests, including reduced duplication of monitoring. In many cases factories are flooded by foreign inspection teams, while local monitoring capacity is limited. The Buyers Forum raised the national reputation of Cambodia as a destination for foreign investment.

Whether the ISO 26000 social responsibility standard will be able to fulfill expectations has to be seen. Will ISO 26000 increase levels of social awareness, empower social responsible practice of stakeholders and synthesize monitoring efforts? The new ISO voluntary standard is planned to be ready in the year 2008. Ms. Wallapa van Willenswaard-Kuntiranont of Suan Nguen Mee Ma company, Bangkok, argued that the development process towards the social responsibility standard by negotiated consensus among the stakeholders may articulate a paradigm shift towards sustainable development. Democratic majority voting alone may be

in-adequate for global transformation needed. The WTO vs. civil society protests in Seattle, 1999, and global warming, tell us that our current world views need to be transformed. Decision making by consensus requires in-depth social interaction between all stakeholders.

Concrete examples of multi-stakeholder cooperation were presented by Thomas Finkel of GTZ, a German Government owned consultancy company. GTZ and Business Link in Vietnam have supported 5 national Round Tables in Vietnam to pave the way towards specific standard and certification initiatives.

However, unequal opportunities to participate in negotiations should be balanced out by support mechanisms like training and empowerment, according to Mr. Finkel. Incentives for economically motivated partners, justifying huge time investments, are strengthened brand reputation and improved market access. 'Mindful markets' are growing all over the world.

Unique insight in communication between employers and employees was given by Mr. Zan Jung-Min Sunoo, Chief Technical Advisor of ILO/Vietnam Industrial Relations Project. His presentation was titled 'Understanding strikes and their prevention'. He urged employers to encourage employees to establish labour unions and communicate on regular bases with them. Developing a clear framework for rights and responsibilities pays back at the end.

The conference had been opened by Mr. Jonathan Pincus, Senior Country Economist of UNDP. He analyzed that the Global Compact will probably be seen as one of the most important legacies of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as it constitutes a global platform for multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation.

Hans van Willenswaard
Business & Society, *issue 11*

The Criminal Court Judgment

Kanchanaburi public prosecutor (Thong Paphoom) V. Sulak Sivaraksa
For violation of the Thai Petroleum Act BE 2522 (1979)

The court has been informed that on 7 May 1996, the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) was authorized to undertake the construction of natural gas pipelines from the Yadana source in Burma through the Thai-Burmese border into Thailand at Ban I-tong, Tambon Pilok, Thong Paphoom district, Kanchanaburi province toward the Ratchaburi combined cycle power plant in Muang district, Ratchaburi province. But between 2-6 March 1998, during day and night successively, the accused and about 30 others camped out in the forest to obstruct the construction of the pipelines. They stood in rows and sat in groups to make the operation of the machines impossible. Thus, they were accused for violating the laws which provided for the rights of PTT to continue their construction.

The accused refused to accept the charge. He informed the judges that as a law graduate he believes in the Constitution and cherishes the constitutional monarchy. Among many in Siam, he has been revered as a conservationist who has made immense contribution to history, social development, economics, politics, culture, archeology and the environment. Apart from his extensive writings, lectures or public speeches, the accused has been endeavoring to work to preserve ancient buildings and the environment all along. Being informed about the Thai-Burmese gas pipeline project, he deemed the project had been pushed ahead by PTT with support from the Thai government without heeding to public opinions. The government, by refusing to hear voices from the people, was pressing ahead a project that would cause massive damages to the national interests, economically and politically, within and outside the country. The damages would also reach the environment, forests, fauna, etc. With this concern and the care for nature and the environment, the accused has been opposed to deforestation, destruction of the environment, particularly, in pristine forests of Kanchanaburi province. Therefore, the opposition waged by the accused toward the construction of the natural gas pipeline rests on the fervent hope to protect national interests at present and in future. It can be regarded as a sincere, honest, peaceful and nonviolent action and this right and freedom has been exercised duly under the provisions in the Constitution.

The accused further argued that the Petroleum Act BE 2522 (1979), which had been cited by the plaintiff to bring charges against him is unlawful in light of the current Constitution. The law grants draconian powers to PTT to bring charges against anyone who decide to obstruct their operation. However, with the attempts by the government to corporatize PTT, new legislations have been issued in recent years and that has led to the revocation of the PTT Act. In addition, the new laws mulled for the governing of the corporatized PTT bear no punitive clauses. Therefore, the PTT Act can no longer be cited as a ground to punish anyone who obstructs the operation by PTT.

The judges are therefore of the opinion that the accused is found not guilty for the charge.

Judges of the Criminal Court, 18 August 2006

How to Achieve Our Democracy

The word "democracy" in Thai appeared in the First Declaration of the People's Party which was announced and distributed to the public on 24 June 1932. It states: "It is necessary that the country has a government like in a democracy; that is, the country's head of state must be a commoner elected by Parliament to assume the position for a specified period. Citizens, expect to be cared for in the best ways."

Now, the word "democracy" in this context refers to a presidency or a republic. To avoid any misunderstanding or fear, democracy is further clarified to specifically mean "a democracy with the monarch as the head of state"; that is, a constitutional monarchy.

In reality, the word "democracy" is often mistakenly used and abused. Many states that call themselves "democracies" take pride in allowing their citizens to vote for their own representatives in parliament every four year or so. (Here I won't refer to the presidential system.) Before citizens go cast their votes, all kinds of means are used during the election campaigns—lies, vote-buying, disinformation, etc. in various degrees. When the whole electoral process is over, the right to government is jealously guarded by politicians and representatives, and citizens are swept aside to play the role of having no role. In some countries, the freedom of expression is only nominally upheld. Here I am not referring to dictatorships in the guise of democracies such as Singapore and Malaysia, but full-fledged democracies like England whose mass media systems are dominated by vested interests and the pursuit of profit. As such, their citizens have limited access to vital information (e.g., many important issues are not freely discussed, and hence are unknown), and therefore they may interpret the world according to the dictates of the ruling interests—e.g., capitalism, consumerism, neoliberalism, imperialism, etc. People everywhere are increasingly finding this version of democracy revolting. No doubt, this is not the kind of democracy that Thais should aim for; it is not good enough for us.

Let us retrace the democracy that emerged in Siam in the wake of the 24 June 1932 Revolution. Within three days a constitution was promulgated. It stated that power belongs to the people; that is, the equality of everyone is guaranteed by the law. No one has special privileges. The monarch is simply the head of state, an equal among equals. If the reactionaries did not successfully obstruct Pridi Banomyong's economic plan, Thais might even have the opportunity to enjoy greater economic equality. Equality here does not mean the absence of differences. But it means that everyone has equal rights and dignity and that everyone is counted equally.

We must also admit that although the People's Party was the main engine driving the 1932 Revolution, its members were mostly highly educated individuals and government officials. They weren't "ordinary" individuals so to speak. One of the main objectives of Pridi Banomyong, the brain of the People's Party, was thus to enhance the accessibility of "ordinary" people to education. This was included in the six proposals of the First Declaration. With education Pridi hoped that "ordinary" people would be able to meaningfully participate in Siamese democracy, thereby making democracy in Siam meaningful.

The establishment of the University of Morals and Political Science in 1934 was an important step in this direction. The idea was to awaken the people to the responsibilities of good citizens, to cultivate the moral courage of the people using the dhamma as an important guidance. It can be said that this university was too successful in its democratic intention. Reactionary forces in the country subsequently got rid of the university's rector, and the military dictatorship ultimately castrated the university's name: it became known simply as the University of Morals without Politics (Thammasat University).

We must be clear about the first fifteen years of democracy in Siam. The military leaders of the People's Party simply wanted to get rid of absolute monarchy, so that they could be the new masters of the country; that is, replacing absolutism with a military dictatorship. At the time, dictatorship was the preferred form of government—witness Germany, Italy, and Japan. Also, we must not forget that absolute monarchy in Siam since the Fifth Reign emulated absolutism in Europe. There was

a power struggle in the People's Party between the military and the civilian wings. Had the civilian wing gained the upper-hand, Siam might have had a more meaningful democracy according to the objectives of the First Declaration. Deep down, the military leaders of the People's Party did not want a constitutional monarchy—unless they were kings themselves. At the same time, the royalists in Siam wanted to preserve the monarchy or the inviolability of the monarch (symbolically at least) at all costs. The royalists were at the nadir of their power, however. This was an unprecedented situation in Siam. Nevertheless, they managed to make the constitution of 27 June 1932 a temporary one; the permanent constitution was promulgated on 10 December of the same year. The royalists made it appear as if it was the king himself who graciously granted the permanent constitution—with minimal contributions from the People's Party. Although the permanent constitution was eventually abolished, and Siam has had many more subsequently, the 10th of December is still considered as the Constitution Day. In other words, the emergence of democracy in Siam is given a conservative or even a reactionary twist to be compatible with the ideological triad of Country, Religion, and Monarchy.

Pridi Banomyong did his utmost to preserve and protect the dignity of the monarchy under the constitution. He wanted to make the monarchy compatible with the changing times. However, he used militant words against the royalists and the monarchy in the First Declaration. And his economic plan aimed at making everyone unacceptably equal in the eyes of the reactionary forces. The royalists thus saw him as a persona non grata. Pridi paid a heavy price for his conviction. In a smear campaign, he was linked to the mysterious death of King Rama VIII. Several innocent individuals were also killed as a result of the campaign through legal and extra-legal measures. This is an important example of eradicating democratic substance from Thai society. It happened alongside the manufacturing of the monarch's divinity and supernatural-ness—which is not Buddhist. This move however seemed to mesh well with the morally half-baked nature of the military dictatorship, which served American imperialism, international capitalism, consumerism, etc.

As someone who brought democracy to Siam, Pridi knew better than others that: 1) as the highest law of the country, the constitution must be enforced by the dhamma, not by armed violence (might is not right); 2) moral courage must be cultivated in the citizens so they would devote themselves to the wellbeing of the country and of humanity; and 3) a meaningful democracy in Siam must be rooted in Buddhism—it need not blindly follow western paradigms. This does not mean that Buddhist principles are superior to those of other religions or faiths. But it proposes that the sangha itself is a viable model of democracy in terms of the cultivation of equality, fraternity, and liberty from greed, hatred, and delusion. When Pridi was Regent to King Rama VIII, he invited Bhikkhu Buddhadasa to engage in a Buddhist conversation with him at his Ta Chang residence. The conversation was held over five consecutive days, approximately three hours each day. With the Buddhadasa's guidance, Pridi wanted to establish a dhammic socialism that was emancipatory and relevant to Siamese society at the time.

Pridi wanted to pave the way for Siamese citizens toward a meaningful democracy. Numerous factors obstructed his dream such as the military dictatorship and World War Two. To preserve the promise of democracy Pridi established the Seri Thai Movement with his fellow citizens in Siam as well as overseas. The movement enabled the kingdom to preserve its sovereignty and national integrity in the wake of the war. Pridi supported national liberation movements in the region. The League of Southeast Asian Nations was established to foster democracy or democratic socialism as well as to counterbalance American and Soviet imperialism in the region. The regional grouping also hoped to improve its members' bargaining power vis-à-vis the emerging states of India and China.

In sum, democracy in Siam by the end of the first fifteen-year cycle pointed toward the greater decentralization of power. The three southernmost provinces had a fair degree of autonomy especially in terms of language and religion. They co-existed in Siam with equality. To a large extent, the northeastern provinces were also able to maintain their distinct characteristics, politically, culturally, and economically. They were not deemed inferior to the central provinces.

Pridi's dream disintegrated six decades ago. Though we had

overthrown a series of dictators (e.g., 14 October 1973, May 1992, and 19 September 2006), meaningful democracy is still not in sight. In each of these events, we merely changed the head of the political elites. Deep down the ruling elites are still fond of top-down structures, fixed hierarchical relations, and special privileges (on this latter point, perhaps even more so than during absolute monarchy). How then can meaningful democracy erupt in Thai society? There's no accountability and transparency. The right to open criticism is limited. Some things are still deemed divine or mystical, hence beyond reproach.

I will not offer any view on the recent coup d'etat. I will not criticize those who are in power now and will not discuss about the government of the present prime minister and his 'parliament'.

I think many individuals in power now are good. At least, they have good intentions and want to make changes to benefit the people as a whole. Of course, some have vested interests in various degrees. But in terms of the system, it is impossible for those in power to reach out to or understand the people. As long as the fixed hierarchical structures are still in place, the people will not be able to raise their heads, will not be counted equally as those above them. It is also difficult to find any 'ordinary' folk at the center of power. How then can the new elites in power understand about meaningful democracy? At best, the new elites will merely (and inappropriately) copy the democratic paradigms available in western textbooks and adapt them to Thai society. How many among the new power elites actually understand about constitutional monarchy? Some of them even suggested that democracy is incompatible with Thai culture.

On this last point, my views are different. I affirm that the democratic spirit is vibrant among Thai citizens. At least this democratic spirit is stronger than in many neighboring countries. In the past, the *jataka* ("Birth Stories") collected and edited by Buddhist monks invariably challenged or confronted the illegitimate power of the ruling class. In the present, we can see this spirit in the Assembly of the Poor and similar organizations scattered throughout the kingdom. The democratic conscience of the middle class has also been awakened. We can see it in the conservationist movement in Kanchanaburi province, in the Bo Nok and Baan Krut communities and NGOs of Udonthani province, in Songkhla, in Chiangmai, etc. The ruling elites are impervious to the potentialities of these movements. Through collaboration the middle and lower classes have narrowed the gap between them. The democratic spirit can also be found within the business community, especially among members of the Social Venture Network, although it is nor as widespread.

On the whole, the bureaucracy and education institutions are still weak on democracy. And so are the sangha and the monks. But there are some individuals within these sites that are democratic in spirit. They are aware of the ills of capitalism, consumerism, neoliberalism, and so on. They see no future in a monarchy walled off from the citizens. Thus they offer us a glimmer of hope—though they have yet to attain a critical mass.

Despite the (numerous) deficiencies of the core leaders of the PAD the movement's positive elements may be employed to serve the people. We may begin to learn from local communities more than simply attempting to educate them. We will be learning from one another in this respect. We may begin to re-valorize aspects of the de-valorized local knowledge systems, which in fact contain many democratic elements that are distinct from western democratic models. These are knowledge systems that valorize nonviolence, morality, self-sufficiency, humility, simplicity, and generosity—typical of rural Thai communities. They are not perfect, but provide vital resources for democracy in Siam.

If we know how to adapt morality and generosity to contemporary society, we will be able to transform religion into an important political resource. Thammasat University attempted to do this in its early years. We may use generosity as a vehicle for some form of welfarism. And morality will be a wheel propelling us toward peace and justice. The sangha has long served as a model of democracy. But the class system and fixed hierarchies have ground down equality, fraternity, and liberty (from greed, hatred, and delusion) in society. An important element that is missing in contemporary Thai society is meditation training. Without deep contemplative training we have no hope for moral training (fostering normality at the individual and collective levels, for each and all) and for the attainment of wisdom. We'll be trapped in

violent structures and mindless violence, for instance.

It is heartening to see a growing interest in mental training in various circles in society—the Vong Lor (Wheel) and the Jit Wiwat (Mental Transformation) groups in Bangkok, the Kwan Muang group in Chiangrai, etc. We must also not forget the Spirit in Education Movement and the Sekiyadhamma network. If they are on the right track (practicing mindfulness not to isolate the self from society but to be socially engaged as well) they will be able to foster inner peace, minimize self-attachment, and expand their circles of virtuous companions to create equality and liberty in society.

We should train ourselves to be humble (in both form and content), to reduce greed, hatred, and delusion. Although we may not be able to fully eradicate them all, at least we should be mindful of our feelings, conducts, and words so as to benefit the majority of the people. We should be mindful in the face of different opinions. We should be willing to ask forgiveness for the negative consequences of our conducts. We should be forgiving too. To forgive means to have no fear. We always fear the enemy. But Buddhism teaches that the enemy is really within —emanating from our greed, hatred, and delusion, from self-attachment.

In other words, it is important to cultivate the (seven) conditions of welfare (Vajji-aparihaniyadhamma), which are as follows:

1. To hold regular and frequent meetings

2. To meet together in harmony, disperse in harmony, and do their business and duties in harmony

3. To introduce no revolutionary ordinance, or break up no established ordinance, but abide by the original or fundamental Vajjian norm and principles

4. To honor and respect the elders among the Vajjians and deem them worthy of listening to

5. The women and girls of the families are to live without being forced or abducted

6. To honor and worship the Vajjian shrines, monuments and objects of worship, both central and provincial, and do not neglect those righteous ceremonies held before for them

7. To provide the rightful protection, shelter and support for the Arahants and wish that the Arahants who have not come may enter the realm and those who have entered may dwell pleasantly therein

Moreover, the ten virtues for the king as well as the four virtues wheeling one to prosperity are not simply there for lip service—but for serious practice.

We don't have to throw away all western textbooks dealing with democracy. I'd like to suggest some books to read. The first is *Mindful Politics: A Buddhist Guide to Making the World a Better Place*. From a Muslim's perspective, a good book is *Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshely of the Paktuns* by Rajmohan Gandhi. Don't forget the works by Eqbal Ahmad (especially *Islam and Politics*) with a forword by Noam Chomsky. Of course I need to mention the volume edited by Pracha Huta-nuwatr and Ramu Manivannan entitled *The Asian Future*.

The Tibetan government in exile is also experimenting with a Buddhist form of democracy. And the government of Bhutan is replacing the calculation of Gross National Products with that of Gross National Happiness, which is gaining widespread interest at the time. (The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation may co-sponsor an international conference on Gross National Happiness by the end of 2007.)

These books are useful for making sense of world affairs. But we must find the time to breathe properly and mindfully. As mentioned earlier, this is also a crucial step toward the prospering of democracy in Siam.

If we want to know how to make democracy meaningful, we must first clearly perceive Thai and western societies. I hereby make six proposals to match the ones in the First Declaration of the People's Party in 1932:

1. We must understand that our society has no future if it is still dominated by fixed hierarchies, violent structures, half-truths, moral cowardice, global capitalism with the American empire at the center, and so on.

2. If we still don't clearly understand the issues raised in Point 1, we must seek further knowledge about them and disseminate this knowledge as widely as possible. We can in part rely on the mainstream mass media, mainstream education institutions, politico-economic elites who have some understanding of the Right View, and so on.

3. Those of us in the NGO sector who want to strengthen democracy in the country must properly train ourselves and others in our circles to understand the importance of equality, fraternity, and liberty from greed, hatred, and delusion.

There must be transparency, accountability, and responsibility at every level of our work. If we train ourselves to achieve inner peace, we can thereby legitimately demand that other organizations or institutions (public and private, local and international) do so too.

4. We must recognize our strengths and weaknesses. Are we too elitist? Too bourgeois? Do we know anything about the poor or the lower class? Are we 'fake' Thais? Do we recognize the mistake(s) of nationalism? To what extent do we honestly respect other cultures and religions? Are we willing and ready to devote ourselves to benefit the majority of the people, gradually reducing our self-attachment?

5. Urban residents should travel to the rural areas to learn from the local villagers and to confront various forms of suffering there. We may begin to realize that our luxurious and comfortable way of life may be the cause of numerous sufferings or social injustice. We should not simply blame TNCs and our ruling elites.

6. Learning from the poor will enable us to understand the villagers' wisdom, to understand the substance of democracy rooted in Buddhist, Muslim, and minority cultures. We can adapt values from these cultures and use them in our lives to transcend mainstream culture, which moves in the direction of capitalism and consumerism.

S. Sivaraksa's
lecture in Thai at the
Pridi Banomyong Institute
21st November 2006

The Monarchy and the Constitution

Today is Constitution Day. Even though the latest constitution was recently ripped apart, today is still a national holiday. And a commemorative ceremony was held today—at the monument of King RamaVII who granted the constitution on December 10, 1932.

We must not forget that there were actually two constitutions in 1932. The first one was declared on June 27. It heralded the supreme power of the people as the (real) owners of the country; previously they were only subjects, playing the role of having no role. However, this constitution was quickly contained. It was made the temporary constitution. The December 10 Constitution was declared the permanent one. But Buddhism teaches us that nothing is permanent. However, the December 10 Constitution survived subsequent coup d'etats. In 1946, through democratic and nonviolent means, a new constitution was introduced and replaced the 1932 one. Perhaps, the 1946 Constitution was too democratic; reactionaries (royalists and military dictators) joined hands to quickly destroy it. And we have carried out numerous coups that continue to change the constitution to this day.

On Constitution Day, we must also not forget to commemorate Pridi Banomyong. We will be venerating the venerable by doing so. No doubt, it is an auspicious thing to do. It is not surprising that there' is no portrait or statue of Pridi at the parliament building. This is because the parliament lacks worthy individuals—hence it is unworthy of its name. The parliament that Pridi had nurtured during the first fifteen years of the revolution completely forgot about him when he passed away. The ruling elites betrayed him as well. The legislative wing even deemed it too much to observe a minute of silence in Pridi's honor when he passed away. Then prime minister Prem briefly expressed his condolences. But at least the French premier sent a wreath to Pridi's residence on the outskirts of Paris. Among the members of the present 'parliament' (National Legislative Assembly), how many actually acknowledge or recognize Pridi's virtues? Wasn't Pridi the one who introduced democracy to Siam (via the People's Party) and protected the monarchy by placing it under the constitution? Wasn't Pridi the one who preserved the country's independence in the wake of WWII? Had he survived the coup against him Siam would have traveled far down the road of equality, fraternity, and liberty from greed, hatred, and delusion—and also from imperialism, TNCs, and absolutism in various guises.

We can say that Thaksinocracy is the enemy of constitutional monarchy. The stated objective of the September 19 coup is to oust Thaksin, a dictator who used the form of democracy and extra-constitutional tactics to serve his and his cronies' vested interests. Was it legitimate to get rid of Thaksin through extra-

constitutional means? Wasn't there any constitutional measure left or available to get the job done? I'm afraid no one has seriously examined this point. Once Thaksin—the enemy of constitutional monarchy—was toppled, to what extent have measures to rejuvenate or re-create our constitutional monarchy been implemented or at least explored? Don't forget that the Council for National Security was previously called the Council for Democratic Reform Under the Constitutional Monarchy. Do they really know anything about a constitutional monarchy? What about the individuals who helped draft previous constitutions as well as the drafters now, do they know anything about a constitutional monarchy?

The September 19 coup abrogated a constitution that is widely considered to be the best one the kingdom has ever had thus far. But one of the main weaknesses of that constitution was its ambiguity on the role of the monarchy under the constitution. Or to exaggerate a bit, in that constitution the monarchy occupied an exceptional position vis-à-vis the parliament. Because in that version of the constitution, there was no provision that allowed parliament to have a voice in the succession of the monarchy

Government in a constitutional monarchy requires great care, subtlety, nuance, and dexterity—combined with moral courage and willingness to speak out, act, and criticize in order to make every institution (including the monarchy and the ruling circles) transparent, accountable, and responsible. All these may be beyond the capability of military strategists, politicians, and businesspeople in general. Even legal scholars or experts may not be well versed in the substance of Thai culture. How then could they fathom the intricacies of government in a constitutional monarchy?

If we don't understand this point, the people will prefer dictatorship or absolutism to democracy. Or they may even want a presidency instead, which is considered to be most democratic—at least in theory.

When King Rama V wanted to bring modernity or western civilization to Siam, he turned to the absolutism in Europe as a model. At the time, some pointed out to the king that he should instead operate within the framework of the constitution and should clearly define the power of the monarch within the law. The king did not heed these suggestions. He was unaware to the deficiencies of the absolutism prevailing in Europe—especially Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia. Among the great powers, England had traveled furthest down the road of democracy. But England does not have a written constitution. This makes it hard for outsiders to understand this tradition—even for those educated in England. It's difficult to find a law graduate from England knowledgeable about the substance of a constitutional monarchy. This was the case during the Fifth Reign as it is now. The most dictatorial royally-appointed premier in Siam was a barrister-at-law from the UK—not to mention the first Thai prime minister in 1932, another barrister-at-law who saw no worth in democracy at all.

During the Fifth Reign, in Siam, absolutism prevailed in Europe. France, Portugal, and Switzerland were the only republican states. At the dawn of the Sixth Reign, absolutism was virtually swept away in Europe. In his biography of King George V, Harold Nicolson states that at the time, "The world witnessed the demise of 5 emperors, 8 kings, and 18 dynasties."

The downfall of absolutism in Europe was in part because of the world war. Perhaps more important was the fact that these monarchies adamantly resisted democratic changes. Republic forms of government were not born out of idealism. Rather these monarchies could not persist in their present status.

The downfall of monarchies in Asia was the result of the loss of independence to western imperialism and colonialism. Of course, there were exceptions whereby the western empires allowed the monarchies to carry on as in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. When Laos became communist, initially there was no plan to overthrow the monarchy. But the Lao King did not earn the sympathy of the ruling elites; he did not really care about their feelings anyway. Moreover, it seemed that his heart was with the French colonial system. In Vietnam, Emperor Bao Dai was merely a colonial puppet who lacked a democratic conscience. As such he was removed. In Cambodia, the monarchy seems to be reducible to one figure, King Norodom Sihanouk. Though his son is officially declared the successor, it is not clear whether or not the monarchy will survive in the wake of the Sihanouk reign. China, Siam, and Japan did not lose their (formal) independence. Nationalist forces overthrew the imperial system in China; they did not consider the Qing dynasty Chinese. In

Japan, the imperial house survived despite Japan's defeat in WWII largely due to the American occupation. Monarchies are still intact in two other South Asian states: Nepal and Bhutan. But the Nepalese monarchy won't last long into the future. In the case of Bhutan, the king plans to democratize the kingdom within two years. If it is not done properly, it may be more harmful than beneficial. Malaysia has many sultans who take turn ruling the country every five years. When Mahathir bin Mohamad was the prime minister, he greatly undermined the power of the sultans. In Brunei the sultan is an absolute monarch as in Saudi Arabia or the Shah of Iran (who was overthrown). King Farouk of Egypt once remarked that in the future there will only be five kings: one in England, and the remaining four in a deck of cards.

As history teaches us, replacing a monarchy with a presidency does not necessarily lead to greater liberty. Not infrequently, power was concentrated in the hands of a small ruling class with dictatorial tendencies (not vastly different from the time of absolutism).

A monarchy often emits the aura of divinity and mysticism. Royal ceremonies are often linked with religious ones. In 1956, four years after Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne, an opinion poll showed that 35 percent of the people in the U.K. believed that she was chosen by God. Now, this belief is almost nonexistent. During the Thatcher years, there was a major attempt to modernize all traditional institutions. It seemed that Thaksin Shinawatra also entertained this idea. Thatcher challenged the bureaucracy, judicial system, universities—and even the BBC. But the monarchy escaped largely unscathed despite numerous efforts to undermine it. It was able to adapt to 'new times.' Even the mainstream media were allowed to publicize (warts and all) the personal lives of members of the royal family. The queen showed forbearance and made improvements to the monarchy—making it not exactly modern but definitely not backward. Of course these changes were not spontaneous and did not satisfy everyone. But the queen seemed willing to alter her position or view in the light of the changing public mood and situation. Anyone who has seen the movie *The Queen* would likely understand this point.

The Duke of Edinburgh stated that a monarchy is not there to protect the rights and privileges of the monarch. Rather its task is to protect the rights and benefits of the citizens.

To understand this point, we have to realize that the monarchies in Europe continue to survive because they are constitutional along democratic lines. For instance, Spain was formerly a dictatorship. But it ultimately became a constitutional monarchy, increasingly guaranteeing liberty, fraternity, and equality.

In the Scandinavian countries, the monarch plays a minimal or limited leadership role. But the monarch serves as the symbol of legitimacy that is above political struggles. The monarch in Belgium is the only person deemed neutral in a land divided into Flemish and Walloons. He is thus not the King of Belgium, but the King of the Belgians.

In the sultanates of the Middle East, the monarchy is used to serve the royal family and its extended family more than its subjects. They are absolutist and dictatorial—to this very day. We have to wait and see how long they last.

In Walter Bagehot's *The English Constitution* (published in 1867)—a must-read for every English monarch and crown prince—the three rights of a monarch vis-à-vis a government are spelled out: 1) the right to be consulted; 2) the right to advise; and 3) the right to warn. All these are not apparent to the public. At the same time, a prime minister may also advise a monarch. For instance, the contents of a king's speech before the public or the parliament must be based on the government's suggestions. In other words, the king is not responsible for his own words. The government must be responsible for them as if the government carries out the king's wishes or orders. Hence the saying "The King can do no wrong" is correct because the government is responsible for the king's action and speech.

In a constitutional monarchy, the head of state is different from the head of government. The head of state performs three duties. One, performing official duties such as the issuing of royal decrees, the appointment of a prime minister, and the closing of the parliament. The last two points should be exercised with great care—if the head of state does not want to be dictatorial. Two, carrying out ceremonial duties such as all sorts of social activity. Three, and most important, serving as the symbol of the Nation. A monarch is unable to be the national symbol if s/he is not neutral and is not widely accepted by the ruling class and the people. Showering a mon-

arch with lavish praises does not necessarily mean that s/he deserves to be the symbol of the Nation.

In *The English Constitution* Bagehot distinguishes between being "efficient" and having "dignified elements". The former concerns the capability to govern, to carry out the stated policies. Thus being efficient is what a premier must do. The latter facilitates the reconciliation and solidarity of the citizens despite their differences. Here a monarch may be in a better position to perform these duties.

A king must also be careful with his personal opinions, making sure that they won't negatively impact his government. Above all, in a constitutional monarchy, the king and the queen must maintain a distance from the military. The military's duty is to protect the monarchy. But the two institutions should not be too close to one another. If this is not the case, it will be severely detrimental to the monarchy. The case of Spain is illuminating. Although the Spanish monarch is a man of the navy, he did not side with the military when it attempted to overthrow the civilian government. He sided with the force of democracy, earning to the respect of everyone who sees democracy more important than short-term gains through dictatorial means.

Being strictly neutral will elevate the status of the monarchy in a constitutional monarchy. For this to be possible, a monarch needs a highly capable and devoted royal secretariat whose members are morally courageous, politically neutral, untainted by vested interests, and willing to go against the monarch's wishes whenever it is in the interest of the nation as a whole.

A good royal secretariat will provide a monarch with relevant information reflecting a plurality of views (not only the government's); that is, its role is to help expand the purview of a monarch and augment his or her capacity for judgment. Remember that a monarch has the right to be consulted.

The ideas raised above largely pertain to the English case. What about ours? I won't delve into it here. But the Thai Royal Secretariat Office has had many capable individuals. They were all praiseworthy and well-trusted.

A capable royal secretariat is crucialy important. Anyone who sees the value of having a monarchy (politicians, ordinary citizens, etc.) should cooperate to help guide that institution (including the royal household bureau) toward greater transparency, accountability, and responsibility without radically undermining its, political and economic, status.

If a monarchy behaves in ways incompatible with the constitution it will be unstable. And if this point is not taken seriously, that monarchy will work for its own benefits rather than those of the citizens—and eventually it will see its role diminish or disappear.

The refusal to listen to (popular) demands and criticisms is contrary to the spirit of democracy. Of course, critics are not always correct. But a monarchy must hear them out and find ways to create greater understanding. In this way, a monarchy will have the capability to transform or rejuvenate itself according to changing conditions and realities. All things being impermanent, every society and its institutions must eventually be subject to change.

Sulak Sivaraksa,
speech delivered at the
Pridi Banomyong Square,
Thammasat University,
on 10 December 2006

Nordic Winter Meeting 2007

8-11th of February
in Stockholm

Spiritual activism
Buddhist-Christian dialogue focused on ecology, nonviolence and justice

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"To be truly religious is not to reject society but to work for social justice and change."

Sulak Sivaraksa

Masao Abe

Professor Masao Abe, a pioneer in the international dialogue among Christians and Buddhists, died in Kyoto, Japan, on 10 September. He was 91 years old. Professor Abe was given a quiet funeral service reserved to family and close friends, according to sources in Kyoto.

After the death of his mentor, D.T. Suzuki, Abe became a leading exponent of Zen in the West and a driving force in the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity. Abe must be credited with much of the intellectual vitality of this dialogue, as well as its relevance to contemporary social problems.

Abe was a tireless exponent of the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness as the standpoint for realizing the True Self, yet was also willing to place this basic Buddhist teaching in dialogue with Christianity. Rejecting the notion that Christianity and Buddhism were either fundamentally similar or completely different, Abe saw in inter-religious dialogue an opportunity for the mutual transformation of dialogue partners and pursued dialogue to help Buddhists and Christians in confronting the threat of nihilism of the modern world.

In the ruins of post-war Japan, Abe began his studies with Hajime Tanabe at the University of Kyoto, a prominent figure in the Kyoto school of contemporary Zen Buddhist philosophy in Japan. But it was his encounter with Shinichi Hisamatsu, another philosopher of Zen at the University of Kyoto, that would be decisive for Abe's turn to Zen. In a series of Zen retreats with Hisamatsu at Myoshinji Temple in western Kyoto, Abe was forced to confront the reality of nihilism within himself and eventually resolve this problem by entering the Zen standpoint of emptiness, wherein the enlightened self arises.

At age 40, Abe left Kyoto for New York in order to study at Union Theological Seminary with two of the most prominent Christian theologians of his day, Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. Thus began a distinguished career of teaching, writing and, above all, dialogue with leading Christian thinkers, including David Tracy, Langdon Gilkey, Rosemary Radford Reuther, Jurgen Multmann and Hans Kung. Abe served as visiting professor at the University of Chicago, Purdue, Claremont, Columbia, Princeton, the University of Hawaii and other schools. In Germany, Abe taught at Heidelburg, Tubingen, and Munich.

In addition to his many Japanese publications, Abe wrote extensively in English. These works include *Zen and Western Thought*, an award-winning collection of essays and a ground-breaking reflection on Christian belief in Christ interpreted from a Buddhist perspective, *Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata*. This essay appeared in conjunction with responses from several Christian and Jewish theologians, making the book itself a dialogue. Abe also engaged Jewish intellectuals with his Buddhist reflection of the Holocaust.

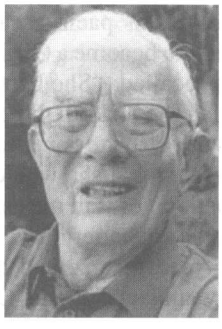
In 1984, Abe and John Cobb convened a group of Buddhist and Christian intellectuals from Japan, North America and Europe for dialogue in depth over a sustained period of time on a number of fundamental issues. He was also a guiding influence on the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies, which continues his work of dialogue today.

Masao Abe is survived by his wife, Ikuko Abe, his constant companion in a life of sojourn and dialogue in the West.

James Fredericks,
Professor of Theological Studies
at Loyola Marymount University

Adam Curle

4 July 1916 - 28 September 2006



Quaker and pioneer of peace studies in Britain. The legitimacy and growth of peace studies is perhaps the greatest and enduring legacy of Adam Curle, who has died aged 90. In 1973, he was appointed to the first chair in peace studies in Britain, at Bradford University, a department that is now the largest and among the best known centres for such work in the world. It has stimulated and provided a model for many other programmes.

Peace and conflict research, once regarded with suspicion, is now established in universities worldwide.

Adam would not have claimed any credit for this growth, but those who knew him as friends, students, colleagues, peace activists, or simply through reading his books, were inspired by his gentle charisma to spread the values of peace through education and action. Education aside, he was also innovative and courageous as a peacemaker, pioneering citizen in mediation and peace building.

Adam defined what education for peace should entail in his inaugural Bradford lecture, *The Scope and Dilemmas of Peace Studies*, published in 1974. Among his prolific output, two books, *Making Peace* (1971) and *Education for Liberation* (1973), signalled his move into peace studies.

Adam was born Charles Curle in L'Isle-Adam, north of Paris. Adam, the name by which he was universally known, came from his birthplace. His father, Richard Curle, was a journalist and writer and close friend of the novelist Joseph Conrad. His mother was Cordelia Fisher. One of her sisters, Adeline, married the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams. Other relatives included the historian FW Maitland; Julia Margaret Cameron, pioneer of photography; Virginia Woolf, novelist and feminist; and the artist Vanessa Bell.

His mother planted the seed that led to his pacifism and his decision to become a Quaker. As Adam recalled: "She hated war, to which she had lost three of her beloved brothers, and was determined that she would instil her loathing of it in me as well." Educated at Charterhouse school, Adam read history and anthropology at New College, Oxford. In 1939, he married Pamela Hobson, with whom he had two daughters. They divorced some years later. During the war, he served in the army, rising to the rank of major. After the war he worked at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, helping to resettle British servicemen who had been prisoners of war.

In 1950, he became a lecturer in social psychology in the psychology department at Oxford University, and two years later was appointed to the education and psychology chair at Exeter University. During the late 1950s he travelled widely in Asia and the Middle East and met Anne Edie, from New Zealand, who was working in community health development in Dhaka, in what was then East Pakistan. They married in 1958, and had one daughter. From 1959 to 1961 he was professor of education at the University of Ghana, where he and Anne joined the Quakers. In 1961 he became director of the Harvard Centre for Studies in Education and Development.

Problems of conflict and violence began to feature in his work, particularly because of his direct experience as a mediator during the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) and the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Then came the invitation to lead the new Bradford department—itself the idea of a small group of Quakers.

Adam retired from Bradford in 1978 but worked on as a peacemaker, often under Quaker auspices, putting into practice the idea that education was concerned with emancipation. This value was also embodied in the principle of "speaking truth to power" asserted by Quakers. The techniques of peacemaking (whether mediation, problem solving, negotiation, policy analysis, advocacy, or non-violent activism) are what he called "tools for transformation".

He worked to bring people together in conflict-torn areas, including India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka and the Balkans. In Croatia, when in his late 70s, he was the inspiration behind the Osijek Peace Centre, which symbolised resistance to the war and inspired a prolific peace network. He was awarded the Gandhi peace prize in 2000 in recognition of his long commitment to peace work.

It is not easy to capture in words the deep affection that people formed for this extraordinary man. He was warm, humorous, modest and wise in equal measure. Visitors were welcomed by him and Anne, whether in America, Yorkshire or, in his later years, in retirement in London. Their hospitality was legendary. Both were avid gardeners and grew the vegetables that graced the dishes cooked by Anne, to the delight of their many guests.

In his early years, Adam played the flute, and maintained a love of music throughout his life. A deeply spiritual man, remaining a Quaker but influenced also by the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism in recent years, he was never pious or doctrinaire. Just to be in his company was enough to feel a palpable and joyous sense of knowing what it means to be human. Intellectually energetic to the last, he published his final book, *The Fragile Voice of Love*, shortly before he died.

He is survived by Anne, his daughters Christina, Anna and Deborah, and several grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Charles Thomas William

Dear Sulak,

I've just read your April 2006 talk - the Monarchy and the Constitution. It is a very fine piece, which lays out the sort of parameters of justice with which so many countries and systems have struggled. In historic term, it is the perfect argument for a constitutional monarchy. People in other countries could learn from this approach.

I hope you are well.

Best wishes,
John Ralston Saul

Dear Sir,

No doubt you have forgotten an evening just outside Chiangrai to which my husband and I were invited. But I have not, I never will, nor will I ever forget the meeting at U Mong Monastery and hear Sulak speak at the end of "Art for Peace" Week. Although ill health cut down my efforts as "activist", the frightful bestiality of the last three or four years by the USA-UK and Israel, and continued western arrogance as they sink deeper into the quagmire of their (self-righteous) delinquent delusion makes me turn more and more towards the only sanity left in the world : What the Buddha taught; so well and clearly put by Sulak, Buddhadasa and Payutto ! Contrary to the Christian churches (of whatever denomination) which persist in a false "Pauline" teaching and misrepresentation of a very political figure of his time out of context Jesus—until the Churches have the guts to face and accept Truth as a basis , I cannot consider their Teachings nor their Church as a TRUE Religion, or one of the great religions of the world — based as their teaching is on false premises. Buddha had said, long before he was born, all that was attributed to Jesus as being "unique". *Seeds of Peace* is hopefully still going on with their good work. Needed more than ever, please let me know, and if it is possible for me to get the latest copy and ideas .

Yours sincerely,

A. Taylor
Alcante, Spain

I did receive your lovely card and *Seeds of Peace* newsletter. Thank you very much. Your work is very beautiful and inspiring.

I look forward very much to the pleasure and opportunity to having another chance to meet you and learn from you. I would like to consult with you about something I often wonder aloud about and discuss with other Buddhist teachers in this country and Europe: how to be more intelligently and nonaggressively active as far as having more positive influence upon society, the political process, young people, the inequitable distribution of wealth, environmental issues and so forth; and how to counterbalance the sort of passive and quietest bent of many western Buddhists who seem to think mindfulness and silent sitting is the Buddha's main and sole path.

Take good care. I hope you continue to have a long and healthy life, and all your Bodhisattva activities keep flourishing.

Lama Surya Das

Dear Sulak,

I know a formal letter of thanks from the college is on its way to you, but I wanted to personally express my gratitude for your participation in our symposium. I think the perspectives you provided were so important to the discussion of religion and public life. Several people came up to me afterward to share their appreciation for the elevated level of discourse you brought to the session.

I myself have been pondering fear (lessness) and forgiveness since that evening...and will continue to hold those thoughts in my consciousness.

Thank you, thank you for joining us! And thank you for the herbs...! I do hope our paths will cross again. You'd be welcome at CC anytime!

With thanks and best regards,

Lisa Ellis '82
Office of Communications
Colorado College

Dear Sulak Sivaraksa,

You are a star!

Thank you so much for sharing your strong character as well as your story and experiences with us.

After the last few days, I want to thank you for all that you gave to dropping knowledge and the world on Saturday. Watching and listening to your responses to our questions, we all feel humbled, thrilled and so deeply moved.

When so many remarkable people come together for so brief a span of time, it's inevitable that we can't connect with all those we may have wished to—and, with this in mind, we'd like to invite you to stay in touch with your fellow participants. With your permission, we'll extend your contact information to all those who agree to share theirs with the group, so that you can continue to share questions, answers and so much more.

Thank you for your patience and understanding, your adventurous spirit, your generosity of heart and for the wisdom you shared so freely with us all at the Table.

Until the next Table and hopefully other encounters within dropping knowledge, if you wish.

Hemma Crain
Manager of Nominee Relations
Dropping knowledge e.V.
Trigger Happy Productions GmbH
Swinemuender Strasse 121
10435 Berlin
Germany

RESURRECTION

PACARAYASARA a Thai publication with intellectual and spiritual concerns, owned by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, which had ceased to exist for two years, has now been resurrected.

SEKHIYADHAMMA movement for socially concerned monks and nuns has its difficulties recently but has now become alive again, with a new leadership.

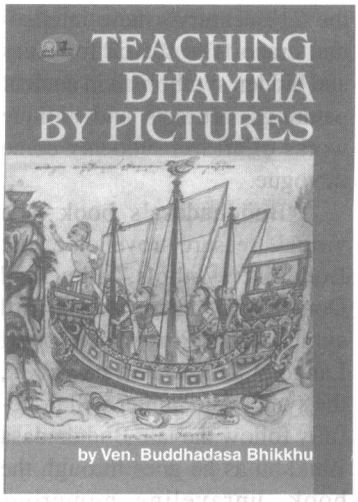
Buddhadasa, Buddhism and Symbolism Hunting

Title: *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*
Author: The Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
Publisher: Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and the Ministry of Education, Bangkok 2006 (Available at Suksit Siam Bookshop)

"Wanna know all about Thai Buddhism?" asked Don Sweetbaum, a slim, bearded *Farang* activist, in the Hippie mould, turned Buddhist, living in Chiengmai — Thailand's cultural heartland. "Try picking up, randomly, any book on Buddhist Philosophy or *Buddhist Ethics*, you see on the shelf," said Don, gesturing to a row of books on Buddhism at a second hand bookshop on Thapae Road in Chiangmai city. "Unreadable, right?"

Good news! "There is a new book about Thai Buddhism in English with lots of beautiful pictures," said Don. The new book titled, *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*, was written by the late *Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu* and reprinted, by *The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and the Ministry of Education*, in 2006. To lazy readers this may be just the right book on Buddhism for starters.

After all, the saying goes, one picture is worth more than a thousand words. Comic books appeal to children because they help to overcome textual difficulties with pictures and vivid imagery. The same principle is at work here. For the newcomer to Buddhism, looking for a simple, yet exciting introduction to Buddhist philosophy *á la Buddhism 101, Thai Buddhism for Dummies or Buddhism for Beginners*,



Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's book on *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*, may be just what the doctor ordered.

Not only beginners need to read *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*. Advanced students of Buddhism will also benefit immensely from it. *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*, is a philosophically profound and artistic book which appeals to many intellectual levels simultaneously. Buddhadasa used art and religious symbolism as a tool to explain the Buddhist world view. The religious painting serves as a snapshot of the content, ingredients, characters, relationships and meaning of the Buddhist universe.

The picture titled *Mind and Body* shown in the page employs symbolism to illustrate Buddhist philosophical beliefs about *mind* and *body*. Buddhadasa explained that "body is represented by the earthenware vessels(carried by the man on the left) while mind is shown as the whimsical, swift and restless monkeys." The symbolism of the monkey representing the mind was also used in Lord Buddha's discourses (Sutta).

In the picture the monkeys prove themselves adept at avoiding capture and the hunters have difficulty in shooting down these agile creatures. The meaning is that the monkey or mind is difficult to control. The body however, is mere clay and cannot move by itself. It is also fragile and easily broken. The meaning is that human existence is impermanent. In Buddhist epistemology the human being is made up of two components: *mind* and *body*.

The body is also sometimes, represented by a ship in Buddhist symbolism. In the picture *Saccamilomika-nana* or "The ninth stage of knowledge derived from conformity with truth", the ship represents the *body(rupa)* and the owner of the ship standing at the bow is *mind(citta)*. Buddhadasa explained: "The ship is crossing from the burning world of mortality to the other shore of *Nibbana*, which is represented by the *Three Gems* to which the owner of the ship(mind) points. The crew and equipment aboard are the various teachings necessary to cross the seas of wandering-on in birth-and-death(samsara). *The Noble Eight-fold Path* and other necessary *Dhamma* such as faith*(saddha)*, or wisdom *(panna)* are essentials to guide the ship across."

Buddhadasa offers many more examples translating various points of *Dhamma* into symbolic pictures. The book contains a collection of 47 pictures, in color plates, reproduced from an old Buddhist Manuscript found in Chaiya, southern Siam, about 100 years ago. *Teaching Dhamma by Pictures*, is based on Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's explanations of the *Chaiya Manuscript*. It was in Chaiya that Buddhadasa set up his famous meditation centre, which exerted a profound influence on Thai Buddhism through

his teachings, sermons and explanations of Buddhist texts, paintings and manuscripts.

The *Chaiya Manuscript* was discovered about 100 years ago, in Chaiya before Buddhadasa Bhikkhu came to preach there. Although, The *Chaiya Manuscript* was painted before Buddhadasa's time, it supports his world view of harmony between *Man* and *Nature*. Natural symbols including birds, snakes and trees represent human emotions which give meaning to human existence. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu used the *Chaiya Manuscript* in his famous preaching and sermons. His profound explanations of the 47 pictures contained in the *Chaiya Manuscript* became very famous in Thailand.

Sulak Sivaraksa and Don Sweetbaum translated Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's explanations of the 47 pictures from the Siamese text prepared by the late Mr. Rabil Bunnag, who was also a gifted photographer, into English. The first edition was printed in 1968. Almost with the generous support of The Asia Foundation, the Venerable Bhikkhu Khantipalo edited and improved the English translation and Miss E. Lyons added a lucid *Introduction* to the book, which was reprinted for the Centenary Celebrations of the Birth of the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (27 May 1906 - 27 May 2006).

The timely reprinting of Buddhadasa's discourses on Buddhist symbolism also, coincided with a new intellectual fashion created by the wildly popular world reception to Dan Brown's blockbuster novel *The Da Vinci Code*. Thanks to Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, which was made into a Hollywood movie, the subject of *Pagan Symbolism* has become the 21st century's new intellectual craze. The search for clues and hidden symbolism in ancient paintings, artifacts and antique works of art has suddenly come in vogue.

"Buddhadasa's book is a virtual treasure trove of exotic Buddhist symbols," chuckled Don. Like Dan Brown's Harvard symbologist Professor Robert Langdon, in *The Da Vinci Code*, the symbolism hunter will gratefully follow the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu as he goes through the book, unraveling numerous Buddhist symbols hidden in the fourty seven pictures of The *Chaiya Manuscript*.

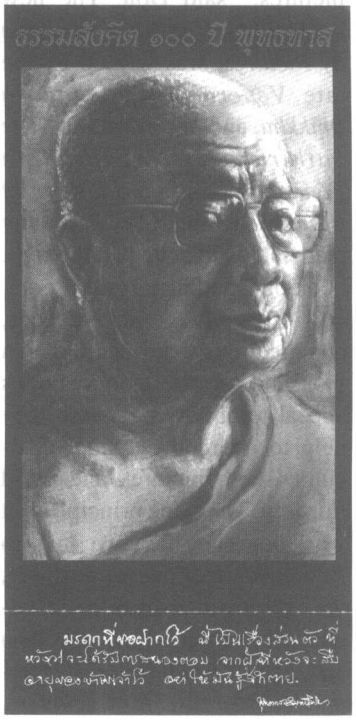
Reminiscent of the history of the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages, Art in ancient Siam was also put at the service of religion. Ancient Siamese Buddhism had effectively enlisted the artist to teach Dhamma by pictures. Temple manuscript and mural paintings were used to tell the story of *The Buddha* in his various reincarnations and to communicate important religious teachings by means of pictorial examples. But the similarity between the Siamese painter and his Western counterpart basically ends there.

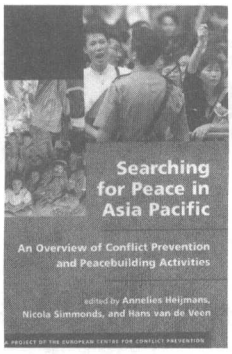
Unlike Leornado da Vinci who painted the Mona Lisa, the Siamese artist did not try to work in an original, individual style. The painter in traditional Siam did not aim at expressing his own personality or his particular philosophy. In fact he rarely signed his name to the painting. Thus, the traditional temple painter of Siam had little connection with the credo of the modern artist. The Siamese artist and the Western modern artist belong to two quite different paradigms.

There were no Van Goghs, Rembrandts or Monets in traditional Siam. The Siamese artist does not claim ownership of the painting like his Western counterpart. Unlike Leonardo da Vinci, the Siamese artist does not work individually. The Siamese artist usually works as part of a team. Temple murals were usually painted by many artists working together. One artist may specialize in painting architecture and another may paint only figures. The complete painting usually reflects the signature of many hands.

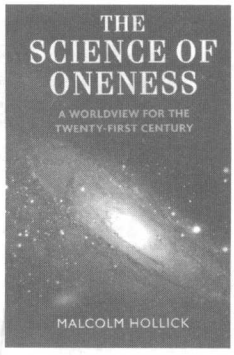
Thus, Buddhadasa's book contains more than just the secrets of religious symbolism. The pictures also speak to the symbologist and the modern artist, about the exotic communal traditions in the craft of Siamese manuscript and temple mural painting.

Jeffery Sng
December 8, 2006

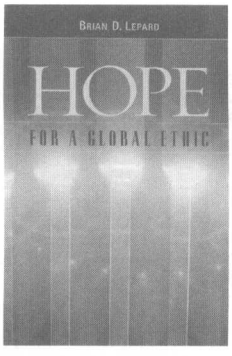




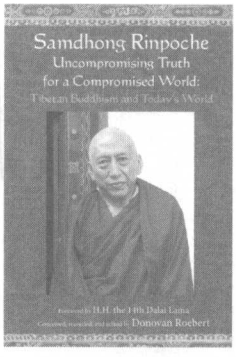
Searching for Peace in Asia Pacific
An Overview of Conflict Prevention
and Peacebuilding Activities
By Annelies Heijmans, Nicola Simmonds
and Hans van de Veen, London 2004



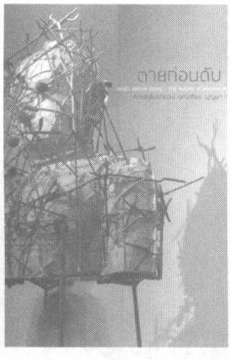
The Science of Oneness
A Worldview for the Twenty-First Century
By Malcolm Hollick, New York, 2006



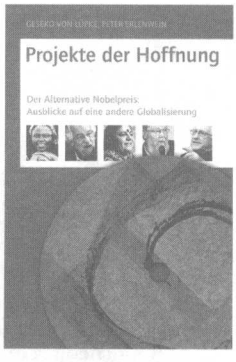
Hope for a Global Ethic
By Brin D.Lepard, America, 2005



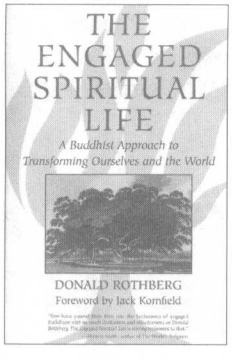
Samdhong Rinpoche
Uncompromising Truth for a Compromised World :
Tibetan Buddhism and
Today's World
By Donovan Roebert,
Canada, 2006



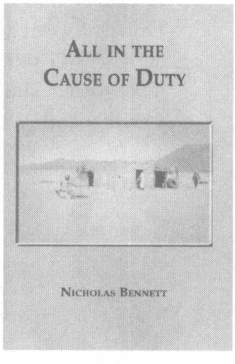
Death Before Dying :
The Return of Montien Boonma
By Montien Boonma, Thailand, 2005



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Der alternative Nobelpreis:
Ausblicke auf eine andere Globalisierung
By Geseko Von Lüpke, Peter Erlenwein (Hrsg.)
München 2006



The Engaged Spiritural Life :
A Buddhist Approach to Transforming
Ourselves and the World
By Donald Rothberg
Boston 2006



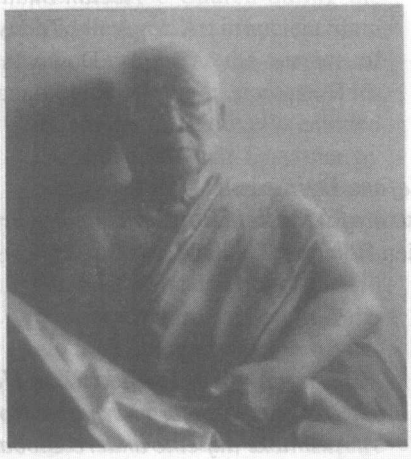
All in the Cause of Duty
By Nicholas Bennett
available at www.amazon.com
$ 14.36
UK 2006

Center *for the* Study *of* World Religions

Harvard Divinity School

The Problematics of Buddhism, Society, and the State in Thailand

12:00-2:00 pm
Monday, October 23
CSWR Common Room
42 Francis Ave



A luncheon seminar celebrating the birth centenary of Thailand's most influential monk of the twentieth century, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu was the major influence on progressive, reformist Buddhism in that country, both lay and monastic. A panel composed of CSWR director Donald Swearer, Thongchai Winichakul (University of Wisconsin), and Sulak Sivaraksa (Thai Buddhist activist) will situate Buddhadasa within contesting views of Thai Buddhism in the broader context of Thai society and politics. One in a series of seminars on the theme Whose Religion? Which Morality? Conflict and Authority in World Religions.







Space is limited, and reservations are required.
Register online at http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/ or call 617.495.4476.