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In Memoriam : Somdej Phra Maha Gosananda

Next INEB Internal Meeting, Taiwan
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* The Venerable Kusalacitto, the new patron of INEB

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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7 February 2007

RE: Requesting for fairness in the prosecution of two lese majeste cases
Enclosed: Three letters written to the prime minister and two reply letters from the Prime Minister's Office

Dear Acting National Police Chief Seripisuth Temiyavej,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your new important position. To my knowledge, you are known for your fairness and compassion for ordinary citizens. As such, you are different from the national police chief under the Thaksin government. Also, the prime minister seems to be of this view. As reported in *Thai Post* newspaper on 19 January, "The Prime Minister criticized the inefficiency of the police, their inability to adapt to social changes. The whole system needs to be revamped. All the police care about is catching thugs at the expense of other considerations and with disregard for the consequences. The police are used to the patron-client system and are prone to abuse the freedom of others. The Prime Minister is determined to set in motion police reforms in an open and honest manner to regain the trust of the people."

It is clear that former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra persecuted me for my oppositional views by filing the two charges of lese majeste against me. The letters I sent to the prime minister were forwarded by the Prime Minister's Office to the Royal Thai Police Office to be used in the deliberation of the prosecution against me. I have called for the ending of the prosecution. (Please refer to the enclosed materials.) But the Royal Thai Police Office seems indifferent.

Therefore, I write to call upon your impartiality to bring about an end to the prosecution so as not to disturb H.M. the King. The King made it clear that any charge of lese majeste filed would not only hurt him but also the monarchy.

Ending the prosecution will facilitate national reconciliation and solidarity. The second lese majeste case lodged against me has to do with an English material that still has not been translated into Thai. Its translation into Thai will lead to widespread ramifications, and the translator may even face the charge of lese majeste as in the case faced by former police chief Pol. Gen. Sawat Amornwiwat.

If my case is brought to the attention of the international community, the credibility and image of the kingdom will be undermined. The king had raised this point before in one of the royal speeches. I am known nationally as well as internationally as a royalist who wants to protect the monarchy within the framework of democracy.

Previous charges of lese majeste lodged against me were also done with malice, for instance at the time when General Arthit Kamlang-ake was jockeying for power vis-a-vis Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda. In this particular case, my lese majeste case was already sent to the military court, but the prime minister intervened to stop it. And when General Suchinda Kraprayoon illegally toppled the Chatichai Choonhavan government, my trial lasted four years. I was eventually acquitted of the charge of lese majeste. The court affirmed my innocence, declaring thus:

> *After considering the statements of the witnesses for both the defense and prosecution, and the complete transcripts of the defendant's speech, most fair-minded people would question why the defendant had been charged, what was the defendant's intention, and toward whom was his public talk directed. We cannot only consider literally what he said. We can see clearly that the intention of the talk was to make the students and the people aware so they would be awakened to resist the unjust authority of the NPKC in seizing power from an elected government and its*

(continue to p.16)

Editorial Notes

We are sad to note the passing away of Somdej Phra Maha Ghosananda, one of our patrons. The late Somdej of Cambodia became INEB's patron after the demise of Bhikkhu Buddhasa in 1992. We are happy that we still have two patrons with us: His Holiness the Dalai Lama is unfortunately not allowed to visit Siam – a Buddhist kingdom. However Thich Nhat Hanh will be in this country from May 19-31 delivering special lectures in Bangkok and a long spiritual retreat in Chiang Mai. Venerable Kusalacitto has now agreed to be our new patron, so there is no vacancy from the Theravada tradition.

Those friends who passed away are recorded in our obituaries section except Ray Downs, who played a very active role at the Students Christian Center in Bangkok. He was indeed a pioneer in guiding his successors to collaborate with young Buddhists, for social justice and freedom during the dictatorship of the 60s which led to the 1973 nonviolent uprising and ended military rule for some years. Unfortunately military rule seems to have returned to us again as of September 19 last year.

We also celebrate a number of our friends' birthdays, especially Angkarn Kalayanapong's, and we will have a great festival at his alma matter, Silpakorn University, to mark his 81st birthday early next year. This year we also mark Uab Sanasen's completion of his sixth cycle – 72nd birthday anniversary. Khun Uab and our editor are good friends since childhood. We are lucky to have his drawing reproduced on the cover of this issue. The drawing was done for our editor, when he was a teenager. The most important birthday this year is Dr. Sem Pringpuangkaew's who will complete his 8th cycle – 96 years old—on May 31. May he be with us many more years to come in order to guide us spiritually in all our endeavors.

On May 27 we will conclude Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's centenary with a sacred music festival for the young at King Bhumibol's Auditorium, the College of Music, Mahidol University, near Buddha Mandala.

The next international conference of INEB will definitely be in Taiwan from 1-7 September. Please make every effort to attend. INEB also collaborates with Payab University in Chiang Mai as well as other institutions to hold a special seminar from June 24 to 30. We hope some of our readers will participate in it.

The editor has been arrested on the charge of lese majeste since August 21 last year and on the eve of the coup on September 19 another warrant was issued by the police claiming that *Seeds of Peace,* Vol. 21, No. 1 January – April 2005, contains words that smack of lese majeste.

The editor wrote to the Thai Prime Minister three times and when he met him at the 60th anniversary celebration of ESCAP in Bangkok on March 28, His Excellency informed our editor not to worry at all. The editor also wrote to the Acting Chief of Police (please see the translation of the letter on page3) who said that he will not allow the police to carry on prosecuting people on the case of lese majeste since His Majesty had already stated that any one bringing such a charge is in fact harming the king personally and undermining the monarchy in general. Yet the editor is still on bail.

We are grateful that many friends at home and abroad have given so much moral support to the editor. Although he is over 74 years old, he is still active in fighting nonviolently for freedom and social justice. Last but not least, his alma mater, the University of Wales at Lampeter, not only elected him an honory fellow of the college, but the Lampeter Society also made him vice president – the president being the Vice Challenger.

The former Government of Thaksin Shinawatra oppressed the poor mercilessly, although some of them believed that he helped them through deceit and propaganda. The Assembly of the Poor was first impressed by Thaksin. But soon enough he turned against them. Although he was overthrown by the bloodless coup of September 19 last year, nothing has improved for the poor. The Assembly of the Poor, in particular, is oppressed even more.

Compared with the victims in Iraq, Tibet and Burma we are still better off. This means that we should care more for all peoples beyond our national boundaries. We need to change social structure, to be less violent – merely getting rid of a dictator does not help.

Thaksin's Loss, US's Gain

Thailand's unfolding political drama pitting exiled former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra against the military-run Council for National Security (CNS) that ousted him has cast the United States in an awkward but familiar position, where realpolitik imperatives now, as historically, have trumped Washington's stated public position of non-support to governments that seize power through anti-democratic means.

When coup makers ousted Thaksin last September 19, Washington was legally bound to suspend about US$14 million in military-to-military aid earmarked for Thailand. The US State Department on cue publicly admonished the CNS for seizing power through undemocratic means and urged a quick return to democracy, which the junta has promised for this year.

That's still the State Department's public line, but President George W Bush and senior US envoys in Bangkok have signaled clearly to the junta that Washington has scant intention of downgrading bilateral relations because of the coup.

In many ways, Thailand's coup has served US regional interests well. Thailand is historically Washington's most trusted strategic ally in Southeast Asia, and US officials are leveraging their senior military contacts now in government in a bid to counterbalance China's expanding regional influence. While the US maintained strong ties with Thaksin's authoritarian administration, particularly through cooperation on counter-terrorism issues, there were concurrent concerns in Washington that the ethnically Chinese Thaksin [1] was gradually moving Thailand closer to Beijing at the United States' strategic expense.

Those concerns would help to explain why Bush received coolly last April Thaksin's pleading personal letter, where the then-embattled premier claimed "anti-democratic" forces were attempting to knock him from power through "extra-constitutional" means. Of course those anti-democratic forces—the royalist military officials who spearheaded the coup—were and remain some of the United States' best in-country contacts. And since Thaksin's ouster, to the deposed premier's apparent chagrin, the US has kept close working tabs with the junta and its interim civilian administration.

Importantly, the suspension of military aid has so far been more symbolic then substantive. As required by law, the US has suspended its International Education and Training Program for Thai military officials, but the US Defense Department has conspicuously tarried on decisions whether to scrap a joint memorandum on military-to-military logistics, an arms-procurement program that provides cheap loans to the Thai military when purchasing US hardware, the United States' continued use of U-Tapao Air Force Base, and the annual Cobra Gold joint military exercises.

"The official US policy is mandatory, but we sense the [US] Defense Department is trying to work its way around the measures," said an adviser to the Thai prime minister. "Washington understands fully well that the military is in the driver's seat and China is waiting in the wings." To underscore that point, he said, coup leader and army commander General Sonthi Boonyaratklin made a recent trip to Beijing for undisclosed reasons.

Moreover, the sanctions notably did not require the US to sever funding for the secretive Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Center (CTIC), established jointly in 2001 between the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and select Thai intelligence officials. As of 2002, the US was providing annually between $10 million and $15 million as well as advanced surveillance equipment to the CTIC, which is tasked with tracking and hunting down regional Muslim terror suspects.

According to the *Washington Post*, Thailand also hosted one of the CIA's now-notorious secret prisons, where Muslim terror suspects were held without trial and at times administered interrogation techniques that rights groups say are tantamount to torture. Thaksin had publicly denied the existence of any CIA prison on Thai soil, but because the US ally is not a signatory to either the United Nations Convention Against Torture or the International Criminal Court, which hypothetically could attempt to try US soldiers and CIA agents for war crimes, European diplomats contend that Thailand would be a legally logical and secure location for such a facility. (US officials in Bangkok have consistently declined com-

ment on the secret-prison allegations.)

That said, senior Thai police counter-terrorism officials have openly carped that US Federal Bureau of Investigation terror-related sting operations have frequently impinged on Thai sovereignty. Despite these official complaints, and Thaksin's push for a highly unpopular free-trade agreement with the US, the anti-government demonstrations that paved the way for his military ouster notably never took on an anti-US bent—as did, for instance, the popular uprising of 1973 that led to the downfall of the corrupt and heavy-handed regime of then-US-backed Field Marshals Thanom Kittikachorn and Praphat Charusathien.

Xenophobic energies

The anti-Thaksin movement concentrated its xenophobic energies instead on Singapore, which through its state-run investment vehicle Temasek purchased Thaksin's family-held Shin Corporation in a controversial $1.9 billion transaction only months before his ouster. The CNS has since inflamed still-simmering popular resentments against Singapore, accusing the island state of using the satellite it purchased from Thaksin to tap the mobile-telephone conversations of senior military officials.

That the CNS has played its foreign-bogey card against Singapore rather than the US underscores the strong personal connections top coup makers have with senior US political and military officials. While Thaksin pays US lobbyists to plead his case on Capitol Hill, in Bangkok US officials are leveraging their military contacts to score diplomatic points over China, which has pursued its diplomacy toward Thailand more through political and economic rather than military channels.

The US military jump-started Thailand's move toward capitalism, pumping more than $2.5 billion between 1951 and 1975 in military-related aid into the country to develop a regional bulwark against the spread of communism. During those decades of authoritarian military rule, the US often assisted in suppressing government opponents, including pro-democracy activists, and the CIA frequently meddled in Thailand's domestic politics. [2]

Fast-forward to the present, and it's no surprise when a Bangkok-based US diplomat confirms that US-Thai military-to-military relations have remained firmly "on track" despite the suspension in aid. Noted one longtime Thai observer: "The US is saying to itself: they may be generals, but they're our generals."

Indeed, current premier and former army commander General Surayud Chulanont received military-college training in the US and his presence in senior military leadership positions was, according to one US diplomat, a factor in Washington's 2003 decision to elevate Thailand to the status of a major non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization ally, a distinction that paved the way for the country to purchase state-of-the-arm US military equipment, including, presumably, the helicopters now circling Bangkok on national-security patrols.

Former intelligence chief, new constitution-drafting chairman and pivotal behind-the-scenes coup maker Prasong Soonsiri was trained and some say retained for a stint in the 1980s by the CIA, and is now known to have close personal relations with US Ambassador to Thailand Ralph "Skip" Boyce. The two developed their friendship during the Thai-speaking Boyce's previous two postings to Thailand.

Most significant, perhaps, former prime minister and current Chief Privy Councilor Prem Tinsulanonda, seen by many as the mastermind behind last year's coup, has strong Cold War ties to several senior US Republican Party operators. During a private dinner in 2000 sponsored by the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, in a speech Prem voiced his "heartfelt" appreciation to Paul Wolfowitz, then the school's dean, for his role in assisting Thailand after Vietnamese communist troops invaded neighboring Cambodia in 1979 and threatened to continue their march into Thailand.

While publicly condemning the Khmer Rouge for their atrocities, the US simultaneously and clandestinely commenced funneling so-called "non-lethal" supplies, including radio equipment, to the murderous Maoist group to help it hold the line against Vietnam on Thailand's eastern border. It was a controversial decision that re-cemented bilateral ties after a rocky period when the US abruptly pulled out of Thailand after the Vietnam War—lasting ties that have influenced Washington's decision concerning which side to take during Thailand's current political standoff.

Repeating history

To some, the US has today made a similarly controversial policy position in supporting the coup makers who ousted a twice democratically elected leader. While publicly lamenting Thailand's retreat from democracy, and more recently criticizing protectionist economic policies that threaten certain US business interests, in private US officials have persistently reaffirmed to Thailand's ruling generals Washington's long-term commitment to keeping bilateral ties on track.

During last November's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Hanoi, Bush met with Surayud on the sidelines and conveyed that Washington "understood" Thailand's political situation. The following month, his father, former president George H W Bush, paid a personal private visit to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej—widely viewed in Thailand as a symbolic endorsement of the royalist coup.

For Washington, last year's military takeover has presented a unique opportunity to steal a march from China, which through soft economic power has seen Beijing consolidate strong alliances in neighboring Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. It is therefore no coincidence that Thaksin, spurned by what he perceived to be his former US ally, has chosen to launch his anti-junta propaganda campaign, in attempted divide-and-rule fashion, from China and Singapore.

In recent interviews with the mainstream Western media, Thaksin has endeavored—doubtless at the advice of his Washington-based private lobbyists and public relations consultants who arranged the appointments—to portray himself poignantly as a popularly elected leader who has been ousted through illegal means.

International publications, including those previously sharply critical of Thaksin's style of governance, have dutifully played up those themes—though at the time of the coup Thaksin was no longer legally Thailand's elected leader after annulled democratic elections in April, and in spite of his illiberal record of promoting extrajudicial killings of drug suspects and disappearances of Muslim militant suspects, and his systematic and punitive suppression of press freedom.

More seasoned observers draw parallels between Thaksin's current propaganda pitch with former Thai fascist leader Field Marshal Phibun Songkhram, who from exile in the 1940s criticized the monarchy and portrayed himself as a man of the people, and who on retaking power years later presided over a hard-knuckled, illiberal and corrupt military-led regime that at times ran counter to Washington's wishes. [3] Washington, it appears, has come to a similar conclusion about Thaksin's usefulness to the United States' future interests.

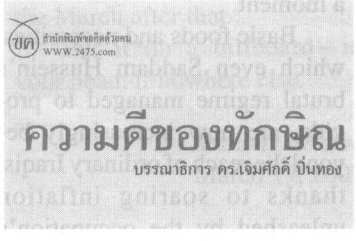
One well-placed source close to Ambassador Boyce says that the US no longer views Thaksin as a "political factor" and that to date Washington believes the junta is doing a "satisfactory" job of administering the country. Should Boyce be proved wrong and one day Thaksin return to political prominence—perhaps hypothetically after the passing of King Bhumibol—the US can probably count on a piqued Thaksin avenging the perceived snub by moving Thailand closer into China's regional orbit.

It's a calculated risk Washington is clearly willing to take and, at least for now, Thaksin's loss is the United States' gain.

Notes

1. Although Thaksin pledged allegiance to his US roots during a visit to his alma mater Sam Houston State University, where he joked that Texas was his second home, many perceived his pilgrimage to the grave markers of his ancestors in China's Fujian province as the more meaningful personal connection.
2. See Daniel Fineman's excellent *A Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947-1958,* University of Hawaii Press, 1997.
3. When Phibun was subsequently ousted in an internal 1957 putsch led by Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat, who more than Phibun favored the United State's foreign-investment-led development model, the US State Department issued a statement three days later affirming the military coup would not alter bilateral relations.

Shawn W Crispin
is Asia Times Online's
Southeast Asia editor.



Four Years Later... and Counting: Billboarding the Iraqi Disaster

As you read this, we're four years from the moment the Bush administration launched its shock-and-awe assault on Iraq, beginning 48 months of remarkable, non-stop destruction of that country ... and still counting. It's an important moment for taking stock of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Here is a short rundown of some of what George Bush's war and occupation has wrought:

Nowhere on Earth is there a worse refugee crisis than in Iraq today. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, some two million Iraqis have fled their country and are now scattered from Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iran to London and Paris. (Almost none have made it to the United States, which has done nothing to address the refugee crisis it created.) Another 1.9 million are estimated to be internally displaced persons, driven from their homes and neighborhoods by the U.S. occupation and the vicious civil war it has sparked. Add those figures up—and they're getting worse by the day—and you have close to 16% of the Iraqi population uprooted. Add the dead to the displaced, and that figure rises to nearly one in five Iraqis. Let that sink in for a moment.

Basic foods and necessities, which even Saddam Hussein's brutal regime managed to provide, are now increasingly beyond the reach of ordinary Iraqis, thanks to soaring inflation unleashed by the occupation's destruction of the already shaky Iraqi economy, cuts to state subsidies encouraged by the International Monetary Fund and the Coalition Provisional Authority, and the disruption of the oil industry. Prices of vegetables, eggs, tea, cooking and heating oil, gasoline, and electricity have skyrocketed. Unemployment is regularly estimated at somewhere between 50-70%. One measure of the impact of all this has been a significant rise in child malnutrition, registered by the United Nations and other organizations. Not surprisingly, access to safe water and regular electricity remain well below pre-invasion levels, which were already disastrous after more than a decade of comprehensive sanctions against, and periodic bombing of, a country staggered by a catastrophic war with Iran in the 1980s and the First Gulf War.

In an ongoing crisis, in which hundred of thousands of Iraqis have already died, the last few months have proved some of the bloodiest on record. In October alone, more than six thousand civilians were killed in Iraq, most in Baghdad, where thousands of additional U.S. troops had been sent in August (in the first official Bush administration "surge") with the claim that they would restore order and stability in the city. In the end, they only fueled more violence. These figures—and they are generally considered undercounts—are more than double the 2005 rate. Other things have more or less doubled in the last years, including, to name just two, the number of daily attacks on U.S. troops and the overall number of U.S. soldiers killed and wounded. United Nations special investigator Manfred Nowak also notes that torture "is totally out of hand" in Iraq. "The situation is so bad many people say it is worse than it has been in the times of Saddam Hussein."

Given the disaster that Iraq is today, you could keep listing terrible numbers until your mind was numb. But here's another way of putting the last four years in context. In that same period, there have, in fact, been a large number of deaths in a distant land on the minds of many people in the United States: Darfur. Since 2003, according to UN estimates, some 200,000 have been killed in the Darfur region of Sudan in a brutal ethnic-cleansing campaign and another 2 million have been turned into refugees.

How would you know this? Well, if you lived in New York City, at least, you could hardly take a subway ride without seeing an ad that reads: "400,000 dead. Millions uniting to save Darfur." *The New York Times* has also regularly featured full-page ads describing the "genocide" in Darfur and calling for intervention there under "a chain of command allowing necessary and timely military action without approval from distant political or civilian personnel."

In those same years, according to the best estimate available, the British medical journal *The Lancet's* door-to-door study of Iraqi deaths, approximately 655,000 Iraqis had died in war, occupation, and civil strife between March 2003 and June 2006. (The study offers a

low-end possible figure on deaths of 392,000 and a high-end figure of 943,000.) But you could travel coast to coast without seeing the equivalents of the billboards, subway placards, full-page newspaper ads, or the like for the Iraqi dead. And you certainly won't see, as in the case of Darfur, celebrities on Good Morning America talking about their commitment to stopping "genocide" in Iraq.

Why is it that we are counting and thinking about the Sudanese dead as part of a high-profile, celebrity-driven campaign to "Save Darfur," yet Iraqi deaths still go effectively uncounted, and rarely seem to provoke moral outrage, let alone public campaigns to end the killing? And why are the numbers of killed in Darfur cited without any question, while the numbers of Iraqi dead, unless pitifully low-ball figures, are instantly challenged—or dismissed?

In our world, it seems, there are the worthy victims and the unworthy ones. To get at the difference, consider the posture of the United States toward the Sudan and Iraq. According to the Bush administration, Sudan is a "rogue state"; it is on the State Department's list of "state sponsors of terrorism." It stands accused of attacking the United States through its role in the suicide-boat bombing of the USS Cole in 2000. And then, of course—as Mahmood Mamdani pointed out in the *London Review of Books* recently—Darfur fits neatly into a narrative of "Muslim-on-Muslim violence," of a "genocide perpetrated by Arabs," a line of argument that appeals heavily to those who would like to change the subject from what the United States has done—and is doing—in Iraq. Talking about U.S. accountability for the deaths of the Iraqis we supposedly liberated is a far less comfortable matter.

It's okay to discuss U.S. "complicity" in human rights abuses, but only as long as you remain focused on sins of omission, not commission. We are failing the people of Darfur by not militarily intervening. If only we had used our military more aggressively. When, however, we do intervene, and wreak havoc in the process, it's another matter.

If anything, the focus on Darfur serves to legitimize the idea of U.S. intervention, of being more of an empire, not less of one, at the very moment when the carnage that such intervention causes is all too visible and is being widely repudiated around the globe. This has also contributed to a situation in which the violence for which the United States is the most responsible, Iraq, is that for which it is held the least accountable at home.

If anyone erred in Iraq, we now hear establishment critics of the invasion and occupation suggest, the real problem was administration incompetence or George Bush's overly optimistic belief that he could bring democracy to Arab or Muslim people, who, we are told, "have no tradition of democracy," who are from a "sick" and "broken society"—and, in brutalizing one another in a civil war, are now showing their true nature.

There is a general agreement across much of the political spectrum that we can blame Iraqis for the problems they face. In a much-lauded speech to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Sen. Barack Obama couched his criticism of Bush administration policy in a call for "no more coddling" of the Iraqi government: The United States, he insisted, "is not going to hold together this country indefinitely." Richard Perle, one of the neoconservative architects of the invasion of Iraq, now says he "underestimated the depravity" of the Iraqis. Sen. Hillary Clinton, Democratic frontrunner in the 2008 presidential election, recently asked, "How much are we willing to sacrifice [for the Iraqis]?" As if the Iraqis asked us to invade their country and make their world a living hell and are now letting us down.

This is what happens when the imperial burden gets too heavy. The natives come in for a lashing.

The disaster the United States has wrought in Iraq is worsening by the day and its effects will be long lasting. How long they last, and how far they spread beyond Iraq, will depend on how quickly our government can be forced to end its occupation. It will also depend on how all of us react the next time we hear that we must attack another country to make the world safe from weapons of mass destruction, "spread democracy," or undertake a "humanitarian intervention." In the meantime, it's worth thinking about what all those horrific figures will look like next March, on the fifth anniversary of the invasion, and the March after, on the sixth, and the March after that...

Put it on a billboard—in your head, if nowhere else.

Anthony Arnove
March 19, 2007

Long Live the King!

But what happens when the King of Thailand dies?

Thailand's stability and prospects for the future are held in place, many would say, by the slender thread of one remarkable 79-year old man. He is credited with seeing the country through crisis after crisis, he is worshiped by most of his people and the country's politicians cross his loyal retainers at their peril.

Last September's coup against former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, done in his name by royalist generals, was just the latest instance of his long shadow. But one day King Bhumibol Adulyadej will die.

"Things might be OK in Bangkok while the king is alive, but what happens when he dies?" a 63-year-old Thai said quietly in a private conversation. Like most Thais, this man speaks of the king in whispers for fear of social reprisals or even jail time. "That's why the coup was bad. It sets a bad example for the future, when the king isn't around to hold things together."

His health is a subject of much speculation and concern. In July, thousands lined the streets to wish him well after undergoing surgery for lumbar spinal stenosis. He has largely stayed out of public view since then. In his annual birthday speech on 5 December he mentioned that his "physical strength" did not permit him to stand for the occasion, even though mentally he was "fit enough."

After more than 60 years on the throne, he is the one constant in Thailand's political life, a mortal deity whose calm demeanor seems to hover above the fray. Since 1946 Bhumibol has outlived 13 constitutions, 16 successful or attempted coups and 26 prime ministers. He has witnessed the remarkable transformation of Thailand from a backwater of superstition and poverty to a modern economy.

"The country will never be ready for the king to die," said a lifelong bureaucrat who has served under eight prime ministers. "This is sensitive to talk about, but it's a very real subject. A period of great instability is coming."

The love for their king is real among Thais. It's hard to imagine that deep-rooted respect for the institution of the monarchy changing even with Bhumibol out of the picture. As Paul Handley spells out in his book *The King Never Smiles*, royalists have gone to great pains to deify the king, and the decades of work that went into restoring the once-peripheral Thai monarchy into a central pillar of political legitimacy will not be undone overnight.

But although an American-born, foreign educated boy has been turned into a Buddhist Dhamma king, the presence of a god-like monarch has also retarded the growth of the country's political and judicial systems. This was evident in the turmoil leading up to the 19 September coup.

When publisher Sondhi Limthongkul, certainly attuned to the feud between the premier and the palace, started his campaign to unseat Thaksin, he distributed yellow T-shirts bearing the words "We Will Fight for the King" — even though no casual observers could see a threat to the throne. Soon after, royalist academics started debating whether the king could use a vague clause in the constitution to oust Thaksin and appoint a prime minister.

By the time Thaksin called an early election in February 2006, the leading opposition Democrat party announced it would boycott the election, and it called on Bhumibol to appoint a new prime minister.

Bhumibol finally swooped down from the heavens on April 25, calling on the country's judges to "solve the problem" created by a boycotted election. Within two weeks, obedient judges voided the poll, which was easily won by Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party. Then the three highest courts, with no legal mandate other than Bhumibol's backing, called on the members of the election watchdog commission to resign. When the commissioners refused, claiming that the judges had no legal right to bully them out, the palace-backed courts quickly found them guilty of malfeasance and denied them bail for the sole purpose of removing them from office.

As that bizarre legal battle played out, an even stranger fight took place between Thaksin and the king's top adviser, retired general and former prime minister Prem Tinsulanonda, chair of the Privy Council.

Thaksin knew that a coup plot was in the works and tried to warn the world of his impending doom. In a letter to US President George W Bush dated June 23,

Thaksin wrote: "Having failed to provoke violence and disorder, my opponents are now attempting various extra Constitutional tactics to co-opt the will of the people." In a speech to bureaucrats on June 29, he said that "highly influential people"—widely seen as a reference to the Privy Council or others surrounding the throne—wanted to depose him. But the public lashed out at Thaksin for even suggesting such a thing, no matter how true it may have been.

Prem proceeded to dress up in full military garb and give a series of speeches to the various armed forces. He repeatedly said that soldiers should not be loyal to a government, but to the king. Many saw it as a green light for the generals to seize power.

Prem is widely viewed as the mastermind behind the putsch and Bhumibol met with the coupmakers hours after they rolled tanks into Bangkok, legitimizing the coup in the eyes of the public. He also gave his unconditional support for the military-installed government led by Surayud Chulanont, who was also a member of the Privy Council at the time of the coup. By some accounts, Bhumibol prevented a second coup recently by declining to respond to requests from some in the junta who wanted to do away with Surayud's government.

While the traditional elite and many democratic activists may have seen Thaksin as a threat—and rightfully so—it remains to be seen if the monarch's sway over the Thai public will be passed on to his only son, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn. As much as Thais love and trust their king, the prince is a different story.

The distaste for the prince is countered by widespread respect for Bhumibol's second daughter, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. She is seen as having the kingly virtues of her father, and many observers say she would unify the country more than the prince.

But mind you, none of this is ever discussed openly. Lese-majeste laws make doing so a crime and thus the fate of the Chakri Dynansty—Bhumibol is the Ninth King in the current line is hidden behind closed palace doors that have more in common with the Middle Ages than the globalized world of Internet gossip.

Succession is still up in the air, although many believe a public relations campaign is unfolding to position the prince as Bhumibol's inevitable successor. The 1924 Palace Law of Succession is based on primogeniture and bars women from serving as monarch, but later amendments have opened the door for a princess. Section 23 of the 1997 Constitution said that if the king does not appoint a successor, then the Privy Council must submit the name of either the prince or the princess to serve as monarch. The choice would need to be approved by the National Assembly.

But the coupmakers tossed out the 1997 charter, so it's unclear how the next monarch will be decided. Some say the king may abdicate in favor of his son or daughter, which would ensure a smoother transition once he passes away. Many Thais may also be more willing to accept the prince if the king appoints him while he's still alive.

Helping the prince's case is that his 36-year-old wife had a baby boy, Dipangkara Rasmijoti, in April 2005. Although the prince has four sons with a previous common law wife, Dipangkara was the first to be considered a legitimate heir, ensuring that the royal line would continue. Princess Sirindhorn, 51, has never married and has no children, even though she could presumably still name Dipangkara as an heir if she were to take the crown.

"Some people think that while promoting Sirindhorn may help keep peace in the short term, it would not be good for the dynasty," said a Western diplomat. "The crown prince establishes a direct line to the king. Once that direct line is broken, then things get more complicated."

Either way, like most other things here, secrecy will prevail. It's also unclear which generals would have the most sway in the process and on the face of it the princess has shown no desire to succeed her father, even if the public may want that.

Prince Vajiralongkorn has attempted to refurbish his image lately, doing charity work and visiting victims of violence in the restive southernmost Muslim-majority provinces. Earlier this month, he piloted a commercial airliner from Bangkok to Chiang Mai on a charity flight to raise money for groups working in the Muslim south. About 112 VIP guests paid for a seat, and the trip raised 80 billion baht in total for charity.

The prince has also taken over some of the king's duties after the coup. In October, he presided over the opening of the legislature, the first time the king has not done so. Last month, he chaired the first meeting of the people's assembly that will draft a new constitution, which is

normally a duty reserved for the king.

Although many academics and editorialists initially greeted the coup as a necessary evil to restore a democracy that Thaksin broke, others saw it as simply removing an obstacle to royal succession.

Moreover, getting rid of the 1997 constitution means the rules of the game can be altered to prevent the rise of another Thaksin-like populist. Some believe the coup plotters will make it much easier for lawmakers to switch parties, bringing the country back to the 1990s, when weak coalition governments were often toppled by just a small group of lawmakers. This could ensure that the military and the monarchy can quickly neutralize any too-ambitious politicians by meddling via backdoor power networks.

Thongchai Winichakul, a student leader in the bloody pro-democracy protests of October 1976 and now a professor at the University of Wisconsin, best articulated this in a paper widely distributed in the days after the coup. To guarantee the "special role of the monarchy in social and political life," he argued, the royalists needed three things: a popular heir, an "obedient, even submissive" government, and a powerful Privy Council that can act as kingmaker in the eyes of the public.

"Thaksin threatened the royalist plan," he wrote. "To the royalists, he seemingly sought to adopt for himself the role of kingmaker. The royalist coup consolidates power to General Prem and the royalists, putting their plan on track. Will Thailand return to democracy under the guidance of an unelected Privy Council? The constitution that the royalists put in place will reveal the character of government and parliamentary system they have in mind... The coup is not as much about toppling Thaksin as for 'Premocracy.'"

The past few months have revealed the crucial role Prem plays in balancing out various competing military factions. The most public rift has been that between former army commander and prime minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and General Saprang Kalayanamitr, a hard-line soldier in line to replace coup leader Sonthi Boonyaratglin as army chief next October.

Following the Bangkok bombings on New Year's Eve, local media reported that Saprang called Chavalit "Thaksin's lackey" and suspected him of orchestrating the blasts. Chavalit, a former deputy prime minister under Thaksin, responded by taunting Saprang, accusing him of "gross incompetence" for not arresting the bombers after claiming he knew their identities.

This prompted Prem to work the phones in an effort to keep the boys in step. After Chavalit met his good friend Prem recently, he reportedly agreed to stop his public attacks on the junta.

The nature of the military makes it impossible to know the motives for one group of generals to turn against another group. *The Bangkok Post*, for example, reported earlier this month that Chavalit was mad at coup leader Sonthi because he failed "to show up at Gen Chavalit's residence to wish him a Happy New Year in person." One can only imagine how much trouble the country would be in if the military is split on Bhumibol's successor.

Combine the sensitivities of generals with those forces, however quiet now, that are opposed in principle to the idea of monarchy, and things could get even more chaotic. Without a doubt, Bhumibol's passing will provide a window of opportunity for anti-monarchists to start demystifying the palace. On this point, analysts recall the events of October 6, 1976. Students had gathered at Thammasat University to protest the return of Field Marshal Thanom Kitikhachorn, a military dictator who pro-democracy demonstrators had forced into exile following a bloody police crackdown on October 14, 1973.

On October 5, 1976 right-wing newspapers had published a photo of Thammasat students reenacting the lynching of two student protestors by police the previous month. The photograph, later found to be doctored, bore a strong resemblance to Prince Vajiralongkorn. The conservative generals soon pounced on the protestors for this terrible act of lese-majeste. Soldiers proceeded to rape, mutilate and kill hundreds.

"The influential people in society have kept people stupid and ill-informed for decades," said a former lawmaker in Thaksin's Thai Rak Thai party, speaking on condition of anonymity. "They are just taught from early on to say *mai pen rai* (no problem) all the time. And it's proven successful for the elites. But it doesn't have to be that way. Once the seeds are sown, then society can become more enlightened. There are several people with stature across party lines who feel the same way."

Thailand is often said to have become a democracy when Field Marshal Phibunsongkhram and civilian leader Pridi Banomyong launched a coup that

upended the absolute monarchy on June 24, 1932. But for most of the last 75 years, unelected generals have held power, often with the support of the king.

The hopes that the generals who ousted Thaksin would install a much better democracy look more remote by the day. Just this month, the junta called a meeting of broadcast media to bully them into not reporting messages from Noppadol Pattama, the ousted premier's lawyer. An interview Thaksin gave to CNN was blacked out by government censors here. Many also expect the generals to dissolve the Thai Rak Thai party in a politically motivated court case. The military leaders, taking a cue from Prem, still insist on promoting vague notions of "unity" and "Thainess" at all costs.

While the king will always be number one in the hearts of the rural poor, Thaksin may come in a distant second. This has potentially dire consequences for the royalists when Bhumibol dies. Thus, the military government is trying to portray Thaksin as a villain, and most of his popular economic programs are being rebranded under the king's intentionally vague "sufficiency economy" philosophy. Formal charges against Thaksin are expected soon. This is all good news for those who feared that a powerful Thaksin in a post-Bhumibol Thailand would prove much worse than any alternative scenario.

"For some there is relief that the country is now under the control of the traditional elite rather than Thaksin's business elites," a diplomat said. "But how things will actually play out when the king dies is anyone's guess."

Neither Thaksin nor Prince Vajiralongkorn nor anyone else will be able to fill the massive vacuum left when Bhumibol passes on. But that doesn't mean they won't try. And that's what makes it all the more important for Thailand to build proper democratic institutions. The alternative is instability, rumors, innuendo, restraints on civil liberties and potential bloodshed.

As renowned scholar Sulak Sivaraksa, a serial lese-majeste offender, told an audience at Thammasat University in April of last year: "Any monarchy that is democratic, possesses limited power, and is mindful of the ethical norms of the contemporary world will treat the people as the ruler of the land, even if they are fallible. The monarchy will thus continue to exist under the constitution. But if the monarchy is arrogant and hardboiled, works closely with the military, conceitedly stands above the citizens, looks down on the people, and dislikes progressive intellectuals (who again are all fallible), royal power will be used to obstruct changes, thereby jeopardizing the viability of the monarchy. The monarchy will be sowing the seeds of its own destruction."

Asia Sentinel
26 January 2007

Thailand's Singapore Problem

As difficulties mount at home, Thailand's leaders begin fumbling relations with Singapore over a visit by Thaksin

After ousting Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra in a coup, the military-appointed leaders here have tried in vain to explain "Thai-style democracy" to the world.

In the past week, it has gotten a bit more difficult as the country has used censorship and bluster to bite back at Singapore for allowing Thaksin into the city state for meetings with officials while he also gave a round of high-profile interviews to foreign journalists while in town.

"When the military intervened in the supposedly democratic governance of our country on September 19 many foreign observers were puzzled by the Thai people's reaction," new Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont told the APEC Summit in Hanoi last November. "Tanks were festooned with flowers, family snapshots taken with tough-looking, but smiling, soldiers."

The coup, he declared, was simply "a uniquely Thai response to the need for urgent political reform" and his government was off to a "running start" in making that happen.

On the face of it, most countries seemed to buy that. Certainly China wasn't going to put up a fuss. Americans and Europeans condemned the coup, but they weren't about to cut off bilateral relations. Although most countries in the 10-nation Asean grouping that had enjoyed good business dealings with

both Thaksin and his family's Shin Corp were surprised but they stayed relatively silent. Malaysia, which often sparred with Thaksin's government, quietly welcomed the move, while Burma's junta prepared for a rougher relationship with the former army chief Surayud at the helm.

And then there's Singapore. The city-state, as one of Thaksin's key business partners over the years, has played a prominent role in the Thai political chaos.

Last January, Singapore-government-run Temasek Holdings purchase of telecommunications firm Shin Corp from Thaksin's family in a largely tax-free sale, unleashed political mayhem. The deal epitomized everything Bangkok's elites hated about Thaksin, who often appeared to be transforming Thailand into a branch of the family business, and the ensuing protests led him to call an early election in February.

At one point, this anger towards Thaksin boiled over into anti-Singaporean rhetoric. Some groups protested in front of the Singapore Embassy, and others called for a boycott of Singaporean products. But it went nowhere. At the end of the day, the public wasn't terribly interested in dragging Singapore into what was essentially a Thai fight.

Even so, in the days following the coup, Singapore again rankled the Thai elite when Lee Hsien Loong, the city-state's leader, called the coup "a setback for Thailand." Certainly Bangkok wasn't going to take lessons on democracy from the leader of an oppressive one-party country.

The strife only worsened last week when Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister S Jayakumar told the Asean Summit in the Philippines, that Southeast Asian nations should reject military coups in a proposed regional charter. Unconstitutional political changes would be forbidden "because we see that as an important principle," the minister said.

Although most Thais probably would've agreed with that statement prior to September 19, they saw it as a slap in the face, particularly since S Jayakumar scheduled a meeting with Thaksin himself just a few days after making those comments. The nail in the coffin was a series of interviews Thaksin gave to foreign media outlets while in Singapore criticizing the new government's performance, including its recent market-jolting capital controls and restrictions on foreign investment. The Thai coup leaders reacted by bullying the local cable operator into blocking the interview on CNN and restricting access to news websites.

The next day, Thailand called in Singapore's ambassador for an "explanation." Thai officials didn't like what they heard, so they canceled a visit by Singapore's foreign minister scheduled for later this month and halted a civil servant exchange program. Permission for Singapore to use Thailand as a base for military training exercises was also under review, although Surayud told reporters Thursday that his government planned no further diplomatic action.

Singapore insists that it played by the rules. Its embassy informed Thai authorities about Thaksin's planned meetings, and received no objections.

"The Thai Government did not notify us that Dr Thaksin has been charged for any offence," the Singapore foreign ministry said in a statement. "There is also no restriction on where he can travel to.... There is no reason for Singapore to turn Dr Thaksin away. Prior to Singapore, Dr Thaksin had also visited several other countries without any protest by the Thai Government."

All this sounds fair enough, but Singapore is essentially playing dumb. After all, this is one of the most media sensitive places on earth. Less than 10 days after the Thai coup, it banned the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, a Dow Jones publication, because it didn't comply with new rules put in place after the magazine printed an interview with an opposition leader. It beggars belief to think Singapore wouldn't grasp the political ramifications of playing host to Thaksin while he criticized the military leaders in interviews with CNN and the *Wall Street Journal*, another Dow Jones title.

But although Thailand's military government would love to direct some public angst at Singapore—and a few small protest groups have already prepared placards—the problems it currently has with the island state stem from Thailand's own identity crisis.

While Thaksin ruled the country, his critics routinely pounced on him for trying to turn Thailand into another Singapore. This essentially meant one-party rule, a cowed, obedient media and an ardently capitalist economy.

Temasek's acquisition of Shin only bolstered the fears that the very essence of Thailand was at stake. The local press focused on the "morality" of the deal. Thaksin appeared greedy for managing to avoid a tax bill on the sale, and his arrogance when

he called critics "jealous" only reinforced the perception that the billionaire did not possess the right virtuous attributes to lead Thailand.

This backlash culminated in the September 19 coup. Democracy advocates cheered the forced removal of the unethical Thaksin. Even the new military appointed leaders convinced themselves that the yellow flowers hoisted on the tanks made them the saviors of democracy.

Foreigners just couldn't understand: The coup would mean a freer media, louder opposition, economic justice and the establishment of the rule of law. This all appeared counter-intuitive.

Surayud's eloquent speech to foreign correspondents in November was particularly instructive in this regard. "For the last five years the Thai people suffered from an increasingly deformed media environment," he said. "Broadcast media were muzzled; news coverage was state-directed. I believe that is called propaganda.... Report positively and you will be rewarded, report negatively and suffer the consequences. The victim, of course, was the truth, and the people's right to know."

To demonstrate their new way of thinking, the generals wouldn't arrest Thaksin outright. They would set up a body to investigate his crimes, and then bring him to court if they found anything. And what can Thaksin do during this time? Well, he could come back whenever the situation "returns to normal," the government said.

Unfortunately for the idealist soldiers and their supporters, something happened on the way to perfect democracy. Although the government has made a point to push Thailand away from the Singaporean economic model by focusing on restricting foreign investment and capital flow, it has at least temporarily begun embracing the city-state's autocratic rule and press restrictions. At the moment, Thais are getting a dose of Singaporean-like repression by trying to rein in offending news reports.

Moreover, the junta's efforts to demonize Thaksin haven't gone smoothly. Temasek's Shin deal turned out to have been structured just like thousands of other deals here. Critics have again started to hail Thaksin's economic management as policymakers fumble with capital controls and changes to foreign business laws. And the graft busters have failed to bring charges against Thaksin, whom the coup-makers had claimed was so corrupt that his government needed to be toppled.

The ambiguous way in which the generals treated Thaksin after the coup and the failure to scrounge up any charges on him in the proceeding four months led to the diplomatic spat with Singapore. If the junta knew what to do with Thaksin, then the rest of the world would know how to treat him as well.

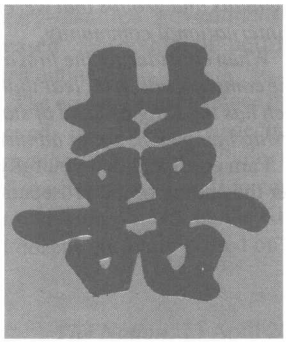
What makes the dispute with Singapore so awkward for the coup apologists who saw Thaksin as a threat to democracy is that the generals are acting more like the loathed Singaporeans than he ever did. Under Surayud's leadership, opposition voices have been quashed in the name of national unity, and the broadcast media is more "muzzled" and "state-directed" than it was under Thaksin.

In the end, the Thai-Singaporean squabble will likely fade away as they tend to do in a region where collective gains often outweigh nationalist struggles. Bangkok and Phnom Penh, for instance, have already improved ties after Khmers torched the Thai embassy and Thai-owned businesses in January 2003 because they viewed Thais as greedy, arrogant and culturally insensitive.

"Singapore is one of our best friends and allies in Asean, even better than Malaysia and Burma," said Panitan Wattanayagorn, a political scientist at Chulalongkorn University. "Yes it's a drastic gesture to cancel the foreign minister's visit, but the lasting impact will likely be quite minimal. It may in fact unintentionally end up hurting Thailand, as we all know how inefficient our bureaucracy is."

Although Thailand's generals are more defensive and introspective these days, some in Bangkok still hold out hope that democracy here will eventually allow space for vibrant dissent and media freedom, assuming the military cedes control later this year. But other say that if one day a political system emerges in Thailand that is not manipulated by Bangkok's elites, royalists or generals, it will hardly be thanks to flower-covered tanks and smiling soldiers.

Daniel Ten Kate
19 January 2007



Myanmar Government Refuse Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire Visa to Visit Aung San Suu Kyi

Today, Ms. Mairead Corrigan Maguire heard from the Burmese Government, that they will not be granting her a visa to visit her Sister Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Speaking from Belfast to an official on the telephone at the Burmese Embassy, in London, Ms. Maguire was given no reason but the assurance that there was no appeal to the refusal of this visa, as she was not allowed into Burma.

Maguire's request for a visa, was one of 13 Nobel Peace Prize winners applications to the Myanmar Embassy, seeking permission to visit Aung San Suu Kyi, the only imprisoned Nobel Peace Laureate. All 13 Nobellist's applications for visas have been turned down by the Burmese Embassy.

In response to the refusal of a visa Ms. Maguire said:

'Many people, including 13 peace nobellists, continue to call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. This includes a personal appeal from the previous UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Under Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, after his recent visit to Burma. The Burmese Government cannot continue to imprison Suu Kyi, nor ignore the voice of the International community to free her and enter into all inclusive dialogue with her, her Party the NLD, and all the Representatives of the Ehnic people of Burma. There will not be a military solution to the deepening crises faced by the Burmese people and the Ethnic nationalities, there can only be a nonviolent political solution, and Aung San Suu Kyi's spirit of reconciliation and peace, is a cornerstone to the success of this process.

I appeal to the Burmese Government of follow their consciences and put an end to the terrible suffering of their own people, by beginning a serious peace process, starting with the release of Suu Kyi and all political prisoners.

We hope that the recent political developments in Northern Ireland, so long a place of violent conflict and near despair, will encourae Suu Kyi, and her friends, and all the people of Burma, to know that peace is possible, and encourage them not to give up hope that hey too will one day celebrate equality, human rights and democracy.'

Mairead Corrigan Maguire,
Nobel Peace Laureate, Peace People, 224 Lisburn Road, Belfast. Northern Ireland.
www.peacepeople.com 2nd April, 2007

(from p.3)

attempts to prolong its hold on power. The talk also tried to clarify the basic principles of democracy, liberty, and equality of the people. No group should use the monarch to serve their own political purposes, and the military groups which have seized power have violated these basic principles throughout the history of Thai democracy. The defendant also denounced the validity of the five points the NPKC used as an excuse for staging the coup. He also condemned individuals and groups that were submissive to the NPKC as having a part in destroying Thailand's reputation within the international community.

When considering the first and the second phrases that the prosecution charged as lese majeste within the context of the complete talk, it is clear that the defendant sought to teach the students to be conscious of the essence of democracy which has the King as head of state. He warned the students not to live a luxurious, consumer-oriented lifestyle, not to worship being rich, not to admire people in power, and to be concerned about justice and righteousness.

I am confident that you fully understand the court's decision cited above and that you have the moral courage to order the ending of the prosecution when it is still within the authority of the national police chief to do so.

Yours respectfully,

(Sulak Sivaraksa)
The alleged offender

Dalai Lama's Envoy Says Political Will Can Help Resolve Tibet Issue

International Campaign for Tibet

March 13th 2007

The Dalai Lama's Special Envoy, Lodi Gyari, testified before the United States Congress that the dialogue process with the Chinese leadership has reached a stage where "if there is the political will on both sides, we have an opportunity to finally resolve this issue."

Speaking before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on "Tibet: Status of the Sino-Tibetan Dialogue" on March 13, 2007 in Washington, D.C., Gyari said, "I can assure you that we have the political will to do so and that we will not give up. We have over and over again demonstrated this by our actions, in spite of difficulties, provocations, and the legitimate frustrations of our people."

Gyari said his team was ready for the next round of discussions. He added, "Since our last round, we have had several in-depth sessions with His Holiness and with Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, the democratically-elected head of the Kashag (cabinet). We possess the sincerity and commitment to pursue these talks to a result, and have qenuinely considered the views of our counterparts. Likewise, it is my sincere hope that my counterparts have taken into full account our fundamental positions and concerns."

HM Pardons Swiss Man Who Defaced His Portraits

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has pardoned a Swiss man sentenced to 10 years' jail last month for vandalising portraits of the monarch, prosecutors said yesterday.

"I have learned that he received a royal pardon a few days ago. He has now been released but will be deported from Thailand," said Panu Kwanyuen, the provincial attorney general of Chiang Mai.

Oliver Jufer, 57, received a 10-year jail term on March 29 after pleading guilty to five counts of lese majeste—the crime of offending the dignity of a sovereign.

He was convicted of defacing several portraits of the King with spray paint during a drunken spree in Chiang Mai in December.

Jufer was released from prison and into the custody of immigration officials on Tuesday, prison authorities said. Immigration officials in Chiang Mai said they were in the process of deporting him—reportedly last night.

"Thailand has asked for Switzerland's help in the repatriation," said Swiss foreign ministry spokesman Jean-Philippe Jeannerat.

"Under the rules of consular protection, we are working to ensure the return of our citizen as soon as possible, by providing the necessary assistance," Jeannerat told Agence France- Preßse.

Swiss and Thai sources said that Jufer was expected to arrive at Zurich airport early today.

Jufer is from Zurich but has lived mainly in Thailand for the last 10 years after marrying a Thai woman, Thai officials have said.

Security cameras videotaped him defacing the King's portraits on December 5, which is the monarch's birthday and a time of national celebration.

Thailand has been swept up in royal fever since the 60th anniversary of the King's accession to the throne in June last year. The palace has also become more prominent in Thai political life with a military coup in mid-September, which was accepted by the King shortly after.

The generals who staged the coup have repeatedly said that one of the reasons for ousting elected prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra was because he had been "impolite" to the monarch. But prosecutors this week dropped lese majeste charges against Thaksin, although they chided him for his remarks.

The controversy over Jufer's case and Thailand's rigid enforcement of its lese majeste law also erupted on the Internet, after a user on the video-sharing site YouTube posted a clip mocking the King and taking aim at the law.

Thailand last week blocked the site because of the video, drawing condemnation from media rights watchdogs, who accused the military-installed government of increased censorship of political speech online.

The original clip has since been removed, but Thailand's decision to censor the website spurred YouTube users world-wide to create their own videos mocking the King, with dozens currently posted on the site.

The Nation, 13 April 2007

Letter from INEB

Dear INEB members and readers,

The past several months are the special moment for Buddhist women in Siam. We welcomed many internationally renowned bhikkhunis as well as distinguished laywomen who visited our country on various occasions. In January, we invited the Venerable Bhikkhuni Tenzin Palmo to deliver dhamma talks and to lead several retreats at Wongsanit Ashram and Chiangmai. Her teachings were simple but profound. Taking this chance, we organized a meeting for Thai bhikkhunis, samaneris, nuns and laywomen to brainstorm how to promote the role and status of women dhamma teachers and to create companionship among them. The meeting was joined by Buddhist women from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions.

In March, there was an awarding ceremony for the 2007 outstanding women in Buddhism in Bangkok. In spite of her tight schedule, Venerable Jampa Tsedroen was very kind to accept our invitation to give a talk to the Thai audience when she was here to accept the award.

In the following pages, you can read the articles on the visits of the two dhamma teachers.

Actually this is an auspicious year for Buddhist women worldwide. In July, an international conference will be held in Germany under the patronage of H.H. the Dalai Lama to consider the *vinaya* regarding women's ordination. Hopefully this conference will generate the advancement in the revival of the bhikkhuni order. Ven. Jampa has played an important role to make the conference possible. Let's give her moral support in organizing this historic event.

Many activities are coming up. In May, to the delight of Thai Buddhists, is the first visit of Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, a great teacher on socially engaged Buddhism, to Siam after his first visit to Siam over three decades ago.

Then in June and July, INEB will continue our Youth Program. The *Young Bodhisattva* Youth Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation is planned for 13 June-24 July. I hope that many young and socially active Buddhists would join us this year.

Also in May, four young Buddhists from Laos, Cambodia, India and Tibet settlement in India will be posted in different countries for a 10-month internship under INEB's new program "Youth Exchange for Peace and Social Innovation". More details will be reported in the next issue.

The plan is now being drafted at INEB to provide advanced trainings for our alumni in specific areas. This year we will start with the advanced learning opportunity for our female alumni about Buddhist feminists and social changes in August. I would like to know what kind of advanced knowledge or skills you might need so that you can serve your community better as socially engaged Buddhists.

The first week of September is our big event of the year, the 2007 INEB Conference in Taiwan. Dr. Yo Hsiang Chou, our executive committee member, is working very hard and coordinating with Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhist groups in preparing it. We are still in need of funds for the conference. If you can help, we would thank you so much.

The various activities of INEB are waiting for your support. Please continue your membership via *Seeds of Peace* subscription. If you wish to help more, you can make additional donation to any activity of your choice. Thank you and see you next issue.

Yours in dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary

The Wisdom of Kindness

This scene could be a projection of the mind—a cut from an on-going movie that has been recycled again and again. But to have Ani Tenzin Palmo playing a role in it, with an immaculately clean kitchen filled with nuns and lay women at Suan Mokkh forest monastery as the setting, makes this a scenario no film director could have conceived or even dreamed of.

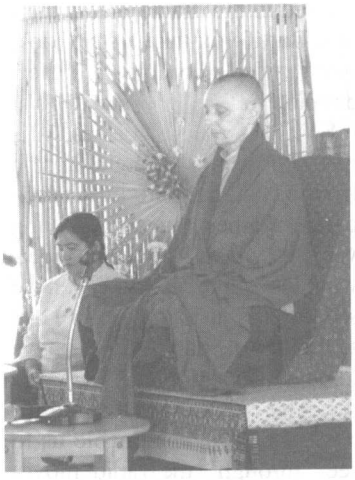
And yet here she is, sitting snugly on a plastic chair, chatting, gesturing and laughing her hearty, joyous laugh.

Although there are differences in language and robe colour of the "cast", the 63-year-old Tibetan Buddhist nun seems to be mingling well with her new Thai friends. This is not surprising given these friends share Tenzin Palmo's gender and, more importantly, her aspiration to attain enlightenment - if not in this lifetime then in one of the numerous sequels they believe are likely follow.

That's exactly the message that the venerable bhikkuni (female monk) repeated throughout her recent whirl-wind tour of Thailand. "Don't waste your time," she urged the different groups she spoke to, be they Thais or foreigners meditating at Suan Mokkh, business people in Bangkok, Mae Chi students at Mahapajapati Buddhist College for nuns in Nakhon Ratchasima or the general public at retreats held in Nakhon Nayok and Chiang Mai. To all she stressed the importance of nurturing a constant state of mindfulness.

"Don't waste your human birth, for if you do, the opportunity may not come again for many, many lifetimes.

"When I discovered the Buddha-dharma through a



course [which was] actually on Thai Buddhism, when I was 18, I recognised immediately that this is the only thing in the world that is important. Therefore, I decided I should try to lead a life that would not distract me from the main point of Buddha-dharma: To attain enlightenment as much as one can in one's lifetime in order to benefit others, because what else could matter?"

Tenzin Palmo has lived her life in pursuit of what she now teaches. In 1964, aged 20, she left her home in London to undertake a spiritual journey in India. A year later, shortly after meeting her Tibetan guru, the late eighth Khamtrul Rinpoche, Tenzin Palmo was ordained as a novice. (She received full bhikkuni ordination in 1973.) In the following years she diligently studied both Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and the myriad rituals and meditation techniques of Vajrayana Buddhism. At one time, she was the only nun practicing at a temple of 100 monks.

Her journey has been far from easy. Cave in the Snow, Tenzin Palmo's biography, written by journalist Vicki Mackenzie, details the patriarchal atmosphere within the Tibetan monastic community (a situation found in many Buddhist countries). In 1970, she received permission from her guru to move to another temple in the Himalayan valley of Lahaul.

After spending six years at that snow-bound land, Tenzin Palmo took a radical step on her quest for enlightenment: She began a solitary retreat in a cave 4,000 metres above sea level. For 12 years, the final three in strict isolation, she led a rugged, precarious existence surviving on basic foods in the sparsest conditions while enduring the extreme weather of the Himalayas.

Now, in the dimmed light of the kitchen at Suan Mokkh, such a legendary feat seems a lifetime away. But is it really? The topics of Tenzin Palmo's chats with the nuns and upasikas (lay practitioners) here range from Hollywood movies like Groundhog Day (she thinks it's a very Buddhist film) and The Matrix (much too violent), to how to achieve a balance between spiritual retreats and community work and whether living in a cave really helps get rid of one's ego.

Tenzin Palmo's serene, light-hearted persona belies her incredible internal strength. Despite her frail health and the packed schedule of her recent visit - almost every day she had to travel, give dharma lectures and answer difficult questions on spirituality - Tenzin Palmo maintains her lucid sharpness. And her immense kindness also. Every now and then, when she senses anguish or a need for solace, she approaches one of the women she's chatting with and gives them a bear hug. This motherly embrace is the mani-

festation of kalayanamitta (true friendship).

"That's why you need a female monk," she says after hugging a woman in tears. "Because [male] monks can't do that."

This casual giving of love is mixed with an indescribable sense of non-attachment, an awareness of space that enables Tenzin Palmo to accommodate others but never cling to them. During her lecture at Suan Mokkh (where she was offered the prestigious speaker's seat once occupied by the monastery's late founder, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu), Tenzin Palmo told a story about her mother's love as an example of a love that does not bind.

"When I was 19 years old, I wanted to go to India to find a spiritual teacher. Finally, I got an invitation letter. I remember running along the road to meet my mother as she was coming from work and saying to her 'I'm going to India!' And she replied 'Oh yes dear, when are you leaving?' Because she loved me, she was happy for me to leave her."

She went on to explain the moral of the story. "We mistake love and attachment. We think they are the same thing, but actually, they are opposites. Love is 'I want you to be happy.' Attachment is 'I want you to make me happy.'"

Tenzin Palmo's dharma talks are simple yet moving because every word she says is tinged with sincerity. As she speaks, her words seem to spring from within through a process as natural as breathing. In a way she is like a tree, sucking in pollution and harm and releasing it as positive energy.

How does she maintain this crisp state of awareness? To be "in" but not "of" the world? One analogy Tenzin Palmo often uses is to compare one's existence to a movie. Most people let themselves become completely immersed in the drama that is their life. But if you take a step back, you can see a completely different picture.

"What you've got, really, is just a projector of light and in front of that light are little transparent frames that are moving very, very fast. And that projects what looks like reality. When we see that it's just a movie, we can still enjoy it, but we don't have to take it so seriously."

The cultivation of mindfulness, she says, can enable us to see "through" the rapid movement of those "frames of thought". Once we master this practice, the "mind moments" will become remarkably slower, slow enough for us to catch the gaps between each frame.

And what lies beneath the illusory "truth" of the mind? Tenzin Palmo describes the presence of the true, original mind ("Buddha nature") as the sky stripped of clouds or a mirror without dirt. Something clear, luminous, and infinite. "It's always there, it belongs to everybody. There is no 'I', no centre."

But for most of us most of the time, we are trapped in our relative mind. A mind that "naturally makes a division between the thinker and everyone outside the thinker. That thinks in terms of past, present and future.

"The point is to get some glimpses of the clear blue sky behind the clouds or the mirror beneath the dirt. So even though there's thick layers of clouds or dirt, you know that it's not the real thing and that there's something beyond that.

"When we are completely in this state of naked primordial awareness all the time, 24 hours a day, whether we are awake or asleep, we become Buddha. Until then, we are still on the path."

But do we all have to cocoon ourselves in a cave in order to seek enlightenment? From her experience, Tenzin Palmo describes intense solitary retreat as a "a pressure cooker. It gives you the chance to really look inwards." But, if the practitioner becomes addicted to the quiet atmosphere or thinks they have become superior to others, then "the practice has gone wrong", she says.

For Tenzin Palmo, true dharma is found in daily life. It is the ability to "be here and now and put others before oneself. This helps us to overcome our innate selfishness and our innate concern with only me, me, me."

One story she often shares tells of an invaluable piece of advice she received from a Catholic priest. Asked if he thought Tenzin Palmo should resume her retreat or undertake the far more formidable task of starting a nunnery (see sidebar), the priest straight away recommended the second option.

"He said we are like rough pieces of wood. If we rub ourselves with silk or velvet, it may be nice, but it won't make us smooth. To become smooth, we need sandpaper."

Minutes pass into hours. At some point, Tenzin Palmo closed her eyes while still sitting in the same plastic chair. It has been an exhaustingly long day for her. But is the venerable monk sleeping? Or is she meditating like she did for most of her time in the mountains 20 years ago? The two frames of possibility almost merge, almost transcend the boundaries of space and time. Which is real? And which is just a projection from the perpetually rolling film of the mind?

Vasana Chinvarakorn

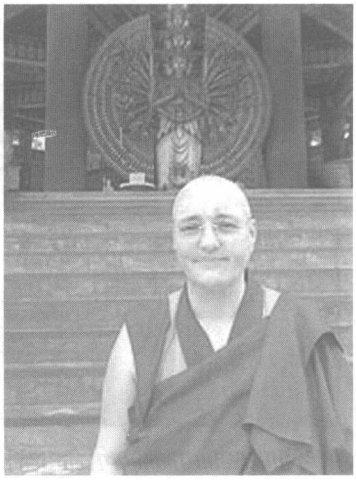
An Equal Chance at Enlightenment

Since she was ordained as a bhikkhuni over 20 years ago, Jampa Tsedroen has been campaigning to give other Buddhist women the opportunity to pursue their faith Bangkok, Thailand — Humility is her most distinctive trait. Despite the significance of the work she's undertaken over the past two decades, the Venerable Jampa Tsedroen has retained her down-to-earth and friendly manner.

Yet her innate warmth is intertwined with a steely determination. In fact it is probably the balancing of these two qualities that enables her to do what she does so well, namely campaigning for women around the world to be able to pursue enlightenment as bhikkhuni - female Buddhist monks. Her self-imposed mission has been far from easy; the German-born monk noted with a laugh that she often has little time for sleep. Also, the controversial nature of the issue she raises—that the majority of monks continue to resist the calls to admit women, while certain women's groups concerned either dismiss the topic or side with their male counterparts—means the Venerable Jampa Tsedroen must regularly tread with the utmost caution.

Unlike in politics or the pursuit of other social causes, the use of terms like "rights" or "fight" could trigger fear or even distrust of the movement Jampa Tsedroen is advancing and render it liable to being dismissed by its opponents as another gung-ho feminist battle.

"Everybody who enters the Buddhist order would very much like to live a peaceful life in harmony with everybody. We want to pacify our own minds. So the word 'fighting' [being used] in connection with Buddhist teachings does not sound very nice," explained the bhikkhuni.



Tranquillity in activity: For more than two decades, bhikkhuni Jampa Tsedroen has dedicated her life to seeking equality on behalf of female Buddhist practitioners.

"I come from a tradition that trains us to be critical and fight for our rights. But I notice that if I have to translate the word 'right' into Tibetan as tobtang, it would sound very unpleasant. My teacher used to tell me I'd do better saying gokab, which means 'chance' or 'opportunity'. But I'm also politically active, I've been working on the issue of human rights violations in Tibet. So I have become used to the word 'fight' and I don't mind fighting if necessary.

"At the inaugural Sakyadhita international conference [for Buddhist women] in Bodhgaya in 1987, I remember His Holiness the Dalai Lama himself saying: 'You women have to fight for it [bhikkhuni ordination]. You cannot expect the monks to serve it to you." '

Semantic sensitivity is but a small part of the challenge of helping Buddhist women. The bigger, looming obstacle is the thousands of years of patriarchy that the spiritual realm has not been excluded from. Ironically, Lord Buddha's decision to allow the first group of women, led by his stepmother Mahapajapati, to be ordained as bhikkhunis over 2,500 years ago has often been used to justify why they should not be ordained now.

Opponents of female ordination point to Buddha's initial refusal of Mahapajapati's request and his issuing—upon consenting after his assistant monk Ananda's appeal that women are as capable as men at attaining enlightenment—of eight rules called Gurudharma that strictly curtailed women's monastic roles. They also cite Buddha's dire prediction that allowing women into Phra Sasana, that is, Buddhism, would halve its lifespan, and refer repeatedly to the "broken bhikkhuni lineage" alongside the decline of the ecclesiastical institutions in India and Sri Lanka a few centuries after women were admitted to explain why it should never be revived today.

The Venerable Jampa Tsedroen's approach to such opposition has been a clever, gentle plea to return to the original "spirit" of Lord Buddha's teachings.

Rather than an emotional plea, the bhikkhuni and her fellow advocates have undertaken

a thorough study of the Vinaya scriptures to show the teacher's courage, far-sightedness and compassion in giving space to "the other sex". One of the texts Jampa Tsedroen often quotes from is the Cullavaga X, wherein Lord Buddha answered Ananda's question on whether or not women who decide to "go forth from home into homelessness in the dharma" can liberate themselves from the cycle of samsara (the endless cycle of birth, suffering, death and rebirth). He replied: "Women, Ananda, having gone forth are able to realise the fruit of stream-attainment or the fruit of once-returning or the fruit of non-returning or arahantship."



Bhikkhuni Juampa Tsedroen on her alms round during her visit to Nakornpathom - Picture courtesy to Dhammananda Bhikkhuni

The awakened one's words were recited again during Jampa Tsedroen's recent keynote speech at the UN's Bangkok office, where the female monk was one of 20 recipients of the UN's Outstanding Buddhist Women Awards for 2007.

"What would the Buddha say today? Can one follow Buddhism on the one hand and keep human rights on the other hand?" Jampa Tsedroen asked those attending the awards. "It cannot be that 2,500 years ago, during Buddha's lifetime, bhikkhuni ordination was possible, and nowadays, when everybody speaks about the equal rights of men and women - rights that are guaranteed by the [Universal Declaration of] Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations ... it is no longer possible to become a bhikkhuni.

"Reviving the bhikkhuni sangha does not mean that we modernise Buddhism or simply adjust it to secular needs. To revive the bhikkhuni sangha means that we go back to the roots and follow the attitude of the Buddha."

In retrospect, despite the Venerable bhikkhuni's refusal to take credit for her work, her campaigns as part of the Committee of Western Buddhist Nuns herald a refreshing chapter in the history of globalised Buddhism.

Due to historical reasons, the Mahayana (also called Dharmagupta) Buddhist tradition, as practised in South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam, has been the most open to the ordination of women. Several Western women, including Jampa Tsedroen, have sought full ordination as bhikkhunis there. (The Tibetan tradition only allows women to be ordained as novices, or samaneris, while the Theravada tradition does not recognise either samaneris or bhikkhunis). It is these women, together with other Buddhist women from the West, who have been relentlessly pushing the issue forward. Jampa Tsedroen said His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as the head of Tibetan Buddhism, has given his full support to the movement to revive the bhikkhuni's order, including donating 50,000 swiss francs (1.36 million baht) from his book royalties to finance the activities of the Committee of Western Buddhist Nuns.

However, the exiled Tibetan leader conceded he could not act alone on this pivotal matter. Monastic leaders, male and female, from other Buddhist traditions and countries need to participate in the debate and make a joint decision. Hence the ongoing preparations for an historic "International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha - Bhikkhuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages", to be held this July in Hamburg, Germany.

As key organiser, Jampa Tsedroen has been busy liaising with the head monks and nuns from different traditions as well as with lay Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars on the Vinaya and the history of Buddhism.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama is very interested in the opinions of Theravada monks

because they are considered to know the Vinaya very well. He would like [them] to show the most proper way of how to do it [revive the bhikkhuni's order in accordance with the Vinaya]. So we are trying to invite Vinaya scholars as well as leading monks from Theravada countries to Hamburg to discuss the matter for Tibetan Buddhism.

"His Holiness also said he would like to seek full support to raise the social status of women in all the countries where Buddhism is practiced. So we thought it would be very good to have some kind of common, international, non-binding resolution so that we get the moral support from all Buddhist leaders to revive the bhikkhuni precepts."

The restoration, if and when it takes place, will not only benefit those in the ecclesiastical domain. In the same speech she delivered at the UN in Bangkok, Jampa Tsedroen argued that as women's low social position leads to their exclusion from religious orders, this in turn helps perpetuate their oppression.

"Many advocates of bhikkhuni ordination consider that there is a direct relationship between the low status of women in Thai Buddhism and the inferior status of women in [Thai] society, which places them at risk of abuse such as domestic violence and sexual trafficking, as well as increased vulnerability to HIV."

In contrast, monastic women in countries like Taiwan and South Korea, Jampa Tsedroen pointed out, have taken a leading role in social progress. Having access to a good education through the orders they belong to, they become valuable public assets, serving their communities in various capacities and in institutions ranging from hospitals to Buddhist TV stations, kindergartens and universities.

Now in her late forties, Jampa Tsedroen continues to juggle her time between work helping refugees at the Tibetan Centre Hamburg, campaigning on women's issues, teaching, and finishing her doctoral thesis at the University of Hamburg. She also works with a training programme for young Tibetan nuns in southern India that she started in 1988. A trace of pride was audible in her voice as she described how the student nuns there have excelled in their religious pursuits, with two of them recently invited to teach the advanced subject of Abhidharma at a monastery in Taiwan.

But when it comes to talk about her own practice, the venerable Bhikkhuni is as self-effacing as ever. True to her bodhisattva vow, Jampa Tsedroen said serving the community is more important than one's personal development. As a result, she thinks her meditating ability "is still not the best".

"I feel I haven't practiced enough. I've accumulated merits and increased a little bit of wisdom, but still my time for meditation and retreat is not enough.

"Now I'm getting old, my hair is getting grey, my eyes are getting bad, I have problems with my back and my memory is also getting weak. I'm a little bit afraid," she paused for a laugh, "that I will pass away before I start a proper meditation.

"We have to take it as it comes, making the most of each situation. So I'm putting a lot of hope in the young Tibetan nuns."

Vasana Chinvarakorn,
Bangkok Post, March 25, 2007

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The International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha - Bhikkhuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages will be held from July 18 to 20 in Hamburg, Germany. For details, see http://www.congress-on-buddhist-women.org/

Revered Buddhist Teacher on Return Visit

For Religious and social leaders, next month's visit of Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh could not be better timed.

Arguably the world's second most famous Buddhist figure after the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh will address people here on the many roles of Buddhism, including the quest for peace in contemporary society during a time of ideological division.

Advocating what is now widely known as "engaged Buddhism", the internationally renowned Vietnamese monk suggests an alternative path for people to follow in their effort to improve society without getting bogged down in the ideology of the day

The return of Thich Nhat Hanh, who now lives in exile in

France, to Thailand after his last visit here more than three decades ago reminds Buddhist and social activists of the similarity between political and social tensions now and then. They are concerned that present-day society is manifesting the same level of dichotomy and hatred.

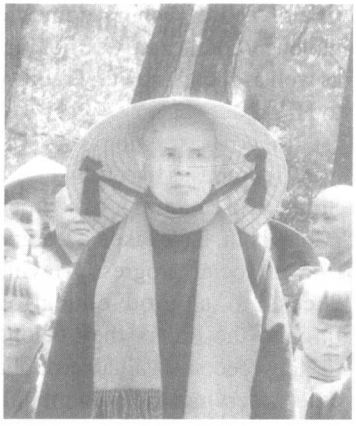
"Ideological walls are growing taller and stronger. Verbal and physical violence is on the rise. Fear and uncertainty are being used to urge people to join one camp or the other. Talk of reconciliation is obscured by actions to the contrary," says leading monk Phra Pisal Visalo.

"When I was a student activist 30 years ago it was the same thing. We had to say either we were with the leftists who didn't mind violence in their striving for a better society or get branded as apologists for a military dictator. I found the level of hatred and anger on both sides unlikely to yield any benefits for society," adds Phra Pisal.

Where the young Pisal and many others did find refuge was in the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. In his three-week visit here in 1975, many activists had the opportunity to hear his sermons, which have helped to guide them in their social work ever since.

Thich Nhat Hanh, now 81, has been living away from his native Vietnam since the age of 40. Refusing to be trapped in the war between North and South Vietnam, he was banned by both the communist and non-communist governments for his role in promoting non-violent civil disobedience to counter the brutality of the war on ordinary people.

He started Plum Village in France in 1982 to allow anyone to come and learn the benefits of practising mindfulness in daily life, so that a more calm and aware



mind can then be applied to helping other people and society. There are now some 200 monks at Plum Village and 2,000 lay people attending extended teachings every year.

"We have people from Israel and Palestine come to our retreats," says Bhikkuni Niramisa, a member of Plum Village from Thailand. "We want to create a dialogue between both sides without them passing judgement on each other. At our discussion forums, the Israelis said they didn't know how much loss and suffering the Palestinians had to go through and vice versa. In the end, both sides returned home with compassion and sympathy toward each other."

Prominent graft-fighter Rosana Tositrakul believes that a lot of valuable social work going on here has been fuelled by exposure to Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings.

"Thay [Vietnamese for teacher] has shown us how to live and continue to work for society amid the battle between the left and the right," she said. "While my college friends, who were very much into socialist ideology then, now enjoy life as corporate executives, many of us are still striving for social change in our activist way."

Thailand is certainly in need of more peace and more social advocates now, says Bhikkuni Niramisa, who hopes to establish a facility similar to Plum Village in Chiang Mai soon. Many have offered to help, including donating land to set up the monastery.

"We hope to decide on the location before the arrival of Luang Pu [Thich Nhat Hanh]. We established a Plum Village in Vietnam two years ago and it now has more than 300 monks. I hope Thailand will be the next place where people can learn from his valuable teachings."

Phra Pisal is also pleased that women will have a chance to be ordained as Zen Bhikkuni once Plum Village Thailand is established.

From May 23-27, some 700 monks and lay people will be offered a taste of Thich Nhat Hanh's thought as he will lead a five-day retreat in Chiang Mai. He will also deliver public speeches and sermons in Bangkok including on Visakha Bucha Day.

"Nothing of this scale has ever been organised in Thailand before and the level of interest is astonishing, which is evidence that Thais are looking for a deeper and also more practical form of Buddhism," said Thitima Urapeepathanapong, who has volunteered to help organise the event.

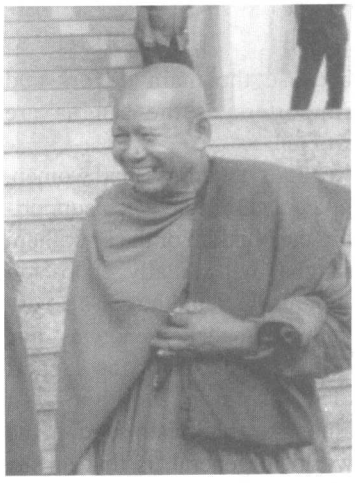
Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on mindfulness and social engagement are very similar to those of Thailand's own Buddhadasa, says Phra Pisal.

"The benefits of Buddha's teaching are not to be bottled up inside ourselves, but to be used to better ourselves so that we in turn can do a better job helping others," he said.

Nantiya Tangwisutjit
The Nation
8 April 2007

Phra Prajak Khuttajitto

Phra Prajak Khuttajitto has been in the public limelight in Thailand and abroad as he was the first monk to be arrested for protecting the forest. At the time Phra Prajak, an ecology concerned monk led people to protest against the government's policy to displace poor people. It is now more than 15 years that he has been struggling against the lawsuit against him. On March 23, 2007 the appeal court acquitted him of the charge on encroachment into the forest.



In the early 1990s there was an attempt by the Thai authority called Land Redistribution Project for the Poor in Degraded Forest Areas, aka the Khor Jor Kor in Thai abbreviation. It was actually a plan to push poor people out of their ancestral farmland in the 47 forests throughout the Northeast of Thailand.

The poor Nongyai villagers were forced to move out of Dong Yai Forest covering Nakorn Ratchasima and Buriram provinces. Phra Prajak who was then an advisor to the conservationist group in the village recognized the oppression against the grassroots people. Under his leadership, the villagers returned to their village and seized back their land, challenging the government and the military. It was the first protest after the May 1992 uprising against the military government from a coup d'etat. The monk was then arrested but won support from many friends, including INEB.

Phra Prajak disrobed in order to fight in the court. Later he returned to monkhood. He was determined to keep up the struggle with or without a Buddhist monk's robe.

After Phra Prajak's winning at the Court of First Instance, the state attorney sent the case to the Court of Appeal. At last the Court of Appeal acquitted him.

Behind the victory of Phra Prajak is Mr. Somnuek Toonsupap, a lawyer who has wholeheartedly and continuously taken care of the case. Not only did he provide his service free of charge for almost two decades, even the travel expenses for Phra Prajak were covered by him. It is a great merit-making act and should be appreciated by all.

Dhamma Bike

"I enclose a photograph which may amuse you, taken at a presentation of the Dhamma Bike Project at Big C Department Store in Chiangrai in October 2006 to promote the project, prior to the tour of the city and its environs last November. We may have made history by promoting ethics on a bicycle in a supermarket and it was pure chance that we were able to display the bike, next to the booth promoting Hi Speed life winged trainers, a direct contrast since the Dhamma Bike is all about slowing down and developing mindfulness.



We were hosted by Dept of Culture and have now completed tours in Lamphun, Pitsanuloke, Phrae and Chiangrai. 100 of our members went from Lamphun to Chiangrai and were joined by another group from Phrae. We also have some brave Bhikkhunis riding them in Nakorn Sri Thammarat"

Venetia Walkey
The Dhamma Park Gallery
Lamphun, Siam

The 13th Sem Pringpuangkaew Annual Lecture
Female Spiritual Masters and Healing the World

This afternoon I am going to speak about female spiritual masters and healing the world. It is well know that at the time of the Buddha that when his step-mother and aunt, Maha Prajapati Gautami requested to join the order the Buddha was very reluctant and at first refused her request. I don't know why in the beginning he was reluctant for women to become monks but I assume it was because at that time there were no nunneries and no monasteries. The monks were literally homeless monks. They lived under trees and in caves and wandered everywhere for their alms. I think the Buddha was very concerned that it was a great danger for these women to go wandering around.

The reason why the Buddha allowed women to go into the homeless life was because Ananda asked him, "Was it possible for women to attain liberation?" The Buddha said, "Yes of course they can be liberated." So then Ananda said, "In that case, why are you creating this obstacle for them by not allowing them to go into the homeless life?" Then of course the Buddha allowed them to go into the homeless life and many, many nuns attained the fruits of the homeless life and became arharti.

There is a prayer for bhikkhunis that dates back to the 7th century that mentions for nuns to live in harmony and that they should receive sufficient alms. One of the reasons why I think this prayer was made is because for nuns one of their struggles is to receive sufficient livelihood. The reason why they struggled is because the main donors and supporters of the sangha are women.

It is an irony that women, given a choice between supporting the bhikkhu or the bhikkhuni sangha, will usually choose to support the bhikkhu. It's a very interesting phenomenon that one of the problems for the support of women in the world, not just among the bhikkhunis, but in the world in general, is that on the whole so many women are not supportive of other women and are far more supportive of the male section of society. This is something which women have to deal with. Why are we so unsupportive of our sisters? The reason why women do not advance more than they do is because they are not holding the hands of each other. They are not supporting one another.

When King Ashoka was in reign he sent his daughter Sanghamitta and a bhikkhuni to Sri Lanka and they instituted the bhikkhuni order into Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BC. In about the 3rd century AD in China there was an order of nuns of bhikkhunis who were ordained by the bhikku sangha alone. Because there were no bhikkhuni in China, the monks alone were giving the ordination. So there were hundreds of bhikkhunis that they had only been ordained by monks. Normally bhikkhunis are ordained according to the vinaya, first by a sangha of 10 senior bhikkhuni and within 24 hours by a sangha of 10 senior bhikkhu. Therefore it was arranged for a contingent of nuns to come from Sri Lanka to China in the 3rd century. The bhikkhuni ordination of China, which is this up to the present day, actually was introduced from Sri Lanka. Bhikkhuni ordination then spread straight from China to Korea, to Vietnam and presumably also to Japan.

During the communist take-over of China, the nuns for whatever reason appreciated the danger rather sooner than the monks did and they left and surfaced in Taiwan. When the monks realized the danger as many monks that could fled also to Taiwan. They had to leave everything behind, and the nuns basically took care of them and helped them to get re-established.

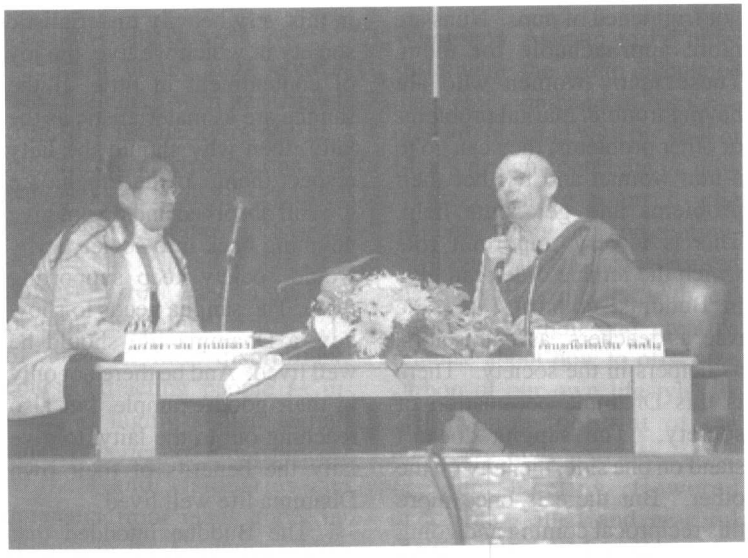
I think because of this the relationship between the monks and the nuns in Taiwan is very close and very reciprocal. The monks remember that they owe so much to the nuns. They have a very nice relationship. It is like brothers and sisters between them. Nowadays the bhikkhuni lineage in Taiwan is very strong. There are probably about 6 times more nuns than there are monks. And nuns nowadays are extremely well educated and they are also highly visible.

For example there is one nun named Venerable Cheng Yen. She came from quite a poor and ordinary background. She became a nun when she was about 30. She had the idea that one should not just practice and study, but one also should be there to benefit society. In the beginning, the ladies who were around her, she would ask them to donate fifty Taiwanese cents a day. And they said, "Well why

can't we just give you 15 dollars a month?" And she said "No, no, no, everyday you have to remember to give a little". So you have like a jar and everyday you put in fifty cents, every day just to remember to offer. This money which she collected she then gave to help poor people. Now she has several million followers around the world. She started an organization called Tzu Chi. This is now a multi-billion dollar organization. They have built huge state of the art hospitals and schools. They do a lot of social work for the poor and they also are there for relief if there are any disasters in the world like tsunamis or earthquakes. Since there are so many nuns in Taiwan, and they are such a presence, the Buddhist society there has a very strong social program.

What I am trying to say is that because there are so many nuns, they have a voice. They are the altos and the sopranos. You hear them. Just when there is a choir, one should really hear the sopranos soaring up from the basses. Likewise when you have a sangha where the majority are actually the females, they have an impact on society. You are very conscious of them.

I am going to be very honest here. We are facing a crisis in the world. Traditionally the sangha was educated. They were the doctors, the natural healers, the psychiatrists, and the marriage counselors. They had a very important and crucial role in ociety. The average layperson was not educated. Therefore the learning of the monks put them in a very special position to be the guide and the counselors for the laity. Therefore the sangha served society and society took care of the sangha. It was a ritual arrangement effective for both



sides.

But nowadays our education is secular. People go to school, they learn, they study, they become well educated. When they are sick they go to hospitals or their doctor. When they are troubled they go to their psychiatrist. They don't need the sangha. Also, as people take up secular type of education, then their belief in karma, in merit, and in the necessity to support the sangha, lessens. So the question is what function does the sangha have in this modern consumer society. This is the question all Buddhist countries have to ask themselves and is a big challenge for the sangha to face.

I think that honestly this is where a stronger female sangha can be of support to their brothers, because it's very necessary in the future for the sangha not only to preserve as well practice in the Dhamma, but to give this knowledge and this expertise back to the people. They become learned to practice themselves, but then give it back and help the people.

In Sri Lanka the bhikkhuni ordination died out about 1000 years ago and was never revived again. The Sri Lankan nuns eventually realized that they were the ones who had taken the ordination originally to China and the nuns become very political. So then a number of women of the nun order in Sri Lanka, decided to take full ordination back again from the Chinese. So a group of them took from the Chinese, and another group from Koreans. They received the ordination in India from the two sanghas. Then very soon afterwards they obtained the state ordination again from the Sri Lankan monks to make them part of the Theravadan tradition. Now this only happened a few years ago but there are already about 1000 bhikkhunis in Sri Lanka within about 7 years. Suddenly there is this huge wide interest in obtaining the bhikkhuni ordination again and they are now officially recognized.

Many of these new bhikkhunis are taking training as counselors because it is realized that a lot of people who are having problems in their life would like to go to a member of the sangha for advice but they are afraid to go to the monks. The monks are too high. But they are

not frightened of nuns. Nuns are more approachable for them. These many women who are having trouble, marital problems or other problems, they can go to a nun woman and tell her their problems and get some help. This is a very important role which the female order can play in Buddhist countries. It's the role as teachers, as counselors, as helpers in the society. There is this Dhamma permeation of society. The sangha doesn't stand on one side, the laity on the other. But there is once more this reciprocal coming and going between the two.

Personally I feel that this is the way of all sangha, not just the female sangha but the male sangha as well. They have to show first of all the example of, in this very heavily materialistic society in which we live, the joy of contentment in little. If the sangha are as materialistic as the laity, then why should the laity respect them. If the sangha are too self absorbed and do not give anything back into society, why would society keep supporting them. The sangha needs to show how a Dhamma life should be well lived. And be there not only in their good example, but also reaching out to the laity, to give laity the benefits of their own Dhamma life well lived.

The Buddha intended that we should be brothers and sisters in the Dhamma. When he talked about the Mahāsānghika it was bhikkhu, bhikkhuni, and upasaki, upasika. As long as you don't have the bhikkhuni you are not among the Mahāsānghika.

In order to have a strong bhikkhuni sangha, you need everybody. It doesn't just benefit the nuns, it also benefits the monks, and it benefits society. It's a win-win situation and everybody should really, from their side, support this wonderful way of going back to what the Buddha intended. The Buddha intended that there should be more voices. We are not starting something new. This is something which started at the time of the Buddha and has continued in some countries, in very large countries up until present time.

Ani Tenzin Palmo
January 9, 2007

Gaia Education Educators for a Sustainable Earth (GEESE) Meeting

The GEESE (Gaia Education Educators for a Sustainable Earth) flew from the 4 corners of the world into Thailand to meet in a beautiful, curvaceous mud building surrounded by lotus ponds and bamboo groves. Inspired by Gandhian ashrams where social change meets spiritual practice and working with the land, Wongsanit Ashram is a hub of sustainability and grassroots leadership training in South East Asia. Wongsanit is also an idyllic eco-settlement complete with organic gardens and traditional thatched and cob houses. This was a wonderful base to come together to discuss the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE). In keeping with the diversity of the group the Southerners revelled in the sultry, humid tropical days whilst Northerners were challenged by the heat!

The GEESE are a think tank of sustainability educators from 13 nationalities building on a common stock of wisdom and best practice from Ecovillages around the world. They have been meeting since 1998 through technology as well as face to face to conceive and birth the EDE programmes that are spreading the message of low impact and carbon neutral activities across the globe. The EDE has been piloted in settings as varied as urban Sao Paulo, Lotan a desert Kibbutz in Israel and Findhorn, a spiritual eco community in Northeast Scotland. The 26 participants were representatives from these and other pilot EDE centres and Ecovillages as well as the Gaia Education Board and other interested parties.

During the meeting the above mentioned centres as well as Tamera Ecovillage in Portugal, Ithaca in upstate New York, Instituto Tonantzin Tlalli in Mexico and Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka gave presentations of their versions of the EDE pilot activities that had taken place the previous year. It was inspiring to see how the four faceted EDE curriculum of World View, Economic Design, Social Design

and Ecological Design were woven together in such diverse environments. Several EDE courses were based on a strong foundation of permaculture with Max Lindegger contributing his resourceful skills to the Tamera, Sri Lanka and Mexico programmes. In Sri Lanka the course was based on a real design for an Ecovillage. In Tamera permaculture was balanced with a very experiential social component with activities in visioning, theatre work, sharing circles and discussions on love and sexuality. Lotan used their extended experience of permaculture and ecological living to sustain their very practical 10 week programme where planting and harvesting crops, creating recycling waste systems and building mud houses were a hands on part of the curriculum. Findhorn had a packed one month training that incorporated their unique social and spiritual rhythms entwined with experience of local right livelihood initiatives and ecological design. In addition they incorporated a comprehensive training of trainers using an experiential empowering approach and daily meditation sessions in the framework of world view. In Sao Paulo the EDE took the form of weekends and evenings over a longer period of time allowing 100 city dwellers working in or interested in the complex challenges of urban sustainability. Many participants were in a position to take the learning and apply it in their place of work in and around the city such as the group of Public Parks Caretakers that joined the training. Next steps in Sao Paulo include working with teenagers, involving public administration and creating a distance learning programme and university courses.

Most of the EDE courses had challenges with participants from diverse backgrounds having different expectations and where possible flexible participant centred approaches adapted activities to respond to this. It is however a real issue in the curriculum design and certification of such an inter-disciplinary course attracting people as diverse as highly skilled technicians, experienced group process workers and visionaries and dreamers from many roots including in the Findhorn course an educator who built labyrinths in New York City parks and an Iraqi architect inspired to rebuild peace villages in his devastated country.

Next year several more centres have been certified to run EDE programmes including two Asian courses at Auroville in India and our hosts Wongsanit; El Poncho, Hue Hue, UMAPAZ and Association Gaia in Latin America and two in Europe. In conjunction with the ongoing EDE courses a series of Four Keys text books are being compiled in the four core areas that will serve all future EDE hosts. This has been a huge amount of work for diligent Geese and is on the final run with publication of the first two books expected later this year. It was decided that a fifth key on process and how to deliver the EDE in an appropriate empowering and creative way will be added to this wealth of educational materials.

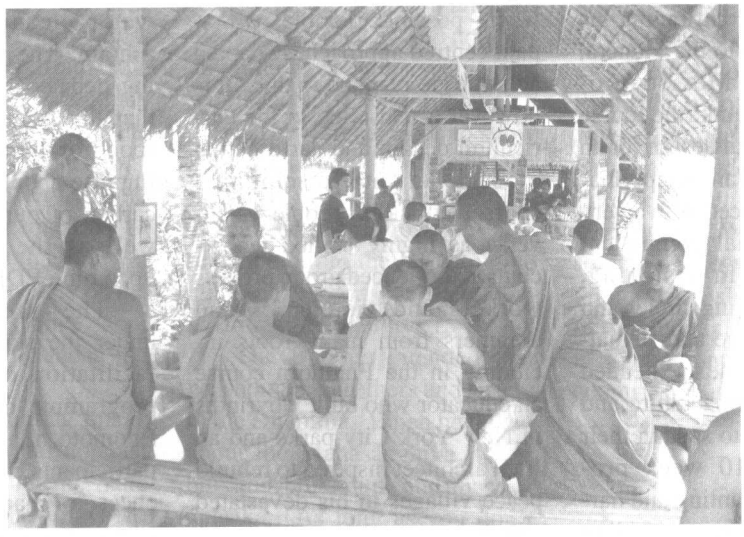
Issues of being carbon neutral were a huge challenge both as a meeting and as educators of sustainability. How can we really walk our talk? In an effort to offset the carbon of the flights to Thailand as well as supporting Wongsanit Ashram to be more sustainable the group calculated their emissions and in response planted trees and with the skill of Max's design contributed a grey water cleaning plant to the ashram. The heated and continuing debate in this area ensured that all participants left with real food for thought and creative impulse about how to offset the carbon of our own lifestyles as well as the footprint of the upcoming EDE activities.

The meeting flowered under the skilled and graceful facilitation of May East, the programme director and Hide Enomoto, a Japanese friend. The participants came full of experiences to share, responsibilities to report on and left with new inspiration and plans to continue this evolving work for the planet. As part of the activities of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development the Gaia Education EDE pilot projects and emerging curriculum are truly a leading light and inspiring prototype for future similar initiatives.

Jane Rasbash
Wongsanit Ashram
February 2007



SEKHIYADHAMMA
Naturopathy Camp for the Healthy Monastic

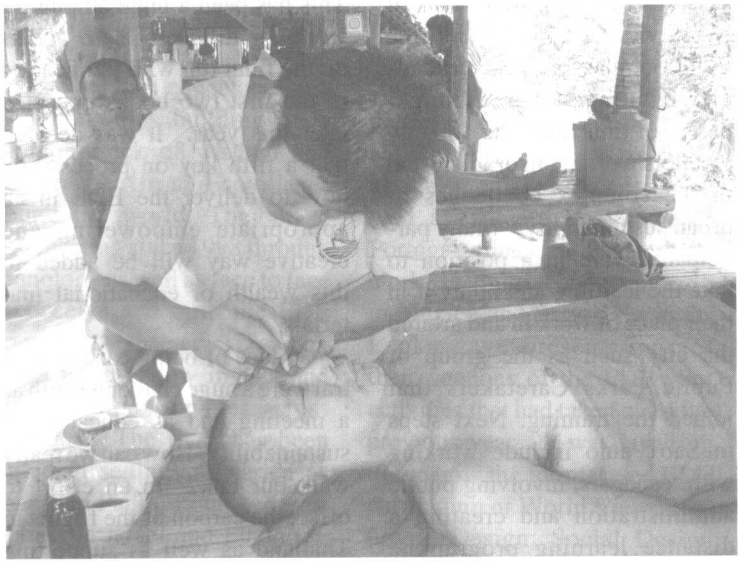


The Buddha said that a lay follower who takes care of an ill monk will get as great merit as taking care of him. This statement encourages many Thai people to make huge donations to the Hospital for Buddhist Monks. Nowadays, it is doubtful whether this act remains a good way to earn true merit.

A large number of monks fall ill because of the so-called good food offered by devoted Thai Buddhists. Besides, many monks lack the knowledge on how to take care of their health. Unhealthy food combined with illiteracy on healthcare create adverse impacts on Buddhism with many monks ending up in the hospitals. The monk's fragile health undermines his intention and capacity to work for the Dhamma.

In addition to the meditation retreat for the spiritual health during 18-28 January 2007, now the members of Sekhiyadhamma Group turned their attention to physical heath. A healthcare camp was organized during 14-17 March 2007 at Sailom Joy Garden in Chiangmai. The purpose was for monks and nuns who are Sekhiyadhamma members to know the basic skills of self-care. They learned and tried techniques such as hot bathing, massaging, acupuncture, organic food, and other kinds of traditional nature cure. Special thanks go to Mr. Ekachai Chinachan and his parents who turned his family farm to a simple rustic learning center on naturopathy amid the farmers' village of San Kampang District as well as to Mr. Binklai, the self-educated barefoot doctor who served as a resource person.

Phairote Chachoenram



Four Months after the 19 September 2006 Coup d'état

Five days after the National Peace-keeping Council (NPKC) overthrew the democratically elected Chatichai Choonhavan government on 23 February 1991, the *Asian Wall Street Journal* came to interview me—at that time, the local dailies were too afraid to do so. In the interview I insisted on the following points. Thais in general would initially support the new rulers after the removal of the previous government. They wouldn't see it as unjust to usurp power illegitimately. However, three months later, the people would begin to get dissatisfied with the new government. After six months, they would start criticizing and denouncing the new government. They might even feel nostalgic for the good old days under the previous regime, often forgetting its sins or flaws. This is either because the new government is really worse than the one before; or the government in power is often seen as worse than the one out of power. This has long been the case.

One month after the NPKC coup d'etat, I passed by Los Angeles, USA. The Thai newspaper in L.A. is called *Siam Media* and the Association of Thai Journalists in California invited me to give a talk on Thai politics, which I gladly complied. The event took place on 22 March, and it was news in *Siam Media*. Subsequently, *Matichon* newspaper in Bangkok sent someone to inform me that I should not criticize the NPKC abroad. (Before that, someone big in *Matichon* who was close to someone big in the NPKC had also told me not to publicly oppose the NPKC.) I thanked the informer for the message, but replied that it was an impossible demand.

Three months after the coup, I was invited to give a talk along with Mr. Phoovadon Songprasert at Thammasat University. Only one local daily (and in this case it happened to be an English one) reported on what I had said in a very brief manner. Moreover, Phoovadon's views, which I consider to be better than mine, were not reported at all. Subsequently, some thugs even beat him up.

Prior to that, I had been a *Matichon* columnist. At the time the standpoint of the newspaper was that the NPKC was a just dictatorship. I held the opposite view, however. Therefore, I resigned from the newspaper—though I remained close to its boss.

Six months after the coup, I was once again invited to give a talk at Thammasat University. The talk was entitled "Six Months of the NPKC: A Regression in Thai Democracy." General Suchinda Kraprayoon lodged an anti-defamation suit against me because of this talk. Moreover, he also charged me with lese majeste because of this speech.

When the Anand Panyarachun government, which was set up by the NPKC, reached its 100 days, a *Time* magazine reporter asked me for my impression of the prime minister, the Cabinet, and the NPKC. I used a lot of time to express my frank views in great details. The reporter said my views were interesting but it wouldn't be appropriate to publish them in the magazine. He said that thus far he had only heard about the positive aspects of the new government from the other interviewees; e.g., that it was honest, sincere, and not corrupt. On the contrary, I told him that honesty is merely the most rudimentary foundation for government. The ruler must also be capable. Preserving the status quo simply means that the rich will get richer and the poor, poorer. The natural environment will also be increasingly devastated. This kind of government cannot be said to be a good one. As for the then prime minister he didn't want to be hated. He smiled a lot and appeared sincere in his willingness to help solve problems. But he wasn't able to tackle the major problems at all because he was dominated by the NPKC in almost every respect. The NPKC was also getting increasingly arrogant and more corrupt than the corrupt ministers and MPs in the previous administration. Thus I argued that it was impossible for *Time* to praise the NPKC.

All these referred to the past. To see whether or not history repeats itself. We now have to turn to the 19 September coup, to compare and contrast the situation in 1991 with that of 2006.

In 1991 I had planned to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Siamese democracy in the kingdom. At the time, it seemed that neither the universities nor the political parties in the kingdom were interested in this matter. But a little caveat must be added

here. Throughout the planning phase of the celebration, I closely worked with Apisit Vejajiva. He called me "The Great Su," who was superior to "Big Su" (i.e., Suchinda Kraprayoon). However, he withdrew from the project when he became a member of the Democratic Party. I wasn't surprised by his move. After all, the Democratic Party collaborated with the coup makers in 1947 to crush the substance of Thai democracy. Eventually, "The Great Su" had to flee the country because of "Big Su." The celebration ultimately took place in Chicago, USA. It attracted a large gathering of Thais and other nationals in the US. Some came from Canada and even from Siam. This year, Thai democracy will reach its 75th anniversary. Should there be a special ceremony to observe this auspicious occasion?

...

In the wake of the 19 September coup, will I face numerous charges for speaking out and for my political activism? Will I be trialed for giving this talk? I don't know. But at least a friend in the Prime Minister's Office told me to put my political activism on a hold at the moment. This somehow reminds me of the NPKC days.

Enough with the digression. Now I will get into the substance of my talk.

The term "coup d'etat" means the seizure of State power. To my knowledge, the Thai word for coup d'etat or *rat praharn* first appeared after Phin Choonhavan led his military gang to overthrow a democratic government on 8 November 1947. This date marks the downfall of democracy in Siam. When Sarit Thanarat became premier, he destroyed all trappings of democracy by abolishing the constitution and parliament on 20 October 1958.

In the destruction of democracy, lies gradually take the place of truths. Virtuous individuals are killed, especially those who want to serve the people. Good folks are discredited or demonized—their images massacred. The justice system operates as a tool to destroy political opponents.

8 November 1947 and 20 October 1958 are days which will live in infamy. Thai democracy began to emerge on 24 June 1932. The event itself could be seen as a coup d'etat undertaken for the people. At the time, it was simply called "the change of government"—that is, the transition from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy. Prior to 1932, the government of Siam was largely a dynastic affair; it can also be interpreted as a series of dynastic struggles. Government was about benefiting the members of the ruling class. Changes in the composition of the ruling class were made to keep things by and large the same. Through religious and cultural means, the governed were held under a spell to accept inequality.

In a similar vein, Saichon Satyanurak has made the following observation, which deserves to be quoted at length:

> The belief that a hierarchical society is inherently good is linked to the assertion that the centralization of power in the hands of a single person is the form of governance most suitable for the kingdom; that is, it is the "Thai form of governance." Mainstream intellectuals explained that blood and Buddhism make the ruling elites virtuous and principled. According to this logic, the king should exercise unaccountable power, and if there should be checks and balances, it is the king who should check and balance the power of his officials. Mainstream intellectuals also tried to convince the people to believe that because of Buddhism the Thai state and society are compassionate. Those in the upper rungs of the social hierarchy are inclined to treat their subordinates ethically. The idea is that the superior-subordinate relationship is like the one between the parent and the child. These are just some of the attempts to make social inequality respectable or legitimate. I realize that mainstream intellectuals come in various shades and hues, some emphasizing on blood, ethnism, etc. more than other considerations. But they share a common basic assumption: human beings were not born equally good and capable, and they lack equal capacity to learn or become "cultivated." Therefore, only the members of the upper-class are morally principled. And so they should also serve as the ruling elites. The absolute majority of citizens are trapped in a cycle of ignorance, poverty, and suffering, beseeching the compassion and tutelage of the ruling class.

In the hands of mainstream intellectuals, the Thai country and society are essentially good, or goodness is an essentialized quality of

the Thai country and society—i.e., goodness as "Thai-ness." Therefore, and this is a bit redundant, the Thai kingdom is good because of Thai-ness. As long as the purity of Thai-ness is maintained and protected, the kingdom will remain good indefinitely. Following this train of logic, any unwanted change or problem in the kingdom is largely the result of the betrayal of Thai-ness or the absorption of undesirable foreign elements.

Mainstream intellectuals pay a lot of attention to justice but it is a form of justice without equality. Put another way, equality is only an intra-group condition. Members of the ruling class are equal, but they are superior to the majority of the population. (Equality also refers to the equal right to be unequal.) Given this condition, the kingdom's ruling elites are the source of justice in society. As for liberty, mainstream intellectuals stress that there's already ample liberty in Thai-ness: the liberation of the mind through the practice of the Dhamma.

I feel that the way the 19 September coup makers think is like that of the abovementioned mainstream Thai intellectuals. When Sarit came to power in 1958, he clearly stated that the democratic and parliamentary systems were forms copied from the West—and hence unsuitable for Thai society. The dictator argued that the country should instead be governed along the lines of King Rama V. One of his political advisors even privately asserted that the dictator was a reincarnation of King Rama V. To the public, Sarit was portrayed as a sovereign who faithfully upheld the form of government employed during the Sukhothai period. The mass media and education system were used cultivate this image....

A few years prior to the 1932 Revolution, King Rama VII explained that although his father, King Rama V, did not think that it was necessary for Siam to have a constitution, a political "revolution" as opposed to an "evolution" took place during the Fifth Reign.

Seen in a positive light, the political revolution during the Fifth Reign entailed the abolishment of slavery and the creation of the modern state with the monarchy holding absolute power. The Front Palace was subdued. And the role of the sangha (despite its inherently democratic features) as a moral counterbalance to the Wheel of State was radically undermined. The only major counterbalance to Siamese absolutism was Western imperialism in the region.

.....

The only Buddhist monk to see that Dhammic Socialism is a democracy beyond the Western form was Bhikkhu Buddhadasa. The only lay Buddhist to understand that democracy, which was adopted from the West, had to be "Dhammified" was Pridi Banomyong. The two had dialogued for hours on several occasions. Many of the ideas expressed in their conversations can be seen as hinting toward the Gross National Happiness concept which is gaining some currency at present. I don't think the rulers today—in the cabinet, the parliament, and the CNS—are capable enough to fathom the substance of the ideas expressed by these two wise men....

....

Initially, the organizer of this talk wanted me to share my views on the royal power and the constitution. Since I think the present rulers do not understand the complex relationship between the monarchy and the constitution, my talk will be in vain. To protect and preserve the monarchy under the constitution, the ruling elites must be morally courageous and willing to criticize the monarchy honestly and sincerely. They must not shun from going against the stream of populism if it is illegitimate. I've touched on this issue many times[1], and therefore I will not unpack my ideas here again. At least, after reading one of my English articles on this issue, John Ralston Saul wrote to me thus: *"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."*

....

To sum up, every coup d'etat in Siam was a poison to democracy, the people, and the monarchy, except for the 1932 coup, which transformed the kingdom from absolutism to constitutional monarchy.... The 19 September coup follows the rule and not the exception even if it was launched under the pretext of protecting constitutional monarchy. As mentioned above, the present rulers have only the slightest idea about the intricate workings of a constitutional monarchy—or to

be more precise about the interdependence between the monarchy, democracy, and the constitution. They also lack moral courage and do not promote a culture of constructive criticism and independent thought at every level, failing to see that this is the very foundation of a democracy. The ruling elites must also be sincere and humble. They must be willing to learn from people from every walk of life, especially the poor at the grassroots—not only from businessmen, technocrats, and the privileged. The objective is to learn from one another in order to find and tackle the root causes of suffering....

It must be clear that the monarchy and the monarch are not one and the same. As a saying goes, "The King is dead, long live the King." When a monarch passed away, s/he is survived by the institution. For this to happen, the monarchy must be the national symbol. For it to be the national symbol it must be neutral, and consequently it will be seen as the natural arbiter in any grave conflict. In a democracy, the monarch necessarily lacks power, in particular military power. This is because the military is a symbol of *violence* or hatred. The monarch and the monarchy must be rendered accountable. They shouldn't be allowed to act in a secretive manner. The law must make these clear. But equally important, there must be morally courageous individuals who are willing to criticize the monarchy. Otherwise, it may turn out to be dictatorial and absolutist.

If power represents hatred then wealth represents greed. The monarch must maintain a distance from all the royal possessions; e.g., in the hand of the Crown Property Bureau. If greed is able to take root in the monarchy or those serving the monarchy, the institution will be mired in the quicksand of capitalism and consumerism. And it will be highly vulnerable to manipulations by politicians, military figures, and investors. As King Rama V wisely informed his first crown prince, a good monarch is poor and loves the people more than himself.

Worse than greed and hatred is ignorance or delusion. If society is morally half-baked and obsessed with the magical and the divine, it will not be able to free itself from delusions. The monarchy must be enlightened. It must illuminate the way to attaining holistic as opposed to fragmented knowledge. It must not inhibit the flow of various streams of knowledge. It must allow dissent and criticism—the voicing of oppositional views. For this to happen, the monarchy must not be allowed to turn into something sacred and otherworldly, beyond reproach and criticism. Criticisms will help narrow the gap in terms of privileges enjoyed by the monarchy. They will help cultivate accountability and responsibility on the part of the monarchy.

....

Let's now turn to England as an example. England started to become a democracy in 1832; that is, 100 years before Siam. At the time, Queen Victoria was not really happy with democracy, but she did not wield much power. She even opposed various trappings of modernity such as equal rights for women. Queen Victoria despised William Gladstone, the highly capable and to date the longest serving prime minister in England. Nevertheless, Gladstone tried his best to protect the monarchy. But the Queen did not think highly of him.

Succeeding Queen Victoria was King Edward VII. He was a playboy and had mistresses as well as was fond of gambling. But it was a well kept secret. The masses did not know about it. At the time the idea that there are things the masses should not know or are not supposed to know was still acceptable. This belief had already fallen out of currency in the civilized world.

It was only during the reign of King George V and Queen Mary that the image of the British royal family was successfully reconstructed to become more homely and down to earth —like the family of an ordinary couple. Not surprisingly, they were well admired by the English public. Of course, there were people who did not see any virtue in having a monarchy. For instance, during the 25th anniversary of the king's accession to the throne, many banners greeted the royal couple on the road from Buckingham Palace to St. Paul's Cathedral, condemning "25 Years of Exploiting the Poor", "25 Years of Widening the Gap between the Rich and the Poor", and "25 Years of Appalling Colonialism"....

In a democracy, the more the monarch is like a commoner and the more s/he is simple, open-minded, and willing to listen to criticisms, the more secure and long lasting the monarchy will become. At the very least, the monarchy has to be neutral in order to guarantee its continual existence. King George VI is a good example. He lacked leadership qualities. He was also a stammerer. But at his side was a queen who was not inclined toward the Wrong Way. And both truly sided with the

people, and hence they were widely respected. On the other hand, his brother thought that he was smarter than all the politicians in the country. Fortunately, he eventually abdicated.

As for the present queen, she may have tilted too heavily toward the conservatives. In any case, she seemed willing to alter her position or view in the light of the changing public mood and situation. She realized that a monarchy that is impervious to the people's wishes will not last long....

During WWII, the Kingdom of Denmark was occupied by Nazi Germany. The Danish king insisted that the Star of David be also pinned on his chest; that is, Hitler should also send him to the concentration camps. Despite his immense power Hitler could not trump over the king of a small state whose only power was based on moral courage. Another monarch who should be commended is the King of Spain. 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.

In Cambodia, the monarchy seems to be reducible to one figure, King Norodom Sihanouk. He has played both positive and negative roles. He seems to be equally loved as well as hated. Though he has already abdicated for King Sihanouk to suceed him, it is not clear whether or not the monarchy will survive after Sihanouk passed away.

I hope the audience will be able to draw their own conclusions after listening to the examples raised above.

Excerpted from Sulak Sivaraksa's speech delivered on 19 January 2007 at the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University

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[1] Please refer to the relevant articles in www.sulak-sivaraksa.org and www.sivaraksa.com

Reflection: Meeting With Sulak Sivaraksa

On Wednesday, May 17, our second full day in Thailand, we met with social activist Sulak Sivaraksa in his Bangkok home. When Sulak took his seat in the discussion room, he instantly commanded the attention of the room, not through authoritarian orders, but on account of his presence, commanding yet amicable and charismatic. It was as if the words of course handouts and books were lifted from their pages, manifested, and thrust into action before our eyes. Sulak spoke with the confidence of a man accustomed to wielding considerable influence over the thoughts and opinions of his audience, of a man who backs up his assertions and critiques with rationale, both clearly and efficiently. He had a lot to say, a lot to share, but he proceeded with a



dynamic approach that, throughout his career, has allowed him to adapt his theories when necessary. A lucid thinker, Sulak has diagnosed the ills of society for more than three decades, and he has never been shy about openly challenging established political institutions and social norms.

Before our visit we were already aware of many of Sulak's accomplishments. For example, he has offered the world a Buddhist vision of how to achieve a more egalitarian society, and while some of his postulates may be lofty, they are not entirely quixotic. A Thai social critic, Sulak has been referred to as "a Thai social institution" in and of himself (Phillips xiii). We are also aware of Sulak's relentless courage to stand up for what he believes in. He has endured two exiles as well as the institutional burning of his books by the Thai military after the 1976 coup. Even after two lese-majeste charges, first in 1984 and again in 1991, Sulak still challenges social institutions with great bellicosity.

Sulak's house exuded a palpable, majestic aura. Though very comfortable by Thai standards, the house was not too

luxurious by American standards; it was both conducive to the involved activist work Sulak does and consistent with the Buddhist underpinnings of his movement. The walls are adorned with bookshelves filled to capacity and pictures of famous leaders. The furniture is modest, most of the house lacks air conditioning, save the large meeting room, and open awnings and windows keep the rooms well ventilated with fresh air. A Buddhist "middle path" that straddles the line between asceticism and opulence underlies the foundation of Sulak's house.

Likewise, Buddhism is the underlying foundation of Sulak's movement. The religion, and its philosophy, is the common element that has permeated all of his work. Still, Buddhism and its practice have not averted Sulak's criticism. The social leader believes and preaches that the introverted practice of religion is not enough, but rather Buddhists, as well as all humans, must also work to make the world a better place. During our discussion, Sulak passionately expounded his philosophy, which he has coined "socially engaged spirituality," emphasizing that traditional Buddhist principles such as non-violence, compassion, ethical behavior, the responsibility to hold leaders to exalted moral and ethical standards, and the proper use of wealth all occupy a central role in socially engaged spirituality.

Of all the social forces Sulak's movement rebukes, the social leader told us that he believes American imperialism is the most dangerous force in the world today, with consumerism and capitalism in general as close seconds. This assertion is corroborated by a look into Sulak's work, which reveals many insights. Sulak is at once socially progressive and culturally conservative, which explains his reluctance to recognize the hybrid Thai and English term "Thailand" as the name of his country. He prefers the traditional term "Siam." Though Thailand was never colonized, he resents the undue influence of western powers since their arrival in his country in the middle of nineteenth century, an influence that he characterizes as "an insidious force" in his essay *The Religion of Consumerism*. In the same essay, he writes that "development is a euphemism for greed" and mourns the intellectual colonization of Thailand as well as the displacement of temples as the center of the community by department stores and commercialism. But it is not just the western powers that Sulak castigates. He also calls on Japan to make changes in the way they deal with the rest of the world, particularly third world countries.

As we sat in his home and asked him questions, Sulak earnestly spoke of the perils of American imperialism and consumerism, knowing that we were Americans. Did it hurt our pride? Maybe a fleeting blow. Did it open our eyes to an entirely different perspective? After we get past our innate ethnocentricities, which happened quicker for some than for others, yes. But he also reached out to us—Americans—and embraced us. We may be directly connected to Thailand's source of affliction, but we are not the enemies. With compassion, Sulak beseeched us to become friends of the fight for equality, for life, for nature. He attempted to inculcate the essential sense of inner peace into our hearts and minds. Clearly, there is no animosity towards us, the oppressors, the consumers, the Americans, and this compassion helped to fully illuminate Sulak's philosophy. Sulak's philosophy is based on compassion, and this is why he prefers the term socially engaged spirituality to socially engaged Buddhism. He understands that to achieve world peace we must be respectful of other religions, and he believes that followers of all religions can become enlightened. Based on the Buddhist principle of skillful means, Sulak explained that, for example, if you are a Christian, you should invite Christ into your heart to achieve inner peace, without which outer peace is impossible. Instead of reprimanding us on account of our nationalities, he made us cognizant of the fact that we all must work together to challenge, improve, and implement each other's ideas for bettering society.

Sulak's compassion put us at ease. It gave us the comfort we needed to begin the process of tearing down cultural barriers; a process that, in reflection, is still ongoing. The social leader does not eschew capitalism, and to an extent he sees the potential benevolence the markets can bring, but he also feels that there is a pressing need to "tame the markets" and make them more equitable. As a cosmopolite living in Bangkok and educated abroad, Sulak made us feel confident that he is in touch with not only the world of his culture, but also the world of our culture, thus giving his message greater validity. Therefore, we recognize that we owe Sulak the same compassion he showed us and we owe it to ourselves to assiduously consider his message.

When grappling with issues raised by Sulak—issues like the inequality in living standards

around the world, foreign exploitation, American imperialism, and consumerism—questions and considerations abound. Is major reform plausible? Realistic? Idealistic? Desirable? The fact that a great deal of income inequality exists is incontrovertible. Likewise, merging the gap while concurrently reducing consumerist greed would certainly benefit the environment, as well as the overwhelming majority of the world's population. However, perhaps the biggest challenge lies in convincing those at or near the top of the spectrum to refrain from many of their consumerist and capitalist behaviors and habits. This Sulak points out in his essay *The "Think Big" Strategy*, writing that "an egalitarian society would have no room for elites (24)."

A question to ponder is whether it is simply human nature to economically maximize one's self-worth and strive to become a wealthy elite. Furthermore, is it human nature to manage our money in a way that at least perpetuates, if not elevates, our social status? In a western capitalistic society one may be tempted to say yes, citing capitalist economic thought. But Sulak is unwilling to concede that consumerism is human nature. In his essay *The Religion of Consumerism*, Sulak writes about traditional Asian values, which stress that personal growth is always related to social well-being. These values hold that personal achievement at the expense of the community, which today we would call economic exploitation, should be looked upon with great reproach. Rooted in Confucianism, harmony is seen as the most important priority, and spending money for extravagant luxuries is insane and wasteful. Clearly, Sulak contends that a different cultural orientation and ideology, one that deviates sharply from "consumerism," governs traditional Asian values.

Although Sulak's discussion of the values of traditional Asian culture presents an ideological alternative to the current form of capitalism practiced, as well as a challenge to the presupposition that consumerist thought is ubiquitous, Sulak is not a proponent of unadulterated Marxist theory. Obviously, he does believe that the global economic system must be made more equitable, but he believes this should be done through "taming the markets" and not abolishing them. As zealous capitalists would quickly point out, Sulak recognizes that market-driven production fosters innovation in many noble and worthy areas such as medicine. Moreover, monetary excess provides for charity, and it has created many great philanthropists, one of the newest members being Bill Gates, the world's richest man. Manipulating the market with this type of altruism holds great promise in solving many of the world's problems.

Still, Sulak feels that the current capitalist system is insufficient and wealth is too polarized. Speaking candidly, he told our class that "an overhaul of individual and collective consciousness" is needed. In his essay *A Buddhist Model of Society*, Sulak writes that "In an ideal Buddhist society, under righteous and effective administration, there would be no poverty (107)." To make this possible, Sulak believes, we must hold ourselves and our leaders to high ethical standards, and we must replace GDP with spirituality as the foremost criterion by which to judge development. In such a society, Sulak sees the Sangha as the hegemonic center of society. What are the steps that must be followed to commence change? Sulak responded to this question by saying, "Be mindful, be compassionate, and don't hate the oppressor, but instead rid yourself of prejudices." By giving up greed, Sulak says, we will also give up suffering.

Sulak compassionately ended our discussion by asking if we would prefer rice or noodles for lunch. After settling on noodles, we were served, and Sulak allowed us to peruse his house and take a look at the many artifacts of activism he has accumulated over the years. Before we left, Sulak came outside to pose for group pictures to commemorate our visit; pictures which will serve as a reminder that we have been in the presence of a man with great facility as a social leader. Sure we were challenged intellectually, but we also earned something about leadership in a general sense. Specifically, Sulak's answer to the final question of the discussion resonates. When asked who his idols and influences were growing up and as a young scholar, Sulak seemed perplexed. He thought for a minute, and then he stated that he greatly respected his parents, but he did not tell us about a certain idol or mentor. It soon hit us. Of course, Sulak did not follow in the footsteps of anyone. He blazed his own path, for he is a leader.

*All references came from either our meeting with Sulak or from essays in his anthology, *Seeds of Peace*. (Parallax Press)

Kevin Fogle
a mindful walk reflection on
Engaged Thai Buddhism,
St Mary's College of Maryland, 2006

Our Skins Cannot be Willed Away

Contrary to popular misinterpretation, in Buddhism self-reliance does not imply an autonomous, asocial, ahistorical, perfectly translucent, and transcendental self. So it is neither like the Cartesian self, nor like the rugged neoliberal and consumerist self of late capitalism. Rather, there is a certain "naturalism" or immanence in the Buddhist notion. By this I mean that there's no supernatural intervention in human activities and that although the self is 'ambiguous' and shaped by nature, culture, and history, it is amenable through self-training and experimentation such as via meditation and proper breathing—hence the "not-self" in Buddhism. I have stressed on countless occasions that the Buddhist response to Descartes is "I breathe therefore I am," and this constitutes what may be called spirituality, which entails the care of the self—or the 'simple magic' and 'small wonder' of Buddhism. This immanence, which is without guarantees since there is no metaphysical comfort, becomes a preliminary condition for the persistent cultivation of generosity, compassion, and wisdom; that is, the transformation of greed into generosity, hatred into compassion, and delusion or ignorance into wisdom. Again, these are tied to humility and simplicity. The Buddha after all was a simple monk. And they all cannot be cultivated without being engaged with the world, without having virtuous companions, and without confronting the sufferings in the world mindfully and nonviolently.

Since there is no autonomous self, self-reliance is then about being in and with the world, about what Thich Nhat Nanh calls "inter-being". Self-reliance does not mean self-attachment or clinging to the self. Put more mundanely, it's about interdependence since we are all vulnerable and life is precarious or fragile, and we are not perfectly sovereign. This condition cannot be willed away—our skins cannot be willed away—even if we live in gated or fortified communities patrolled by private security firms, acquire immense wealth, etc. In Buddhism, happiness entails traveling on the Middle Path without self-attachment. Devotees of the Buddha (lay or otherwise) are expected to examine themselves on a daily basis. And the things to be contemplated on a daily basis *(Abhinhapaccavekkhana)* are as follows.

1. One should again and again contemplate: I am subject to decay and cannot escape it.
2. I am subject to disease and I cannot escape it.
3. I am subject to death and cannot escape it.
4. There will be division and separation from all that are dear to me and beloved.
5. I am owner of my deed, whatever deed I do, whether good or bad, I shall become heir to it.

Greed, hatred, and delusion are tools to foster a perfectly sovereign self, which is roguish by nature. We kill others, we dominate others, represent various isms we hold dear as absolute, etc. to feel sovereign, for instance. Self-reliance thus posits a non-possessive and non-domineering kind of agency, one that shuns from fixed hierarchies or totalities such as structural violence. Once again, many have pointed out that nonviolence or *ahimsa* 'the master precept' in Buddhism.

common ground
Vol. vii No.1 spring 2006

The Dharmasangita Project is about to launch a campaign of Dharma music for the young.

The Dharmasangita project under the support of Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation is aimed to recombine the teachings and traditions of Buddhism with music. The name '*Dharmasangita*' – meaning the combination of music in accordance with Dharma - was first coined by the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Pridi Banomyong in their joint initiative to support musical creativity for the enhancement of spirituality along Buddhist teachings. Although the initiative had lied dormant for decades, a number of Siamese Buddhists saw the occasion for the 100th anniversary of Buddhadasa as an auspicious time to renew the attempt.

Dharmasangita will generate a network of musicians, songwriters, artists, producers and studio engineers as well as media professionals, which will jointly work for a revival and enhancement of Buddhist musical traditions in Siam and elsewhere. It will aim at both people interested in Dharma and music as well as the general public. At present, a number of works have begun, including the provision of a mini-studio for the recording and production.

On the 27th May this year, which will commemorate the 101st

(see p.43)

Born to be a Poet

The path to recognition

Although he is now an established name among contemporary Thai poets and visual artists, Angkarn Kalyanapong has not had an easy ride. The 1988 National Artist award winner used to be harshly criticised for his avant-garde writing style —although it was later emulated by others. In his earlier creative years, one critic even charged him with writing "crude, vulgar and violence-prone verses that do not elevate anyone's spirit".

In retrospect, such views can seem ridiculously myopic. But despite the criticism he used to receive and the precariousness of a poet's daily existence, Angkarn made a stubborn but steadfast decision to dedicate his entire life to his art. This is a rare phenomenon, hardly seen before and perhaps even less likely to be witnessed in future.

Poets in Thailand, as elsewhere, traditionally rely on patrons such as courtiers or high-ranking aristocrats. Unless they come from a well-to-do family, men and women of letters need to support themselves through work that often has nothing to do with creative writing. Angkarn has avoided such labour, giving his free-spirited thoughts ample room to develop.

He has benefited from several *kalayanamitta* (true friends), notably Sulak Sivaraksa. Through Sulak and others, Angkarn's writing was published in various periodicals where he gradually earned respect, or notoriety, among the intellectuals and literati of Thailand. As as editor of the now-defunct journal *Sangkomsart Parithat,* Sulak also initiated publication of Angkarn's first book, *Kawee Niphon Khong Angkarn Kalyanapong* (Poems of Angkarn Kalyanapong), since recognised as a classic.



Angkarn Kalyanapong leading a group of students to the old town of Sri Satchanalai in 1998. Says Angkarn years later, "I can always revisit Sri Satchanalai in my verses; in my hand lives Sri Satchanalai."

The social critic's dedication to his poet friend is second-to-none: Since their first meeting in 1958, Sulak has been constantly publicising Angkarn's work to both local and international audiences. He once showed an English translation of *Wak Talay* (Scoop Up the Sea) to the late Allen Ginsberg, who, Sulak wrote years later, took an immediate liking to it and reproduced the piece in the American journal *Evergreen Review*.

In 1972, after an intense debate among literary scholars, Angkarn was declared "the most outstanding contemporary Thai poet" by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. But accolades did not come easitly to the man once dubbed the *enfant terrible* of Thai literature. However, 14 years later, in what some described as an act of repentance, However, he says this forgetting is some-what intentional, stressing that as a poet his head must be empty and not filled with his own works. "Otherwise, Angkarn, [whose name means] the ashes, would have to change his name to Narcissus," he once explained.

So how has he come to know so much about the history of old towns and cities, the botany of indigenous plants, the intricate details of archaeological sites and the literary gems of yore? More importantly, how has he managed, despite the passing of the years, to retain his "poet's eyes"—an ever-youthful ability to marvel at the wonders of the world, still be able to whip up fiery bouts of emotion, lash out at social malaise and have tears



well-up in his eyes when he recalls stories of motherly sacrifice?

"I simply have had so many great 'teachers'," replies Angkarn in a casual, matter-of-fact tone. "They all doted on me and devoted their lives to teaching me, there's simply no way I could have turned out rotten."

On several occasions, Angkarn told of how, despite his reputation for brusqueness, he can become remarkably "still" as he sits down to write. In those hours, he says he "forgets" everything—the worries about household expenses, the ever-approaching debt collectors. He says it is lucky that, to write verse, all he needs is a pen and paper.

Angkarn describes *khlong* — Thai quatrains that are known as the most, difficult form of poetry to write and which he is considered a master of — as akin to a magnifying glass that can "concentrate sunlight intensely enough to light a match".

"A duty of a writer is to serve the land, to be as constructive as possible and to hold a vision ahead of the society one belongs to. We have to help other people who may not have the time to contemplate the meaning or direction of their lives. A writer must provide these people with some greater visions, and not be preoccupied with oneself.

"An artist's ideal, for me, is never to prostitute oneself before you reach the goal, before the awakening, the spiritual consciousness that is the ultimate end of all forms of art."

Angkarn's way of describing himself and his role is uncannily ironic. On one level, he sounds like he possesses a bloated, pompous view of his place in the world. But listen again and Angkarn's grand statements, such as "I have been a poet for many lives," contain a powerful tinge of humility, as if in so speaking about the causal chain of accumulated karma, he is simply making a factual statement about something bigger, and more important, than himself. Nothing more, nothing less.

But is he ever concerned about his legacy—that people may no longer read his work a generation from now?

"There is no need to worry if people will read them or not," he says. "There will always be some who love poetry. The children of the future can view my work however they like. I will always be me — the Angkarn who was born of the winds, a womb and oxygen ..."

Bangkok Post,
February 28, 2007

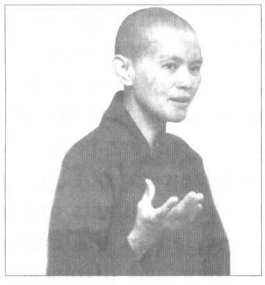
The 2007 Outstanding Women in Buddhism

Congratulations to the dedicated women who were recognized as the 2007 Outstanding Women in Buddhism on March 7, 2007 at the UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, to celebrate International Women's Day. Some of them are familiar to INEB or the socially engaged Buddhists' circle. They are



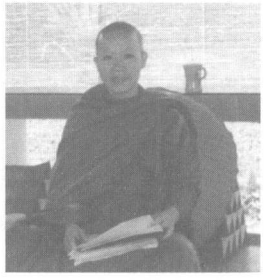
Bhikkhuni Jampa Tesdroen (Germany),

Former Carola Roloff was ordained in the year 1981 with Geshe Thubten Ngawang, at Tibetan Center in Hamburg, Germany and named Jampa Tesdroen. In 1985 she got fully ordained in Taiwan. She is a well known Buddhist scholar and a member of the committee of Western Bhikshunis. She is now arranging for the 1st International Congress on Buddhist Women's Role in the Sangha: Bhikshuni Vinaya and Ordination Lineages' which will be held at the University of Hamburg from July 18-20, 2007.



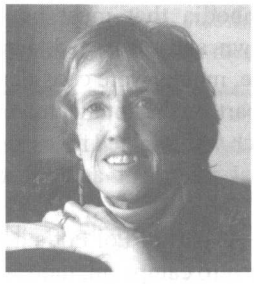
Bhikkhuni Chan Linh Nghiem or Niramisa (Thailand)

She got ordained at Plum Village in France and became Thich Nhat Hanh's disciple. In 2004 she attended the Lamp Transmission Ceremony, assigning her to be a dhamma teacher. Before ordination, with her degree in nursing she spent many years helping the ethnic minorities in Thailand's neighbouring countries with UNICEF.



Ayya Santini (Indonesia)

Her role in teaching the Buddhist communities in Indonesia is as significant as her activeness in promoting inter-religious harmony. She often participates in meetings and gatherings organized by socially engaged Buddhists such as the Think Sangha meeting in 2003



Joanna Macy (USA)

Joanna Macy is internationally well known Buddhist scholar and social activist. Her fields of interest include general system theory and deep ecology. She is often invited to many places to give talks and conduct training workshops in areas such as ecological awareness, peace and justice as well as psychological and spiritual issues for personal and social changes.



Prateep Ungsongtham Hata (Thailand)

Prateep was born in a slum in Khlong Toey, Bangkok. She received her education up to the diploma in education, with difficulty due to her poverty. She has been working for the slum dwellers in the areas of education, housing security and human rights since her youth. In 1978 she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award which helped her to establish Duang Prateep Foundation. She was elected to the senate in 2002 and continues to be active to protect the poor and the discriminated at policy level.

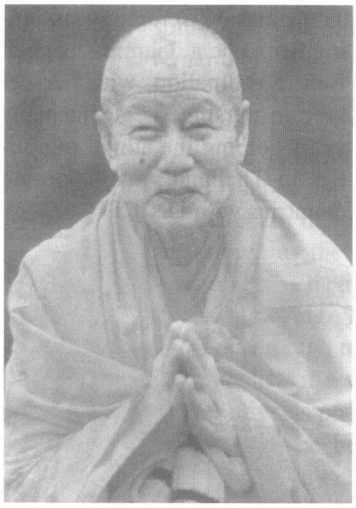
The others recipients of the Award are Bhikshuni Xiou Xiun (China), Bhikshuni Tzu Chuang (Taiwan), Bhikshuni Jing Ding (Taiwan), Bhikshuni Chang Heng (Malaysia), Bhikhuni Dhammananda (Vietnam), Maechee Sukhi Chitcharoen (Thailand), Dr. Maechee Krisna Raksachom (Thailand), Her Majesty the Queen Ashi Tshering Yangdong Wangchuk of Bhutan, Madame Shiranthi Wickramasinghe Rajapaksa (the First Lady of Sri Lanka), Annabelle Dagmar Zinser (Germany), Mrs. Suchin Borihanvanakhet (Thailand), Ms. Phannee Bunyakamol (Thailand), Dr. Payom Wongsarnsri, Dr. Bong Chui Lien and Mrs. Paveena Hongsakul (Thailand).

Somdech Phra Maha Ghosananda
(The "Gandhi of Cambodia")
(1929-2007)

Maha Ghosananda was born in 1929 to a farming family in the Mekong Delta plains. From an early age he showed great interest in religion, and began to serve as a temple boy at age eight. He greatly impressed the monks with whom he served, and at fourteen received his parent's permission to ordain as a Buddhist monk (samanera). He went on to study at monastic universities in Phnom Penh and Battambang, before going to India to pursue a doctorate in Pali at Nava Nalanda University in Bihar.

Before the age of 30, Ghosananda was granted the title "Maha" in recognition of his skill at the monastic Pali language exams. He went on to study under a variety of teachers, including the Japanese monk Nichidatsu Fujii and the Cambodian Patriarch Samdech Prah Sangha Raja Chuon Noth. From Nichidatsu Fujii, Maha Ghosananda received training in mediation and nonviolent resistance (Fujii was an associate of Mahatma Gandhi), and by studying under the Cambodian Sangha Raja was marked as a rising star of the Cambodian monastic community.

In 1965, Maha Ghosananda left Cambodia to study meditation under the Thai master Achaan Dhammadaro, a guiding light of the Thai Forest Tradition. Four years later, while he was still studying at Dhammadaro's forest monastery, the United States began bombing Cambodia as part of their attempt to shut down the Ho Chi Minh



trail and end the Vietnam War. A year later, a full-blown civil war was underway in Cambodia.

As the Khmer Rouge seized control of the country, the prospects for Buddhism in Cambodia became increasingly dim. Pol Pot, who once had served in a Buddhist monastery, identified the monks and temples as part of the power structure of feudal Cambodia that must be overthrown and destroyed. Furthermore, monks were considered to be part of the intellectual class, which was targeted for especially brutal treatment and "reeducation".

As part of Pol Pot's horrific year zero campaign, monks were systematically turned out of monasteries and murdered or sent to "reeducation facilities" (which is to say, they were tortured, and then murdered). Some monks were forced to violate their vows (most often through forced copulation at gunpoint) so that they would not get any ideas about continuing to act as monks. By the time the Khmer Rouge ended its reign of terror, most Cambodian monks were dead, and most temples and monasteries were rubble.

Meanwhile, Maha Ghosananda continued to study under the guidance of Achaan Dhammadaro for nine years. Though eager to attempt to help his people, he was advised by his teachers to wait for a better opportunity. Finally, in 1978, he saw an opportunity to help his people, as the first refugees from Pol Pot's coup and ensuing reign of terror began to arrive in Thailand. He traveled to Sakeo, on the Thai side of the Thai-Cambodian border, where Cambodian refugees were arriving in droves.

Maha Ghosananda's appearance raised a stir among the refugees; to wear the robes of a monk in public was to invite a death sentence in Cambodia—most likely, none of the refugees had seen a monk in years. Maha Ghosananda began to distribute photocopies of Buddhist scripture among the refugees, and to revive their lapsed and battered religious practices.

By 1978, Maha Ghosananda's entire family had been killed by Pol Pot's Communist regime. Yet, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia and sent the Khmer Rouge into retreat, he traveled to the refugee camps of the former Communist militants just as he had traveled to the camps of those they had displaced. His reception was much the same; amazement, followed by grateful

weeping.

In addition to handing out copies of the Metta Sutta and establishing new temples in refugee camps, Maha Ghosananda worked to bring about peace and reconciliation in his war-torn homeland.

When Pol Pot's regime collapsed in 1979, Maha Ghosananda was one of only 3,000 Cambodian Buddhist monks alive-out of 60,000 at the start of his reign of terror in 1976. In 1988, he was made a Buddhist Patriarch of Cambodia.

In 1992, during the first year of the peace agreement, Maha Ghosananda led the first nationwide Dhamma Yatra, a walk for peace across Cambodia. The Dhamma Yatra (Pali, 'yatra' journey or pilgrimage) is much more than an elaborate walk-a-thon. Every year, more than 200 marchers, many of them ordained Buddhist monks from a variety of traditions, travel the roads of Cambodia, praying for peace, blessing villagers and regional leaders, and drawing media attention to the numerous problems that plague post-war Cambodia—illegal logging, unexploded land mines, inadequate sanita-tion, the plight of the numerous war orphans, and the loss of Cambodian culture.

The route that the Dhamma Yatra takes is far from a walk in the park. Every year, Maha Ghosananda and other organizers work to plan a route for the march, a route that is almost always guaranteed to carry the marchers into danger and uncertainty. In its second year, the marchers passed through contested territory just prior to the first U.N monitored elections, encouraging Cambodians to resist attempts at voting intimidation. During the next year, they passed through the most contested and war-torn areas of Cambodia, and two walkers were killed when they were caught in crossfire between government and rebel forces. In 1997, the path of the walk passed through areas that had been, until the previous few months, entirely under former Khmer Rouge hard-line control. The Dhamma Yatra marchers were sometimes first contact with the outside world that the people of this region had had in decades.

Whatever the route taken, the Dhamma Yatra walkers are always received with great joy and appreciation by the Cambodian people. They have re-dedicated Buddhist temples damaged or desecrated during the war years, and are helping not only to improve the political and physical circumstances of the Cambodian people, but also to renew and revitalize Cambodian religion.

In 1994, Maha Ghosananda was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by the chair of the U.S Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Claiborne Pell. He was again nominated in 1995, 1996, and 1997 for his work in bringing peace and stability to Cambodia. In 1998, he received the Niwano Peace Prize in recognition of his commitment to peace and inter-religious understanding. He has also acted as an advisor to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, and has been involved in campaigning for negotiations to end the civil war in Sri Lanka. In 1997, he staged the first mass coordinated event to protest the use of violence in Cambodian politics, following a coup d'etat, and was recognized with an award from Sri Lanka's Sarvodaya Sramadana organization.

In Cambodia, it is said that Maha Ghosananda is a true monk, that he would give his daily meal and robes to anyone that asked for them. He is called "Cambodia's Gandhi", a "living treasure", and the "living Truth" (Dhamma). His commitment to peace and the people of Cambodia has persevered for his entire life, despite exile, great difficulty, and the loss of his entire family, as well as most of his teachers and friends.

He was very active in INEB's activities. Towards the end of his life, he stayed mostly with the Khmer community in New England, USA, where he passed away.

(from p.38)
anniversary of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, the Dharmasangita Project will launch a song contest among the young in Siam. The contest and event, called '*Tua Ku Khong Ku* – Me My Music,' will provide opportunities for young people to express their musical, song-writing, and performing talents along with their own understanding and interpretation of Buddhist teachings. The main theme for this year will be creative interpretations and expressions of the Buddhist doctrine of the self and non-self as expressed succinctly in Thai by Buddhadasa's famous phrase '*tua ku khong ku*'. A lot of professional musicians and performers will also join the event; and an audio-visual exhibition of Dharma-oriented songs in Thai will also be displayed. The College of Music (Withhayalai Duriyangasilpa), Mahidol University, generously provided the venue for the launching and the event.

Further information about the Dharmasangita, the *Tua Ku Khong Ku* Me My Music Contest or donation for these activities may be inquired at the Satirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation.

Princess Marayatra Diskul

A benevolent princess

The longest living member of the Chakri dynasty committed herself to the service of the Thai Red Cross Society

KRISSIE NA KLONGTOEY

On Sunday, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn will preside over the cremation of HSH Princess Marayatra Kanya Diskul. The name might not mean much to members of generation X or Y, but Princess Marayatra was quite a remarkable lady of her time. She passed away on December 11 last year, but had she lived a few more months to April 8, 2007, she would have celebrated her 105th birthday. Even now, she goes on record as the longest living member of the Chakri dynasty.

Princess Marayatra was the 10th daughter of Prince Damrong Rajanubhap, and the eldest of her mother, Mom Saeng's, six children. She was born on April 8, 1902, during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, (Rama V).

As tradition dictated, Princess Marayatra was sent by her parents at the age of five to live in the Royal Palace, where she would learn the manners, arts and etiquette befitting a princess. She was attached to the court of Queen Sukhumala Marasri, and her royal daughter, Princess Suthatipayaratana. Her duty was to carry the betel box for the princess when she attended royal ceremonies or private outings. As a result, she was privy to all the court's ceremonies and became acquainted with the courtiers of King Chulalongkorn.

She had a few years of formal schooling at Rajini School,



HSH Princess Marayatra Kanya Diskul

but was later "home schooled" at Bang Khun Phrom Palace along with Queen Sukhumala Marasri's grandchildren. Though the curriculum comprised maths, history, geography and poetry like most high school students, English was taught by foreign tutors.

Upon the deaths of Queen Sukhumala Marasri and Princess Suthatipayaratana, Princess Marayatra returned to her family home at Varadis Palace, where she became her father's personal assistant.

Princess Marayatra was a keen sportswoman who enjoyed croquet and water sports like rowing and sailing, which she learned while living at Bang Khun Phrom Palace on the Chao Phraya River.

It was at the Thai Red Cross Society, however, where Princess Marayatra made her mark. She started working there in 1929 when Prince Paribatra was the society's president. Such a move was almost unheard of at the time: Women in those days did not usually go out to work, especially if they were of royal blood. Princess Marayatra was one of the first Thai working women and she took her job very seriously. She was the only woman working in the Thai Red Cross office, the rest of the staff being made up of army personnel. And she was also one of the first Thai women to drive her own car, despite her father originally prohibiting all his daughters from driving for fear of their safety.

As secretary of the Thai Red Cross, Princess Marayatra had to screen every single piece of correspondence from all of the society's units. To prepare herself for the job, she read every single document, both Thai and English, in the office's cabinets, regardless of whether they were about the Thai Red Cross, the International Red Cross, the Ministery of Foreign Affairs or the Interior Ministry. She became known as "the Red Cross library".

She dedicated herself totally to her work. Even during the great floods she never gave up, rowing a boat from Varadis Palace along Saen Saeb Canal and up Phyathai Road to the office.

When her father was arrested during the revolution of 1932 and held captive at Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall along with Prince Paribatra and Prince Naris, Princess Marayatra chose not to flee like several other members of the royal family.

In fact, she even went out to Ratchadamnoen Avenue to speak with the gathered crowd

and sound out their opinions.

Princess Marayatra represented the Thai Red Cross Society on several occasions at International Red Cross conferences, including the 15th International Red Cross Conference in Tokyo in 1934, and the Preliminary Conference of the 16th International Red Cross in England and Switzerland in 1936, on which occasion she had the opportunity to meet King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

During the air raids of World War Two, Princess Marayatra would spend the night at the office and be one of the first volunteers out in the morning to provide aid to bombing victims.

She continued working at the Thai Red Cross Society until 1954, when she resigned due to poor health. Even then, she continued to support the society with advice and funding until her final days.

Ravindra Varma

Mr. Ravindra Varma, former Union Labour Minister, died of cardiac arrest in Delhi on Monday, October 9, 2006. He was 81. Mr. Varma, a prominent Gandhian freedom fighter, was the head of several Gandhian institutions including Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhi Peace Foundation, Gandhi Vichar Parishad and Vishwa Yuvak Kendra. He was also a prolific writer and worked long hours on various projects right till the end. He suffered a seizure on October 3, 2006, at his office and was admitted to Apollo Hospital. He recovered and was discharged on October 9 afternoon. He was working on a draft of his convocation address to Gujarat Vidyapith later in the evening, when he suddenly collapsed. He did not recover consciousness.

Mr. Ravindra Varma was born at Mavelikara, Kerala, on 18 April 1925, and was educated at Maharaja's College of Arts, Trivandrum and Christian College, Madras. He was associated with the Congress; took active part in the national struggle for independence and the struggle for responsible Government in Travancore and Mysore States, and in the 'Quit India' Movement; courted imprisonment



Ravindra Varma

several times; played leading part in the Lok Sangharsh Movement during the Emergency; directed the all India underground movement against the Emergency, and for the restoration of democracy, traveled all over India and built up underground cells of resistance and organised All India Satyagraha Movement; was arrested in Bombay in the beginning of February 1976, detained in Thane Jail and released on February 24, 1977.

He was a Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) for three terms — 1962-67, 1977-79 and 1979-84.

He was the Union Cabinet Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Labour, March 1977- August 1979.

As a young Congress leader, he

a. built up the All India Students' Congress during the Freedom Struggle. Vice President, and later President, All India Students Congress 1946-1949.
b. served two terms as President of World Assembly of Youth.
c. elected Member, International Executive of the International Students Service - World University Congress, 1945-46.
d. built up the Indian Youth Congress. Secretary, Indian Youth Congress 1949-51; President, All India Youth Congress, 1957.

Until the end of his life, Mr. Varma was Chairman, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, Chairman, Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, New Delhi and Chancellor, Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad.

He had traveled extensively all over the world and spoke almost all Indian languages. Late in his life, he became a practicing Buddhist and was much devoted to H.H. the Dalai Lama.

Udom Yenrudi
Co-founder of the Komol Kheemthong Foundation

The majority of Thais may not know this man who passed away quietly last Saturday. But over the past six decades, Udom Yenrudi had been making pivotal, behind-the-scenes contributions to society. His efforts are best described by the well-known Thai saying *pid thong lang phra* (to paste a gold leaf on the back of a Buddha statue), which is applied to describe those who do good deeds without seeking recognition.

Udom came from a Thai-Chinese family. As a boy in Thon Buri he won a government scholarship and went to study in England. Following the outbreak of World War Two , Udom returned to Thailand to work as a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University's Arts Faculty (unlike some of his peers who refused to come back). The over-bearing limits on academic freedom under the military regime, however, eventually prompted him to resign. Udom then became arguably the first ever Thai correspondent with Reuters. At the same time, he worked as secretary to the president of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Tan Siew Meng.

During the war, leaders in the Thai-Chinese community were divided over whether they should side with or oppose the Japanese who were occupying the country. Tan Siew Meng somehow managed to earn the respect of both sides. The Japanese wanted to force the ethnic-Chinese to supply them with rice and labour to build the Thai-Burma railway. Tan Siew Meng, however, insisted that the Chinese must abide by Thai laws and reminded the Japanese of their declared policy of non-interference. In the end, the Japanese paid a good price for the rice and resorted to using forced labour from Malaya and Singapore instead. Tan Siew Meng received a series of personal threats from the dissatisfied Japanese as a result.



Udom Yenrudi

As Tan's secretary, Udom informed a Japanese former classmate of his, who was working as an assistant to the press officer at the Japanese embassy, that the Japanese military's threatening of the president of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce violated diplomatic protocol. Apparently, Udom was highly trusted by Tan. When Tan was murdered during the subsequent regime of Khuang Abhaiwong, Udom was a key witness at the investigation.

After the war, and especially during the conflict in Vietnam, Thailand received a flood of foreign correspondents. Most of them knew Udom and considered him a good friend. A number of these foreign journalists pooled their funds and set up a mining company, which they asked Udom to be the president of.

Among the US correspondents was Darrell Berrigan, formerly the owner and editor of the *Bangkok World*. Berrigan adopted a Thai son, who invited me to preside over a youth camp organised by the mining company to train young people to serve society.

That was in 1970. I was not able to accept the invitation, but in my place I sent a few young students who were keen on social issues, one of whom was Komol Kheemthong.

A senior at Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Education, Komol was diligent, active and well-connected with several youth groups in other univesities. Although his teachers wanted him to take up a teaching job at his alma mater, Komol became fascinated with the youth camp experience and wanted to set up a community school. He set his mind on working as a rural teacher after he graduated.

Udom fully supported Komol's idea. The school Komol established was a genuine pioneer in drawing on and promoting indigenous sources of knowledge and wisdom. Komol

invited many local villagers, as well as friends of his to come and teach his students. Those who were not able to go often contributed novel ideas to the dedicated teacher.

Unfortunately, the area where the school was located, at Ban Song in Surat Thani, was caught in the fighting between the Thai army and Communist insurgents. Komol came under the suspicion of both camps and was gunned down on February 22, 1971.

Udom took up the task of organising Komol's funeral. The present Supreme Patriarch (then known as Phra Sasan-asophon) gave a dharma lecture at the event and the late privy councillor, Sanya Dharmasakti, sought special permission for a royally sponsored cremation. Udom spent a lot of money on the funeral books, which were sold to raise funds for what is now known as the Komol Kheemthong Foundation, an organisation set up to promote alternative education and instil social ideals in young people.

Sanya was the foundation's first president until he resigned to become prime minister in 1973. Udom succeeded him in the post, stepping down several years later due to his advanced age. He continued to support the foundation's activites for the rest of his life. As well as from foreign correspondents, Udom also made friends with a number of Asian leaders, notably Belen Abreu of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation. Udom personally nominated several Thais to receive the prestigious award, including winners Puey Ungpakorn, Prateep Ungsongtham and Phra Chamroon Parnchand of Tham Krabok Temple for his work with drug addicts.

Prateep used the award money to set up the Duangprateep Foundation. Udom actively supported the foundation and helped Prateep set up another organisation for babies born in slums. Evidently, Udom's lifelong interest was the problems faced by children and the underprivileged.

Udom was married to A-ngoon Malik. Although they later separated, A-ngoon also played a key role in supporting progressive political and cultural student movements. A large property she donated on Soi Thong Lor became the Pridi Banomyong Foundation.

Throughout his life, Udom continued to help relieve people of their suffering, be it at a personal or social level. Some people may not even realise that they were assisted by him.

This is a summarised translation of the obituary written by Sulak Sivarksa, which has been published in a funeral book that is being distributed at the funeral rite held at Wat Sommanas until today. Phra Paisan Visalo will deliver a dharma lecture at 10am. For more details, call 02-438-0353.

Adam Curle

Adam Curle died last September. He was a great inspiration to me and to many others who see spirituality as the foundation for making peace. He was a real leader. The marvellous thing about Adam was that his words were completely consistent with his attitude and behavior. He never set himself as an example to be emulated, nor did he try to push or control. Rather, Adam led by inspiration. Working with him, one found fresh energy arising naturally. This led initiative and decision, but I don't remember a single occasion when Adam in any way forced a conclusion. Rather he stimulated



a deeply creative flow — one in which everyone could participate.

After each time we had been together, on mediation visits in Sri Lanka , or later visits to the family home in East Dulwich , I always felt empowered and, I have to say, ennobled. It was as if the contact had stimulated a capacity for hope, love and joy I had somehow forgotten. I could never link it with any particular thing he had said. It seemed not to be mediated by words, but rather a more direct sharing of the heart. The concept of spiritual energy is difficult to explain, but the experience was quite real, and was at the core of his work as a peace-maker.

Everyone knew him as Adam, but this was a nick-name, deriving from L'Isle-Adam, a town north of Paris , where he was born on 4th July 1916. His mother, Cordelia Fisher, had lost three brothers in World War I, and gave their three names to her son. So, Adam's birth certificate reads 'Charles Thomas William Curle'. His father, Richard, was a writer (and friend of the English novelists Joseph Conrad and John Galsworthy), but was seldom at home and the couple divorced while Adam was still young. I have always liked the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, and it was a surprise to learn from Adam that the composer was his uncle.

Adam's concern about peace perhaps dates back to early childhood. At any rate, Cordelia made the infant Adam aware of the horrendous suffering of war, on at least one occasion taking him to see the recent battlefields in France .

Barbara Mitchels records how adults in the villages where the Curles lived in both France and England , were at times impatient with the sensitive, very expressive boy in their midst — telling him to 'shut up you stupid boy' when he sang and danced exuberantly, or opining that, 'the boy deserves a good whipping' when he resisted a fox-hunting initiation ceremony. Early on, Adam discovered that his inner intuition and sensitivity were not always shared by other people. A related characteristic of Adam's later writing was that he would put things in his own terms, often putting meaning before convention.

An early insight was triggered when Adam wanted a toy gun. Cordelia naturally resisted the request and desire for the toy built up until the little Adam thought that, if only he could possess the gun, he would always be happy. Cordelia finally gave in and there were some hours of excited bliss. However, it was short-lived. Something upset him just the next day and he saw clearly — in the way that children can intuit the very heart of things — that happiness does not come from material things at all, but is internal.

Even at an early age, the young Adam used spirituality and the inner life to help him engage with outer problems. Sent as a day boy to a private school, he was appalled at the institutionalised violence. He wrote that he survived by, playing the flute (mainly Bach), writing poems and reading the mystics.,

Adam studied history and anthropology at Oxford university. He reflected that he was, '...never much good at passing examinations in regular subjects ... but better at putting aspects of them together to give a new twist ...' In 1939, Adam married Pamela Hobson, with whom he had two daughters, Christina and Anna. The couple divorced some years later.

His interest in anthropology was furthered by his war experience. From 1940 to 1946, Adam served in the British forces, becoming chief research officer in a Civil Resettlement Unit charged with helping rehabilitate former prisoners of war. This brought him into intimate contact with the long-term mental suffering caused by war. Then, when the war ended, Adam worked at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, helping former soldiers whose wartime experiences had left them emotionally disturbed.

He became increasingly interested in psychology and sociology, and in 1950 was offered the first lectureship in the then innovative subject of Social Psychology at Oxford University. He became Professor of Education and Psychology at Exeter University two years later.

Adam thought that conventional education is often an instrument for inculcating self-limitation and enslavement. We are born with the potential for wisdom, generosity and compassion, but learn the patterns that lead to injustice and war. However, true education gives us insight into our true nature, and liberates a spiritual creativity that can transform our lives, individually and socially. The key thing in overcoming un-peaceful relationships is to become aware of the oppressive patterns and begin to change them.

Thus, education should prepare us to know ourselves, to live deeply and creatively, to relate together in ways that promote each other's happiness and well-being. As well as rethinking content, Adam experimented with new ways of teaching, giving emphasis to self-discovery on the part of the student.

In 1956, Adam was invited to serve as an advisor on education policy to the Government of Pakistan, then in 1959 he took up a professorship at the University of Ghana . He traveled widely in Asia, Africa and the Middle East during these years. It was on one of these trips that he met Anne Edie who was working in community health in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). They married in 1958. Adam and Anne both joined the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) while in Ghana . Later they had a daughter, Deborah.

From 1961 to 1973 Adam was Director of the Harvard Centre for Studies in Education and Development. The Centre already had a tradition of experi-

mental projects overseas, including Central America, Nigeria and Tunisia . In addition, he kept links with Pakistan, advised the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, and mediated in the Nigerian Civil War. Here, his efforts to help each side empathize with the other seem to have contributed to deliberate leniency on the part of the winning side after the war ended. The bloodbath that many had expected was avoided. He mediated, again, in the war between India and Pakistan.

In 1974, Adam was invited to set up a department of peace studies at Bradford University in the UK. By this time he saw issues of the quality of interpersonal relationship, social justice, development, and international relations as being on a continuum. Overt conflict and war were the visible tips of the ice-berg, supported by a broad range of unjust human situation that he called, 'unpeaceful relationships'. In his inaugural lecture, 'The Scope and Dilemmas of Peace Studies', Adam listed some of them: 'Many of the conditions associated with war continue throughout large areas of the world: people are driven from their homes, unjustly imprisoned, separated from their families, flung into detention camps, virtually enslaved, exploited by landlords, victimized by the police, oppressed by the government, starved and malnourished because of official neglect or official policies; they are humiliated and have their perceptions distorted by propaganda; many in fact die because of these conditions. Circumstances such as these inflict such damage on human life, health, capacity for creative and happy existence and work and for the development of potential, that I find it impossible to refer to them as peaceful: they inflict upon human beings, though in a less direct and concentrated form, many of the same destructive horrors as does war.' It is these, and other, unpeaceful relationships that the new discipline of Peace Studies should address, first by identifying un-peaceful elements and then working out ways of transforming them: '... the next function is to use this information in order to devise means of changing unpeaceful into peaceful relationships.'

In another article he reflected: "We need to know more about the conditions - economic, political, and social — in which relationships might tend to be more or less peaceful. Can, for example, a world order based on essentially selfish and rapacious nation states ever be secure? What forms of economy are compatible with social justice and genuine equality of opportunity?'

Adam was one of the founders of the new discipline of Peace Studies, and he did his best to make sure it sustained an activist, rather than purely academic, orientation. Establishing peaceful relationships within his own department at Bradford proved a struggle. In various ways (like negotiating course-syllabi with students, setting up a General Assembly in which staff and students could shape departmental policy together) Adam tried to establish peaceful relationships within the department. However, tensions around expectations of shared control with staff and students, and with University authorities over different understandings of how a university department should function, led to Adam's resignation from the post in 1978.

After leaving Bradford, Adam continued to work as a peacemaker, often as part of Quaker initiatives. He worked with me on one such in Sri Lanka while I was the representative for Quaker Peace and Service there. Thinking of that time brings me back to my opening paragraphs. While being very realistic as to how human beings are in conflict, Adam effused good will and real care. People could feel the quality of his heart and were willing to share their fears and hopes.

He was not a wheeler-dealer type of meditator at all. He believed that, if the will was there, then solutions would come. His own special contribution was to elicit the subtle changes in heart and attitude which would let peaceful change take place.

I wrote earlier that Adam trusted intuition. Once, on the journey from airport to Colombo, Adam sensed, and felt overwhelmed by, the suffering that was taking place: 'Arriving by air in Sri Lanka ... at the height of the slaughter, I was at once overwhelmed by a shroud of terror and despair. I saw no terrible sights ... learned no new facts. But the screams of the tortured rang in my ears and I suffered the dread and panic of the fugitives. For some days, feeling a strange and indefinable sickness, I could hardly sleep or eat. I shared in a larger consciousness, a great collective hopelessness and fear.'One can sense here, the extent of Adam's sensitivity and how he allowed it to connect with the human reality in a profound, very compassionate, way.

On another occasion, Adam's trust in psychic intuition led to a surprising turn of events. He and Anne had sensed that one of the people we were meeting (the President actually) would be in danger on a particular day — so Adam accompanied the man, from breakfast, through all his official appointments, on that

day.

Then, some months later, when a young man we knew disappeared, Adam was deeply affected by it. He cared sincerely about the people he met, and he had a quality of energy and enthusiasm that drew the best from those fortunate enough to be helped by him.

From the early 1990s, Adam devoted much energy to work in the Balkans. He inspired the creation of the Osijek Peace Centre in Croatia which he visited as long and frequently as health would permit. He visited Thailand where he worked with NGOs and addressed an audience including Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

In 1999 Adam published one of his most powerful works, probably the one of most relevance to Buddhists — *'To Tame the Hydra'*. Using at times mythical language he identifies how the self-centredness and ignorance of individuals feeds the collective Hydra (the many-headed monster) that manifests in a global system that oppresses us all: '... the interwoven and increasingly interacting world-wide forces of economic, political and military power: a global culture of violence.' Suffering piles on suffering and seems beyond our power to control, but actually it originates in the mental habits of our daily lives. We ourselves are actively (if ignorantly) involved in perpetuating the monster. The book goes on to explore the kind of engaged spirituality needed to transform the world. In true Buddhist spirit, his answer was, not to try to kill the Hydra, but through understanding to transform it. The task involves both mind and world.

Those who meditate or pray consistently know that there are depths of awareness that simply effuse happiness and healing energy. Adam called this, 'primal happiness', that is happiness which is just joy in awareness itself — not dependant on external circumstances. It is because we have lost this deep happiness that we mistake satisfaction of desire for happiness, and get entangled with the habits of greed, resentment and delusion. The remedy is to be aware and use the wisdom and healthy energy to engage with the Hydra. Then, when awareness and primal happiness are present in enough people, systems too will begin to change: 'The centerpiece of my strategy, therefore, for taming the Hydra and stimulating happiness, is simply... to save humanity's joie de vivre and indeed humanity itself by meeting and talking. Talking and meeting in every possible context and drawing in every possible group and individual until an irresistible force of mind disarms the Hydra within ourselves and hence our institutions. And of course in the process, bit by bit, restructures society.'

Adam was awarded the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2000.

In his last book, *The Fragile Voice of Love*, published just last year, Adam included a poem described as an abbreviated version of the wholebook for readers in a hurry. I would like to quote just a couple of verses:

'Nothing is separate,
Our loneliness is an illusion.
We share the pains and the confusions, the joys and peaceful days of all our many, very varied selves:
The totality is sacred.'

The poem concludes:

'And thus throughout our lives,
Throughout our civilizations, we have stamped
The stain of self and judgment,
Even on the ones we love the most—
Perhaps them more than any,
And they inevitably pass it on.
Thus we have armed ourselves and others
Against the enemies of ego.
How to disarm ourselves?
Again its simple, but perversely hard:
To understand what's happening
And to remain awake against
The sleep of self and custom.
Then shall the weapons of destruction fall
Unnoticed from our mental hands,
And the grace of individual lives
Merge within the glory of the All.'

In latter years he suffered from leukemia. Knowing he did not have long to live Adam offered one last act of generosity to help resolve a situation of conflict. Those present recall him saying:

'I don't think I have much time left. I would like my death to be useful.
Please think about how it could be useful. I have been concerned about those
Jewish soldiers held hostage — do you think I could be swapped for them and go in their place?'

Adam's attitude to death is clear in this poem from 1987:

'Life and Death
Why worry about death,
Nothing can really die
Except the unmourned ego.
And body change, persist and flow
Onward. Only deluded I,
Yearning for permanence, can
Disintegrate, dissolve, die
And by its vanishing reveal
Life's blazing panoply and show
That death's a lie.'

Farewell Adam. You have lived deeply, joyfully and touched the lives of many. We remember you with love and gratitude.

John McConnell,
Haworth 12/12/2006

Dear Sulak,

Just received your typed letter of December 18th. Great to hear that you are well. I'm sorry to hear nothing is moving ahead on your court case. We have something in Canada called libel chill. The idea behind it is that people with lots of money who don't want writers criticizing them, sue them for libel on the flimsiest of charges. They then drag out the case for years without ever allowing it to get to court so that it costs the writer/publisher quite a bit of money each year with the result that they usually give in before it goes to court and apologize. At the very least they stop criticizing the individuals.

It's great to hear that you will be hosting the GNH conference, on the 22-28 November of this year. Of course I am a great admirer of Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley, and have spent quite a bit of time with him over the last few years in both Canada and Bhutan. Karma Ura is a very interesting person as well. I would be very interested in being invited to the conference. At this point I'm free in that period. I'll wait to hear from Wallapa and Hans. Certainly I very much enjoyed giving the closing speech at the Canadian GNH conference and it would be interesting to speak at this new conference, and of course to hear what others have to say. You are quite right to raise the question of funds. It's quite a way and you will have to get someone to back the conference in order to make it financial feasible for people to come.

I'm delighted to have the details on the possibility of the translation of *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World* into Thai. Wallapa and Hans should get in touch with me so that this can be handled properly. It certainly would be a very relevant book for Thailand at this time.

Very best wishes to you for the New Year and to your wife from both Adrienne and myself.

I look forward to seeing you sometime during the year.

Yours,
John Ralston Saul

Remembering the "Battle of Yadana"

I was pleased to learn that Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa had been acquitted of criminal charges; namely those arising from his arrest at the Yadana gas pipeline in the Huay Kha Keng forest in March 1998. Eight and a half years of litigation that may not be over yet if the Petroleum Authority of Thailand (P.T.T) wins the right to appeal the decision. Petroleum, how that has become the dirtiest word in the modern world, the stuff of modern piracy and plunder. A brief handwritten note from far off Siam brought the news to my new home in France and brought memories of that time, when, dressed as a native Thai, I stood with Ajahn Sulak, and a dozen or so Thai student activists 'shoulder to shoulder' as the expression goes. At the time I was immersed in radical activism due to staying at the Wongsanit Ashram, where the liberal rebel in me was deeply attracted to the Buddhist intellectuals who lived and worked there. Hauled from in front of the pipeline route where we had been blocking construction, promptly arrested, I nevertheless still consider it one of my finer moments in life. I think most of us have precious few opportunities to stand up and be counted in such a way. In the eight years that have passed, Ajahn Sulak has been dragged through an expensive, drawn out game played in the criminal and constitutional courts of Bangkok. During that time, the Buddhist law of impermanence will have changed all the protagonists circumstances and ways of thinking, we are all older and hopefully wiser. What strikes me most profoundly is the growing scientific clamour concerning climate change, and the acceptance in those circles that our world cannot continue to be abused in the manner that it has indefinitely. It was an important issue at the time, the spectacular ecology of the living forest, coupled with the oppression and abuse of the Karen and other ethnic minorities along the pipeline's route. In retrospect, and with a seriousness probably lacking in my youth, the stakes could not have been higher.

At the time, I thought that the protest was bound to fail, protests of this kind invariably end up with police or army sent in, and very often with the demonstrating public receiving injury or worse. It is a testament to Ajahn Sulak's standing in Thai society, and the restraint shown by the officers of Chuan

Leekpai's government, that a peaceful protest was not viciously repressed as it could easily have been. I keenly remember the bravery of the young Thai students, brave in overcoming the fear of violence, or the ignominy of being criminalized in society. I remember Ajahn Sulak, whom I know well and admire profoundly, standing up to the bigwigs and army types with their gangs of hired, often menacing thugs, with an authority that most men could never possess. I also remember the incredible beauty of the jungle, a place bursting with life and an energy that is palpable. Lastly, I remember most vividly, those Karen tribesmen who built Ajahn Sulak a little hut from bamboo. The forset dwelling men bowed low, almost prostrate, when he arrived to greet out ragged band in the jungle. As a westerner, I was surprised by this show of humbleness. I come from a world increasingly lacking in civil manners, let alone deeply felt respect for a Buddhist statesman. This gratitude was by way of appreciating the fact that Ajahn Sulak was choosing to fight this battle. As un-winnable a cause as it was, it made all the difference to the tribal groups whose home it was. I have been into the hillside villages and experienced their hospitality, have participated in the rice harvest and sat around a fire at night listening to folklore and song. It is true to say that I am entirely partisan when it comes to the mistreatment of my fellow human beings.

For the tribal groups of Burma and Siam it was not a matter of abstract principle. Apart from the environmental damage caused by the razing of pristine forests and the burning of fossil fuels into the atmosphere (something for which we all share collective guilt), the pipeline was also a lucrative expedient for the Burmese regime to slaughter, terrorise and eventually control the marginalized hillside tribes that by accident of birth occupied the Burma/Siam forests. I am greatly pleased that, although via a technicality, Sulak has won a moral victory in this instance. It is more disturbing to learn that yet again he is charged with Lese Majeste, and that the spectre of army politics once again hangs over Siam. Now attention has turned to the southern provinces and civil unrest, it is my most sincere hope that those who power their way into government do not use it reprehensibly. Ajahn Sulak some time ago wrote a book called "Loyalty Demands Dissent". I like to think that it means, in other words, 'good advice from my friends can save me unnecessary suffering.' I hope that wonderful works reported in the Seed of Peace publication continue without interference from government, army or otherwise.

Danny Campbell 12-2006.

Dear Ajahn Sulak.

I will always remember his kindness in opening my first exhibition of the Twelve Links of Dependant Origination of suffering at the Alliance Francaise in Bangkok, 6 months after the May riots in 1993. He also took part in the panel discussion on Socially Engaged Buddhism.

I was privileged to be at the INEB Peace conference with him in Sarvodaya and other gatherings. He gave me invaluable teachings on "watching the Feelings" which I have incorporated into my practise and the Gallery tour. He was truly a wise, compassionate Noble Guide and Friend and I cherish these remembrances and try to live up to them.

I sincerely hope his passing was free from suffering.

Yours in the Dhamma
Venetia Walkey (Pa Maem)
Coordinator of the Dhamma Park Foundation
Director the Dhamma Park Gallery.
Pasang Noi.
Lumphun 51000/

Coup by invitation
Twenty Thai thinkers curse the coup and question the future

The formula of "Democracy with the King as Head of State" (DKHS, sometimes known as' 'Democracy under Constitutional Monarchy') was adopted during the Sarit Thanarat military dictatorship in 1959. After the bloody political crisis of October, 1976, it was promoted as a kind of national ideology. In last September's coup, it was adopted as a badge by the generals, but quickly dropped on the grounds that it seemed to implicate the monarchy. The introduction to this intense and complex book poses several questions. How could people invite "feudal warriors" to stage another coup in the name of democracy? How could intellectuals give it support? How could the old bureaucratic polity make a comeback? How could military uniforms become chic? How could the institution of monarchy, supposed to be above politics, become "a tool of the coup-makers"?

Fah Diew Kan (same sky) is a radical monthly magazine launched by a young editorial team four years ago. It publishes weighty academic analyses and political polemics leavened by elegant layout and witty graphics. In this special edition, the editor, Thanapol Eawsakul, has collected articles, interviews, speeches and translations by 20 principal writers who all opposed Thaksin, but agree on three points: September 19 was a coup, whatever the generals claim (as the cover wittily emphasizes); it involved the monarchical institution, as shown by the roles of privy councillors both before and after, and the royal appointment of the head



of the Council for National Security; it cannot be justified, however bad Thaksin was.

The DKHS formula was an attempt to move beyond the combative politics of the 1970s. It summed up the idea that Thailand ought to be run by a parliamentary democracy rather than military dictatorship, but the King should also have a role as titular head, focus of unity, and perhaps more. The book argues that the coup has exposed the uncertainty over how democracy and monarchy coexist in the DKHS formula.

Thanapol presents a detailed narrative of how the coup was generated. Sondhi Limthongkul and the People's Alliance for Democracy set themselves up as the "voice of the people", and shouted that they were saving the nation and fighting for the King. They manufactured a constitutional crisis by arguing that there was a war going on between the prime minister and the King in which people had to take sides. They organised demos, but in the end these failed to escalate into a mass movement. They called for use of Clause 7 (of the 1997 constitution) to overthrow Thaksin but the King said that this would be inappropriate. When these other routes failed, they issued an invitation to the military to carry out a coup, and the military accepted the invitation.

Suthachai Yimprasert puts this narrative in a wider context. 2006 was just the latest in a long series of coups which have all been much the same. The main reason they happen is because the ruling class of Thailand does not respect democratic government and popular rights. The bureaucracy and much of the middle class turn to the army and the monarchy whenever they feel politically insecure.

Thongchai Winichakul digs deeper. Up to 1973, Thailand's politics were a struggle by democrats to overcome military despotism. But since 1973, the game has changed. The status elite wants a political system which looks like a democracy but which preserves their special position, power and privileges. They try to achieve this through constitutions which create parliaments while still enshrining elite powers. They hope to legitimise such systems by claiming the existence of a "Thai democracy" which is a bit different from the usual type. And in the end, they resort to force to protect themselves.

Within the framework of DKHS, there is a lot of jostling between the "Three Ms"—money politics, monarchy and mass. Over time money and mass are getting stronger, and that makes the old elite look to monarchy more and more as a counter-balance. But this is where, in Thongchai's opinion, the whole framework of DKHS runs into crisis. In the heat of last year's confrontation, the head of the Privy Council, Prem Tinsulanonda, described the prime minister as a "jockey", who could be changed at any time. By implica-

tion, the horse is the whole government including the bureaucracy, courts and armed forces, and its owner is the King. Prem's statement directly denied the fundamental principle of democracy, the sovereignty of the people. With this statement, the DKHS formula lost the "D".

Why did so many thoughtful people support this coup, especially those who think of themselves as democrats? Most of all, why did Thirayuth Boonmee, a key leader of the 1973 student movement which made the first, vital dent in military despotism, give open and warm support to this coup?

Sirote Klampaibun picks apart Thirayuth's argument that there is a Thai form of democracy that is somehow better than the Western type. Sirote shows that Thirayuth is undermining the role of elections and elected politicians and dredging up the old idea of a philosopher king, a form of government in which "the rulers are good, ethical, honest, righteous people who think only of the justice and good living of the people". Sirote argues that Thirayuth has become the ideologue of traditional elitism.

Others in this book criticise the supporters of the coup for trying to be too pragmatic. Chaiwat Satha-anand goes back to Aristotle to argue that there is an ethical basis for opposing illegitimate methods for engineering political change, whatever you think of the ethics of whoever is being overthrown.

Kasian Tejapira notes that the Octobrists of the 1970s have split into two groups. One group joined with Thaksin, planned his populist policies and ignored his authoritarianism and corruption. This group has prioritised social justice over democratic rights. The other group condemned Thaksin for destroying democracy, and hopes that social justice will be achieved through community self-help. By supporting Thaksin so overwhelmingly, the mass has shown that it prefers capitalist populism over communal self-help, but some intellectuals find this hard to live with.

These disagreements are important, not because they show Thai intellectuals in disarray (intellectuals are always in disarray), but because they signal an important change in the terms of debate. When Thaksin was around, it was easy to criticise him without thinking too much. Now that Thaksin's authoritarianism has been replaced through an unconstitutional process by another authoritarianism which has less legitimacy and less competence, new questions have been raised.

The first of these is, What will happen next? Supalak Ganjanakhundee predicts a return to the "semi-democracy" that flourished under General Prem in the 1980s. "Political parties will be downgraded to the status of beauty queens, paraded before the people at elections for the sake of form alone." The main losers will be the lower classes. People's movements like the Assembly of the Poor will be ignored or crushed. Kasian Tejapira agrees that the coup has led Thailand into a tunnel with no light at the other end. The new constitution will be bad because "whatever class issues a law, the law serves that class".

The bigger question is, How can monarchy and democracy coexist for the long term without regular and damaging interruptions? To help answer this question, Sulak Sivaraksa surveys monarchies in other democratic countries. He concludes that there are four conditions which determine why they survive and prosper: They "have nothing to do with the generals"; their finances are transparent; they are seen as working for the people rather than for themselves; and they truly support a democratic form of government. Nidhi Eoseewong makes a similar argument. "In the long run, the crucial point is the King's popularity among his people. As long as he has this, and it must be greater than for anyone else, elected or not, then things will be the same as now. Whenever this condition ends, everything will probably change."

Finally, What hope is there for Thailand's democracy? Banjerd Singkaneti argues that this disastrous coup should ultimately make people appreciate the value of democracy more. Societies do have internal conflicts, and democracy is a system for resolving conflicts through debate and negotiation. This is better than pretending that such conflicts are wrong, and imagining they can be made to disappear. Democracy has a certain set of rules. Being democratic means respecting these rules, not breaking them or changing them at every opportunity. It needs some patience, but ultimately it delivers.

There are several other articles in the book, and none are duds. The disagreement among the contributors, and between them and other thinkers, should not be cause for mockery. This book shows a will to argue, to ask big questions, to challenge, to change, and to admit mistakes - which gives some grounds for optimism about Thailand's democracy in dark times. This is a remarkable, gutsy, important book.

Chris Baker
Saturday March 10 ***Bangkok Post***

Living with the Devil
by Stephen Batchelor
Now available in Thai

The Devil comes in myriad shapes and forms: The Tripitaka contains numerous accounts about the Evil One, aka Mara, disguising himself variously as an elephant king, a serpent, a Brahmin priest and a maiden. Sometimes the Devil appears as a farmer or an old man with a hunched back. Sometimes, he even conjures up earthquakes. All these acts are done with an aim of getting his "targets"—Buddha, monks (both male and female) and lay people—to feel fear, doubt, despondency, frustration and, perhaps, to abandon their efforts to propagate *dharma* (Buddha's teachings) and thus liberate people from the cycle of *samsara*.

Living with the Devil: A Meditation on Good and Evil shows how Mara dwells both outside and inside our hearts. Diverse are his manifestations—as clinging and attachment, yearning for security and certainty, fear, doubts, self-forgetfulness and wickedness. All these have one thing in common: They oppress or hinder our capacity to realise truth and freedom.

But if that's all there is to Mara how was it that Buddha, who had realized the utmost freedom, continued to be bothered by him? Hadn't the Awakened One freed himself completely from the Devil's clutches? Here, Stephen Batchelor offers one possible explanation: Buddha was still a human being, and Mara was nothing else than "Gautama's own conflicted humanity".

For Buddhists who worship the Teacher as if he were almost superhuman, this interpretation may be hard to swallow. But we cannot deny the existence of stories about Buddha's doubts. For example, shortly after he attained enlightenment, Buddha noted that he was hesitant to teach dharma to others, seeing it as too difficult for most people to grasp. On another occasion, he harboured doubts about being able to reign over a temporal kingdom without causing harm to himself and others. (Certainly, the Devil had pleaded with him to assume the throne.) These incidents show that the state of Buddhahood did not mean freedom from doubt. Therefore, Buddha could not escape from Mara. The latter may have failed to stop Buddha's quest for enlightenment, but he continued tirelessly to interfere in Buddha's attempts to free the masses from their suffering.

Eventually, the Devil succeeded in putting a check on the Teacher. Old age and sickness prompted Buddha to contemplate the limitations of his life. And death ended all his work. Old age, sickness and death—aren't they just other names for Mara? He followed Buddha everywhere. No matter how the Buddha tried to put off or negotiate (with Mara, he was unable to extend his earthly life for ever.) Finally, the Awakened One was assured that the Dharma-Vinaya (Buddhism) he had founded was firm and solid, and that the Sangha community was strong, and so he ceased all his work and entered nirvana.

If we accept that "conflicts"—which include old age, sickness and death—are experienced by every human being, then Batchelor is not mistaken when he argues that similar contradictions reside in Buddha, and that both Buddha and Mara "walk hand in hand together".

However, the close relationships between Buddha and the Devil mean far more than that. If "Mara" refers to a state of mental oppressiveness—be it in the form of craving, fear, lethargy: or depression—it is at the same time the cause and conditions of the birth of Buddha. Buddha used to say that without suffering he would not have appeared in this world. As he studied the nature and causes of suffering, he discovered the path to end it, and eventually attained enlightenment by himself.

Both physical and mental oppressiveness may make us suffer. But if we keep our mind stable and aware, and look at with mindfulness, we will see its transient, impermanent nature. We suffer because we hold on to it as "me and mine". Thus arises the "I" who suffers. When we realise this truth, we can let it go. Liberation from suffering will ensue. In the suffering lies the path to end it. In other words, Mara and Buddha have always been together. The same key is used both to close and open the door. It is the same switch that turns the light on and off. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu often said that "in samsara is nirvana".

Suffering, or the state of oppressiveness and conflicts, is the first of the Four Noble Truths. Our "duty" as prescribed by Buddha is to understand suffering; it is not to be abandoned, but to be understood. (The causes of suffering are what have to be ended.) Understanding suffering through and through will lead to awakening. To live with and be aware of suffering is to liberate ourselves from it. To live with and be aware of Mara is to not let Mara overpower us.

However, the Devil is ex-

tremely clever and it's not easy to keep up with him. In the guise of vice, Mara is not that difficult to discern. More fearsome, however, is when he appears in the cloak of virtue. As soon as we start clinging to some [notion of] goodness, we are instantly enslaved by Mara. We become self- indulgent and may hurt others under the pretext of doing good. Countless wars have been declared in the name of God, religion or ideology. Moreover, to cling to the idea of goodness is to become trapped in the cycle of samsara. Unable to let go of self, we are unable to attain enlightenment. Nor does this apply only to clinging to goodness. Even the noble thought of nirvana, as soon as we hold on to it, closes our access to the path towards liberation.

Batchelor also introduces us to another kind of Mara, one not mentioned by either Buddha or the Tripitaka: "Limited and oppressive structure of violence", a term which includes "Army of governments, religion, superpowers, and market forces" plus oppressive and centralised religious institutions and systems. Such structures hinder the culture of awakening that should guide the masses towards ultimate truth and freedom.

Unfortunately, we may have to live with this kind of Mara for a long time to come. But to let him block human potential is not the Buddhist way. To be aware of the presence of this Mara may not be enough, though. We must take steps to induce change in order to help people liberate themselves as well. Batchelor does not give any specific recommendations—readers are given the opportunity to do some exploring themselves.

Living with the Devil portrays the many facets of and depths of meaning to Mara. Readers should try to distinguish between the different meanings; otherwise some misunderstanding, or even frustration, may occur, especially when the writer talks about Mara "walking hand in hand" with Buddha. Ultimately, Batchelor makes the point that the ultimate Devil is our own perception of beings as separate and independent from one another, that each entity is permanent, which is completely against the law of transience and non-self. Even the thought of "I" is dependent on many things, some of which date back 15,000 million years! There is no need to look back so far, though. Without "you" and "others", there will be no "me".

Shadows come out of sunlight. The beautiful lotus grows out of mud. Space exists to provide room for things. Good and evil, Mara and Buddha, may seem like opposites, but they are interdependent; they cannot be separated. To understand that nothing is fixed or independent, including "me", will liberate us from attachment. The duty of Mara is to prevent us from seeing the truth. For, as soon as we can see through [his machinations], we will be freed from his power.

This book was intended more as a philosophical treatise than a religious tome. Since the readers Batchelor primarily has in mind are Westerners with a propensity for rationalisation and secularism, *Living with the Devil* is often full of thought-provoking passages. Sometimes, his style of writing comes across almost like an invitation to engage in debate. But this is done just to stimulate ideas, to get beyond old sets of beliefs. Many Thai readers may not be familiar with such an approach, though, and may not even understand what the author is trying to get at or where he is heading.

Translator Sodsai Khantiworaphong has done a singularly commendable job in rendering his text into beautiful but succinct Thai. Still, *Living with the Devil* is not the type of book to be read only once; it must be re-read several times in order to get the whole gist. But even if not everything is clear, several passages in the book are likely to spur us to deep contemplation. And perhaps, in the process, we will develop the wisdom to repel Mara—for we will become aware of the devious snares he sets—and in the nick of time, too.

All in the Cause of Duty
By Nicholas Bennett

At 17 Nicolas Bennett left the UK 'without money to walk, canoe and hitch from the Ghanian coast to Timbuktu'. Thus opens this colourful and unorthodox story of the life of an adventurer, benefactor, development expert, human rights activist and nonviolence advocate.

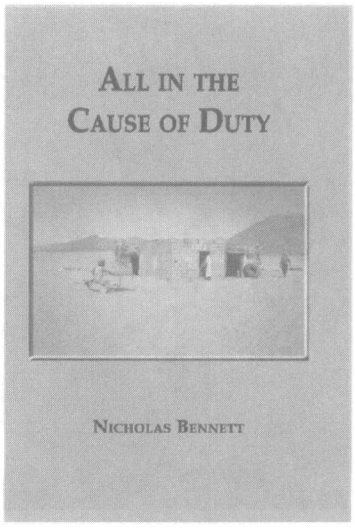
His career as an international educational development worker in countries like Thailand, Nepal and various African states intertwined with his generosity and sharp insights made him friends and adversaries

wherever he went. Caught up in military coups and witnessing revolutions his interactions with both corrupt and fine politicians and leaders make moving reading. Sharing an office with Idi Amin for several weeks and his wife entertaining an armed gunman are just tastes of the unconventional aspects of his life.

A sharp critic of some of the policies he implemented on behalf of the World Bank, UNESCO, USAID, the Ford Foundation and other such institutions his extraordinary career was simultaneously earning him respect in some circles as well as a reputation as a rebel and troublemaker in others. He openly states he never fitted into the 'Headquarters culture' of such organizations preferring to be in the field where in the days before internet and email contact communication to the powers-that-be was sporadic to say the least.

He took as a given that 'school systems create a pretence of equality of opportunity, without the reality' for example middle class children have the advantage of text books, electric light and literate parents at home.

Working from this basic premise he strived to implement radical human-centred development educational policies useful for children of those who were marginalized and disadvantaged. In an effort to reach young girls in Nepal who had no chance



of schooling he instigated the Cheli Beti (small girl) functional literacy programme. This was held early mornings before the girls went about their daily chores and was so effective that before long families were asking if the boys could go too as it was much better than the education provided at the schools.

Inspired by Buddhist Economics where the aim is to 'increase satisfaction by reducing desire' rather than the western approach that 'increases satisfaction by increasing the achievement of desires' Nicholas Bennett has a philosophy of people first and minimum basic needs rather than supporting huge systems, large scale operations and insatiable needs. This is rather at odds with the governments and large organizations he worked with and this is reflected in the rather poignant undertone and disparaging comments on some of the development strategies he was sent to implement. The book goes for breadth and highlights a huge range of injustices and complex issues. Having worked in development I recognized many of the quandaries pointed out and appreciated how concisely they were articulated leaving huge food for thought. However I occasionally hungered for more details to fully integrate the points he was making.

Nicolas Bennett honours the many friends he has made and collaborated with over the years who have devoted their lives to helping those living miserably. He is honest in acknowledging that his biggest enemy has been his ego as his confidence and clarity of articulation often won people over. A major teaching of his life was to drop preconceived notions and listen and learn from the diverse range of people from villagers to heads of state that he has come in contact with. I believe this is something most of us particularly development workers, managers, consultants and so called specialists can learn from. I would recommend this engaging book to anyone who likes to read about adventures as well as educationalists and those involved with development work.

Jane Rasbash
March 2007

The Naga's Journey
By Tew Bunnag
Orchid Press
978 974 524 102 2

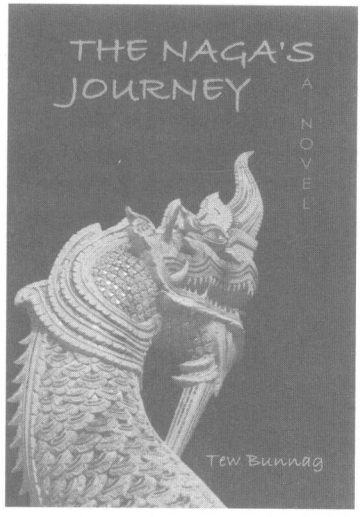
Tew Bunnag is a writer and social activist. He has written many books on meditation and the martial arts. He has also published *After the Wave*, a collection of short stories about the post Tsunami situation in the South of Thailand. He also recently published a compilation of short stories titled *Fragile Days—Tales from Bangkok. A Naga's Journey* is his first novel and after reading it you will certainly hope it's not his last.

The Naga's Journey is set in

modern day Bangkok. Reading this novel is like a privileged view into the different realms of Thai society, as they are not all so easily located on one, own. Undertaking the task of recreating the complexity of Bangkok requires a deep knowledge of the disparate levels of society but also an understanding of the intricacies of their interdependence. Bunnag demonstrates a clear vision of society as he creates a world of high society, police mafia, prostitution and slum dwelling. Beyond that, he incorporates into his story the element of ecological destruction. As our real world is awakening to the threat of ecological devastation it's significant to have this threat personified in contemporary literature.

At the beginning of the novel, the reader may feel a little lost, not overwhelmed, but skeptical of a potential cohesion. We are introduced to three individuals, whose backgrounds and personal accounts are different enough for each to be a protagonist in three separate novels. Marisa is a middle aged actress turned producer. Arun is an artist struggling with the objective of his livelihood. And Don is a young man who has just left a monastery where he lived as a monk for years. The flawless and skillful writing Bunnag is appraised for is shown by his merging of these three into a constructive relationship. As a result of this relationship, he not only emphasizes the interdependence of society, but he also manages to show the relativity of the human existence throughout all levels of the social order.

The character development of Marisa, Arun and Don is done for the most part while they are still independent components



of the novel. It is the death of a notorious public figure that begins to unravel the plot. The dead man left behind a reputation concerning his undisclosed but controversial affairs. His mysterious death has left half the city outraged and the other half relieved. Each character attends the funeral for personal reasons, and it is a bizarre incident at the funeral that thrusts the three into an impetuous relationship and a consequent close bond of friendship. As their trust with one another grows, their personal connections with the dead man are revealed. This is when we begin to understand the depths of human endurance, how all our lives are interconnected and how dramatically we can influence one another.

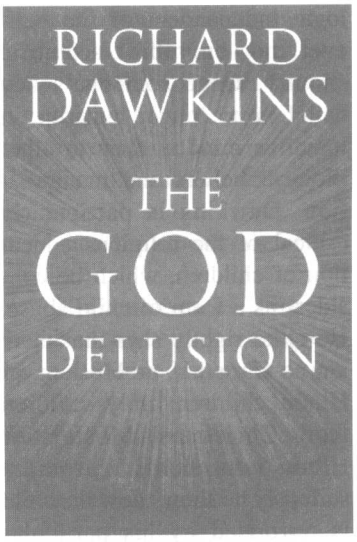
The message of the novel is strengthened by the continual presence of the Naga. Naga, depicted as a serpent of the water, symbolically represents the suffering caused when human kind becomes careless and ignorant in their relations to each other and consequently to the environment. Bangkok acts as a microcosm for our worlds' eroding moral and physical conditions. Our society has become, somewhat unknowingly, dependent on its interwoven relationships of the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the corrupt and the moral. As these relationships become increasingly exploitative, society as we know it may be on the verge of collapse. When Bangkok is threatened by a massive flood, its fragility in the face of nature (or Naga's retaliation) is exposed. The three friends' relationship is detrimentally changed by the flood, and we are left to ponder the tragedy of human relations among ourselves and to the environments we are emerged in. The permanent and intricate ways in which we are bound to one another have become tragically unbalanced. Living in a dysfunctional ecosystem, we are at risk of devastation. This novel awakens us to that threat, but more significantly it encourages a message of reconciliation because new relationships are continually manifesting; and Naga has the power both to nurture and to destroy.

Raelynn Gibson



Next INEB meeting Taiwan
1-7 September

The God Delusion
By Richard Dawkins
Bantam Press UK
ISBN 978093055489



Richard Dawkins is currently Professor for the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University, a world renowned biologist, and the author of a number of epic scientific books such as *The Selfish Gene* and *The Ancestor's Tale*. He is also a committed Atheist believing neither in the existence of God nor in any religion.

In this complex, and sometimes difficult to absorb and understand book, Dawkins takes an extremely wide voyage through European tautological arguments for the existence of God, US constitutional history, Darwinism and modern evolutionary studies, cosmology, old and new testament bible studies, genetic causes for wide scale but unjustified belief in religion, and the damage caused by 'faith' in any religion. Though British, he dwells a great deal on the US situation largely because a much larger proportion of the US population profess a belief in the existence of God than is the case in the UK and Western Europe.

Dawkins points out that top scientists in the US and the UK are much less likely to believe in a personal god than the general population. This, he claims, is largely because scientists have been trained to look for evidence and carry out experiments that can be replicated by other scientists. He reports that amongst the members of the US National Academy of Science only 7% believe in a personal god, whilst only 5% of the British Royal Society so believe. 'Pseudo scientific' creationalists and theologians come under particularly virulent attack, especially those who believe in phenomena that have long since proven to be incorrect, such as their belief that the earth is only ten thousand years old, when two billion year old fossils have already been discovered.

When Dawkins is on familiar ground, explaining Darwinism and biological evolution, and belittling and destroying the weak and illogical beliefs of the creationalists he is brilliant and cannot be faulted. He provides a concise and clear explanation of evolution, and convinces me that this is no longer a theory but an accepted description of how all living creatures developed. He argues against the sloppiness of those who explain the gaps in their knowledge that they are too lazy to study, by bringing in their belief in a supernatural power.

He should have, I believe, stopped his scientific proof that there is no need for a god to explain the wonderful and extraordinarily beautiful diversity of life on our planet there, but unfortunately he did not. Dawkins went on to try to explain the physical evolution of planet Earth, but on this his only valid argument was that if our planet was not where it is in a particular solar system, life as we know it could not have existed. Cosmologically he shows that there are likely to be billions of other planets with conditions similar to those that exist on Earth, but the only way this added to his proof of the nonexistence of a deity was that such a world have to be inordinately complex to manage all these planets and their life forms.

Dawkins notes that almost all world cultures have some religion, and some belief in a deity, or deities. He is not satisfied by those who would argue the psychological solace and cultural unification that belief structures and religions can provide but in what is little better than the creationalists, in his weakest argument Dawkins creates a new mental equivalent of the gene which he calls a meme, which in my view was entirely unnecessary.

He returns to his earlier brilliance when he shows what an awful creature the God of the three great western theist religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) appears to be when he analyses the Old Testament. The wonderful story of Noah's Ark, which so charmed me when I was a child is in fact the story of a vengeful and violent deity ready to wipe out humankind (and animalkind) and merely save breeding pairs chosen by this genocidal maniac. It seems to me that gods are created in the image of the leaders of the particular tribe or gtoup.

The New Testament though much more humane than the Old, is still constructed around the concept of sin, and is of course totally male oriented. Christians are all led to believe that they are

sinners, and still have to pay for the original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Dawkins is not prepared to let the theist religions be. He quotes Sean O'Casey, who said that 'politics has slain its thousands, but religion has slain its tens of thousands'. He shows that there is little difference between 'moderate' believers in a particular deity and religion and 'fundamentalist' believers. The huge danger, according to Dawkins, is the faith that adherents have in their particular god or religion, for faith suggests a belief that is neither based on a logic independent of the believer, nor on robust scientific enquiry. Once someone's key belief is no longer built up on logic his mind is open to other illogical beliefs and manipulation. Dawkins is particularly critical of the religious education of children, which he considers as a form of child abuse. He quite rightly says that there are no Christian, or Moslem, or Hindu children, only children from Christians, Moslem or Hindu households. Far more seriously he shows how the child is terrorised by his particular dogma's concepts of hell.

Even for those who cannot follow many of Dawkins more complicated arguments, the idea that there is an entity complex enough to manufacture the conditions for life, create billions of life forms, listen into the daily prayers of billions of people and act on some of these, and do the same in billions of other planets, seems far less likely than the rational explanation that Dawkins and other scientists have provided for the way things are in terms of evolution and cosmology.

Nicholas Bennett

Bhutan: Heaven on Earth
by Sulak Sivaraksa
Published by the Thai-Tibet Centre price Bt150

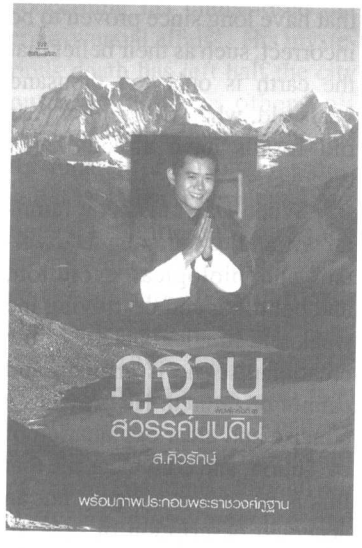
Bhutan—and Buddhism's last hope

As a travel writer, Sualak Sivaraksa remains a social activist. He offers the usual impressions of a country, and then assesses it socially and politically.

Here he recounts a week in Bhutan in September 1987 and augments his experiences with expressions of hope that it can open up to modern influences while preserving its Buddhist values.

At best the book gives him the chance to expound on his faith in Buddhism as a guiding force in human development.

Sulak made the trip — the beginning of an involvement with the Himalayan kingdom that has lasted to this day — at the invitation of a member of its royal family. He was to discuss Buddhism with monks and young people there.



He has since become a mainstay in the international seminars that Bhutan holds on its proposed Gross National Happiness (GNH) index. The second was in Bangkok two years ago; the third, next year, is also in Thailand.

It's been almost two decades since Sulak's account was first published in *Matichon* newspaper, but this third edition is still relevant in terms of traveling tips and socio-economic perspective.

Bhutan, he writes, is the last Buddhist country that could still emerge with its Buddhist values intact, a noble example not just to Asia but the world.

Now confronting the crossroads that Thailand encountered a century ago, Bhutan, he says, should avoid the mistakes made by Siam, Japan and South Korea in embracing modern times.

Except for its cover photo of the charming Bhutanese crown prince, Sulak's travelogue has little in common with other recent titles that cash in on Jigme's current popularity in Thailand.

It offers a rare glimpse into Bhutan's recent past, on a voyage into the country's geographical and spiritual landscape. Both positive and negative aspects are presented in an honest journey around the mountainous country and into bordering Tibet and India.

Sulak's unmatched knowledge of Buddhism's dual Mahayana and Theravada traditions makes the book an enriching read even if Bhutan is not your next sightseeing destination.

Few Thais, in fact, would be able to envision the majestic Himalayas against a backdrop of Buddhist cosmology, as did Sulak when his plane approached the lofty homes of the Hindu gods, like Sumeru and Everest, the abode of Indra.

Bhutan today maintains protective policies on tourism, foreign investment and the use of resources. Sulak speaks of these as he visits towns like Paro, Thimpu, Punakha and Wangdi, his information on each still largely up to date.

Of special interest is his trek by land from Bhutan to India to catch his homeward-bound place — the airport in Paro was beset by bad weather. The route he took is still devoid of foreigners, and in those days permission to use it could take six months to be issued.

The small border towns — Bhutan's Phunt Soling, India's Jaigoun and Silliguri — provided perfect settings for the knowledgeable, British-educated Sulak to reflect on colonialism's effects on the map as well as on the locals' mannerisms and attire, and the ethnic mix of the frontier.

Sulak embraces Tibetan Buddhism and strongly supports the Dali Lama. He is one of the few Thais who can speak with clarity on Buddhism as practiced in Tibet and Bhutan, and on the contradictory natures of relations between those countries.

For centuries, Bhutan has respected Tibet's culture — and refused to trust its leaders. Sulak likens their guarded relationship to that of Thailand and Burma, soured by history's wars. In both cases, the former enemies decline to learn from on another.

Sulak attributes Bhutan's success in maintaining its independence to two factors: remoteness and Buddhist non-aggression.

Much as he praises Bhutan for its development plans, though, he has no illusions and romanticizes nothing. He remains skeptical about the monarchy and the monastery's ability to overcome their limitations and help the country prosper.

He also raises doubts how the country would manage its proffered development budget without running into debt.

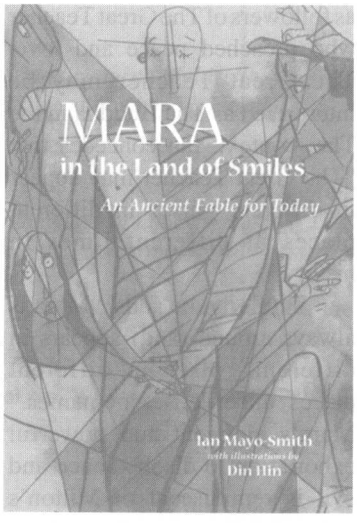
Unable to include more information about the GNH in the book, Sulak invites readers to visit www.bhutanstudies.org.bt and www.ait.ac.th/gnh2004.

Book talk by Sukanya Hantrakul — ***The Nation*** September 14, 2006

MARA: ART OR OXYMORON

Ian Mayo-Smith is in love with Thailand. He sought to express his deep love for the country through literature. As a *farang* Ian has managed to do a very innovative thing. Whilst many farang and Thai writers have translated Thai literature into English very few have consciously tried to write Thai literature in English. Although, this sounds like an oxymoron we should not simply dismiss the idea out of hand. *Mara in the Land of Smiles*, is very Thai in many ways.

The author is at pains to acknowledge that the new book grew out of his lasting friendship with Janya and Tongchai from a family of professional *likay*



performers. During his stay in Thailand Ian became profoundly influenced by Buddhism. He wrote *Mara in the Land of Smiles*, in the house of Janya and Tongchai, surrounded by Buddha images and other holy personages. *Mara in the Land of Smiles*, mirrors the influence of the Buddhist faith and Thai culture on the author.

Ian Mayo-Smith's choice of the fable or child fantasy medium as the vehicle for his message reflects a Thai influence — *The Likay*. He said, "the story (of Mara) has unrolled before me as though it was being performed as a *Likay* drama." *Likays* are a form of traditional Thai folk theatre combining music, singing, classical dance, knockout comedy, melodrama, sword fights and romance.

In *Mara in the Land of Smiles*, Ian Mayo-Smith sets out to write a mythical fable, utilizing traditional *Likay* attributes, set in a symbolic Thai landscape. The story has a familiar structure. It begins in an idyllic paradise,

called The Land of Smiles, where traditional Thai Buddhist values, of contentment and moderation apparently prevailed and people were happy and lived in harmony.

But danger was lurking. The inhabitants, like Adam and Eve in Biblical Paradise, are blissfully unaware that their happiness has annoyed Mara, The Lord of Delusion. Mara embodies the predatory values of greed and selfishness in sharp contrast to Buddhism's core values of moderation, peace and balance.

One of the highlights of the book are the songs which preface every chapter. Many of the songs are so disarmingly seductive. The use of poems or songs as a dramatic technique to introduce a character or set the tone for a new scene can be directly traced to the *Likay*.

Furthermore, *Likay* techniques are used effectively to bridge the space between fable and reality and speak to the burning issues of contemporary Thai society. *Meobah(Wildcat)'s* seductive song speaks to the innermost fantasies of every beer-bar girl in Thailand's robust decadent commercial sex industry.

Marshal Jorakei (the Crocodile General)'s song celebrating power and order over peace and democracy, evokes the politically predatory nature of the Thai military reflected in a turbulent modern political history punctuated by 31 coup d'etats — the last of which occurred on September 19th 2006.

In the novel, *Mara* seeks to corrupt the innocence and virtue of the inhabitants of The Land of Smiles. Mara sends his disciples to sow hatred and mistrust among the inhabitants. Soon fear, jealousy, hatred, greed, delusion and decadence had replaced happiness and peace in the once idyllic Land of Smiles. The Land of Smiles was ripe to crumble under Mara's moral siege.

But a good drama cannot just end there. The *Likay* always provides for a dramatic rebound after putting the audience through fearful suspense. In the depths of despair hope flickers. Somehow, four persons still remained uncorrupted and stood in the way of Mara's complete victory. The King of the Land, an old monk, a poor peasant and a wealthy merchant refused to succumb and organized to resist and turn the tide of Mara's baneful influence.

Setting up the king as the leader of the moral regeneration movement reflects a *Likay* convention (as a story of kings and demons) as well as, the faith of the overwhelming majority of ordinary Thais, in the current King Bhumibhol's moral integrity and probity.

The four set themselves up as followers of The Great Teacher who preached peace and love. The Great Teacher may be interpreted as The Buddha in the Thai context. Ian concedes that "The Great Teacher may appear in different guises in different places at different times in history."

Similarly, he adds, "Mara is always around (and) appears in different guises in different places under different names." Mara's eloquent and powerful exhortation to disobedience and evil is reminiscent of Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*. Like Milton in *Paradise Lost* one can't help feeling that Ian has packed more punch and eloquence into Mara's lines than the followers of The Great Teacher.

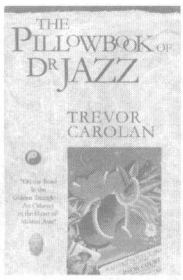
After many vicissitudes, the epic struggle between Mara and the followers of the Great Teacher culminated in a final battle where King Surya defeated Mara's supporters. The story has a happy ending, in conformity to traditional *Likay* convention, where the King not only magnanimously forgives Mara's repentant disciple Meobah but also marries her.

Bravo! Ian has given us a charming beautifully narrated bedtime story. Clearly, he also wants the book to be something more than just a bedtime story.

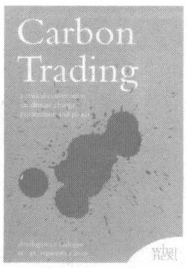
"Perhaps," he suggests, "some of the troubles in the mythical *Land of Smiles*, where the story takes place have their parallels in Thailand today." *Mara in the Land of Smiles*, speaks to the crisis of Buddhist values in modern Thailand. The vulnerability of Buddhist values is underscored by the eloquently seductive arguments put forth by Mara to justify a selfish moral standpoint. The helplessness of the Sangha in the wake of the erosion of Buddhist values has prompted the renowned Buddhist reformer Sulak Sivaraksa to cry out "Thai Buddhism is dead!"

Jeffery Sng
Date: 4/9/07

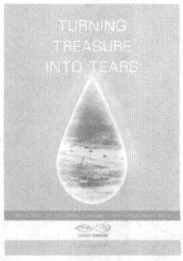
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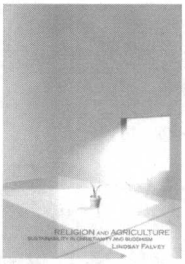
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By Trevor Carolan
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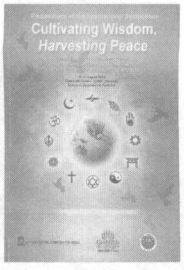
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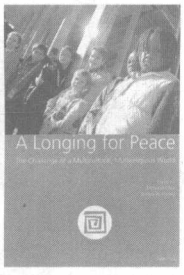
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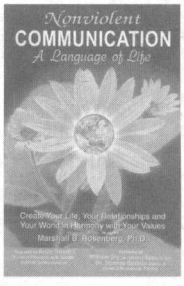
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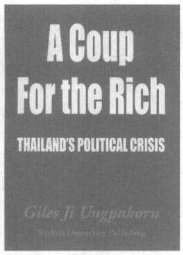
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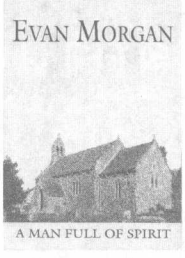
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เป็นครั้งแรกในประเทศไทยอย่างเป็นทางการของท่านติช นัท ฮันห์
และคณะภิกษุ ภิกษุณีแห่งหมู่บ้านพลัม ประเทศฝรั่งเศสกว่า 80 รูป

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