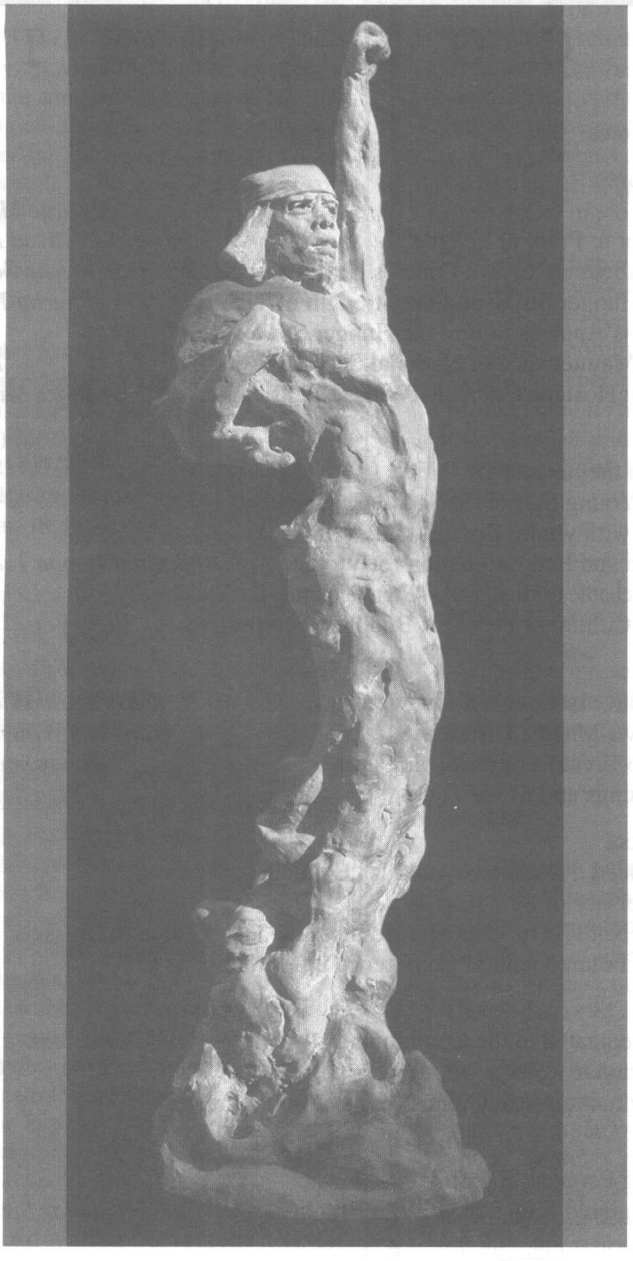
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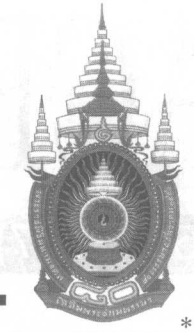
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3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness

22-28
November 2007,
Nongkhai
and Bangkok,
Siam

In Memoriam
Thanpuying Phoonsuk Banomyong



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* Emblem of HM the King's 80th birthday anniversary — 5th December 2007

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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PERSONALITIES

Upasaka Dhammadasa Panich

A younger brother of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, whose was centenary was on March 14, 2007. He helped his elder brother in every way, especially in establishing the Dhamma Dana Foundation, which backed the Garden of Liberation from the beginning, in propagating the teaching of the Buddha appropriately for the modern world. He was so unasuming and selfless, but full of wisdom and generosity.

Dr. Sem Pringpuangkaew

A patron of the Spirit in Education Movement, whose syncronym represents his name (SEM) and our Foundation organized the Sem Pringpuangkaew Lecture annually for 11 years now, not only to honor him but to let the Thai public get to know alternative ways of thinking in the world. He completed his 8th cycle birthday anniversary (96 years old) on May 31. May he live much longer to be our guide spiritually and morally for most NGO movements in Siam and beyond.

Robert Aitken

Over 120 friends, family and maha-sangha from throughout Hawaii and beyond gathered on June 24, 2007, for the festive ceremony commemorating Aitken Rōshi's 90th birthday on June 19. Especially large contingents of Rōshi's friends and former students from the islands of Maui and Hawaii, joined the local sangha and many of Rōshi's friends from the Honolulu community for a morning of zazen, sutras, and a Dharma assembly.

Rooshi's teishōo was new and fresh, yet entirely and familiarly his, reminding many students of sesshin on Maui, at Koko An, and at Pālolo in years past. Following the teishō, Rōshi responded to questions from the floor, giving rise to some lively exchanges and laughter.

Those present included some new sangha babies and children, including Rōshi's 16 months old grand-daughter, and more than one former sangha kid are now all grown up. All were entertained at the reception not only by the babies and seeing so many friends from years ago, but also by talented local sangha members.

INEB's new patron

The Venerable Ajahn Maha Somchai Kusalacitto was born into a farming family in the far north of Siam and was ordained as a monk at age twenty. After receiving a B.A. in Buddhist studies in the country and a Ph.D in Indian philosophy at the University of Madras, he was appointed dean at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in Bangkok, where he later held the post of deputy rector for foreign affairs and lectured on Buddhist topics and comparative religion. He continues to publish scholarly works on Buddhism and serves as assistant abbot at the Chandaram Buddhist monastery, while also broadcasting on Thai radio and television and writing for newspapers and magazines on Buddhist topics. He is cofounder of an international society for Buddhists engaged in social issues, of a group advocating an alternative educational system in Siam, and of an association of Thai monks dedicated to preserving the forest monastic tradition. In the year 2000, the venerable took part in a dialogue with H.H. the Dalai Lama at Dharamsala, which has now appeared in ***Destructive Emotions and How to Overcome Them*** edited by Daniel Goleman (Bloomsbury) London 2003.

Editorial Notes

Our readers may recall that the editor was charged twice for lese majeste. In the three previous issues we published the translation of the editor's letters to the prime minister and the acting national police chief asking them to drop the case. On the eve of the Coronation Anniversary, May 4, we were informed by two most reliable sources that the secretary-general to His Majesty had telephoned the acting national police chief that H.M. wanted the cases against our editor be dropped. We are all very grateful to the king for his magnanimity and generosity. Yet so far we have not received anything in writing that the editor is really a free man.

Indeed His Majesty had declared openly on the eve of his birthday, December 4, 2005, that whoever brought the case of lese majeste to the police is in fact harming the king personally as well as undermining the monarchy. Yet those who claimed to be his loyal subjects kept on bringing such cases to the authority. The former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra had accused many of his so-called enemies of this charge, our editor being one of them. And as late as July 20, 2007, we were told that Mr. Boonsong Chaisinghakananon, an assistant professor at the Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, may be charged with this serious crime because he is a man with moral courage who would not kowtow to the administrators who are known to be corrupt. So the lese majeste law is used as a political witch hunt against him—not dissimilar to the inquisition of the Holy Catholic Church during the Middle Ages and the totalitarian regimes of Hitler and Stalin more recently—not to mention McCarthyism in the USA. One would have thought that since Siam is part of the American empire of neoliberalism and free market fundamentalism, there wouldn't be a place for such practice in the kingdom. In particular, the university should have academic freedom. Yet, the latest case shows that university administrators are worse than military dictators.

At the end of this year, we will celebrate the king's 80th birthday. The government should offer a present to His Majesty by abolishing this most dreadful law of lese majeste. This will enhance royal prestige and offer real freedom to the king's subjects vis-à-vis the monarchy. Indeed the government should do more for the king and his subjects on this auspicious occasion i.e., not by throwing an ostentatious ceremony, which is not only wasteful but also (as is often the case) replete with dishonest acclamations of the king's greatness and ingenuity in almost every aspect, leaving no room for proper critical evaluation. Rather the government should promote the social wellbeing of the poor and safe-guard human rights as well as encourage human dignity for the "underclass," including refugees from our neighboring countries and tribal and ethnic minorities within the kingdom. These will really constitute a wonderful present for the one and only Buddhist monarch whose reign is longer than that of any other head of state in the present.

As far as the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) is concerned, we greatly appreciate the financial contributions of many "virtuous companions" that enabled the construction of our new building, which will be completed in time for the editor's 75th birthday on March 27, 2008. He will then resign from the presidency of the Foundation, and our colleagues will have enough space to conduct various alternative activities under the umbrella of the Foundation.

INEB, under the umbrella of SNF, will have its international meeting in Taiwan from September 1-7. INEB is grateful to our Taiwanese hosts and the many friends who have been supporting our activities for so many years.

SNF itself will hold its own international conference on Gross National Happiness in collaboration with the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Royal Thai Government from November 21-28. Many NGOs, good friends, and local contributors kindly raised the money for us to be able to undertake this vital event, which will directly and concretely challenge the concept of GDP.

From December 2, 2007, to January 16, 2008, the Spirit in Education Movement, which is also under the umbrella of SNF, is organizing the Eco-village Design Education: Training of Trainers program in collaboration with Gaia Education and the Global Eco-village Network. This will really be relevant for grassroots leaders, community and social activists, and in particular contemporary youths.

The editor himself is also a member of the World Future Council, which is dedicated to cultivating alternative visions, values and lifestyles for the seven generations to come.

Eco-junk

Green Consumerism will not save the Biosphere

It wasn't meant to happen like this. The climate scientists told us that our winters would become wetter and our summers drier. So I can't claim that these floods were caused by climate change, or are even consistent with the models. But, like the ghost of Christmas yet to come, they offer us a glimpse of the possible winter world we'll inhabit if we don't sort ourselves out.

With rising sea levels and more winter rain (and remember that when the trees are dormant and the soils saturated there are fewer places for the rain to go) all it will take is a freshwater flood to coincide with a high spring tide and we have a formula for full-blown disaster. We have now seen how localised floods can wipe out essential services and overwhelm emergency workers. But this month's events don't even register beside some of the predictions now circulating in learned journals(1). Our primary political struggle must be to prevent the break-up of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets. The only question now worth asking about climate change is how.

Dozens of new books appear to provide an answer: we can save the world by embracing "better, greener lifestyles". Last week, for example, the *Guardian* published an extract of the new book by Sheherazade Goldsmith, who is married to the very rich environmentalist Zac, in which she teaches us "to live within nature's limits"(2). It's easy: just make your own bread, butter, cheese, jam, chutneys and pickles, keep a milking cow, a few pigs, goats, geese, ducks, chickens, beehives, gardens and orchards. Well, what are you waiting for? Her book also contains plenty of useful advice, and she comes across as modest, sincere and well-informed. But of lobbying for political change, there is not a word: you can save the planet in your own kitchen — if you have endless time and plenty of land. When I was reading it on the train, another passenger asked me if he could take a look. He flicked through it for a moment then summed up the problem in seven words. "This is for people who don't work."

None of this would matter, if the *Guardian* hadn't put her photo on the masthead last week, with the promise that she could teach us to go green. The media's obsession with beauty, wealth and fame blights every issue it touches, but none more so than green politics. There is an inherent conflict between the aspirational lifestyle journalism which makes readers feel better about themselves and sells country kitchens and the central demand of environmentalism: that we should consume less. "None of these changes represents a sacrifice", Sheherazade tells us. "Being more conscientious isn't about giving up things." But it is: if, like her, you own more than one home when others have none.

Uncomfortable as this is for both the media and its advertisers, giving things up is an essential component of going green. A section on ethical shopping in Goldsmith's book advises us to buy organic, buy seasonal, buy local, buy sustainable, buy recycled. But it says nothing about buying less. Green consumerism is becoming a pox on the planet. If it merely swapped the damaging goods we buy for less damaging ones, I would champion it. But two parallel markets are developing: one for unethical products and one for ethical products, and the expansion of the second does little to hinder the growth of the first. I am now drowning in a tide of ecojunk. Over the past six months, our coatpegs have become clogged with organic cotton bags, which — filled with packets of ginseng tea and jojoba oil bath salts — are now the obligatory gift at every environmental event. I have several lifetimes' supply of ballpoint pens made with recycled paper and about half a dozen miniature solar chargers for gadgets I don't possess.

Last week the *Telegraph* told its readers not to abandon the fight to save the planet. "There is still hope, and the middle classes, with their composters and ecogadgets, will be leading the way."(3) It made some helpful suggestions, such as a "hydrogen-powered model racing car", which, for £74.99, comes with a solar panel, an electrolyser and a fuel cell(4). God knows what rare metals and energy-intensive processes were used to manufacture it. In the name of environmental consciousness, we have simply created new opportunities for surplus capital.

Ethical shopping is in danger of becoming another signifier of social status. I have met people who have bought solar

panels and mini-wind turbines before they have insulated their lofts: partly because they love gadgets, but partly, I suspect, because everyone can then see how conscientious (and how rich) they are. We are often told that buying such products encourages us to think more widely about environmental challenges, but it is just as likely to be depoliticising. Green consumerism is another form of atomisation — a substitute for collective action. No political challenge can be met by shopping. The middle classes rebrand their lives, congratulate themselves on going green, and carry on buying and flying as much as ever before. It is easy to picture a situation in which the whole world religiously buys green products, and its carbon emissions continue to soar.

It is true, as the green consumerists argue, that most people find aspirational green living more attractive than dour puritanism. But it can also be alienating. I have met plenty of farm labourers and tenants who are desperate to start a small farm of their own, but have been excluded by what they call "horsiculture": small parcels of agricultural land being bought up for pony paddocks and hobby farms. In places like Surrey and the New Forest, farmland is now fetching up to £30,000 an acre as city bonuses are used to buy organic lifestyles (5). When the new owners dress up as milkmaids then tell the excluded how to make butter, they run the risk of turning environmentalism into the whim of the elite.

Challenge the new green consumerism and you become a prig and a party pooper, the spectre at the feast, the ghost of Christmas yet to come. Against the shiny new world of organic aspirations you are forced to raise drab and boringly equitable restraints: carbon rationing, contraction and convergence, tougher building regulations, coach lanes on motorways. No colour supplement will carry an article about that. No rock star could live comfortably within his carbon ration.

But such measures, and the long hard political battle required to bring them about, are, unfortunately, required to prevent the catastrophe these floods predict, rather than merely to play at being green. Only when they have been applied does green consumerism become a substitute for current spending rather than a supplement to it. They are harder to sell, not least because they cannot be bought from mail order catalogues. Hard political choices will have to be made, and the economic elite and its spending habits must be challenged, rather than groomed and flattered. The multi-millionaires who have embraced the green agenda might suddenly discover another urgent cause.

July 26, 2007

George Monbiot has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Essex and an honorary fellowship by Cardiff University.
www.monbiot.com

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1. Eg James Hansen et al, 2007. Climate Change and Trace Gases. *Philiosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* - A. Vol 365, pp 1925-1954. doi: 10.1098/rsta.2007.2052. http://pubs.giss.nasa.gov/docs/2007/2007_Hansen_etal_2.pdf
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4. See http://shop.tangogroup.net/PDF/H-Racer%20002.pdf
5. See http://www.lawsonfairbank.co.uk/pony-paddocks.asp

HRW Letter to Premier League

July 30, 2007

Mr. Richard Scudamore
Chief Executive
The Premier League
30 Gloucester Place
London W1U 8PL
Fax: 020 7864 9001

Re: Purchase of Manchester City Football Club by Thaksin Shinawatra
Dear Mr. Scudamore:

Human Rights Watch is an independent, non-governmental human rights organization based in New York, with offices in many other cities, including London.

We write regarding your approval of the sale of Manchester City Football Club to Thaksin Shinawatra, the former Prime Minister of Thailand. In light of the widespread, serious and systematic human rights abuses perpetrated in Thailand under Mr. Thaksin's leadership, we are very concerned that you concluded that he is a "fit and proper person" to purchase Manchester City Football Club.

We believe that an assessment of any prospective team owner should at least include an assessment of the individual's human rights record, his or her record on corporate responsibility, and whether there are credible allegations of corruption or other issues that might call into question whether the person is truly "fit and proper" for ownership. Such criteria should examine the individual's record globally and not just in relation to UK laws. (We take no position on international ownership.)

In the case of Mr. Thaksin, we have condemned the coup that ousted Mr. Thaksin from power last September and continue to be critical of the military-backed government. However, our research and that of other credible organizations shows that Mr. Thaksin's time in office from 2001 to 2006 was characterized by numerous extrajudicial executions, "disappearances," illegal abductions, arbitrary detentions, torture and other mistreatment of persons in detention, and attacks on media freedoms.

The most disturbing period of Mr. Thaksin's rule was his "war on drugs," in which Thai security forces routinely committed serious violations of human rights. By his government's own count, more than 2,275 people were killed in the three months after the campaign was launched on 1 February, 2003. There is little doubt that Thailand was facing a boom in the use of methamphetamines at the time, but instead of responding with legal measures, Mr. Thaksin unleashed his security forces in a violent campaign against alleged drug traffickers and sellers. He issued cash incentives to police and local officials to remove thousands of drug suspects from government "blacklists." Many on the blacklists, which were issued to local government and police, were killed. In a speech announcing the campaign, Mr. Thaksin borrowed a quote from a former police chief known for having orchestrated political assassinations in the 1950s: "There is nothing under the sun which the Thai police cannot do," Mr. Thaksin said. "Because drug traders are ruthless to our children, so being ruthless back to them is not a bad thing. . . It may be necessary to have casualties. . . If there are deaths among traders, it's normal."

The gravity of the situation prompted the US State Department to report in 2004 that Thailand's human rights record has "worsened with regard to extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests." The United Nations special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Asma Jahangir, expressed deep concern at the high number of deaths in the "war on drugs." A similar alert was raised by the United Nations Human Rights Committee on July 28, 2005. A Human Rights Watch report, *Not Enough Graves: The War on Drugs,* HIV/AIDS, and Violations of Human Rights, documented shocking details of extrajudicial executions of drug suspects in Thailand (the report can be found at http://hrw.org/reports/2004/thailand 0704/).

Mr. Thaksin was equally brutal in addressing the insurgency in Thailand's predominantly ethnic Malay Muslim southern border provinces. His heavy-handed counterinsurgency policy, which emphasized the unnecessary or excessive use of force and encouraged grave human rights violations, lead to the deaths of hundreds of ethnic Malay Muslims and injuries to many more. A Human Rights Watch report, *"It Was Like Suddenly My Son No Longer Existed": Enforced Disappearances in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces*, detailed 22 cases of unresolved "disappearances" in which the evidence strongly indicated that the Thai military forces and police were responsible (the report can be found at http://hrw.org/reports/2007/ thailand0307/).

Amidst these widespread abuses, Mr. Thaksin failed to address seriously the culture of impunity that prevailed in the country during his government. In March 2004 Somchai Nee-lapaijit, chairman of Thailand's Muslim Lawyers Association and a prominent critic of government human rights abuses, was abducted from a busy street in Bangkok. He has never been seen since and is presumed dead. Under strong public pressure, five police officers were belatedly arrested in connection with the abduction, but only one was convicted of the lesser charge of assault. In his concluding remarks, the judge criticized deficiencies

in the police investigation and work of the prosecutors. Mr. Thaksin publicly stated that government officials were involved in Somchai's abduction and killing but took no action to bring the perpetrators to justice, even though it is widely believed that their identities, and that of their superior officers, are known to the government. Somchai's wife, Angkhana Neelapaijit, told Human Rights Watch that Mr. Thaksin had informed her that her husband was taken to Ratchaburi province after being abducted. It is unclear how Mr. Thaksin learned of this information, but it is clear he did not act on it (for more on this case, see the Human Rights Watch statement at: http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/03/11/thaila12876. htm).

In all these cases, as well as many other state-sponsored violations of human rights brought to his attention, Mr. Thaksin made no apparent effort to pursue serious investigations to bring those responsible to justice.

Based on his record, Mr. Thaksin does not appear to us to be "fit and proper" under any reasonable definition of that term. His past actions should lead to him being subjected to investigations by impartial police and prosecutors, not welcomed into the club of owners of the most popular football league in the world.

We understand that you may not follow the political or human rights situation in Thailand. But in light of all the publicity about Mr. Thaksin's record in office, a quick Web search of "Thaksin and human rights" or "Thailand and human rights" would have uncovered a wealth of relevant information, including the Human Rights Watch reports noted in this letter.

We hope you would agree that the integrity of the Premier League depends in large part on the integrity of its owners. The rules concerning who is "fit and proper" should ensure that serious human rights abusers are not among the league's owners.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We would be happy to discuss this further at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Brad Adams
Asia Director
Human Rights Watch

*****

30 July 2007

Mr Brad Adams
Asia Director
Human Rights Watch
350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
USA

Dear Mr Adams

Thank you for your letter of 30 July. I would like to reassure you that the Premier League takes its responsibilities surrounding the governance of its clubs very seriously and we are aware of the issues you raise.

It may help if I set out the legal and regulatory framework within which we operate. In the first place we accept the primacy of UK and European law. This determines who may, and who may not, legally reside in the UK, own and acquire assets and engage in commercial and other activities. There are also significant protections in place to prevent money-laundering. These are all measures introduced and policed by the statutory authorities and, in the case of money laundering, by the banks and financial institutions which carry out the transactions. Over and above those laws, we have our own Fit and Proper Persons Test. This goes beyond the legal requirements placed on companies operating in the UK but we see it as crucially

important that the League and our clubs show sound corporate governance with additional rules specific to football's own needs.

I enclose the relevant section from within our rules and the schedule of offences that it refers to. You will see that it seeks to ensure that anyone convicted of any of the offences listed therein will not be permitted to become a director, or a shadow director, of a club.

The issues that you raise are of course extremely important, so much so that they fall to the UK Government, the statutory authorities and the European Union to consider and decide upon. We would presume that you have presented any evidence that you believe is relevant to those authorities so that they can take them into account and act accordingly. Should you have presented your evidence to the authorities we would be interested to know how they responded to you.

You can be assured that we will always operate within the law and will always take into account any evidence as verified by the appropriate legal process.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely

Richard Scudamore

Whispers About the Crown Prince's Health Transfix Bangkok

Thai Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn showed up in the flesh at Kasetsart University in Bangkok on Friday to watch his wife receive a master's degree in home economics, debunking widespread speculation in the capital over the past few weeks that he had died or was incapacitated.

Indeed, Bangkok's supercharged rumor mill has had the prince everywhere and nowhere at once. Variations of the rumors had him taking flight simulation courses in Canada or flying illegally over Sweden. The darkest and most tragic accounts—which were picked up by several blogs—said he died in Switzerland while undergoing treatment for an incurable disease.

Either way, taxi drivers, office workers, executives and bureaucrats across the capital all waited anxiously to see if the tales were true. The story seemed plausible to many for a number of reasons. First, whispers that the prince is suffering from a terminal illness are nothing new. Second, he hadn't made a public appearance since he opened a new theatre on June 3 after making several high-profile appearances throughout the year. Third, the rumors were widespread, persistent and confirmed by military and diplomatic sources to foreign newswires and top editors of local newspapers, which would never dare print the information anyway until receiving confirmation from the palace.

It's unclear who started the rumor campaign or why, but many observers said that something was certainly amiss. Even so, the opacity surrounding Thailand's monarchy allows rumors like this to fester as all official public information is tightly controlled.

But the tale about Vajiralongkorn took on a life of its own because of the many questions surrounding succession issues when his father, the esteemed but aging King Bhumibol Adulyadej, passes away.

Though it's taboo to discuss, some segments of the Thai public would prefer to see someone else besides Vajiralongkorn become the monarch. Many Thais have a negative impression of the crown prince despite palace attempts in recent years to give his image a makeover.

Moreover, deposed premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who reportedly helped to bankroll the prince's jet-setting lifestyle, would lose a pillar of support inside the monarchy. It's tough to tell if this would complicate efforts by Thaksin to return to power one day, as his removal from office was largely supported by royalist bureaucrats and soldiers loyal to Privy Council chief Prem Tinsulanonda, a former army chief and prime

minister who is seen as Thailand's ultimate power broker.

Either way, the succession questions would have been forced on the public, even if most people would still be reluctant to think about it. Bhumibol will turn 80 in December and his own health is the subject of wide speculation.

After Vajiralongkorn, who turns 55 on Saturday, possible successors include his two-year-old son, Prince Dipangkara Rasmijoti, and the king's popular daughter, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

Indeed, Sirindhorn could possibly serve as regent until the younger prince turns 18, although the constitution allows for a female successor if the king has not named an heir. The decision ultimately rests with either the king or the privy council.

Although the monarchy is highly revered and deemed "above politics" by many Thais, the military-led government has certainly levered the king's immense popularity to gain support for the coup. Bhumibol's praise during his annual December birthday speech for the government of appointed Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, who served beside Prem on his advisory council, helped boost the unelected government's legitimacy.

The king's presence undoubtedly acts as a buffer to prevent widespread political violence in much of the country (apart from the vicious insurgency raging in the majority Malay-Muslim southernmost provinces, of course). But when Bhumibol eventually passes away—a thought some might find offensive even to entertain—the monarchy's aura of morality will take a blow, inviting those who challenge the aristocracy to fight back against any moves from soldiers and royalist Bangkok elites perceived to restrict civil liberties and retain their grip on power.

Although some critics may say it's useless to even discuss rumors surrounding the monarchy, strict lese-majeste laws and a possible public backlash prevent any open discussion, creating the conditions for rumors to proliferate. The fears are certainly justified. A university philosophy lecturer was recently threatened with charges for asking on an exam if the monarchy was necessary for Thai society and how it should be adapted to a democratic system. This climate of secrecy and fear clearly has a destabilizing effect, as seen by the protest at Prem's house last Sunday that turned violent.

Since the September 2006 putsch, anti-coup protestors have accused Prem of giving the green light for General Sonthi Boonyaratglin to take Thaksin out with guns. Prior to the power seizure, Prem, a former army chief himself, dressed up in full military garb and told soldiers to be loyal to the king instead of the government—signaling that indeed they had divergent interests.

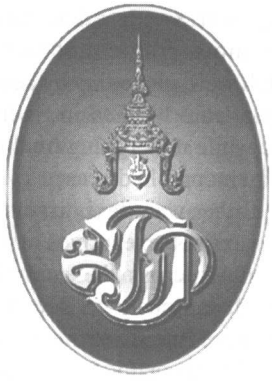
Now the protest leaders are in jail for inciting violence, and Surayud has accused them of trying to take down the monarchy—an explosive charge that even drew a rebuke from *The Nation* newspaper, which has more or less supported the coupmakers.

Surayud's "statement condemning the violence—in which he claimed that the protests could be part of a conspiracy to undermine Thailand's monarchy—was uncalled for," the editorial said. "After all, the country's political situation has already become fragile, without bringing its most beloved institution into the picture... Thai politics has deteriorated into underground power plays that could erupt into a bloody upheaval with just a little spark."

But indeed, as long as discussion of the monarchy remains stifled and the king's closest advisors associate openly with coup leaders—or in Surayud's case, become prime minister of a military-installed government—then opponents of military rule will continue overt and covert attempts to undermine the power structure, which receives its legitimacy from the king's unmatched moral authority.

A simple way to dispel such rumors in the future would be for the monarchy and privy council to adapt the same measures of transparency that is demanded of elected politicians and go out of their way to ensure that they actually have no political interest. But of course nobody expects that anytime soon. The myths of morality will carry on—as well as the secrets and rumors to the contrary.

Asia Sentinel,
27 July 2007



Indefinite Hunger Strike and the Strength of Tibetan Freedom Movement

New Delhi, August 6: *The Indefinite Hunger Strike* by 14 defiant Tibetans in the Indian capital, calling for world attention on Tibet and demanding direct response from the Chinese government over the ongoing violations of rights of Tibetan people inside Tibet, is almost nearing a month now.

Tibetan Youth Congress' August 1 report says "The once lively and energetic 14 people now need the support of two people to even take a few steps". The day marked 25th day of the indefinite hunger strike.

These hunger strikers have remained resolute despite several appeals by leaders and supporters to end the hunger strike. They want direct response from the Chinese government to their set of five demands. However, many are of the view that China will not pay a heed.

Meanwhile, several thousands of Tibetans have converged in the Indian capital to make happen, what they call the largest Tibetan movement to be held since the historical Tibetan National Uprising of Lhasa on 10 March 1959.

Tibetans and their hard core supporters from across India, Nepal and elsewhere have been flocking into New Delhi, the spot for the largest Tibetan conglomeration to steer the largest protest campaign ever by the exile Tibetan community.

Symbolic yet, equally significant campaign events are being organized elsewhere around the world by Tibetan regional organizations and Tibet support groups.

Tibetan activist leaders have been repeatedly saying that they will make use of every available opportunity in the wake of the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games to create an effective campaign aimed at forcing the Communist Chinese Regime to bring about a meaningful change inside occupied Tibet.

Tibetans have long grumbled that the almost 50 years of brutal Chinese rule in Tibet has caused the worst human disasters in Tibet's long and peaceful history. For them, the 2008 Olympics in China is a chance opportunity to make a difference. Many Tibetans are of the opinion that if they miss the Olympics opportunity to act, the aftermath may turn bleak to Tibetan struggle.

At the same time, Tibetan activists and their supporters are demanding IOC (International Olympic Committee) to put pressure on Beijing authorities to make improvements in China and in its occupied territories.

Dolma Gyari, the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Assembly in Exile, while addressing a Tibetan protest gathering in Dharamsala on Saturday, said "In 2001, to justify and defend its decision to honour China to host the 2008 Games in Beijing, the IOC had said that in the coming seven years' time, there will be favourable changes in China".

However, citing few of the many examples like the shocking Nangpala-Pass shooting incident in 2006, and sentencing, without proper justification, Trulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and his close associate student in 2002 and the latest crackdown on Tibetan political demonstrator in Lithang this month by Chinese authorities, she said, "Now there is only a year left for 2008 Olympics, but things have been becoming only worst in Tibet."

"Where is the change?" she questioned.

She also criticized IOC's stand that Olympics is independent of political issues is a lame and baseless excuse. Pointing at Olympic Games in Montreal and Moscow, she said there are enough records of Olympics actually involved deeply in politics.

With Sino-Tibetan dialogue making no significant breakthrough after six rounds of talks and China's repressive rule continuing in Tibet, Tibetan activists are becoming more restless and are getting exhausted with the wait and hope policy of their Government in exile.

The last few days saw Tibetans—young, old, monk and nun—storming into the large expanse of Delhi to make their protest presence felt and draw world's attention to their cause.

With world focus cast on China when the Games will begin in August next year, many Tibetans see 2008 Olympics in China a viable opportunity to create a new dimension to their long standing peaceful freedom struggle.

Earlier on Saturday, Tibetans led by four prominent organisations and their supporters launched the "Bring Tibet to the 2008 Games" campaign to promote and advocate inclusion of "Team Tibet" in the Olympic

Games.

Under the logo of "Snow Lion holding Tibetan National Flag" Tibetans will continue with the Team Tibet campaign in varying means till the Olympic Games will begin in Beijing on August 8 next year.

On Wednesday this week, as exact one year countdown to the 2008 Games will start, Tibetans and support groups worldwide will initiate a series of campaigns to mark International Day of Action for Tibet.

India being home to the vast majority of Tibetans in exile, the largest of such action campaign will be held in New Delhi.

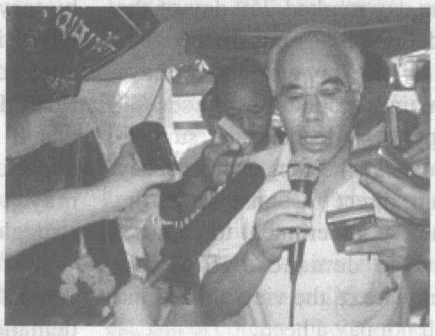
The authorities in Beijing are making all effort to make the Games in Beijing run smoothly and to ensure that the event will not foil the suppressed stability of China and the Communist party's hold on power.

In the wake of the 2008 Olympic Games in China next year, the strength of the Tibetan freedom struggle seems to be tested more than ever.

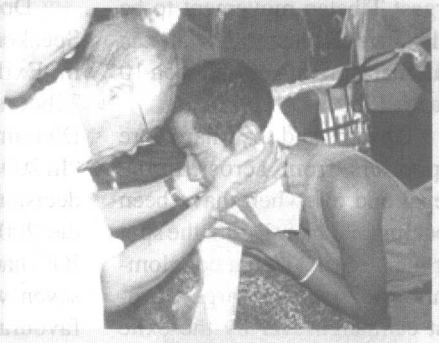
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http://www.phayul.com/news/

His Holiness Appeals to End the Hunger Strike



Kalon Tempa Tsering addressing media personnel, after reading the message of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Tibetan hunger strikers in New Delhi Dharamshala: Mr Tempa Tsering, Kalon for Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration today visited the 14 Tibetans on indefinite hunger strike in New Delhi, to convey His Holiness the Dalai Lama's appeal to immediately end their strike, organized by Tibetan Youth Congress on 8 July. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in his message to the fourteen Tibetans and the organizer, said "the action undertaken by them is not only a form of violence but it is not likely to bring positive results by simply sacrificing the lives of more Tibetan people".



Kalon Tempa Tsering meeting one of the 14 Tibetans undergoing indefinite strike earlier on 24 July. Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche also met the hunger strikers to appeal to them to put an end to the indefinite strike. In his message, Kalon Tripa appealed to them for "an immediate end of the campaign, which brings enormous hardship while risking their precious lives." He further said losing the life of a single Tibetan in this moment would be a setback and a loss for all the Tibetans. While taking stock of their health, Kalon Tripa expressed his deep concern of the deteriorating health conditions of the 14 Tibetans and urged them to stop the hunger strike.

(www.tibet.net is the official website of the Central Tibetan Administration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.)

Tuesday, 7 August 2007, 2:30 p.m.

Statement : Maintenance of National Security Act is for Ensuring the Powers of the Military and not the Security of the People!!

The Draft Bill on the Maintenance of National Security is riddled with problems and has given rise to many questions and suspicions in Thai society. We the undersigned organizations would like the current interim government and parliament to drop such a draconian draft bill and review what their role should be during this transition period. The draft bill has far reaching implications for a constitutional democracy and the civil liberties of an individual because;

1) The National Legislative Assembly, which is an interim parliament constituted under an interim constitution, does not have legitimacy to enact a law which imposes serious limitations on the civil political rights of the people. Since a new Constitution is to be adopted after a referendum, all law making business affecting rights of the people should be deferred till a new Constitution is in place. Further an elected parliament, representing all sections of the society should be responsible for such law making.

2) Article 3 (1) of the Draft Maintenance of National Security Act (NSA) explains maintenance of national security as maintaining, 'pride in Thainess', 'love and concern for Thai culture and land of the Thais'. Equating national security with 'Thainess' results in branding any person who is non Thai as the 'other' who is to be viewed as a threat to the security of the Kingdom. The National Reconciliation Commission in its report in 2006 clearly said that cultural diversity was a 'precious historical heritage' and 'social reality' which needed to be preserved. The report also said that, historically 'Thai identity' had been created by dictatorial regimes—and today, it seems that history is trying to repeat itself. We should learn from history and not replicate the mistakes.

3) Article 3 (2) defines national security. Under the draft law, an act that aims to destroy or damage life and property, cause sabotage, acts of terrorism, trans-border crime, an attack, propaganda, incite use of violence, cause unrest in lives of people or cause damage to security of State is deemed to be a threat to national security. The Act gives power to the Internal Security Operations Committee (ISOC), comprising mainly of officers from Police, Armed forces, Intelligence, Ministry of Defence to implement its provisions. Article 25 gives power to the ISOC to issue restrictions on the freedom of movement of the people, right to gather or assemble and advertise if it is believed that it would invite or encourage others to commit an illegal act.

Supreme Court Judges of USA through their jurisprudence have developed the Doctrine of Vagueness which says that a law is unconstitutional if a person of ordinary intelligence cannot determine what action is regulated and prohibited under the law. Viewed in the light of this principle, the definition of national security is vague and too broad. The definition encompasses a wide range of activities related to the basic rights of people in a democracy and it is difficult to determine exactly what is prohibited and who can be punished under the law. The ISOC can prohibit even peaceful gatherings of people.

Any expression of opinion which is contrary to the mainstream ideas can cause unrest in society—does that mean that such expression of opinion is a threat to national security and is to be prohibited? Not all unrest in society is inimical to peace and security. Exchange of ideas, debates help to strengthen a society and should be encouraged. If it results in tensions, the State has a duty to manage and control the tensions—but in fear of such probable tensions, it cannot throttle the debates itself through criminal sanctions.

4) The Draft Act also gives powers to the ISOC to arrest and carry out searches without warrant and on grounds of suspicion. Under the existing criminal laws, the police already have powers to conduct searches and arrests without warrant in cases which necessitate immediate action. There is no need for special laws such as this.

5) Under Article 31, if an inquiry officer perceives that a person has committed a wrong-

doing because of having been 'misguided' or 'misinformed', but such wrongdoing is not serious enough for a case to be filed against that person, ISOC can direct that person to attend 'training courses' for up to six months. Given that the definition of acts against national security is so broad, and given that national security is also equated with 'Thainess' and maintaining 'Thai pride', a provision like this will give unlimited power to officers to deal with issues according to their own notions of 'Thai pride'. Such provisions that authorizes officers to send people for correctional behavior is reminiscent of the Nazi laws where the fascist regime was trying to impose their notion of 'Aryan pride' on all the people.

6) And last but not the least, Article 37, gives immunity to officers from civil and criminal violations or disciplinary actions if they were performing their actions honestly—thus in effect giving immunity to them Thus the ISOC would have unlimited powers to determine which act is to be prohibited and punished in the name of national security. They would also enjoy immunity from any kind of accountability mechanism creating a climate of impunity. Such unbridled powers would only result in the creation of a police state eroding the basic values of a democracy. Thailand, today is in a political crisis and to come out of it, it needs to strengthen its democratic structures of governance and not create another undemocratic, totalitarian power centre. We call for all related bodies to act appropriately so that such a draft bill is not enacted into a law.

Human Rights Organizations Network
3 July 2007

The Korean Hostage Crisis: Its Wider Ramifications

It is not surprising that a number of Muslim governments and civil society organizations have condemned the abduction of South Korean nationals by the Taliban in Afghanistan on 19 July 2007. The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) itself has taken a strong stand and has called for the immediate and unconditional release of all the hostages.

Needless to say, the abduction is a blatant violation of Islamic ethics. Even when a nation is under foreign occupation, the kidnapping of civilians is prohibited. What has made the Taliban's action even more morally reprehensible is the cold-blooded murder of two of the 23 hostages in the last two weeks.

Their murder has made it more urgent to secure the release of the remaining hostages. It is unlikely that either the Afghan government in Kabul or the US Administration will be able to achieve this. They have made it very clear that they will not exchange Taliban linked prisoners in their jails for the Korean hostages. This is why there may be no alternative but to allow the Korean government to negotiate directly with the Taliban. After all what is at stake are the lives of 21 mostly young people who may be killed any time by their ruthless captors.

It is significant that while the Korean people are traumatized by the hostage crisis, a number of Koreans have raised some searching questions about the overseas role of some Korean groups which have not been highlighted in the mainstream global media. On web sites and blogs these Koreans are asking whether their fellow citizens should mix humanitarian aid work with Christian missionary activities in foreign lands such as Afghanistan . By so doing, are they creating unnecessary tensions in the region?

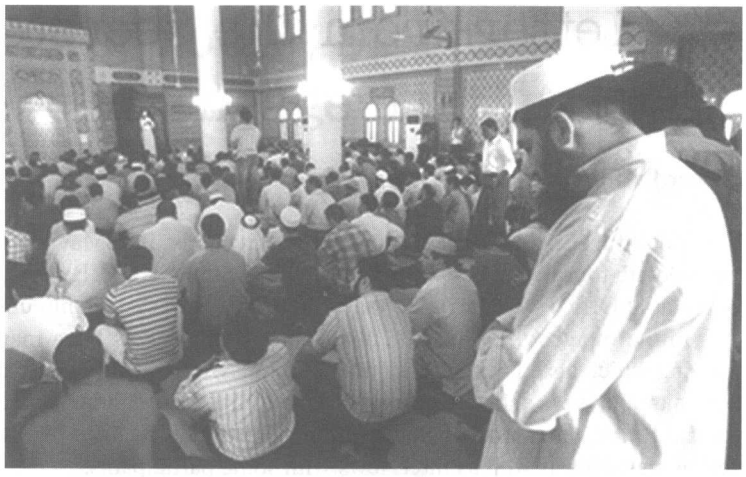
All the hostages, it should be noted, are members of the Saemmul Community Church, a Presbyterian congregation in Bundang, a suburb of Seoul. Many of them are medical professionals or English language teachers who, according to Joseph Park, the Mission Director of the Christian Council of Korea, were involved in 'short-term evangelistic and aid work' in Afghanistan. Last year, it would be recalled, some 1200 Korean Christian evangelists arrived in Kabul in the pretext of holding a 'peace festival'. Their presence sparked protests from the preponderantly Muslim population leading to their deportation.

The Saemmul Church has denied that the hostages had

undertaken any missionary work and had only provided medical and other voluntary assistance to the poor. This of course reflects a familiar pattern in the evangelical work of not only Korean but also other Christian groups in various parts of the world. The trust and confidence of the local community is first secured through humanitarian efforts which are then followed by missionary activities aimed at winning converts.

It is not widely known that South Korea has between 12,000 and 17,000 evangelists in more than 160 countries. The *Christian Science Monitor* (28 July 2007) describes these evangelists as 'one of the most aggressive armies of Christian missionaries on earth. Only the US sends out more — 46,000 by some estimates.' Money, college scholarships, trips abroad and other such material allurements, it is alleged, have played a major role in these evangelical drives to recruit people into the Christian faith.

Evangelism of this sort is often associated with that movement in contemporary Christianity that scholars have labeled 'The Christian Right'. Apart from wholehearted endorsement of neo-liberal capitalist policies in the domestic sphere, the Christian Right is totally committed to the Washington led attempt to establish global hegemony. It explains its support for the invasion of Afghanistan and the occupation of Iraq. Like the neo-conservatives around President George Bush, the Christian Right also believes that US hegemony over the Middle East is vital to secure control over oil and to enhance the position of Israel. Hence its affinity to Zionism.



South Koreans and foreign Muslims pray for the release of 22 South Koreans kidnapped by the Taliban in Afghanistan and mourn for slain pastor Bae Hyung-kyu, at the Seoul Central Mosque in Seoul, South Korea, Friday, July 27, 2007. (Photo: Yonhap/Lee Jung-hun, www.christianpost.com)

Since 9-11, Christian Right evangelism has made huge inroads into countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam and China. Afghanistan and Iraq are special targets. It will be remembered that in 2004 a South Korean interpreter in Iraq who was also a Christian missionary was beheaded by militants.

In a sense, the current Christian Right push is its second major thrust in the last 30 years. In the eighties when Ronald Reagan was US President, there was a concerted drive to disseminate the ideology in Latin America in order to weaken progressive Catholic ideals which championed the cause of the poor and marginalized known as Liberation Theology. There is no need to emphasize that Reagan, like the present US President, was inclined to the Christian Right.

There is no denying that the growing impact of Christian Right evangelism is a threat to the relatively harmonious relations that mainline Catholic and Protestant communities have built with Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists in much of Asia. In fact, more than a handful of Catholic and Protestant scholars and theologians have expressed their uneasiness about this sort of evangelism. Expectedly, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist leaders in a number of countries have reacted to the aggressiveness of the Christian Right by either formulating legislation aimed at curbing its activities or through outright denunciations of the movement.

The tragic Korean hostage crisis has brought to the surface a fault-line in the relations among the different religious communities which has for the most part remained concealed from the public eye. Let us pray that the resolution of the crisis will lead to improved inter-religious ties.

Chandra Muzaffar
Malaysia, 7 August 2007.

Dr. Chandra Muzaffar is President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST).

Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

Youthful energy was circutating in INEB recently. Last May, the first INEB Youth Exchange Program started with four young people posting abroad within the INEB circle. As a part of this program, the INEB Secretariat Office welcomed Dolma from the Tibet in exile community to be with us for ten months.

In the months of June and July, young Bodhisattvas from many countries gathered for the youth training which lasted 6 weeks. I am very impressed by this group of amazing young people. They worked very hard but were able to find a lot of time for singing, dancing and chitchatting. They affirmed my hope for the future generation of Socially Engaged Buddhists. The report of the training can be found in the following pages as well as interviews with some participants.

During the past five years, INEB was able to reach out to more than a hundred young people through training and networking. I am happy to see many of them continuing to work actively for their organizations. Some alumni are in the process of empowering young Buddhist activists, and creating their local networks, like in India, Indonesia and Burma. My next plan is how to link the young generation with the elders of INEB, how to combine the wisdom of our seniors with the energy of youths. If you have any idea to share, please kindly do so.

In the last week of August INEB sent three Buddhist women from Nepal and India to join an intensive training for socially engaged Buddhist women run by our sister Ouyporn Khuankaew at end of August. This is a new step forward of INEB with the hope to support the INEB alumni who wish to focus their work on Buddhist gender issues.

Well, that's what happened during the past four months since the last issue of *Seeds of Peace*. The next four months will begin with the *Vassa* Rain Retreat for Theravadan countries. To me, it is a time for renewing my learning spirit as well as for contemplation and preparation for the future plan of INEB. I hope that it would be a time for spiritual growth for all of you, too.

By the time this issue reaches you, I will be in Taipei for the 2007 INEB Conference. The event can come to pass only with the extremely hard work of Dr. Yo Hsiang-Chou, Dhamacari Lokamitra, David Reid (acting INEB Executive Secretary in 2002), Jon Watts and many other friends. Please wait for the report in the next issue.

Yours in the Dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary

To maintain liveliness of INEB, your support in terms of renewal your membership is essential. The annual renewal fee is US$50. You can make additional donation to the INEB activities of your choices;

- Youth Buddhist Leadership Training
- Intensive Training on Buddhism and Women
- International Youth Exchange Program
- Fund for developing new projects

You can send your check payable to SULAK SIVARAKSA (please do not mention *Seeds of Peace* or INEB as the beneficiary) and mail to INEB address as shown in page 3.

Nurturing Young Spirits for Social Engagement

What is the purpose of life as a young Buddhist? What are the main problems of our world today? How should the young Buddhists respond to such problems? How should we draw the value of Buddhism to bring about a more desirable world? How would we work with wisdom, compassion and joy for the benefit of ourselves and all beings? Such questions were the core of the 4th International Youth Buddhist Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation, which ended last July.



Testing group energy with a challenging activity

Despite the weighty problems of visa, the Thai participants and INEB welcomed young people from Tibet in China and in exile, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia, Burma, and of course India, with the participants from Ladakh in the Himalaya down to Chennai in the south. In addition, three volunteers from the West and one from Shouth Korea helped extend our learning horizon by sharing the perspective of the so-called developed world.

The first four days were for creating trust and team-working skills which is a foundation for any learning community. The next five days were spent on the meditation retreat. This session started with the documentary of Goenka teaching vipassana meditation in the prisons in India. It is very inspiring for the participants. In the following days, they learned various kinds of meditation; breathing, observing mind and feeling, contemplating, meditation on death, etc. This is helpful for the young social workers. While facing the difficulties, injustices or the violence in the society, the skill of observing the impact of outer phenomena on our mind and our physical, verbal and mental reaction to such phenomena is valuable. Meditation on death makes the social workers detach themselves from worldly temptations that can corrupt them.

Then, we moved on to learn about the current issues of the modern world. Resource persons gave us knowledge on the impacts of globalization in Asia, in the aspects of poverty, environment, gender, agriculture, etc. From the lecture we spent the next week traveling in Chiangmai province to observe the reality.

The first place of exposure visit is Suan Sai Lom Joy where we learned about organic farming and nature cure. Then, we went to see the slums right in the middle of Chiangmai tourist district. We visited three senior members of INEB; Ouyporn Khuankaew who runs the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice, Venetia Walkey who runs the Dhamma Park Gallery and environment protection project, and Ven. Kittisak in his Mettadhamma Garden where he works with local people on land protection and organic fruit growing. On one afternoon, we visited Mrs. Pimjai Intamoon who initiated the community health center. Living with HIV/AIDS for almost two decades, she is very physically and spiritually strong. We are impressed with her daily routine of meditation on death and her long and difficult traveling on foot across the Thai-Burma border to help the ethnic people with and without HIV/AIDS. We also visited an organic orange farm in Fang and a community forest in Mae Tha.

With this eye-opening visit and the knowledge on social

analysis, the participants continued to learn about the Buddhist teachings that can help them to understand the inner and outer phenomena in a new light. Before going back home, the skills of working with their community as facilitators or trainers were presented in the last part.

Though the training kept the participants busy for six weeks, fun and joy are an integral part of the program. A day trip to the ancient ruins in Ayudhaya offered them a glimpse of the grandeur of Siam. In the hard-working weeks, one day was set aside as "The Culture Day". The participants cooked a dish of their respective countries for lunch. And, in the night they enjoyed songs and dances from many Asian traditions. A visit to the sea was requested by friends from the mountainous Himalayan region. Their wish was granted and people regardless of their locality equally enjoyed.

In the tears of sorrow, it was time to go back home. The hard work for their people awaited them. Now they know that they are not alone. Everywhere there are sisters and brothers in dhamma who share the same aspirations and commitments. Everywhere there is support for them from the INEB seniors. All members of INEB are hopeful that the younger generation is blooming, revitalizing our network and ready to continue the effort of spiritual advancement and social engagement.

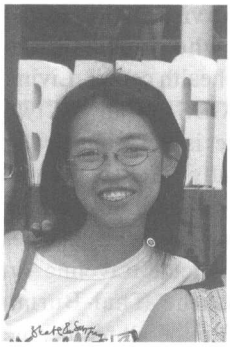
Some of the participants spent their time during the training talking about their lives and works in an interview with *Pacarayasara Maganize*, a Thai counterpart of *Seeds of Peace*. Interviews with Samta Suman and Dian Saptiana are summarized below.

Interviews With Young Bodhisattvas



Samta Suman is a volunteer from Youth Buddhist Society (YBS India). Her organization is doing a lot of spiritual activities, educational, development activities, educational tour and universal peace activities. YBS has built many community schools, temples and community centers. Besides, she said, it offers dhamma talks, meditation camps and various Buddhist ceremonies and rituals.

To the question of the restoration of Buddhism after a long disappearance, she said that her people and she herself have not forced Buddhism to come back, but people willingly join Buddhism. Her family has converted to Buddhism due to the problem of caste division in Hinduism. Samta saw the possibility that many more people are considering to be Buddhist because Buddhism treats everyone equally.



Dian Saptiana's organization is HIKMABUDHI (The Union of Indonesian Buddhist Students). It has done a lot of leadership trainings, charity works, natural disaster relief works, fund raising and issues related with Indonesian Government regulation on Buddhism. For example, if someone wants to build a temple, then the signatures of 100,000 family heads are needed, which is very difficult in the Muslim areas. They also work with other religious minorities such as the Christian and the Hindu.

Despite being a religious minority, she does not feel it to be a problem. Her concerns are rather within the Buddhist circle itself. Monks are more into rituals than social works. They do not even know the mentioned government regulation. Moreover, there is conflict and competition among the lay and ordained of different Buddhist traditions to win more followers. It should not be like this in her view. The full ordination for women is also her concern. In Indonesia the monks use the same excuse like in other Theravadan countries to deny the ordination of women.

Finally Dian talked about her organization's campaign to save the Burobudur. To take pictures, people climb the Buddha statues. This action broke the statures and other sculptures. Her organization put up a lot of posters to persuade people to save it.

Dalai Lama Announces "Full Support" for Introduction of Full Ordination for Women in Tibetan Buddhism

Indicates First Steps Towards That Goal During Groundbreaking Congress in Hamburg

(July 22, 2007, Hamburg) — His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama expressed "full support" for the establishment of full ordination for women in the Tibetan tradition during a history-making conference at the University of Hamburg in Germany last week. His Holiness further indicated concrete measures that can be taken towards accomplishing that aim.

The statement came at the conclusion of the International Congress on Buddhist Women, convened at his request to examine the possibility of instating full ordination for women in Tibetan Buddhism. The congress brought together specialists in monastic codes from Buddhist communities from over 19 countries, and marked the culmination of some 30 years of research into the possibility of establishing full female ordination in the Tibetan tradition. Along with the statement from the Dalai Lama, the congress resulted in the expression of overwhelming support from a large delegation of monastic specialists and senior members of the international Buddhist monastic community.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama was an active participant in a panel of experts in monastic code from all major Buddhist countries. The panel offered its resounding support for the Tibetan initiative, urged immediate action and suggested possible methods for granting Tibetan women the same opportunities as are available to Tibetan men.

The groundbreaking congress, held from July 18 through 20, elicited tremendous interest, with nearly 400 people participating on July 18 and 19, and a total of 1,200 people atending to hear the final outcome on July 20.

Venerable Bhikshuni Jampa Tsedroen (Carola Roloff), co-organizer of the congress, said, "We are deeply gratified by His Holiness' unflinching commitment to equal spiritual opportunities for women in Tibetan Buddhism. For the first time ever, we have an indication where the road ahead lies for women in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition seeking full ordination."

Formal Statement of Support Issued

In a formal statement issued at the close of the congress, His Holiness the Dalai Lama affirmed, "The four-fold Buddhist community (of [fully ordained monks], [fully ordained nuns], [male lay followers] and [female lay followers]) is incomplete in the Tibetan tradition. If we can introduce the [full ordination for women], that would be excellent in order to have the four-fold Buddhist community complete..."

"Given that women are fully capable of achieving the ultimate goal of the Buddha's teachings, in harmony with the spirit of the modern age, the means and opportunity to achieve this goal should be completely accessible to them..."

"On the basis of the above considerations, and after extensive research and consultation with leading vinaya [monastic code] scholars and Sangha [monastic community] members of the Tibetan tradition and Buddhist traditions internationally, and with the backing of the Tibetan Buddhist community, since 1960s, I express my full support for the establishment of the Bhikshuni Sangha [or community of fully ordained women] in the Tibetan tradition."

Practical Measures Outlined; Conference to Take Place in India This Winter

During a follow-up meeting held on the morning of July 21 with congress participants, His Holiness the Dalai Lama provided further details of the road ahead towards establishing full ordination for women. Among those was a conference to take place this winter in India where senior Tibetan monks can meet with senior members of the other Buddhist monastic orders worldwide.

This conference is crucial to allow the initiative to move forward in the direction proposed by His Holiness in Hamburg, since no single individual has the right to revamp ordination practices or to make changes to the monastic code in Tibetan Buddhism. Rather, decisions regarding community-wide matters should be reached through broad consensus within the monastic community. The conference this coming winter will provide a

forum where community-wide discussions can be conducted, and such a consensus may be reached.

Full ordination for women is currently available in Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese Buddhism, through a monastic lineage called Dharmaguptaka. The Dharmaguptaka nuns' lineage should now be "Tibetanized," His Holiness said. To that end, he called for the translation of the main texts of the Dharmaguptaka lineage from Chinese into Tibetan language. He further asked nuns already fully ordained in that lineage who practice Tibetan Buddhism to gather in India to perform the monastic rituals of the Dharmaguptaka nuns' lineage in the Tibetan language.

Additionally, His Holiness made an unequivocal statement that women who have already gone to that lineage for full ordination but who practice within Tibetan Buddhism are accepted as an integral part of Tibetan Buddhism.

Bhikshuni Jampa Tsedroen (Carola Roloff) said, "His Holiness' unconditional acceptance of the Dharmaguptaka bhikshuni lineage as a valid ordination helps clear the way forward for Tibetan women who have considered receiving their full ordination from that lineage, and for that ordination to be introduced into Tibetan Buddhism.

Full text of the statement by His Holiness the Dalai Lama can be found at www.congess-on-buddhist-women.org Proceedings of the congress will be published as a book and made available from Wisdom Publications next year.

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From Untouchable to Buddhist — Reinvigorating the Buddhist World

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was born an untouchable, perhaps the most socially deprived community of people in the world, making up one sixth of India 's population. He devoted his great mind and boundless energy to finding a means of eradicating untouchability. Brilliant politician and lawyer though he was, the answer he found in Buddhism.

"Positively, my social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Let no one, however, say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha."

Along with 500,000 followers, most of whom were also so-called untouchables (now known as Scheduled Castes or Dalits) he converted to Buddhism on the anniversary of the great King Ashoka's conversion over 2,000 years earlier. Now 50 years later the new Buddhist movement is gaining a new momentum. Until recently most of the newly converted Buddhists were from Dr. Ambedkar's own sub-caste based in Maharashtra. Now Scheduled Castes all over India , as well as Tribal people and others oppressed by the caste system are thinking seriously about becoming Buddhist. 300 million people in India could be open to the Buddha's teaching over the next few years. In the next ten years there could be Buddhists or those who want to know about Buddhism in most villages and towns in India ! If successful this movement could not only transform Indian society, but it could reinvigorate Buddhism throughout the world.

But that is a big IF. There are three major conditions to success.

First of all thousands of people need to be thoroughly trained to teach the Dhamma effectively in the villages and towns.

Secondly a carefully structured *system* of teachings, practices, and institutions through which the cadre of Dhamma workers can work needs to be developed.

Thirdly and most basically, the Buddhist world needs to respond on an enormous scale, both in providing Dhamma teachers and the huge finances required.

This document looks at the background to the situation, the potential for India and the world, what is required to make it successful, the contribution of TBMSG, and an initial action plan. While we are fairly clear about the basic principles and are committed to doing what we can to develop the situation, the ideas presented in this paper are not final and we are requesting you for feedback, however critical.

Buddhism in India Today

Buddhism effectively died out in India over 700 years ago. In 1956 this situation changed dramatically with the conversion of Dr. Ambedkar to Buddhism along with 500,000 followers who had all been born so-called Untouchables (officially called Scheduled Castes). Outside the Hindu caste system altogether, the so-called untouchables were treated in the most cruelly. Traditionally they had only been allowed to do the dirtiest and most degrading work, live in the least hygienic parts of the village and were allowed no education or religion. Worst of all there was no way they could try and change their social position, so effective were the religious sanctions of untouchability. Dr. Ambedkar, born himself an untouchable, realised that he could only get rid of untouchability by getting out of the religion that caused it. After much research he concluded that Buddhism was the most suitable religion not only for his followers but for modern men and women throughout the world. Tragically he died just six weeks after the great conversion ceremony leaving this new Buddhist Movement leaderless.

Many more Scheduled Castes have followed Dr. Ambedkar to Buddhism over the last 50 years, and now this movement is accelerating very fast. Besides Scheduled Castes, many from the extremely backward Tribal communities have recently converted to Buddhism. Today there are estimated to be about 30 million newly converted Buddhists in India .

Most of the Scheduled Caste population, numbering 180 million, and many of the Scheduled Tribe population, numbering 80 million, have a deep respect and gratitude for Dr. Ambedkar and will be very interested in Buddhist education and practice once they understand the importance he gave to it. Others (Sudras or Other Backward Classes) who have also suffered from the inequities of the caste system are thinking seriously about Dr. Ambedkar's advice. There could eventually be some 300 million people who are interested in learning about Buddha and His Teachings from the point of view of transforming their lives and the society they live in. The vast majority of these people come from very socially deprived backgrounds with high levels of poverty and illiteracy, and a history of social exclusion and exploitation.

The new Buddhist have been largely ignored by the Buddhist world and there have been very few trained Indian Dhamma teachers to visit all the thousands of towns and villages and teach them. Thus while most have strong faith few have ever had a chance to understand Buddhist teachings. ***And yet there is so much thirst for the Dhamma amongst them. Wherever we go in the slums and villages in India we come across enormous enthusiasm. People are desperate to make sense of their new religion; they want to understand how to practice and how that practice will help them change themselves and society. <u>In the next ten years there could be Buddhists or those who want to know about Buddhism in most villages and towns in India ! What will happen to them if they do not get any teaching?</u>***

For Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism was not just for the poor and oppressed. He saw it as the way in which all Indians could leave behind the divisions and oppressions of caste and create a truly just and democratic society, on the basis of the greatest in Indian tradition. We can expect to see this as more and more begin to espouse Buddhist values, and are supported by effective teaching.

This will have repercussions far wider than India . As an increasingly influential political, economic, and cultural power, whatever happens in India will have reverberations throughout the world. Buddhism in its traditional homelands in Asia is increasingly on the defensive, and in most cases has yet to find an effective response to the modern world. It has contributed little to bringing peace and social justice to the modern world. In the West, Buddhism still grows, but only among a very small section of society. A revival of Buddhism in India with a new vision of the place of Buddha Dhamma in society could have a dramatically invigorating effect on Buddhism, both in the East and West.

However, if Buddhist teaching is to be made available to all those in India who want it, we think three things need to happen. These are:

- training, especially the development of a dedicated cadre of Dhamma teachers

- an effective system of teaching for the very large numbers involved.
- a large scale and active response from the Buddhist world;

Training, and developing a dedicated cadre of Dhamma teachers

The most central question is that of Buddhist education and training. We see this as consisting of the following major areas:

a. Substantial basic training for one or two years. This would start off for 500 people at a secluded centre near Nagpur, which is the centre of the new Buddhist movement in India . As soon as possible numbers should be raised to 1000 or more. Eventually similar training centres should be established in different parts of India

b. Out of this training would emerge students who could be trained to constitute a dedicated cadre of highly selected Dharma workers. Their job would be to teach the Dharma in the villages and localities throughout India and sustain people there in their Buddhist lives. They would be:
   - Highly motivated and dedicated to full-time work: Members would be ready to move anywhere they might be required, given a reasonable and human process of consultation.
   - Carefully selected in terms of intelligence, resourcefulness, know ledge and understanding, social facility, communication skills, individuality, spiritual commitment.
   - Thoroughly trained in spiritual life and practise, all aspects of the Buddha Dharma, various life and teaching skills, and in one or more languages.
   - Guided by the most appropriate and effective management systems.
   - Working in cooperation and harmony with other Buddhists and like minded people, not competing for resources or followers or duplicating their work.

We need to train many such Dhamma workers as soon as possible to cater for the needs of the millions who want to know about the Buddha and His Dhamma.

c. This training would include both meditation and Buddhist studies. Some will want to take these much deeper and should be encouraged to do so as both are essential to the redevelopment of Buddhism in India . HH the Dalai Lama is personally urging us to pay very serious attention to this. Without higher studies taking place among some people within the overall system outlined below there will be a tendency to drift into confused views, and without deeper meditation by some people the whole system will lack the sublimity that invests everything with sacredness.

An effective system of teaching for the enormous numbers involved in town and villages throughout India

This requires a carefully structured system of teachings, practices, and institutions through which the cadre of Dhamma workers can work.

The Principles of the system would include:

a. Clear guidelines for practise and action: People in the villages and towns will need to know exactly what they need to do to practise the Buddha Dharma, e.g. recite the refuges and precepts every day, practice dana every day, daily puja/chanting, listen to certain taped/videoed lectures each week, etc. These guidelines should be clear, tangible, and practical as well as provide for different stages of engagement.

b. Well-articulated teaching: The Dharma should be boiled down to what people need to know at the different stages of engagement, and explained very clearly in handbooks, and supported by appropriate books, tapes, and videos, etc. in local languages. This material should be carefully prepared with as much 'science' and 'art' as possible so that it is easily understood, absorbed, and memorised, and so that it translates easily into practical action.

c. Sacred, ritual element: The teaching needs to have a compelling power. This is in some ways the most difficult

but the most significant element of the whole formula. A key component of what people do needs to be something of a 'sacralising' nature. The repetition of the Refuge formula is probably, in the context, the best basis — acceptable to all schools and creating an immediate connection with Dr Ambedkar's conversion. It can be used as a collective ritual on a daily basis and also as a mantra-like personal repetition at all times.

d. Cultural element: A closely allied area is the development of specifically Buddhist cultural forms, in the areas of 'Rites of Passage' — name-giving, weddings, funerals - festivals of key Buddhist events, as well as of the more general cultural life that gives richness, enjoyment, social bonding, and broad moral meaning to life — songs, plays, poetry, TV, film, etc.

e. Social action element: Given the appalling conditions in which so many live, there should be a parallel system that encourages people to take effective social action and supports them in doing so. Perhaps cadre members should not themselves run social organisations, although some of them might run agencies that helped others to do so, putting them in touch with funding agencies and other resources. A strategy of relevant and effective social action would need to be worked out and key issues identified such as advocacy for legal rights and against atrocity, or education.

f. Social context: Beyond the most basic one of becoming a Buddhist, each participant would need an immediate arena for the experience of Sangha and a context for personal practice. While this needs considerable thought, each group or kula could be led by a member who him/herself belongs to a kula at the next stage up and be a channel between the kula and higher levels and stages of the system.

g. Youth wing: There could be a youth wing to provide guidance, support, and solidarity for young people in different situations: primary and secondary schools, in vocational training, and college students

h. Non-sectarian: Although the system is explicitly articulated and defined, it is avowedly non-sectarian and opens people to the Buddhist tradition as a whole. Other Buddhists are encouraged to participate in the system and can be trained how they might do so, without compromise to their own schools and traditions.

i. Possibilities of higher and further commitment: The system is structured to give always the possibility of higher commitment to those capable of it, whether through membership of the cadre, of the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha (Western Buddhist Order), or of other Buddhist Sanghas. While the system is here articulated to support Buddhists who continue to live at home and to work, as well as to train and support their teachers, it allows opportunities for those who want to study the Buddha Dharma much more deeply, whether within an academic context or a monastic one, and/or who want to meditate much more rigorously. Such scholars and meditators should be able to feed in their own contributions.

j. Equality of the sexes: The system should be truly egalitarian in every way, including in terms of gender. Special efforts would have be made to overcome the gender bias of Indian society, especially at the bottom. However, this should not exclude there being separate facilities for men and women, as appropriate.

k. Dhammicaly there would need to be a clearly graded structure of involvement and practice — a 'graduated Path'.

l. Organisationally there would need to be a clear structure starting at village/locality level, through taluka, district, state etc. The organisation eventually could mirror the administrative structure, so that those responsible can maintain appropriate and necessary connections with administrative and political authorities.

The Buddhist World.

Dr. Ambedkar: "The duty of a good Buddhist is not merely to be a good Buddhist. His duty is to spread Buddhism. They must have the belief that to spread Buddhism is to serve mankind."

When Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism he desperately hoped the Buddhist world would educate his poor, oppressed and exploited followers in the Dhamma. It did not. The present speed and momentum of interest in Buddhism requires the enormous resources, both in terms of funds and well-trained

and effective Dharma teachers. We hope that Buddhists throughout the world will support this work in both ways.

a. Enormous funds are required to develop and maintain training centres and the cadre of Dhamma workers.
b. Thousands of Dhamma teachers are required. They should be:

i. Committed to cooperating in this work through a broad common approach, which does not compromise their own distinctive traditions.
ii. Willing to teach at the general and basic stages from the teachings of the historical Buddha found in the Pali Nikayas, Sanskrit Agamas, and equivalent material in the Tibetan cannon: e.g. Three Refuges, The Four Noble Truths, the 37 Factors of Enlightenment.
iii. Share Dr Ambedkar's vision of the ideal society and of social change based on the Dhamma and are willing to work creatively with his approach as contained in his *The Buddha and His Dhamma* and *The Buddha and the Future of His Religion.*

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is very interested in this work and it is hoped that other leading Buddhists throughout the world, representing as many different major schools and traditions as possible, will also take an active interest

The Contribution of TBMSG

TBMSG is, at present, in a unique position to catalyse, facilitate, and contribute to this work in India . We have 30 years of experience working in India and we have developed a spiritual community there of men and women that has considerable integrity and effectiveness. Sangharakshita, our founder, has taught us a radical emphasis on the essentials of the Dhamma, which enables us to value and draw from all schools and traditions. And we have a deep appreciation and understanding of the significance of Dr Ambedkar's conversion, and have learnt how to work with his thinking as a gateway to the full riches of the Buddhist tradition.

We want to offer our resources and experience to the collective task of reviving Buddhism in India . At the same time, we have no interest in dominating or controlling that work: there is too much for one group to undertake and greater creativity and effectiveness is likely to result from multiple approaches. Our vision is of different schools and traditions working side by side, each able to maintain its distinctive character while cooperating harmoniously with others and collaborating on an equal basis where appropriate.

In TBMSG, we want to contribute fully our own distinctive approach and understanding, alongside other Buddhists doing the same. We believe we can best help this to happen by:

1. *encouraging* others to participate in this work, each working independently but in cooperation.

2. *cooperating* harmoniously with those who do such work.

3. *training* those from other schools and traditions who want it in:

a. the social and historical background from which most Indian Buddhists are likely to come;
b. Dr Ambedkar's life, thinking , and mission;
c. what we have found to be the most effective ways of working with people.

This is perhaps one of our key contributions and one that we have already begun;

4. *exemplifying* good and effective work by

i. forming a cadre of teachers,
ii. operating within a well thought out, organised system of institutions, teachings, and practices.

Preliminary Action

1. Training.

For the last five years we have been running basic one and two year courses in basic Buddhism at the Nagarjuna Institute, Nagpur . So far over 350 students from 15 states in India have completed the course. Many of them are sharing what they learnt and organising Dhamma activities in their areas.

The proposal now is to train as soon as possible 500-1000 students a year. The campus of the Nagarjuna Institute in Nagpur is not large enough and so we are intending to raise funds to purchase at least 100 acres within an hour from Nagpur. This would be an extension of the Nagarjuna Institute. The accommodation would be cheap and environmentally sustainable. This land will allow scope to develop the

Dhamma worker cadre training as well as the deeper training in meditation and Buddhist studies.

2. Teachers

At present we have a few people who can manage both the basic training mentioned above and the Dhamma worker cadre training. In the next two years we are aiming at raising this number to 50. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has already sent one Tibetan monk for a short period of teaching, and is happy to send more. We are keen to involve Buddhists from different traditions in the training as soon as possible.

3. Workshops for other Buddhists

We held a three day workshop for Tibetan monks, nuns, leaders and lay professors in Dharamsala in May encouraged by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Afterwards the Kalon Tripa, the head of the Tibetan Government in Exile, said, "the forum, a first of its kind, must chalk out a realistic action plan that can be implemented by the Central Tibetan Administration, NGOs and various educational institutions."

In a similar manner we would like to do everything we can to share our experience with Buddhists from other traditions to help them to work in the situation.

Lokamitra

Towards a Culture of Peace: A Buddhist Perspective[1]

One of the most accurate and concise descriptions of the twentieth century was made by a renown and prodigious British musician, Yehudi Menuhin, who said that "it raised the greatest hopes ever conceived by humanity, and destroyed all illusions and ideals".

At the dawn of the century, hopes for a lasting peace prevailed in the world. Even the First World War was believed to be "the war that ends all wars". Less than two decades later, however, the Second World War broke out, followed by the cold war, and its subsequent proxy wars in every corner of the world. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the cold war, global peace was expected and "the end of history" was believed to be im-minent. But that optimism was shattered by civil wars in the Balkans and other countries in Asia and Africa.

The previous century boasts one of the bloodiest eras. Between 1900 and 1989, 86 million people have perished in various wars. On top of it was 48 million



people who were killed by their own governments (including the ones led by Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot). Many of them were victims of the unprecedented extensive genocides.

The twenty first century features no better prospects. The first year of this century was marked by international terrorism that triggered anti-terrorism wars all over the world, not to mention civil wars and armed conflicts in 30 countries, with a combined population of 2.3 billions. In other words, today a third of the world's population is at war.[2]

These wars and armed conflicts are made possible not only by the sole decision of the leaders. Waged against people's consent, any war cannot last. Decade-long wars and armed conflicts have been perpetuated by support of people from all walks of life. They do not just endorse them but are also willing to shoulder their costs, materially, physically, or morally.

Though part of the inclination toward wars and the willingness to absorb their costs has been driven by brilliant political propaganda or powerful political manipulation, but for the propaganda and manipulation to succeed, one factor is indispensable, namely, culture. Culture involves collective beliefs, values, and attitudes shared by people in the same country. And a part of culture has been used to justify violence and encourage people to resort to its use. Thus, wars can erupt at the national scale. Such part of culture can be called "culture of violence".

Components of a culture of violence

According to Buddhism, three fundamental attitudes or mental qualities are essential in thrusting people to use violence and wage wars. First among them is the sense of superiority, or conceit, regarding ethnicity, race, language, religion, or wealth. Twinned to this attitude is the one that regards people of different identity as inferior. Getting too extreme, such a negative attitude results in the denial of one's humanity, and to inflict violence on them is just one small step ahead. A case in point is the Holocaust which could happen because some Germans regarded the Jews as a "disease", a "virus" or being "subhuman". Similarly, the civil war in ex-Yugoslavia escalated rapidly and brutally as people from both sides denied each other's humanity. While the Croats were described in Serbia as "vampires", the Serbians were represented in Croatia's newspapers as "beasts in human form" or "bloodsuckers". During the Gulf War, the killing of retreating Iraqi soldiers was described by the US Marines as "turkey shoot". A lieutenant-colonel compared the Iraqi troops he saw from his plane to "cockroaches".[3]

Conceit is conducive to maltreatment against people regarded as inferior. No conceit is more dangerous than the morally superior one since it tends to regard "others" as "evil". Once one is taken as evil, his or her existence is not warranted for and he or she needs to be eliminated. Violence against other is thus morally justified and the act of violence glorifies the perpetrators.

While identity helps to forge unity among people from the same category, it excludes people of different category who are then regarded as "others". Hence, the separation between "they" against "us" and the tendency toward hostility. The hostility is rapidly intensified once the sense of "they" against "us" is strengthened by the moral label "we are good, you are evil". Difference of ethnicity, race, or language can give rise to such hostility. But it cannot be compared to religious or sectarian difference. The more devoted one is to one's religion, the stronger sense of one being "good", and more likely to regard people who believe and behave differently as "bad" or "evil".

During the cold war, one important question was "which side are you on?". Today it could be replaced by "who you are?", white or black, Thai or Burmese, Hindu or Muslim, Sunni or Shiite. These identities, especially the religiously related ones, become an explosive political issue which determines power relationship of different actors in the political arena. It is a powerful force that mobilizes the country's political resources towards the desired course of action. Moreover, it influences the projection of other people (with different identity) as an enemy or a culprit responsible for the decline or crisis in one's country. The Jews in Germany were, for example, denounced for being the source of all corruptions and problems in Germany before and during the Second World War. Politics of identity therefore contributes to the current accumulated hatred and wide-spread violence with the support of existing culture of violence (especially the sense of superiority/inferiority of one's identity). The politics of identity is intensified by a culture of violence, and vice versa.

The second component of a culture of violence is the attachment to ideas or ideologies. If such attachment goes extreme it can drive the believers to do everything, even sacrificing oneself or killing the others, to fulfill an idea or ideology. On one hand the world witnessed the heroic sacrifice of innumerable people for the rise of Communism in Russia, China, Vietnam, and Cambodia. On the other hand, massacres that shocked the world have taken place in these countries simply for the eradication of obstacles to ideology adhered to by the rulers.[4]

Communism is now on a decline and is being replaced by many other ideologies that command people's mind and drive them towards violence. One of them is nationalism which can lead to either the restoration of sovereignty or ongoing civil wars. Furthermore, religion is another ideology that can fuel various forms of violence, i.e. international war, civil war, terrorism, and communal violence.

Obsessed with a particular ideology, people who share different ideology are taken as an enemy. And engulfed with hatred, one has no hesitation in attacking other. With the obsession driven by conceit that supposes ourselves to be morally superior to others, the nonbelievers or morally inferior or evil persons are thought to be unworthy for living. With such conviction, some pro-life activists feel justified in invading the abortion clinic and shooting doctors inside. Some extremist environmental activists can also kill animal torturers. Similarly, an obsessive religion can engender hostile attitude to the nonbelievers, perhaps much more than other ideologies can.

The third component of a culture of violence is craving. The most powerful craving nowadays is consumerism which promises us that the more we consume the

happier we become. Such a belief leads to insatiable desires, competition, and exploitation in every level, from personal to global. Hence, violence, crimes, armed conflicts and wars. It is estimated that about a quarter of wars and armed conflicts nowadays has been triggered by struggles for natural resources. Fighting among different ethnic groups in the same country is also motivated by attempts to control natural resources. Genocide in Rwanda, for example, is linked to competition for land, thus many land owners have been killed by people of the same ethnicity in the same village.

Apart from direct violence, exploitation and interest-induced conflict also lead to another kind of violence such as poverty and famine. Everyday around 1.1 billion, or one in five of the world's population live in hunger. Widespread hunger and malnutrition exist, despite the abundance of food in the world, thus the problems cannot be attributed to a lack of resources. The real reason is the unjust economic and trade system designed to serve the insatiable desire of a few, at the national and global levels, the result of which is a huge gap between the rich and the poor. While every year, 9 million poor people die of a lack of clean water (the problem of which can be addressed with 9 billion USD), the Europeans spend 11 billion USD just for ice cream, and 12 billion USD for perfume, not to mention 24 billion USD spent globally for skin care and 38 billion USD for hair care.

The globalized economy and communication, especially the liberalization of market, has propelled consumerism stimulating the desire and competition for natural resources all over the world. Meanwhile, the rapid expansion of western culture has led to increasing insecure feeling. People fear that their local cultures will be marginalized and their identity will disappear. The intimidation forces them to fight back to preserve their beloved culture and identity. The notion that their race, language, and religion are superior to others has been reinforced time and again and it has led to more entrenched conceit. Along with that, attempts are made to use traditional ideology or identity as a weapon to wage wars against globalization. Robust religiosity and nationalism thus exist everywhere, mostly in militant versions, as a reaction to the perceived threats from outside. The growing diversity of ideas and beliefs in the globalization age has also led to conflicts and hostility even in the same community and, at times, could be attributed as a cause of violence.

In sum, in the age of globalization, conceit and clinging to ideas and craving are being intensified and contribute to the expansion of a culture of violence.

Culture of peace

A culture of peace is defined by collective attitudes, values, and beliefs that discourage violence and lead to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. While the culture of violence is founded on conceit, attachment to ideas, and craving, the culture of peace rests on respect of others, tolerance, and contentment.

Values or attitudes that unite people, regardless of identity and belief, are badly needed in the age of globalization to prevent increasing polarization. Apart from extreme prosperity that exists amidst abject poverty, the world witnesses the rise of globalism hand in hand with the rise of tribalism. There is also a huge division between the world of materialism and the world of religiosity — between the McWorld and Jihad. Not to mention the division between secularism and fundamentalism. The bipolarity is well registered in many respects in this age of extreme.

The world's divisions can be relieved once every faction opens their minds, respects others' identity, and practices generosity. This can be achieved only when we recognize humanity in each other. We have more in common than different, i.e. the pursuit of happiness, aversion to suffering, longing for respect, desire to be good, and care for our dignity.

Apart from realizing and giving due respect to our common humanity, a belief in nonviolence is another intrinsic value to the culture of peace. Violence helps to settle a problem temporarily, but creates new problems in the long run, or even exacerbates the old problems. Though the use of violence may lead to the elimination of some evil persons, it can produce the new ones as well including the perpetrators themselves. Violent revolution can neither eradicate all evil people nor create lasting peace. After their opponents are gone, they tend to point their guns to each other and a new round of purge will start.

Last but not least, a culture of peace rests on simplicity that enables us to experience happiness through good work and meaningful life, and achieve inner happiness through peaceful mind free from anger, hatred, and greed. In other words, the awareness that happiness is not out there, but right inside our mind.

Religion and its contribution to a culture of peace

The three fundamental components of a culture of violence,

conceit, attachment to ideology, and craving, are essentially self-centered attitudes. It is the nature of ego or self, either personal or collective, that demands everything to support its greatness. Identity, ideology or materials are therefore used by the ego to serve its own interest.

Every established religion aims to reduce selfishness and free one's mind from self-centered attitudes. It therefore goes against the culture of violence. By cherishing love, tolerance, respect for humanity in everybody, and pointing the way for inner happiness, each religion is supportive to the culture of peace. In fact, each religion regards peace for humanity as its ultimate objective.

Practicing the teaching of each religion can inspire goodness or new quality of mind, i.e. compassion, generosity, and sacrifice for the others. Religion is therefore a main force for reconciliation in society. It can help to reduce exploitation or oppression as evidenced in campaign against war, slave abolition, dictatorship, and campaign for civil rights of the coloured people during the past centuries.

However, undeniably, religion can instigate violence. Often times, religion is used to justify violence in different forms, including war for religious propagation and preservation. Historically, religion was frequently used to sanction violence to people who were not devout believers. Likewise, a lot of violence and wars are waged in the name of religion.

As mentioned before, religion, as an identity, is used to reinforce self-centered attitude or superior conceit among the devout believers, while the nonbelievers are labeled as evil. Moreover, the extreme attachment to religion can contribute to strong conviction that holds anything is permissible for the glory of religion. In other word, deviated religious adherence could be a license to kill people of other faiths. This attitude is apparently shared by a lot of fundamentalists or extremists.

It should be noted that the extreme notion does not exist just among religious fundamentalists, but also the secularists including communists, neo-conservatives , or environmentalists. In numerous incidents, millions of people were killed by extreme secularists like Nazis, and communists. Some extreme environmentalists even declared recently that "everything is permitted".

Religion is also used to support consumerism. A lot of religious teachings are misused to embrace the pursuit for prosperity and material accumulation. Turning to god or the sacred for fortune and wealth becomes a global phenomenon. Religious establishment becomes a spectacular showcase of material excess as religious leaders are bestowed with a luxurious life. It is not exaggerated to say that many religious establishments become the medium of consumerism that sanctions and intensifies craving and lead to more competition and exploitation.

In short, religion (or its interpretation) can be a source of a culture of violence. This is the challenge for believers who wish to see religion as a beacon for a culture of peace.

Beyond extreme religious attachment

Religion has a lot of potentials to create a culture of peace. Initially, however, religion has to avoid being the source of a culture of violence.

Religion can contribute to violence if religious attachment has gone extreme, nurturing conceit. To curb this tendency, religious believers must be encouraged to cultivate critical self-reflection or critical self-awareness that prevents conceit from dominating the mind. In fact, each religion essentially aims to free one from self-centered attitudes. Once one understands deeply the essence of one's religion, selfishness will be gone, and conceit and craving can no longer exist. Anger and hatred will also find no place in mind. One is unlikely to be overwhelmed by a dualist perspective of "they" against "us" or pass moral judgment that "we are good" and "you are evil" since one is well aware that this is conceit in disguise. Critical self-reflection helps one to be aware that the line that divides good and evil is in our mind, rather than out there.[5]

A lack of critical self-awareness creates a time bomb in our mind which can explode any time. Thus, one can create all forms of violence. Even without weapons in hand, the 9/11 terrorists have managed to kill thousands of people with the commandeering of commercial planes. Through the practice of deep and critical self-awareness, one can get rid of the time bomb in one's mind and be free from conceit and self-centered attitudes.

Once the mental bomb is defused , we will be free, open, and stay aloof the wall of religion or identity that separates us from others. From there, we can see common humanity in every human being. In spite of holding on to many religions or faiths, all of us are one. In fact every human being can wear various identities, not only Buddhist, Christian, or Muslim. But our religious identification can sometimes keep us from seeing others in entirety. We see them as to what religion

they profess or which religious "label" they have, but nothing else[6]. Such an attitude toward religion obviously narrows our perspective. Even though religion should otherwise deepen our mind and broaden our perspective.

Religion can be compared to the "root" that helps to deepen our mind and enable us to feel secure and grounded. It can be more than that, however. Religion should give us the "wings" that free our mind, and help us to see the world and humanity from a broad perspective. From a bird's eye view, all differences of humans on the earth, be it religion, race, skin, language, are undistinguishable. Only our common humanity is apparent.

Realizing oneness of humanity brings us closer and helps us see each other as friends, brothers or sisters, undivided by religion, race, or skin. Anger and hatred will wither away. We will realize by then that our enemy is not an human being, but conceit, craving, attachment to ideology, and selfishness. Eliminating human beings can never be a real solution to problems which can be permanently solved through freeing the opponent's mind from negative qualities with the help of love and goodness. The more violence we use, the more anger and hatred developed in our mind, leading to more violent response. The spiral of violence will become endless. Thus the Buddha said "Conquer anger by love, conquer evil by good, conquer the miser by liberality, and conquer the liar by truth".

Ultimately, freedom of mind can be achieved not just through renouncing self-centered attitude, anger or hatred alone, but attachment to religion as well. Any ideology or religion can imprison or fetter our mind. But religion can also give us the wings to fly above the ideological prison. And that state of mind happens when the true essence of religion is understood and religious detachment is attained. As the Buddha said, we have to use a raft to cross the river. Once ashore, we have to leave the raft behind. No wise man would bother carrying the raft with him.

Even when the true essence of religion is not fully understood, being on guard against attachment to religion can be useful for us and others. The following contemplative mindfulness of Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing is a good reminder for all religious who care for peace:

> "Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, we are determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist teachings are guiding means to help us learn to look deeply and to develop our understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill, or die for.
>
> "Aware of the suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, we are determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. We shall learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to other's insights and experiences. We are aware that the knowledge we presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life, and we will observe life within and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives."

Realizing the true essence of one's own religion brings about deep and comprehensive transformation of one's mind. With free and open minds, all human beings embrace each other with unbound compassion. We can thus witness common humanity in all persons regardless of identity difference. This can significantly contribute to a culture of peace in the deepest level.

Action for a culture of peace

Apart from helping to cultivate deep personal transformation, religion can help to reinforce a culture of peace by promoting changes in collective value and attitude through peace education and media, humanitarian work, and action to stem violence in society.

Peace Education

My definition of peace education is the promotion of values for peaceful co-existence, i.e. tolerance, respect for diversity, forgiveness, and compassion. Through both formal and non-formal education, people can learn to respect the dignity of human life, regardless of religion, language, race or ideology. Faith in nonviolence and the understanding that violence always begets violence are among peace attitudes that need to be cultivated. In addition to peace attitudes, peace education should embrace skills for peaceful conflict resolution. Conflict is a fact of life and, like difference in ideas, it can be both negative and positive, depending how it is handled. Learning to deal with conflict constructively forges mutual understanding among parties involved in conflicts.

Peace Media

Peace media should also be an integral part of peace education. Through emphasizing our common humanity rather than the tad bit of difference we share, they can extensively reduce

biases or stereotypes toward the minority or people of different ethnicities and religions. Their way of life, tradition, beliefs, and aspirations should be presented in such a way that nurtures better understanding among peoples.

Apart from reducing anger and hatred, peace education and media should play the role in keeping materialism and consumerism at bay. Materialism and consumerism are now the main forces dominating present education and media even though it is too artificial to quantify reality simply in monetary term. Therefore, promoting alternatives to the materialistic worldview and happiness beyond wealth or consumption should be an important task to be completed through peace education and media. The value of peace emanated from good work and inner peace should be upheld.

Humanitarian Work

The core values of culture of peace are love and generosity. Such values are best manifested not through preaching but concrete humanitarian work. Culture of peace is developed by concerted efforts to relieve fellow humans from all kinds of suffering, i.e. poverty, physical or mental abuse, exploitation, and oppression. Uplifting the quality of life contributes to the prosperity of a culture of generosity and develops peace in society. Moreover, it also portrays that happiness can be attained through giving, not excessive possession or consumption. The less egoistic the believer is, the more likely she or he shares the suffering of fellow human beings. In other words, humanitarian work is an important indicator of how much one is free from egoistic attitudes.

Action to stem violence

Violence exists at various levels, personal, communal or national. By reducing or stopping violence, one can show succinctly that violence is unacceptable. The reason that violence is widespread in society is the belief that violence (at least the domestic one, or capital punishment) is acceptable. Religion should play an active role in stemming all forms of violence, including wars.

Beyond direct violence is structural violence which creates and upholds the structure that promotes or justifies exploitation systematically and leads to poverty, sickness, and human rights violation. Structural violence is ingrained in the current economic, political and judiciary systems that massively inflict suffering on people. Religion should play a role in stemming structural violence.

To achieve that, these values are indispensable, namely, compassion toward those in suffering, courage to face all difficulties, wisdom to understand profound causes, and self-awareness to overcome conceit, attachment to ideas, and craving. All these moral forces can strongly inspire believers to take on difficult task as shown in history. On the contrary, however, religion has recently been used to propel killings among believers. The time is ripe for religion to drive the believers to sacrifice themselves to protect lives of others and bring peace to the world through compassion, courage, wisdom, and self-awareness stemming from their deep personal transformation. There is no other way for a culture of peace to prevail the world.

Phra Paisal Visalo

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[1] Keynote address for the International Conference on Religion and Culture at Payap University on June 25, 2006

[2] Jessica Williams *"50 Facts that Should Change the World"* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2004) p.140

[3] Jonathan Glover "Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century" (Yale: Yale University Press,1999) pp 50, 130

[4] The following remark by one of Stalin's cadres illustrates the influence of ideological attachment, which in extreme case, is tantamount to a license to kill people, "Our great goal was the universal triumph of communism, and for the sake of that goal everything was permissible—to lie, to steal, to destroy hundreds of thousands and even millions of people, all those who were hindering our work or who could hinder it, everyone who stood in the way." Such an attitude also prevailed among the communist workers in other countries, including Cambodia. During the Khmer Rouge regime, one of its slogan was "One or two million young people are enough to make the new Kampuchea!" The rest of the population, which amounts to around six millions, was dispensable. (ibid, pp. 259, 306)

[5] Solzhenitsyn, the Russian Nobel laureate, made this point succinctly clear that: "If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being".

[6] A Croat remarked the role of nationalism in reducing people to only one dimension of nationality: "The trouble with this nationhood, however, is that whereas before, I was defined by my education, my job, my ideas, my character—and , yes, my nationality too—now I feel stripped of all that. I am nobody because I am not a person any more. I am one of 4.5 million Croats". (Glover,p.152) It is undeniable that religion can play the same role of reducing person's identities to one of religion.

Why We Have to Love our Community

A nation can become strong only when its numerous small communities are strong

"Dear brothers, sisters and friends who are gathered here to witness the erection of Charoen Wataksorn's Monument, which is named by Acharn Naowarat Pongpaibool (the SeaWrite laureate) as Thoranong na Thoranee (Pride of our land).

Originally, the artists who built this statue wanted to honour Charoen Wat-aksorn, the head of the Bo Nok-Kuiburi Rak Thongthin (Love our community) group, who was murdered on June 21, 2004. But the real meaning of the statue, as everybody here agrees and which is why we have come from different parts of the country to declare our common will today, is that it is a symbol of the struggle of commoners like us, those who fight because they love their homeland, those who selflessly chip in to build strong communities.

Why do we need an 'ideology' of loving and protecting our communities?

Throughout the long history of this country, a number of communities have stood up to fight for the right to determine their own future. Numerous struggles have been witnessed. Blood has been shed of blood and the lives of faceless people have been sacrificed. Sometimes they lose. Sometimes they win. But they have always fought with dignity.

They fight simply because sheer common sense says that we have lived for years on this land. Good or bad, we have lived here from the times of our ancestors. We have brought up our families thanks to the land, river, forest, and the sea. We have always lived together as a community, as kindred families. Sometimes we live in harmony, other times we quarrel. But we still belong to the same communities. We have to depend on one another.

So if one day, someone or some group threatens to break our rice bowl and tear apart our communities, we can do nothing but fight. This is our basic instinct. This is pure common sense. We have a clear-cut goal that we fight for in order to save our lives, our rice pot, the pots where we buried our umbilical cords.

Don't just toss words like 'the national interest' or 'the interest of the majority' at us, to tell us that we must sacrifice.

The majority is indeed an aggregation of the so-called minorities, the scattering of ordinary folks. How can the majority have pride if the minorities continue to be oppressed?

How can the interest of the majority be real if it comes from theft, destruction, and exploitation of the minorities?

The nation consists of numerous small communities.

When the communities are strong, a nation becomes strong. We know the colours of the national flag.

But when we stand up to protect our community, we sew our own flags. We cut the sticks to make our own flagpoles. We ourselves select what colours we want to use.

When we raise the green or red flags, this is not to deny the national flag.

On the contrary, this is to reconfirm our identity as one of the communities that build up a nation.

If we do not survive, the nation will not survive, either.

The movements of local peoples may appear to be specific to a certain issue or area. But it is within such small-scale movements that we know what is happening. We can see through every single part, every single component of a movement. Because it is our movement. It is under our eyes, our control and our joint decision. Even the core leaders cannot make any decision, or conduct any act without monitoring and evaluation by our own people.

It is such a small field like this that trains us to be ready for bigger fields.

From the ideology of loving our communities, we can keep up with the traps and the real meanings of the bigger ideologies.

For us, the genuine structural and policy change must start from the small feet of people who have walked together, who have been through the ups and downs to push for the change together, pace by pace, step by step.

As long as each step forward is on our own feet, by a decision of our own making.

Whether it is slow, or even sometimes broken by a fall, we can still take pride in the fact that these are our steps.

Our friends from the Assembly of the Poor once told us that the constitution must be written by our own feet.

So we do believe that we have to become active to shape the constitution together so that the country's highest law will become what we want.

Brothers and sisters, you may not be aware that in preparation for this gathering, many of us here have been depriving themselves of sleep. They took turns carrying the stones, sand, and concrete to build the platform of this monument.

Any monument, however big or important, cannot stand without a platform.

The ideology of loving our communities is an ideology of people who believe in working to build the platform grounds to serve the monument or a historic upheaval that is to arise.

It is our belief that the strength of local communities is key to the change, so we plan to turn this ground where the monument stands into a school. This will be a forum for the exchange of experiences among people who struggle to protect their communities. There will be a collection of stories of people who have fought to protect their land. This will serve to keep the records of history by the local people, people who have taken part in rewriting their own history.

This "school" will house the histories of movements by people in Prachuap Khiri Khan and from other communities around the country. It will serve as a hub of villagers who believe in the need to fight to protect their homes.

They can come to meet, exchange and work together to give moral support to one another.

We would like to see numerous communities stand up to build their own history, to fight to protect their homes with strength, to carry and pass on the ideology of loving their communities to other places.

After all, keeping up the strength and ideology of the locals here has not been easy. Our fight is far from over. The Bo Nok-Hin Krut power plants may have been scrapped. But new power plant projects, be they coal, gas, or nuclear-fuelled, are waiting to get in at any time. Mega-industrial plants like Sahaviriya's are eyeing the expansion of their empire to usurp the resources and threaten the health of people of Prachuap. The public land at Khlong Chaithong is still in the hands of local influential groups.

If and when our communities are not aware of the importance of uniting ourselves, of standing on our own feet, past victories will become only mere legends, stories of yore that will eventually be forgotten and destroyed, along with our way of life and the resources of the community.

Then we will only have this bronze monument left, nothing else. We will become a community that has lost its dignity, being dissolved; a community of slaves in a nation that calls itself Thailand." (Land of the free).

This is a translation of the speech delivered by Korn-uma Pongnoi on June 21 on the occasion of the third anniversary of the death of Charoen Wataksorn, her husband. On that day, a monument of Thailand's first commoner was unveiled on the spot where Charoen was gunned down.

Korn-Uma Pongnoi

3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness

WORLD VIEWS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. TOWARDS GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

After international meetings on Gross National Happiness in Thimphu, Bhutan, 2004, and in Nova Scotia, Canada, 2005, the third GNH conference will start with an inter-faith gathering at Wat Hin Mak Peng, a Buddhist meditation center in the forest tradition in Nongkhai Province, Northern Siam. Religious leaders from Bhutan, the Mekong region and other parts of the world will introduce dialogue on happiness and inner transformation. The first part of the conference will also include a community leaders' forum and workshops; it will culminate in Loy Krathong celebrations, 24 November (full moon) at the banks of the Mekong river. Optional pre-conference activities will include a boattrip on the Mekong river and an excursion to Vientiane, Laos.

The second part of the conference, 26-28 November, will be

held at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. A provisional list of resource persons is given at the end of this article. The morning of 29 November will be a special post-conference session on the future of Gross National Happiness hosted by the Center for Bhutan Studies.

Transformation needed

The 3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness is anticipated to be a critical and fertile momentum to review cultural integrity in Asia and the world, giving creative impetus to an 'undercurrent' of ongoing social transformation. Gross National Happiness, GNH, challenges GDP-driven economic growth that dominates development and results in unbalanced economic globalization. GDP, Gross Domestic (or National) Product, is the ultimate yardstick to measure corporate — government supported—success or failure of development. More and more research proves that GDP is misguiding citizens in the belief that accumulation of economic production leads to more happiness and well-being. In the transformation process needed to turn the tide, creative partnerships with persons and organizations from all continents of the world are essential. Cultural values, world views, and even the integrity of religions have been bended to support the misguided belief that competition for wealth leads to more happiness.

The title of the 3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness is: WORLD VIEWS MAKE A DIFFERENCE. TOWARDS GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION.

The objectives of the conference are:

1. to raise awareness on Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a concept challenging mainstream development

2. to strengthen and initiate networking and advocacy efforts among critical stakeholders of development policies and practice

3. to explore and strengthen research frameworks shaping a diversity of local happiness and well-being indicators, standards and indexes, leading towards a global trend and guidelines for alternative public policy development.

Alternative Development

Amidst accelerated economic growth and the creation of unprecedented business opportunities in India and China, with enormous impact on cultures and environment; political turbulence in Thailand and Bangladesh; complete stagnation in Myanmar; violence in Sri Lanka —to mention only some challenges to cultural integrity in Asia, the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan will adopt its first Constitution endorsing the philosophy of Gross National Happiness!

Since 1974 Bhutan, in United Nations terminology a so-called 'Least Developed Country' (LDC), has challenged the fixation of 'development' on economic growth measured by Gross National Product.

The philosophy of Gross National Happiness was launched by the former King of Bhutan and guided Bhutan towards internal reforms and decentralization from an absolute monarchy to a democratic constitutional monarchy to be established in 2008. At the same time Bhutan opened up from complete isolation to interaction with the world community. Gradually, Bhutan gained recognition as a remarkable pioneer of alternative development, a creative voice in UN platforms, resulting in the first International Conference on Gross National Happiness in Thimphu, Bhutan, 2004.

On this occasion the present King of Bhutan H.M. Jigmi Khesar Wangchuk stated:

"I feel that there must be some convergence among nations on the idea of what the primary objective of development and progress should be — something Gross National Happiness seeks to bring about".

Since the first conference in Thimphu the network of policy makers, responsible business persons, religious leaders, academics and researchers, NGO's and community elders working on the concept each in their respective ways, is growing. A remarkable fact is that particularly interest among Youth groups is very strong. GNH is welcomed as a sign of hope and 'world views can make a difference'.

The second conference titled 'Local Pathways to Global Wellbeing' was held in Nova Scotia, Canada, June 2005 with strong involvement of groups worldwide.

In South East Asia organizations felt that the concept of GNH should be discussed in the first place with partners in the Mekong region, as many countries share 'Least Developed Country' status with Bhutan; and the Mekong river, like all great rivers in Asia, springs from the Himlaya's and the Tibetan plateau . This resulted in a regional GNH conference in 2006 and from there the initiative to organise the 3rd International

Conference on Gross National Happiness in Thailand, November 2007, evolved.

November 2007: critical momentum for resilience

While Bhutan will hold its historic first democratic elections in 2008, prepared by a careful process of decentralization, Thailand, in contrast, will see at the end of the year 2007 one of many elections, this time to end its 28th military coup d'etat since the proclamation of democracy in 1932.

In the perspective of contemporary Asia it is of utmost importance that opportunities for the continent's cultural resilience are recognized in a variety of new concepts for policy development, led by Gross National Happiness (Bhutan): Sufficiency Economy (Thailand), social entrepreneurship and micro-finance (Bangladesh), Earth Democracy (India), as well as Human Security (brought to the UN platform through leadership from Japan). In the same time in Europe and the USA Asian spirituality is embraced as an important source of understanding the meaning of personal 'liberation' or inner transformation. In addition, realization of 'engaged spirituality' as a guiding philosophy towards social transformation is gradually growing.

Within the context of turbulence, stagnation, detoriation and the emergence of new 'world views', the organizers of the 3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness invite stakeholders to engage in dialogue, interaction and networking to give direction to our future.

Stakeholders include governments and inter-governmental organizations; the business sector; NGO's, PO's and civil society; academic communities.

Youth participants will be an important core group in this creative process.

Hans van Willensward

Resource persons will include: Lyonpo Yigmi Thinley, former Prime Minister of Bhutan; Sulak Sivaraksa, social critic, Siam; Peter Hershock, East-West Center, Hawaii; Vandana Shiva, Beiya Vidyapeeth, India; Sombath Somphone, PADETC, Laos; Chea Vannah, Social Development Center, Cambodia; Paiboon Wattanasiritham, Deputy Prime Minister, Siam; John Ralston Saul, author, Canada; Dipal Barua, Grameen Bank, Bangladesh; Dasho Karma Ura, Director Center for Bhutan Studies; Phra Paisal Visalo, teacher in Engaged Buddhism, Siam; Takayoshi Kusago, researcher Osaka University, Japan; Nic Marks, New Economics Foundation, UK; Nicanor Perlas, CADI, Philippines; Ronald Colman, GPI Atlantic, Canada; Joyce Meuzelaar, Social Venture Network Europe, the Netherlands; Lokamitra, Buddhist teacher, India; Guo Peiyuan, SynTao, People's Republic of China; Mr. Harsha Kumara Navaratne, Sevalangka, Sri Lanka and Helena Norberg-Hodge with her new film *'An Economy of Happiness'*; many others are in the process of confirmation. **Please visit WWW.GNH-MOVEMENT.ORG for regular updates and registration.**

Learning to Create a Sustainable Future

We're becoming increasingly aware of the challenges which face us - on a global level, on an environmental level, on a social level and on a human level. Every day the media is full of stories about climate change, environmental destruction, dysfunctional societies and human suffering. These challenges are complex and often interconnected; responding isn't straightforward. There is now an education programme which shows how to move towards a sustainable future, which empowers citizens through knowledge and tools which enable them to actively participate in the design and creation of sustainable communities and bioregions.

Gaia Education is based on principles that recognize that humans are part of the web of life, and not above and apart from it; that our production and consumption patterns, our technologies and trade systems, our laws, social agreements and policies can ensure justice, sustainability and peace only if they are contextualised by and embedded in the Earth Family.

Ecovillage Design Education

An international group of sustainability educators has

created a curriculum called Ecovillage Design Education. It is organised around four dimensions of ecovillage design — Worldview, Social Design, Ecological Design and Economic Design. It is holistic and the starting point can be anywhere — see www.gaiaeducation.org for more details.

Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) empowers individuals with the knowledge for shaping their worlds and becoming more self-reliant while engaging in community, bioregional as well as international cooperation. EDE equips students with practical skills, analytic abilities and philosophical and spiritual depth for redesigning our human presence in the world. Drawing on the wisdom of traditional communities in Asia and around the world, as well as the emerging alternative paradigm in the West, EDE in Thailand will focus on a worldview which is relevant to the Asian region and beyond.

Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) is organising EDE in Thailand, and it will take place at Wongsanit Ashram near Bangkok from 2 December 2007 till 16 January 2008. The first four weeks is a holistic course in sustainable design, which covers the four dimensions of ecovillage design — worldview, social design, ecological design and economic design. The two weeks in January are for training of trainers.

EDE in Thailand : 2 to 30 December 2007

Week 1: Our starting point is the significance of ecovillage design in the present world context and the current paradigm of thinking — reviewing the many challenges that face us today, from climate change to social disintegration, from environmental destruction to the decline of spiritual values, to dealing with the unforeseen consequences of the global economy.

Week 2: We will build on this analysis by looking at the principles of ecovillage design as a response to some of these challenges — how to design low-impact human settlements, skills for building community, developing local and sustainable economics, embracing a holistic worldview. We will draw out the interconnections between the principles.

Week 3: We will uncover how these principles can be applied in the real world, learning from local examples and case studies from sustainable communities in the Asian region and around the world.

Week 4: Finally we will weave together principles and insights into integrated ecovillage design.

Training of Trainers - 2 to 16 January 2008

Weeks 5 and 6: Using an experiential and participatory approach, TOT will empower trainers to work in the field of education related to sustainability and ecovillage design. We will begin with community building and move on to key concepts in participatory learning such as knowing yourself, critical thinking, team teaching, designing workshops and evaluation. There will be opportunities to put the learning into action during teaching practice.

Wongsanit Ashram

The venue for the course is Wongsanit Ashram, a small ecocommunity of engaged Buddhists two hours outside Bangkok. We are a group of people working and living together for social change as an alternative community and organisation. The ashram is home to lots of interesting projects: Grassroots Leadership Training, mudhouse building, organic gardening, nature cure, alternative community research and Asian Ecovillage Network.

We are planning for a group of 30 people - 20 from the Asian region and 10 from elsewhere in the world. We invite grass-roots leaders, community and social activists, sustainability educators, students and youth to join this course.

You can find more information about the course on our website www.sulak-sivaraksa.org where you can download an application form and registration form. Email contact is EDE@semsikkha.org

Liz Serocold

What is an ecovillage?

Ecovillages are urban or rural communities of people, who strive to integrate a supportive social environment with a low impact way of life. To achieve this, they integrate various aspects of ecological design, permaculture, ecological building, green production, alternative energy, community building practices, and much more.

The motivation for ecovillages is "being the change you want to see in the world". It stems

from the choice and commitment to reverse the gradual disintegration of supportive social/cultural structures and the upsurge of destructive environmental practices on our planet. For millennia, people have lived in communities close to nature, and with supportive social structures. Many of these communities, or "ecovillages", exist to this day and are struggling for survival.

Ecovillages are now being created intentionally, so people can once more live in communities that are connected to the Earth in a way that ensures the wellbeing of all life-forms into the indefinite future. Ecovillages are one solution to the major problems of our time—the planet is experiencing the limits to growth, and our lives are often lacking meaningful content.

Ecovillages, by endeavoring for lifestyles which are "successfully continuable into the indefinite future", are living models of sustainability, and examples of how action can be taken immediately. They represent an effective, accessible way to combat the degradation of our social, ecological and spiritual environments.

See www.gen.ecovillage.org for more information.

Hwayoung Jeon

Dharmic Songs and Music the Dharmasangita

The *Dharmasangita*, a project under the support and administration of Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, has launched two activities during the past few months. The project is aimed to encourage and provide facilities for people of all spiritual inspirations who attempt to create music and songs reflecting Dharma or spiritual essences of human life.

In May 2007 the *Dharmasagita* project launched a songwriter contest, "*Tua Ku Khong Ku*," calling for young people to submit lyrics accompanying the tunes composed specifically for the contest by current pop-musicians in Siam. As part of the concept of "*Dharmasangita*" (*Dharma* plus *Sangita*, the latter of which means a musical combination), the songs and the lyrics will reflect younger generations' spiritual inspiration and understanding of themselves. The contest was supported in part by the Siam Cement Group Foundation, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the College of Music, Mahidol University. Currently more than 60 lyrics have been submitted to the contest.

At present, a mini-studio has also been set up and in operation. It was designed and built under professional consultancy provided by young studio practitioners who volunteer to assist in its making. Its equipments and computerized programs are up to professional standards. The studio has already been used for narrative recordings and the productions of music for documentaries.

Further activities will include the recordings of Thai Theravada chanting and hymns for further musical adaptation and composition. A small "spiritual" song festival will also be held monthly at Suan Ngern Mee Ma. The project will also support the production of CDs for music composed and played by spiritually-inspired musicians.

The *Dharmasangita* welcome people and projects of all spiritual orientations to utilize its studio in order to record and produce songs and music for a "Dharmic" life and society. Its uses in recording and musical accompaniment for documentaries are also encouraged. And, of course, donation and support for the project will be highly beneficial for the musical dimension of Dharma — a gift of Dharma in a new form for the comtemporay world. In either case, please contact our staff at the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation.

Vira Somboon

Why we need a Democracy that is "edible" and a Politics in which the Poor Matter

I must stress that the democratization of Siam 75 years ago was done in the name of the People's Party or the majority in the kingdom—that is, the poor. The first constitution of the kingdom of Siam, which made its appearance three days after the Revolution, clearly states thus: "The supreme power in the country belongs to the people." This was the first time in Thai history that the people owned the country. This was also a declaration that the poor mattered. Prior to the Revolution, the people were treated as merely slaves or servants—or debris and dusts. That is, they had no significance for the ruling elites aside from being used to extract their labor and tax money. The ruling class, on the other hand, enjoyed all kinds of privileges. Only the few who managed to succeed in the bureaucracy or whose commercial transactions made them rich merchants mattered. But they still lacked most of the privileges enjoyed by the royal family (at least since the middle of the Fifth Reign).

Pridi Banomyong was the brain of the civilian wing of the People's Party. He was almost the only person among the country's civil servants at the time who understood the hardship of and exploitation faced by the poor. (Exploitation of the poor seems to be greater now than then, however.) As a leader of the Revolution, Pridi wanted to struggle for the equality of the poor, for their dignity. His Outline Economic Plan (1933) was intended to promote the well being of the people, especially the poor—to make democracy "edible" as a saying goes. The Outline insured the well being of the people; the government would provide assurance that everyone would be employed and that state welfare would be available to retired individuals. There would be a health care system to look after the people too. All things considered, the Outline aimed at meeting the "human needs" of the people. Pridi used the term "human needs" rather than "basic needs" (namely, food, clothing, shelter, and medicine) because other things might also be vital for a good life—such as books for reading, musical instruments for entertainment, vehicles for travel, and so on.

Unfortunately, the new ruling class in the wake of the Revolution eventually acted as if they were born with royal blood. They became the new kings. They rejected the Outline, acting as if the poor did not matter. The new kings did not want democracy to benefit the poor. In fact this has been a consistent trend in Thai history and society: the poor don't matter. Every coup d'etat, at least since 1947, always ended up oppressing the poor.

Prior to the coup in 1947, while Pridi was serving as Regent to King Rama VIII he invited Buddhadasa Bhikkhu to engage in a Buddhist discussion with him at his Ta Chang Residence. The discussion was held for four consecutive days for approximately three hours a day. Pridi wanted a distilled version of the Dhamma from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in order to adapt it to democracy. In particular, driven by radical egalitarianism, he wanted to struggle for the human dignity and self-contentment of the poor. In this respect, the ordained and the lay must collaborate to eradicate or tame multiple forms of craving for they are the means of capitalism and consumerism, for they nurture obsessive competition, lust for power and wealth, etc., thereby leading to suffering more than happiness.

That the ruling elites often insist that democracy is a Western invention and therefore is unsuitable for Thai society, and that Thai society really needs good and capable leaders who can bring social progress more than democracy, is for the simple reason that they want to the people qua inferiors to see the hierarchies in society as natural (as opposed to contingent and historically constructed) and hence fixed. Worse, the ruling elites frequently use Buddhism to legitimize their right to government and special privileges. This constant feature can be witnessed from the time of the absolute monarchy to Thaksinocracy. Of course, Thaksin was toppled. Whether or not it is justifiable is still a dubious matter. But it must be pointed out that every coup d'etat since 1947, including the latest one on 19 September 2006, may be interpreted as replacing one form of wickedness by another.

The leaders of the Democratic Party collaborated with reactionary and right-wing groups in the military during the 1947 coup d'etat. The coup destroyed the substance of

democracy while preserving its form. It also rekindled many absolutist features, including the disdain for and the exploitation of the poor. And that coup brought about the downfall of Pridi Banomyong and his colleagues, i.e., the forces of democratization—a democratization that was concerned about the poor. Put another way, the 1947 coup squashed the very idea of egalitarianism, not only politically but also economically. This notion was also tied to power-sharing. Peoples in the South, the North, and the Northeast have their distinct features. Power-sharing meant they could pursue their own cultures and maintain certain degrees of autonomous rule. It also meant that they could use languages different from the one employed in the Central area. Gone thus was egalitarianism, which included power-sharing. Many politicians were assassinated for the treasonous act of siding with the poor. Those who survived had their names tarnished for life. The education system and the mass media also played a role in this de-democratization process. All these occurred against the international backdrop of the expansion of American imperialism and US-led international capitalism, which held the Thai ruling elites under a spell. Monks too had not been immune to this process. Voluntarily or otherwise, many monks stopped teaching about the virtue of contentment.

When the Phibunsongkram government began to realize the threats of neo-colonialism led by the US, it tried to extricate the country from Washington's imperialistic embrace. It moved to diplomatically recognize the communist government in China and explored ways to invite Pridi Banomyong back to the kingdom. It also issued a land-reform bill that restricted the number of rai of land to be individually owned or used. Put another way, the government began to feel that the poor and their wellbeing mattered or at least began to contain the rich within acceptable bounds. Let's compare this project with the situation at present. Let's focus on only one case. The Crown Property Bureau owns approximately 30 percent of the land in Bangkok. It has also driven away tenants (who had been living there for generations) from its plots of land like animals under the pretext of land development; that is, so that the rich could come in to build fancy establishments.

Anyone who talks about the sufficiency economy and is a leading landowner while the poor barely have any or are forcefully relocated in the name of national development (e.g., to build big dams) is merely paying lip service to it. Since the poor are now heavily in debt why doesn't the biggest landowner use his plots of land as collaterals against the loans in case of default by the borrowers? Wouldn't this act announce that the poor matter? When Prince Phetsarath returned to Laos to struggle for its independence he sold his lands very inexpensively to farmers who once rented them. He could have given the lands to them for free. But he wanted them to feel proud of their efforts as well as to have dignity. Shouldn't we also learn from this neighboring country of ours? Shouldn't we also direct our attention to the wisdom of its royal family members? Although Laos is now a communist state, many Lao people still revere the prince.

The initiatives of the Phibunsongkram government were better late than never. Ultimately, they were put on a hold by the American empire with the consent of the royal court and anti-democratic military figures led by Sarit Thanarat. Sarit launched a coup in 1958, and henceforth began to destroy all symbolic remnants of democracy in the kingdom. The monarchy was rendered divine during this period. It became untouchable in the sense of being beyond reproach and criticism. All of the announcements made by the coup-makers lacked legitimacy. But they eventually became part of the law. Intellectuals, writers, and independent thinkers were oppressed. But the poor suffered an even worse fate because of "development," which led to environmental degradation on a massive scale and the plundering of natural resources. The natural environment and resources are indispensable for the livelihood of the poor. The poor were thus doubly exploited by the oppressive political system as well as the modernizing economy which put great pressure on the natural environment, thereby greatly undermining their way of life. Anyone seen as too independent was accused of being communist. Labeled thus, they could easily be killed through extrajudicial means. The luckier ones faced long term imprisonment. The judicial system did not or could not intervene on their behalf. Monks who stood with the poor did not fare better; they often faced disrobement and imprisonment.

The 14 October 1973 movement was triumphant over dictatorship only in the sense of removing a number of dictatorial figures from the political scene.

Dictatorial structures were pretty much left in tact, and absolutism was drawn into politics. Worse, the door was opened for capitalism to enter into politics, to directly control politics and government. Despite its democratic façade, the new political scene was likewise unsympathetic to the poor. Most of the students who thought that they had won over the military dictatorship also did not forge solidarity with the poor or did not really understand democracy. Yet they arrogantly taught the virtue of democracy to poor rural villagers.

In reality, the victory of the 14 October 1973 movement was about the rise of one previously dormant military wing, about the defeat of one military faction by another which was more or less supported by the students and the people. A much more important support however was provided by the royal court. We must also not forget that the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT), which was controlled by the CCP, was still a dynamic force during 1973-76.

After the American defeat in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos also became communist. In the case of Laos the king was overthrown too. This triggered fear among the reactionary and conservative forces in the Thai kingdom. They increasingly became more dictatorial to restore their sense of security. This contributed to the bloodshed on 6 October 1976, which was intended to completely de-democratize the country.

A semblance of democracy—at least in the symbolic sense—was restored after the removal Thanin Kravixien. It was however destroyed again by the National Peace-keeping Council (NPKC) in 1991. When mass protests led to the eventual downfall of the NPKC and paved the way to the promulgation a new constitution in 1997, the poor did not seem to matter yet again. For instance, the 1997 Constitution stipulated that at least a bachelor degree is needed to qualify for running for MP. Worse, the 1997 Constitution opened the way for Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai to abuse their power and exploit the country in every conceivable way.

Of course, it is unfair to put the whole blame on the constitution. Several drafters of that constitution were visionary. They developed the means to check and balance the power of the executive by, for example, making senators come from national elections and by founding the Constitutional Court, the National Human Rights Commission, and so on. But many of those who were to act as checks and balances grew up in the old power structures, and so they lacked moral courage. They did not confront the powers that be. Some were even willing to serve corrupt politicians—for a fee of course.

We must not forget that Thaksin and his TRT came to power after a landslide electoral victory—on a scale that is unprecedented in the Thai democratic system. In the end he turned out to be a dictator masquerading as a democrat. (Hitler likewise came to power riding on the crest of a massive electoral victory.)

To this day the majority in the country still could not see that Thaksin played a leading role in the de-democratization of the country, and that he really had great disdain for the poor. He employed every tactic and all his power to hold the people, especially the educated class, under the spell of technocracy, absolutism, and capitalism. After the demise of the Soviet Union, what we call 'Thai democracy' simply means blindly following capitalism, which is also known as 'globalization' and 'the market economy.'

In this context, how can democracy treat the poor as if they really matter? The military junta and the government that came in the wake of the 19 September coup don't really have the poor on their minds. Needless to say, they also don't know how to make democracy meaningful. Some of them even muttered that democracy is a *farang* thing. Don't they know that the sangha established by the Buddha more than 2500 years ago was democratic, was based on equality, fraternity, and freedom (i.e., freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion)? And the *Dhamma-vinaya* was substantially democratic too. A democratic ethos could also be found at the village level throughout the kingdom. At the level of the state, monks were at the core of the Wheel of Dhamma. The Wheel of Dhamma was used to counterbalance state power and to help spiritually guide the ruling elites. When the State massively centralized its power since the Fifth Reign the role of the Wheel of Dhamma was radically displaced or eclipsed. And as the State expanded its power throughout the kingdom, the democratic ethos at the rural level also gradually dissipated.

A good sign is that the poor are once again 'awakened', especially politically. The Assembly of the Poor (AOP) is a good example. It is a democratic grassroots movement and reflects the democratic ethos of the rural

society. It relies on traditional wisdom and is a "green" movement. Also, AOP leaders are able to find the time for mental training, for sowing seeds of peace within themselves. As such, they have long resorted to nonviolence to confront the powers that be that are violently oppressing them.

In addition, the middle class are beginning to be 'awakened.' Many of them see the poor as worthy as opposed to unworthy human beings. As such an interclass alliance has been forged. And it has been active in, for instance, protesting against the construction of gas pipelines in Kanchanaburi and Songkhla and of a potash mine in Udonthani.

The Social Venture Network of (i.e., those who are not dictated by the single-minded pursuit of profit maximization) is also expanding. This business community is also beginning to see the importance of the poor and of promoting the wellbeing of everyone. It has helped exposed the middle and the lower classes to the greed, hatred, and delusion that are governing the world.

Once we are clear on Suffering and the Cause of Suffering, we may begin to explore ways for the Cessation of Suffering; that is, through the Three-fold Training on morality, mindfulness, and wisdom. We will be awakened to the fact that being is always also being—with or being-together. Thich Nhat Hanh calls it "inter-being." This of course doesn't denote passivity or paralysis. When the prime minister calls himself a Buddhist and doesn't do anything substantial to confront the de-democratizing forces in the kingdom, his inaction is not in the least Buddhist. "Inter-being" does not simply entail, among other things, interclass alliances in the country. It also means international and global engagements.

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Money is illusory while rice and fish are real. But most people tend to be captivated by illusory things. To abstain from handling money constitutes the tenth precept for the ordained. When monks are obsessed about money, the downfall of the Sangha is imminent.

Rice and fish are real only when everyone has enough to eat—not when some have too much to eat while others don't have any. Equality not only in terms of the basic needs but also of human needs must be sufficiently met. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu captured this radical egalitarianism in his concept of Dhammic Socialism.

All of you probably perfectly understand what I've said thus far. But it's difficult for the present ruling elites in the Council for National Security, the government, the National Legislative Assembly, the prestigious universities, the intellectual mainstream, the mainstream mass media, etc. to do so. Of course, good individuals can be found at these places or institutions. But as long as the social hierarchies are still fixed and dominated by an upper-crust that is immune from any morally courageous criticism, how could the ruling elites perceive the poor as equal to themselves?

The only way to make democracy "edible" is that the poor (and here I am not exclusively referring to the AOP) must coalesce with those in the middle class who valorize the grassroots and who have experience in struggles for justice and for environmental conservation; and with socially responsible business-people. The Midnight University may also take part in this movement. The more converts we win from the ruling class and the transnational or transversal cooperation we are able to forge, the harder it will be able to deny the poor, to de-realize their existence. Fidelity to the following causes must be widely promoted:

1. The cultivation of moral courage to confront the truth and to challenge fabrications and falsehood. This also means the willingness to honor (much maligned) individuals such as Pridi Banomyong, Tieng Sirikun, Thawin Udon, Chit Singhaseni, etc. The idea is not to create a cult of personality. But we must know whom to honor (including those who are still living).

2. We must understand the worthiness of our culture, which in many respects is filled with a democratic ethos. But at the same time we must always be aware of any slippage into dangerous narcissism of our culture.

3. We must have the courage to challenge globalization, empire, imperialism, and transnational corporations (including CP, which maintained a cozy relationship with the Shinawatra clan).

4. We must dare to challenge the divine, the sacred, and the magical-e.g., amulets, King Naraesuan the Great, King Rama V and his grandson, etc.

5. Contentment must be at the core of our living. We must have the appropriate human needs. Both of these will lead to Dhammic Socialism. We must be clear about this and must materialize it; we should stop babbling on the sufficiency economy.

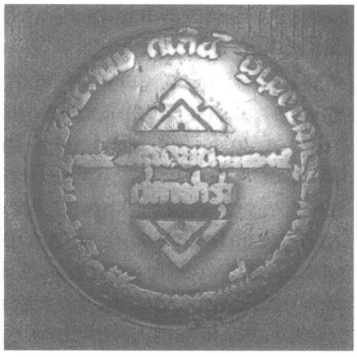
Translated from a lecture in Thai for the Assembly of the Poor 20 April 2007 at Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

75th Anniversary of 24th June 1932

At the break of dawn on 24 June 1932 Colonel Phya Phahon Phonphayuhasena (Phot Phaholyothin) read aloud the First Declaration of the People's Party at the King Rama V Equestrian Monument at the Royal Plaza—the very place on which we are standing. Luang Praditmanutham (Pridi Banomyong) drafted the declaration. It well captured the political ethos and commitment of the revolutionaries qua mid-wives who successfully struggled for a political transition from absolute monarchy, in which the monarchy stood above the law and used power thusly, thereby reducing the common people to mere subjects (in the negative sense of the word), to constitutional monarchy, in which, as it was declared, "The supreme power in the country belongs to the people." This very declaration also appeared in the first (temporary) constitution of the kingdom, which was promulgated three days later.

Although the 1932 coup/revolution was bloodless, the use of military force to seize state power was not along the lines of nonviolence. Subsequently, a rift developed between the military leaders, and some of them even elevated themselves to become the new masters, once again de-valorizing the majority of the people.

Needless to say, the traditional and the new powers clashed despite several attempts for their reconciliation. The advent of the permanent constitution on 10 December 1932 signaled that the old powers were willing to tolerate the political transition. But their tolerance soon reached its limit, especially



because of the Luang Praditmanutham's Outline Economic Plan, which advocated radical egalitarianism.

The failure of the Boworadej Rebellion in 1933 not only signified the defeat of the old powers, which contributed to the abdication of King Rama VII, but also the laying of a new foundation for the wielders of military power. Its de-democratizing effects need not be spelled out. It also must be pointed out that fascism and military dictatorship were on the rise at the time, especially in Germany, Italy, and Japan.

The People's Party continued its revolution under the new regime. The country reclaimed its full sovereignty in 1939 by successfully revoking all the extraterritorial rights previously enjoyed by foreign powers. These unequal treaties were signed since the time of King Rama IV. The country was never formally colonized, but it was under the indirect rule of *farangs* (eventually including Japan) with regard to legal jurisdiction and import duty. These powers ultimately recognized the kingdom as an equal sovereign in 1939.

Unfortunately, the very year the kingdom regained its complete independence it also destroyed its Siamese essence, which did not lay claim to ethnocentric homogeneity and which respected other races, ethnicities, languages, religions and cultures in the kingdom, by transforming the country's name from Siam to Thailand. Along with ethnocentric homogeneity came the centralization of power and the rejection of traditional wisdom in favor of Western knowledge, which was equated with universalism. The ruling elites, then as well as now, could hardly understand the substance of Western civilization in both its positive and negative contents. Put another way, we reclaimed full political independence (for a short while) but we lost the freedom of independent thought and the Siamese spirituality henceforth. To this day, we have yet to emancipate our thought from the mainstream intellectual currents of the West. Some among the ruling elites have even claimed that democracy is a Western invention, and that it is unsuitable for the country. They have of course overlooked the democratic substance of the sangha—democracy as the originary substance of the sangha. And the Wheel of Dhamma had dignifiedly guided the state until the Fifth Reign. In other words, the Wheel of Dhamma had supported democratization for hundreds of years at every level throughout the kingdom. Buddhism also has a democratic ethos, which has almost always challenged the abuse of power on the part of the state.

When Pridi Banomyong founded the University of Moral and Political Science (Thammasat University) on 27 June 1934, he wanted the dhamma to hone

and awaken the consciousness of the students to struggle against the remnants of absolutism, the new militarism, and capitalism. Judging from the conversations Pridi as Regent to King Rama VIII had with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, the former wanted to revolutionize Thai democracy along the lines of Dhammic Socialism.

The mysterious death of King Rama VIII on 9 June 1946 served as the final straw that triggered the military coup d'etat on 8 November 1947. The coup set the country on the road of rapid and massive de-democratization. As a result of the coup, Pridi and the democratic revolutionaries of the People's Party were also demonized. Some of them were even assassinated, including through extra-judicial means. All of them had their reputations tarnished. Lies became confused with truths, and the discus came to be seen as a lotus.

The Thai state soon became a squirrel carrying pebbles for the American empire and for transnational corporations. It is clear what this stance entails in terms of capitalism, consumerism, and militarism. It was also a boon to the belief in magic—the old magic of unreasonable superstitions as well as the new magic of technology, globalization, and mainstream Western education, which is compartmentalized as opposed to holistic.

As a result, moral courage disappeared. Beauty, Goodness, and Truth became half-baked. The freedom to critique was banished as well. The mainstream mass media docilely serve capitalism and consumerism. All things considered, the quest for the substance of democracy was abandoned. Virtually all talks on Nation, Religion, Monarchy, and the constitution could not grasp their substance—despite the fact that we have had numerous constitutions.

I have been duly negative thus far. I have pointed to the truth of suffering in society. In Buddhism, the causes of suffering are greed (i.e., capitalism), hatred (i.e., militarism), and delusion (i.e., consumerism). All these are manifested in the form of self-attachment, of endeavors to prop up and amass the self—for me, for my family, for my group, etc. This can be pervasively witnessed throughout society, not only among politicians, military figures, businesspeople, leading mainstream academics, etc.

When Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Pridi engaged in a long Buddhist discussion at the latter's Ta Chang Residence for four consecutive days in May 1942, Pridi wanted a distilled version of the Dhamma from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in order to adapt it to democracy. In particular, Pridi wanted to employ self-contentment as the anti-dote to craving, which is at the source of greed, hatred, and delusion.

If we are able to grasp the gist of this matter, we will be able to tread on the path of the Threefold Training in order to bring normalcy to our selves and society *(sila)*, to practice mindful breathing and unite the mind and the heart *(samadhi)*, and to reduce selfishness, which will enable us to traverse the narrowness of nationalism and serve humanity at large, especially the poor and the exploited. In fact we may not be aware that we are exploiting many others. Once we have practiced our mind and conduct to fathom the four noble sentiments, we will be able to overcome prejudices and see the truth of any situation *(panna)*. We may even be able to foster a network of virtuous companions among diverse and disperse groupings in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, etc.

A good sign is that the poor are once again 'awakened', especially politically. The Assembly of the Poor (AOP) is a good example. In addition, the middle class are beginning to be 'awakened.' Many of them see the poor as worthy as opposed to unworthy human beings. And they have NGOs with interesting projects and campaigns. These can be seen as constituting civic society. Similar networks and movements can also be increasingly found in neighboring countries and elsewhere —and even at the heart of the American empire. Capitalism, consumerism, and militarism are being challenged. Alternative forms of education, politics, economics, and even medical science are contesting mainstream dominance.

With the birth of "Thailand" in 1939, our ruling elites emulated the militarism and authoritarianism of Germany, Italy, and Japan. They were all defeated in the Second World War. But their military defeat is only temporary. The same can be said about America in Vietnam—and ultimately in Iraq.

Real victory lies in overcoming greed, hatred, and delusion in the self and in the awakening of a new consciousness by learning from the past in order to move forward with mindfulness and wisdom.

In rough paraphrase, His Holiness the Dalai Lama states that world peace is impossible unless we first cultivate inner peace. The cultivation of inner peace is terribly difficult, but it is

the only way to bring about a lasting peace in the world. The wisdom of the Dalai Lama is increasingly gaining currency even among the world's ruling elites. It is still considered an "alternative" line of thinking, however. Siam must likewise turn to this alternative stream to realize Dhammic Socialism.

The things I have just said may sound like a dream. But it is a dream that can be realized. If we maintain fidelity to this vision, struggle for it, and try to materialize it, the objectives of the Siamese revolution of 1932 may be accomplished on its 100th anniversary in 2032. And Siam will serve as a model—a choice—for the peoples of the world. At present, the Tibetan government in exile is experimenting with a Buddhist version of democracy, and the Bhutanese government is developing the concept of Gross National Happiness to challenge that of GDP. At the international level there is also the World Future Council, which champions the rights of future generations, desiring to see them live together in peace and in sustainable natural environments. Also we may turn to the ancient future of Ladakh as opposed to the West, which must also be better understood as a form of mythology.

Translated from an address in Thai
on June 24, 2007
at the Royal Plaza

Why I Did Not Get to Meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Brussels

The World Future Council (WFC) Conference in Hamburg was held during 9-14 May 2007. It overlapped with the Tibet Support Groups (TSG) Conference, which was held in Brussels during 11-14 May.

I left the WFC Conference early in order to fully participate in the Brussels conference, and to inform His Holiness the Dalai Lama about the progress of the WFC initiative. After all, the Dalai Lama was the 'founder' of the WFC. When I arrived at Brussels on 11May (also Pridi Banomyong's birthday) I was informed that His Holiness would not be present at the conference because delegates of the Belgian government, comprising of the Crown Prince and trade representatives, were on a mission in China. The Belgian government feared that the Dalai Lama's visit would negatively impact its business interests in China. It politely informed His Holiness that his presence in Brussels would be inappropriate in such circumstance. As such, His Holiness cancelled his trip.

The members of the Tibet Support Groups are largely Westerners. The German foundation Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung has financially supported the TSG from the very beginning. There have been a number of TSG conferences over the years. I have almost always attended its conferences. I did not participate in the previous conference in Prague, however. Several TSG donors had also come to Wongsanit Ashram to hold talks with the Tibetans.

I had planned to be in Brussels throughout the duration of the TSG Conference. Unfortunately, I received the news from home that Thanpuying Poonsukh Banomyong was fatally ill. She passed away on 11 May, on her husband's birthday. Therefore, I made up my mind to return to Bangkok in order to attend her funeral. It was a major personal loss to me—and to my country as well, especially in terms of democracy.

The TSG organizers asked me to address the other delegates, approximately 500-strong. It went thus. I told them that I had just arrived from Hamburg, attending the WFC Conference. I informed them that the WFC was an initiative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The WFC champions the rights of future (at least seven) generations, desiring to see them live together in peace and in sustainable natural environments. In other words, His Holiness envisaged the WFC as a platform to advance the benefits of all sentient beings, not simply of Tibetans.

A conference on Gross National Happiness (GNH) will be held in Siam at the end of this year. The very concept directly challenges that of GDP. His Holiness was the primary figure behind its conceptualization. The former King of Bhutan, however, played a major role in greatly substantializing or materializing the very idea. The more concrete

the GNH concept becomes, the better we would be able to distance ourselves from capitalism and consumerism—if not to be able to thoroughly overcome them. And the better we would be able to cultivate socially engaged spirituality. Here the 'we' not only refers to Buddhists or Tibetans, but to everyone.

Most of the TSG delegates are well-intentioned Westerners who are truly concerned about Tibet. But they tend to merely focused on liberty and human rights along Western lines. They are too liberal, so to speak. Or to be more precise, they should try to lessen their liberal arrogance (and intolerance) and be more humble. They shouldn't see themselves as 'masters' of Tibet. In Buddhist parlance, they shouldn't simply see themselves as aiding Tibet because of their superior political and economic position, but because of inter-being-ness: being always also means being-together or being-with. In other words, in assisting Tibet—the rooftop of the world—'we' are always also assisted.

Tibet relies primarily on nonviolence to democratize meaningfully. It serves as a shining example. If all those who are concerned about Tibet well understand this point and attempt to meaningfully democratize their respective countries by focusing on being human rather than being *homo oeconomimus*, this may well introduce a novel act that is crucial for humanity. The contemporary obsession with capitalism, consumerism, and militarism can only lead the world to destruction.

I am not saying that the participation of the Western delegates at the TSG Conference is without benefit. But China always sees Westerners as hypocritical. The action of the Belgian government mentioned above is a good example. China notices that whenever their business interests are at stake, Westerners are more than willing to deviate from their stated principles. The new generation in the West must find a way to interrupt their ruling elites' single-minded pursuit of money and power, of profits over *demos*. More youth delegates seemed to be present at the latest TSG Conference. This is a good sign. But more Asians should also be represented at the conference. This is because China seems to be more concerned about Asian opinions than Western ones. Asians should well recognize that China is silently 'intervening' in or pressuring many other Asian states politically as well as economically at an increasing pace and scale. If the new generation in Asia could grasp this point, they should organize and pressure their governments and investors—to stir up the moral conscience of their elites—to see the harmful side of the Chinese government; for instance, harmfulness vis-à-vis Tibetans as well as the Chinese population in the country.

Tibetan lamas are at the forefront of spreading the Dhamma in both the East and the West (contributing to the rise of Western Buddhism in the latter case). But these teachers only focus on attaining inner peace (which can be a perverse form of enjoyment or self-satisfaction), dis-embedding the Dhamma from social and political engagements. These lamas should also cultivate in their students the fidelity to justice and equality at the global level. Justice for all won't come about without social and political engagements, without rupturing the unjust status quo. Moreover, many of their students, who are from the ruling and middle classes, couldn't care less about how their way of life is causing suffering to the majority of people in the world—not to mention, how it is destroying the natural environment. Hence, the pertinence of socially engaged Buddhism or spirituality especially through non-violence cannot be over-emphasized.

Increasingly, the Chinese people are being awakened by socially engaged spirituality. Although the ruling class is employing dictatorial means to police the people and is docilely treading along the path of capitalism and consumerism, Buddhism along with Taoism and Confucianism still serve as valuable ethical resources to undermine the advent of *homo oeconomicus* in China. If we can find a way to link with these ordinary Chinese people, we may be able to 'help' China as well as Tibet. And it may help make China 'friendly' to other states, a hospitality that is sincere and non-exploitative. Of course, this is not an easy task, but it does not mean that it shouldn't be started.

Suksit Siam celebrated its 40th anniversary on April 20, 2007. It is not only a bookshop, promoting books on Buddhism and spirituality etc, but it also provides customers with arts and crafts, especially from Tibet.
113-115 Fuangnakorn Road
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email: suanco@suan-spirit.com
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The World Future Council Conference in Hamburg

The idea for establishment of the World Future Council (WFC) was conceived by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Likewise, His Holiness engendered the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). He floated important ideas that were vital for envisaging both initiatives. On the GNH the previous King of Bhutan picked it up and worked to develop it. It is now known worldwide. And an international conference on Gross National Happiness will be held in Bangkok this November. As for the WFC, Jakob von Uexkull, who founded the Right Livelihood Awards some 25 years ago, helped to materialize the Dalai Lama's vision. He set up a meeting in Austria some years ago to put flesh on the WFC. An official conference was held in Geneva last year. I participated in every WFC meeting, and serve as one of its councillors. The WFC keeps an eye on and provides advices to numerous agencies—State, private, corporate, the United Nations, etc—asking them to work for human survival and our common future. It champions the rights of future generations, desiring to see them live together in peace and in sustainable natural environments. At present, there is much talk on global warming—and on water and air problems. The quality of air in big cities is also highly polluted. This talk seems to be just hot air, however. There is no major effort to tackle these pressing problems. Every government, municipality, corporation, institution, etc. seems to be fixated by short-term interests and hence is unable to see the big picture and to think about the future.

Jakob von Uexkull is a highly capable person. He successfully sold the WFC idea to a millionaire who subsequently provided necessary start-up funds; and so did the municipal government of Hamburg. The WFC headquarters is thus in Hamburg. These funds would enable the WFC to carry its works for 3 years. Other sources provided research funds; e.g., research on renewable energy.

As such the opening ceremony of the World Future Council was held at the main conference hall of Hamburg's town hall, which is both spacious and elegant. Our lodging was at Haus Rissen, an academic institution surrounded by a beautiful forest grove at the outskirt of the city. We traveled to the inner city using a bus powered by neither gasoline nor gas but by steam. The bus reminds us about our urgent need to seek and develop renewable energy. If we fail in this endeavor, the future may be doomed. Hydroelectric power is now outdated, and it is environmentally destructive. Natural gas also does not provide the way out—not to mention nuclear energy. Most technocrats and politicians, especially in the Third World, are however busily thinking about harnessing these sources of energy.

Fifty WFC members from various countries and various continents attended the opening ceremony at the Munich town hall. Also present were many members of Hamburg's municipal government and other dignitaries. The main conference hall was packed. The ceremony opened with a solo violin recital by a female Chinese performer. Jakob then explained about the development of the WFC, its campaigns, and its hopes. Next the mayor gave welcoming remarks.

The interesting thing is that the participation of young people could be seen throughout the ceremony. They came to sing and dance for us. They showed us their hopes and dreams. And, at the end of the ceremony, each of the participants had a chance to talk to them, to answer "childish" or "immature" questions that are vital for the regeneration of future politics. They also presented us with flowers and letters of appreciation.

Here I am just giving a very short summary of the event. I left out several important things such as the speech by the former mayor of Heidelberg (the birth place of King Rama VIII) about sustainability, economically, culturally, and architecturally. The governor of Bangkok should learn from her.

The young who came to see us were from different classes and backgrounds. They constituted a multiracial group. One Chinese adolescent emigrated from mainland China, and is now a devotee of Tibetan Buddhism. One Thai adolescent was happy to converse in the Thai language with me, and also asked for a photograph with me. Additionally, television and radio stations asked for interviews with me as well as with many of the other participants.

I had a chance to meet one German physician whom I have never met before. He said he had read about my work from my website and from the Internet. He also publicizes my activities in his personal website—perhaps a strangely common thing to do in this globalizing world of ours.

An afternoon meeting was held at a conference room of Haus Rissen. The advisors had their separate meeting. They are very keen on finding financial sponsors or donors, and gave broad suggestions. The fifty council members however had the final say on the policies to pursue, and they reserved the right to pick the five administrators.

It was an intense meeting. The Western participants were talking non-stop. The Indians did not give in too. The Chinese were pretty quiet. An African member brought along an infant who eventually cried and had to be carried out of the room.

Due to my schedule I was only there for only one meeting. The entire conference was held till the 13th. After that the participants had a chance to sail along the river. The city's port happened to reach its 818th anniversary this year too. Many old ships would probably make their appearance to celebrate this event.

I sat quietly throughout the afternoon. And since I was scheduled to leave the following day—on the morning of the 11th of May—the chair of the meeting pointed to me, asking for my views. Apparently, I was the last speaker of the day. I told him that the creation of the WFC was inspired by the wisdom of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who recognizes the cultivation of inner peace as the precondition for global peace and the interconnection between inner and outer peace. I think we can all agree with this view. To pave the way for a nonviolent future we also need to have inner peace. Reason alone is insufficient. We must learn to "let go" or to maintain equanimity to avoid transforming our own views into absolutes. We must teach ourselves to cope with stress—to not be stressful. I then invited them to practice breathing mindfully for five minutes —I breathe therefore I am— before the meeting adjourned.

The WFC is still a new organization. It however took five years of preparation and planning. It has already published a number of interesting books challenging mainstream thoughts such as *Feed-in Tariffs: Accelerating the Development of Renewable Energy* by Miguel Mendonca and *Surviving the Century: Facing Climate Chaos and other Global Challenges* edited by Herbert Girardet. Both books were also translated into German.

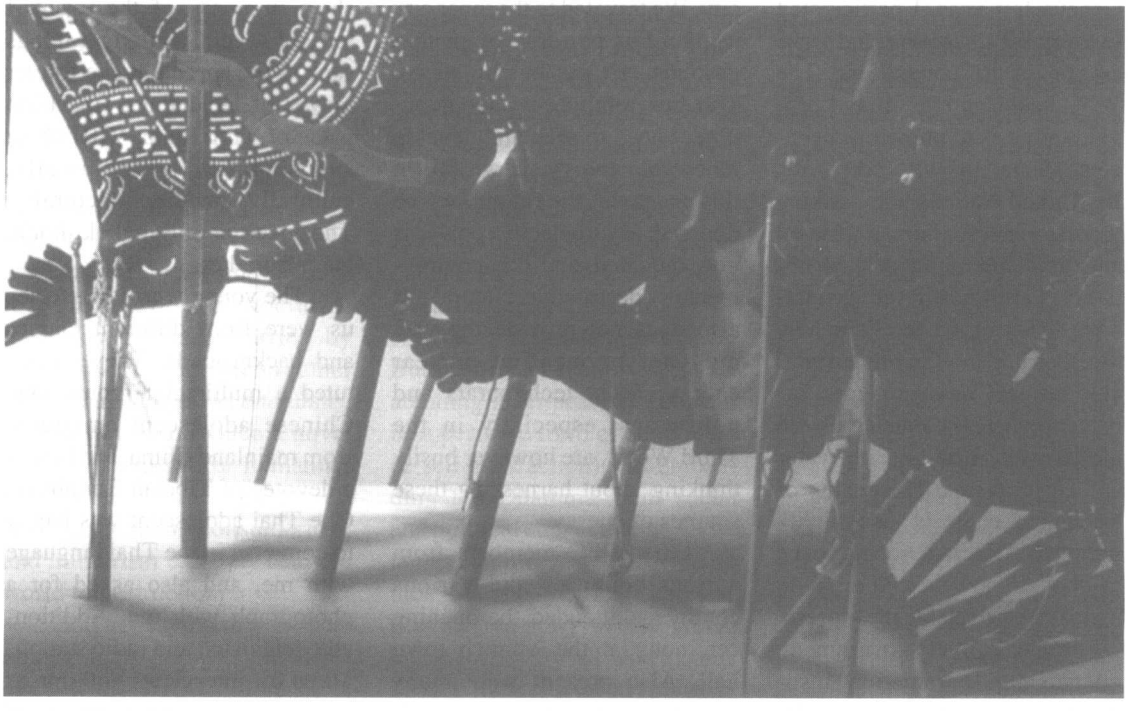


Photo Exhibition by Sittiporn Banjongpetch

A Statue Dedicated to the Commonman

She has learned, grown, a lot over the last three years. Since her husband Charoen Wat-aksorn was gunned down on June 21, 2004, Korn-uma (Krarok) Pongnoi has matured into a true leader, a leader who knows that genuine leadership is less about leading than about sharing—of the vision, love of the motherland and sense of determination—with the people she lives and works for. Last week, she delivered a moving speech. It was on the occasion of the erection of Thailand's very first monument to a commoner, put up on the spot Charoen was killed.

Free of rhetoric, her speech kept the hundreds of people who took part in the historic event, academics, activists, every single person there, spell-bound. I personally think it is one of the decade's best speeches.

Krarok stated right away that she did not take the monument to be a personal tribute to her late husband. Rather, she said, "the real meaning of the statue is to be a symbol of the struggles of common people around the country, those who fight because they love their homes, those who selflessly chip in to build strong communities.

"They fight simply because their sheer common sense says that 'We have lived for years on this land. Good or bad, we have lived here from the times of our ancestors. We have brought up our families thanks to the land, river, forest, and the sea. Sometimes we live in harmony, other times we quarrel. But we still belong to the same communities. We have to depend on one another'."

Krarok's view of the interdependence of the local and the national is simple yet profound. The nation consists of small communities scattered around the country, she said. Only when the local people are strong can a nation become strong. Often, though, the people are told that they must sacrifice for the sake of the "national interest" or "the interest of the majority".

"We know the colours of the national flag," she noted.

"But when we stand up to protect our community, we sew our own flags. We cut the sticks to make our own flagpoles. We ourselves select what colours we want to use.

"When we raise the green or red flags, this is not to deny the national flag. On the contrary, this is to reconfirm our identity as one of the communities that build up a nation.

"If we do not survive, the nation will not survive, either."

In the months to come, the monument will serve as the centre of an innovative school, run by and for the people.

Krarok said she hopes those who have experience in fighting to protect their homeland, from different parts of Thailand, will come and exchange their stories here. Imagine the growing store of real-life, dramatic history of the people. There will certainly be plenty.

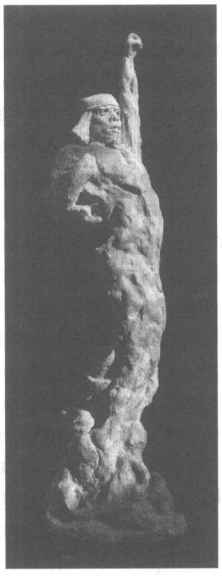
But it will be just the beginning. Thanks to the efforts of people like Charoen and Krarok, they have succeeded in withstanding the two coal-fired power plant projects. But there are several other so-called development schemes waiting to exploit our limited resources. After all, they still have to continue their crusade to get the masterminds who ordered the killing of Charoen. (How many more years will his body have to wait for a cremation, will that day ever come?)

Thus she ended her speech on a cautious note:

"If and when our communities are not aware of the importance of uniting ourselves, of standing on our own feet, past victories will become only mere legends, stories of yore that will eventually be forgotten, destroyed, along with our way of life and the resources of the community.

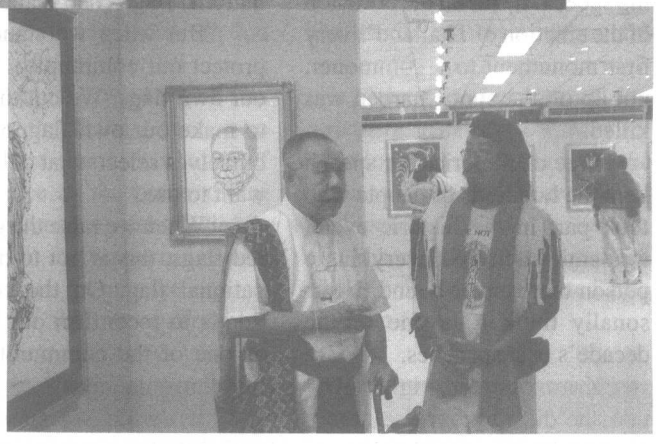
"Then we will only have this bronze monument left, nothing else. We will become a community that has lost its dignity, being dissolved; a community of slaves in a nation that calls itself Thai."

Vasana Chinvarakorn
Bangkok Post



Art Exhibition at Pattaya
4-14 September 2007





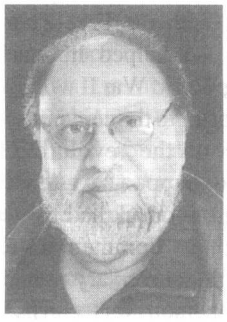
Hongjorn Saneh-ngarmcharoen is an artist whose paintings are highly original and admirable. He is also the owner of Bangkok Gallery, which displays his works as well as those by fellow painters to the general public. Anyone interested also has the opportunity to buy and own these works. Moreover, Hongjorn loves to teach art to the younger generation and has willingly and devotedly supported numerous artists and artistic activities. For instance, he helped organize the centennial anniversary of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa for the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF), and an art exhibition to gather donations for Naab Sothipun who is chronically sick and burden with medical expenses. This helped lift Naab's spirit, and therefore he is now devoting the rest of his life to painting and playing the violin along the lines of sacred music—e.g., during the chanting of the Dhamma. Additionally, Hongjorn has also actively supported Angkarn Kalayanapong on numerous occasions. For instance, he is collaborating with SNF to hold a big ceremony to celebrate Angkarn's 81st birthday at Silpakorn University on 8 February 2008. Son Simatrang is another active contributor in this endeavor. Not infrequently, Hongjorn also organizes art exhibitions in various provinces throughout the kingdom such as the one in Phuket.

Recently, Hongjorn invited seven other artists to Pattaya to paint. They are: 1) Sumpun Sararak; 2) Prasert Putsorn; 3) Naab Sothipun; 4) Supasit Vongromngern; 5) Somyos Sudsaen; 6) Pornchai Lertthamsiri; and 7) Panuwat Jittiwutkarn. The flutist Sriprae Maekalai was also invited. Their paintings will be displayed at The Mariot Hotel, Pattaya, during 4-14 September 2007. Works by young local artists will also be exhibited. This is surely a praiseworthy initiative for Pattaya is a leading tourist destination. However, many tourists tend to visit this beach town simply for all sorts of recreation, in particular sexual activities. The exhibition by these nine artists may help raise the aesthetic profile and dignity of the resort town, distancing it from crude consumerism. And if other hotel owners and local entrepreneurs do see the value of beauty beyond crass commercialism this kind of art exhibition may be more prevalent throughout Pattaya, thereby helping to move it toward excellence. Beauty may uplift the consciousness of those who could appreciate it, making them desire justice in society and proper balance in the natural environment.

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation is pleased to collaborate with these eight painters. In the past China had the eight Arahats and eight immortals who contributed immensely to spiritual welfare. Hopefully, these 8-9 artists will help elevate the minds of their audiences above and beyond oppressive mediocrity.

THE FUKUOKA
ASIAN CULTURE PRIZES

The 18th Fukuoka Asian Culture Prizes 2007 Laureates



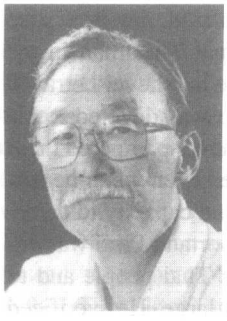
GRAND PRIZE — **Ashis NANDY**
(India / Social and Cultural Critic)

Professor Ashis Nandy is one of the leading social and cultural critics not only in India but also throughout Asia. He is a profound thinker who has tackled a broad range of subjects including individual dignity, nationalism and culture. By closely interweaving individuals and the real world in his arguments, he reaches the very heart of the problem. He is also a socially committed intellectual who plays an energetic role in a grassroots movement, in the so-called the "Conscience of India".



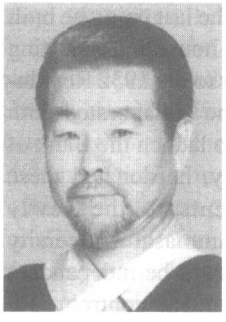
ACADEMIC PRIZE — **Srisakra VALLIBHOTAMA**
(Thailand / Anthropology, Archaeology)

Professor Srisakra Vallibhotama is one of the leading anthropologists and archaeologists in Thailand and the whole of Southeast Asia. By combining expertise in anthropology, archaeology, history and folklore, he has used a local-historical approach to establish an entirely new perspective of Thai history, replacing the conventional view which has focused on the national and royal chronicles. His contribution to Thai and Southeast Asian historiography is truly remarkable.



ARTS AND CULTURE PRIZE — **JU Ming**
(Taiwan / Sculpture)

Mr. Ju Ming is one of the leading sculptors in Asia. His powerful and distincive works, which draw upon both traditional and modern sculpture, portray vividly the profound world of Eastern spirituality, and stand in a class of their own. He has also rendered great service in propagating art, especially by founding the Juming Museum.



ARTS AND CULTURE PRIZE — **KIM Duk-soo**
(Republic of Korea / Traditional Peforming Art)

Mr. Kim Duk-soo is one of the leading figures in Korean traditional performing art. He has pioneered new developments in technique of playing Changgu (a double-headed drum) which he first mastered in his early childhood. He formed the "Samulnori", a traditional Korean percussion quartet. He has won international recognition, both as the embodiment of traditional Korean music and for his adaptation of contemporary sensibilities to promote innovative means of expression.

In Memoriam: Thanpuying Phoonsuk Banomyong

Had Thanpuying Phoonsuk Banomyong lived to 2 January 2008, she would have completed her 8th cycle; that is, she would be 96 years old. For those of us who greatly respected her, we even hoped that she would live even longer and continue to serve as our source of moral support. Among our contemporaries, it is impossible to find someone like her. She had deftly blended traditional notions of femininity with modern values associated with meaningful democracy. She had stood with the marginalized and steadfastly upheld truthfulness and nonviolence. She was also a loyal subject of the members of the royal family, whom she had served since the time of H.M. Queen Sawang, grand mother of Rama VIII & IX and H.M. Queen Saovabha, mother of Rama VI & VII. In fact it was Queen Saovabha who granted her the name "Phoonsuk."

Thanpuying Phoonsuk dearly loved her husband and children. She had served as a model wife and mother. She had extended her love and compassion to others as well. In this respect, she was a true Buddhist. She had never violated the Five Precepts and was full of parami (i.e., Perfections). Above all, she never developed a grudge against all those who had oppressed, directly or otherwise, her and her family, in particular her husband and her eldest son.

Had Thanpuying Phoonsuk lived to 24 June 2007 she would have been the last living witness of the 1932 Revolution in Siam, a revolution that has been consistently betrayed and perverted by numerous dictatorships, including the most recent coup on 19 September 2006. That Thanpuying Phoonsuk will not be around to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the revolution is perhaps appropriate since the political climate in the country is morally and democratically half-baked at present.

More significantly, she passed away on 11 May (or 12 May based on the modern calendar), which is the day of birth of her husband. The two had been a lovely couple. Together they had persevered through many hardships and difficulties. But Thanpuying Phoonsuk had always considered the sufferings of the people to be more severe than her own. Therefore she was able to confront her personal sufferings with strength, courage, and mindfulness. Again, this shows that she was a true Buddhist. In contemporary Thai society, it is difficult to find someone of comparable status manifesting this feature. Understanding the multifaceted sufferings faced by the majority of her compatriots, she had collaborated with her husband and devoted her life to the cause of emancipating them from these sufferings—politically, economically, and culturally. Of course, it is still unaccomplished because of deep structures that are highly unjust and violent at the national and international levels.

Ajarn Pridi had failed in his revolutionary ambition. Conservative, anti-democratic, and anti-revolutionary forces were by and large the order of the day. But this defeat can be seen as only temporary. Nothing is permanent. We can be 'that' instead of 'this.' I believe that the seeds of democracy nurtured and sowed by Pridi and the People's Party along with the Free Thai Movement that helped liberate Siam during World War II will be reactivated prior to the centennial anniversary of the revolution. Miracles do happen. At least Thanpuying Phoonsuk had lived long enough to commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of her husband, a person was consistently betrayed by the ruling elites ever since 8 November 1947. During the commemorative ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the end of WWII in Siam, the Free Thai Movement was likewise betrayed by the ruling elites. Among Thais, Ajarn Pridi was the exception rather than the rule. He never lusted for more power when assuming political positions. He always sided with the marginalized. He was also an exceptional Thai man in the sense that he had never betrayed his wife. He was devoted to his family but never pampered them with luxuries even when he had the means and capacity to do so. Equally important, Pridi was devoted to the Thai people and to humanity at large. He sacrificed a lot of personal energy, time, and money. On the last point, he built a publishing house and a printing factory prior to the 1932 Revolution. Then he collaborated with his friends to launch the Bank of Asia. Finally, he donated these establishments to the newly opened Thammasat University so that it would be independent from government control. He

also refused to accept any remittance for participating in the board meetings of state and private enterprises. Thanpuying Phoonsuk firmly supported this decision.

Betrayed by the ruling elites after the 1947 coup, which marked the downward cycle in the development of Thai democracy, successive Thai governments had refused to provide him with a retirement pension. They also withheld his passport. Had Pridi had someone else as his lifelong partner, he would have endured greater hardship financially as well as politically. Thanpuying Phoonsuk had inherited some fortune from her Na Pombejra family. She sold the Na Pombejra residence on Silom Road and used part of the money to buy a small house in Antony in suburbs of Paris and to support the expense of life in exile. Puey Ungphakorn, the then governor of the Bank of Thailand, had the courage to allow her to transfer money out of the kingdom. Someone with much less moral courage would have demurred from making such decision. Puey was among the very first of Pridi's former students to become part of the country's ruling elites. Puey was also brave enough to meet Pridi and his wife while they were in exile. This incident was a factor that caused his name to be included in the ruling elites' hate list.

Thanpuying Phoonsuk not only supported her husband financially, but she also aided him politically—albeit unofficially—especially after his failed bid to oust Field Marshal Phibunsongkram in 1949. She found Pridi a secret place to hide for a long while and planned for his escape to exile abroad, which was orchestrated successfully.

Pridi was not simply looking for the independence of all Siamese citizens. He also wanted to serve humanity at large, in particular the peoples in neighboring lands who were under Western colonialism. Again, Thanpuying Phoonsuk supported her husband in this endeavor in every possible way after WWII. Our neighbors have not been oblivious to this fact. When Laos and Vietnam celebrated their 50th anniversary of independence, both of their governments presented Thanpuying Phoonsuk with medals of friendship in recognition of her husband's and her own effort in their road toward independence. The Thai government, however, has never paid homage to her—aside from groundlessly charging her and her eldest son with the subversion of the internal and external security of the kingdom.

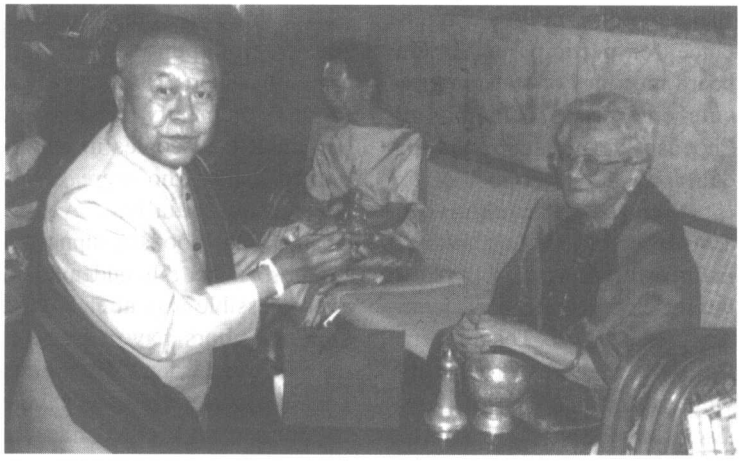
Ladies who are entitled to use the honorific title of "thanpuying" are also recipients of the Dame Grand Commander (Second Cass, higher grade) of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao. During the Eighth Reign, only three ladies received this royal decoration. Aside from Thanpuying Phoonsuk, the other two were: Thanpuying Phahon Phonphayuhasena, the wife of a major figure in the People's Party and the leader of the 1932 Revolution; and Thanpuying La-iad, the wife of Field Marshal Phibunsongkram, the dictatorial prime minister during the Eighth Reign. At the time, many people lauded Thanpuying La-iad as "the First Lady." Even though Pridi ultimately became the sole Regent to the king his wife continued to appropriately play a secondary or 'behind-the-scene' role—although the wife of the former chair of the Regency was awarded with the royal decoration Dame Grand Cross (First Class) of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao. But Thanpuying Phoonsuk did not aspire for status. She made no pretence to being someone superior to an ordinary person.

During the 50th anniversary of his accession to the throne, the present king promoted all recipients of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao decoration since the Eighth Reign by one class higher. Hence, for instance, M.L. Pui Jayanama was elevated from Dame Commander (Third Class, higher grade) of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao to Dame Grand Commander (Second Class, ordinary grade) of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao. For the recipient of Dame Grand Commander (higher grade) and there was only one—there was no promotion, however. Thanpuying Phoonsuk showed neither surprise nor dejection. She well understood the eight worldly conditions in which gain is accompanied by loss, fame/rank by obscurity, praise by blame, and happiness by pain.

Although I had once misunderstood Pridi and had used my pen as a sword to attack him severely, I ultimately realized my mistake and went to see Pridi and Thanpuying Phoonsukh in order to ask for their forgiveness, which they did with great sincerity. Henceforth, I had often experienced their compassion and goodwill. After Ajarn Pridi passed away in 1983, Thanpuying Phoonsuk continued to maintain amiable relations with me, my family, and my NGO network. When my relatives and friends held the celebration of my 72nd birthday at the conse-

crated assembly hall of Wat Thong Nopakun, Thanpuying Phoonsuk graciously presided at the gathering and presented me with a jade Buddha statue. She told me that Ajarn Pridi had paid respect to this jade Buddha statue all his life, and that after consulting with her children she found it appropriate to give the statue to me so that I could continue to pay respect to it. I see this as an auspicious sign. It is akin to inheriting and defending the lost causes of peace, democracy, and justice trail blazed by Pridi himself. I have therefore taken a vow to maintain fidelity to and defend these lost causes.

I have been invited to give a speech on the morning of 24 June 2007 at the King Rama V Equestrian Monument at the Royal Plaza, a place where one can find a plate that reads "Here on the morning of 24 June 1932 the People's Party prodaineed the Constitution for the progress of the country."



It was at the Royal Plaza on the morning of 24 June 1932 that the First Announcement of the People's Party was read aloud by Colonel Phya Phahon Phonphayuhasena (Phot Phaholyothin), the leader of the revolutionary party. Pridi Banomyong drafted this important document. The stated aims of the first announcement have more or less been eclipsed in contemporary Thai society. My speech, which will be delivered 75 years after the revolution, will lack the verve and sharpness of the first announcement. But I shall be faithful to the lost causes of the 1932 Revolution and draw upon their emancipatory potentials so that liberty, solidarity, and egalitarianism can see the light in this land. Hopefully, it will be accomplished prior to the 100th anniversary of democracy in the kingdom so as to properly venerate Pridi and Thanpuying Phoonsuk Banomyong.

We Are Sad to Record the Passing Away of Two Christian Friends

Rev. Cannon Reginald Fuller (1915-2007) of the Anglican Church, who taught at St. David's College, Lampeter in Wales before going to teach at Western Seabury Seminary at Evanston, Illinois, Union Teological Seminary in New York and the Verginia Theological Seminary, Richmord, Virginia. He was acknowledged an authority on the New Testament. Professor Fuller was so kind to me when I was a student at Lampeter although I did not take his class. He and his wife would invite us foreign students to have tea at their home to sing songs almost every month. I also had the privilege to stay with them at Evomston and New York. I also visited them at Richmond, Virginia. Many of us really miss him.

Rev. Jan Van Braght (1928-2007), Roman Catholic priest of the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the first director of the Nanzan Institute of Religion and Culture in Nagoya , Japan , which was and is a place for many Buddhists to do research. Especially for those who are political refugees like myself, Jan was a real friend in need — so kind and so unassuming, with a good sense of humor. He was a truly religious man in the mystic tradition. He was also a key figure in the Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies.

Sulak Sivaraksa

Dear Sulak Sivaraksa,

On behalf of Earth Charter International, I wish to both congratulate you on the successful launch of the World Future Council, and to express my deep gratitude for making the endorsement and adoption of the Earth Charter one of your initial formal acts.

To note this event, I enclose two copies of the official Earth Charter brochure one to keep, and one to share with a colleague. More copies are available to you on request. The brochure includes the full text of the Charter, as well as general information about its origin and about the broader Earth Charter Initiative. Please also track the news from ECI via our weblog, www. earthcharterinaction.org (where we featured the WFC's launch recently).

The World Future Council has already begun to play an important role in the global movement to motivate and accelerate change to ensure a more just, sustainable, and peaceful future. The role is sure to grow over time. The Council's farsighted commitment to promoting policies that have the interests of future generations in mind sets an important benchmark in place that is sure to inspire citizens, governments, and decision-makers everywhere.

I note with pleasure the human overlaps in our organizations: the Chair of WFC's Executive Committee, Bianca Jagger, also serves as an Advisor to Earth Charter International, as does Herbert Girardet. I am pleased and proud to serve on the WFC Board of Advisors. And importantily, Pauline Tangiora, who serves on the Council, was also a critically important participant in the Earth Charter Commission's work to oversee the drafting of the Charter, and she continues to be a member of the Commission. informally, our organizations have many friendships and collegial relationships in common.

But also, as I noted in my brief remarks to the preliminary meeting of World Future Councilors in Geneva last year, there is a wonderful complementarity in the missions of Earth Charter International and World Future Council. Perhaps most importantly, we share a fierce commitment to a future that is "sustainable, just and peaceful" — three words that also appear together in nearly all offcial ECI communication.

I am sure there will be many important opportunities to collaborate and to support each other's success. The world needs both new ethics and new policies, and the will to make both a reality. Let us strive together, whenever and wherever we can, to achieve this essential dream

With great respect and admiration for the task you have collectively undertaken, and with thanks for the partnership,

Alan Atkinson
Executive Director
Earth Charter International

Dear friend Sulak,

Received your postcard. You may not have received my email acknowledging cancellation of your engagement in New York area. We hope you will be coming this way again and await word from you.

We are well, considering that we are in our 90's. Lillian continues efforts to regain ability to walk without a walker, slow and difficult. She persists.

In the midst of this country's descent into corporate/political dictatorship we hold fast to our vision of a nonviolent world of peace, equality and freedom for all.

Be well, go well,

George & Lillian Willoughby

Dear Sulak,

Muhammad and Ani just left to return to Boston after a wonderful week-end with us. Thank you for putting us back in touch.

A friend here has asked me about Dr. Ariyaratne about a possible participant in a conference he is organizing. I have never met him, but I think I remember you talking about him from time to time. Do you have any idea how good a speaker he would be? The topic, if I remember, is on religious responses to globalization. I am suggesting that we get some one to speak from a liberation theology perspective from Latin America — someone who really understands details of how the IMF/World Bank and WTO intervenes and the costs to Latin America. Could Dr. Ariyaratne do this?

Maine is wonderful at this time of year. My brothers are coming to visit next week. And the dogs are fine!

Warm regards,

Brewster Grace

Chinese Porcelain Siamese History

"The perspective of the Cold War has cast China in the role of a threat to Thailand, which contrasts sharply with historical evidence of a mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries spanning over 600 years," said Pimpraphai Bisalputra, author of an interesting new book titled *Krabueng Thuay Kala Tek*, which hold up antique Chinese porcelain as a social mirror reflecting on the traditional relationship between the two kingdoms.

In her new book Pimpraphai Bisalputra, linked Ming and Ching period porcelain pieces with the fortunes of the lesser known Sino-Siamese Junk Merchants to shed new light on Siamese history. "Siamese history has always reflected a strong Chinese connection dating back to the golden age of the Kingdom of Ayuthaya(1350-1767), which has been described as 'the most dazzling city that travelers encountered between Europe and Cathay'", said Pimpraphai. Before the arrival of the Western colonial powers, the commerce of the Eastern World passed through Ayutthaya, where traders crossing the Indian Ocean could buy Siamese products including rice, dyes, wax, bird nest, ivory and elephants as well as various Chinese products supplied by the lucrative junk trade dominated by Hokkien traders from China's southeastern port cities.

During the Ming and Ching dynasties Chinese porcelain exports dominated the trade between China and the rest of the world, including Siam. Chinese porcelain produced for the world



Title: Krabueng Thuay Kala Tek
Author: Pimpraphai Bisalputra
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market, in those days, were invariably of the finest quality made from white clay, called kaolin, mined near the district of Ching-te-chen in Kiangsi province. "From the 14th - 18th century Ching-te-chen was universally regarded as the porcelain center of the world and the Royal Courts from Japan to Europe ordered their China Wares from Ching-te-chen" said Pimpraphai.

Due to its non perishable quality Chinese porcelain artifacts often survive, in pristine condition, as evidence of foreign intercourse with China. Hence Antique porcelain handed down through the ages in Siam bore silent witness to the heyday of Ayutthaya and the changing fortunes of their owners. With skill and patience the historian may elicit important secrets, from blue and white Ming bowls found along riverine trade routes among the tributaries of the Chao Phraya River Basin. The Late Ayutthaya Court, however, preferred color enameled wares painted with Siamese Motif called Benjarong.

Benjarong was first imported into Siam during the period when the five-colored enamel wares known as *'Wu-tsai'* were popular in China. For the Chinese, the number 5 has a magical association with the five natural elements —wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Fine quality Benjarong were imported by the Ayuthaya court from China for ceremonial use on a made-to-order basis.

While researching for the book Pimpraphai came across a unique Benjarong Bowl. "This bowl is interesting because its motif is neither Chinese nor Thai, instead the motif suggests a strong Persian influence though the style and shade of color used in enameling were those favored by the Siamese Court," said the author. This interesting clue helps to confirm the existence of a strong Persian influence in the court of Ayuthaya.

Thais seem to forget that several decades before Constantine Phaulkon, a Greek adventurer, became a senior Minister during King Narai (1656-88), Sheik Ahmad, a Shiite Muslim merchant of Persian descent also occupied the same position in the Court of King Songtham (1620-28). Direct descendants of Sheik Ahmad include the Bunnag family and General Sonthi Boonyaratglin, leader of the last military coup, of September 19th 2007 which overthrew the elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra, and the current head of the Council for National Security(CNS) of Thailand.



Benjarong sporting Persian motif

After the fall of Ayuthaya, under the onslaught of Burmese invaders and the rise of King Taksin, Taechiu traders broke the maritime hegemony of Hokkien merchants over the junk trade and dominated the new Siamese capital at Thonburi. Among the Taechiu traders, whose fortune was linked to the rise of King Taksin, was a merchant named Lin Wu who was born in the same village as Taksin's mother at Baan Laem, in Petchburi. Lin Wu's great-grandson Phraya Pisarn Suppaphon later operated the first modern steamship plying between Siam and Hong Kong and became the country's leading importer of Chinese porcelain under the brand name *Poh Ju Li Kee*. King Taksin ruled for fifteen years before the Kingdom of Thonburi succumbed to palace intrigues and collapsed in 1782.

The new Chakri rulers relocated the capital from Thonburi, on the east bank to Bangkok on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River. After a short disruption the Chakri dynasty restored the robust junk trade between Siam and China. "All foreign trade, in Siam, including the junk trade was operated as a Royal Monopoly," said Pimpraphai. The lucrative junk trade provided the new dynasty with a golden opportunity to consolidate political support. "The profit from the Royal Monopoly Trade was used by the Chakri rulers to maintain the army and pay for the costs of running the government," she added. The politically astute new Chakri rulers was reluctant to levy heavy taxes on the population before consolidating their power. "Without the profits from the Royal Monopoly Trade the King would have no alternative but to resort to levying heavy taxes on his subjects to pay for the government and the army," said Pimpraphai.

The arrival of the Europeans dealt a fatal blow to the royal monopoly over the Junk Trade, which had served as the mainstay of the Siamese financial system, as well as the dominance of Chinese merchants over the China trade. The Siamese royalty survived the abolition of commodity and trading monopolies forced upon them by the Western colonial powers. Following the Bowring Treaty other trade treaties were signed with the colonial powers leading to a boom in foreign trade which compensated for the loss of royal monopolies.

Chinese merchants also, adjusted to European hegemony by competing with European traders and trading on behalf of European principals under European flags. The author tells the story of the vicissitudes of royal and personal fortunes throughout the tumultuous rise and fall of Siamese kingdoms from Ayuthaya to the present.

An interesting example of the survival talents of the Chinese merchant class consists in the story of The King of Thonburi's Merchant Lin Wu's family. "Even after the fall of King Taksin, Lin Wu's family continued to enjoy the patronage of the new Chakri Dynasty," observed Pimpraphai. Coincidentally, Lin Wu's son, Boonchu was a close friend of the nephew of Rama I, *Phraya* Suriya Aphai, the governor of Nakorn Ratchasima.

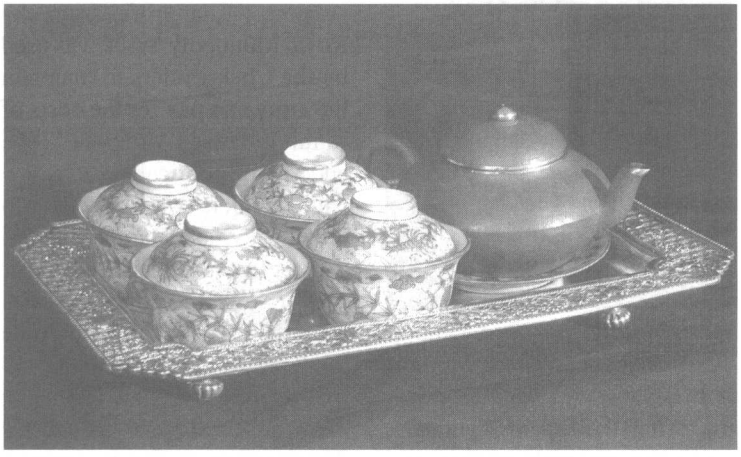
During the final days of Thonburi, King Taksin sent his general Chao Phraya Chakri on



The Canton Waterfront (1780-1782).

a military campaign against Cambodia. When Chao Phraya Chakri, was away on military campaign the capital was threatened by rebellion. The rebellion was quickly put down by the same nephew of Chao Phrya Chakri, who was the close friend of Lin Wu's son Boonchu. Thanks to his nephew Phraya Suriya Aphai's successful effort in quelling the rebellion Chao Phraya Chakri was able to return and ascend the throne.

Chao Phraya Chakri became the new Chakri king Rama I. Subsequently, Rama I made Phraya Suriya Aphai the *Krom Phraj Raj Wang Lung*(or Prince of the Rear Palace). The new *Krom Phraj Raj Wang Lang* decided to use the same junk fleet as the King of Thonburi by appointing his friend Boonchu as his merchant. Boonchu conducted the junk trade on behalf of the *Krom Phraj Raj Wang Lung* and made the latter prosperous. "Boonchu had a daughter named Jam who later became the mother of *Phraya* Pisarn," said Pimpraphai Bisalputra, whose family is directly descended from *Phraya* Pisan. The family name Bisalputra meaning son of Bisal(Pisarn) was bestowed by King Rama VI.



A Wang Lung tea set, made to order from China during Rama I (1782-1809)

Among the Bisalputra family heirloom is an antique Chinese porcelain tea set, comprising of 4 gilded tea cups painted with a golden aquatic motif. Family tradition has it that the heirloom was part of the porcelain cargo imported by Booncho on the *Wang Lang's* junk fleet during the reign of Rama I.

For Thai language readers *Krabueng Thuay Kala Tek*, written by Pimpraphai Bisalputra and published by Nanmee Books, may prove to be more than just an interesting read. The book tells a colorful tale of one of Thailand's oldest Chinese families spanning many reigns. The book succeeds in adding flesh and blood to Thailand's historical chronology, as well as, appeals to the antique connoisseur's appreciation of fine Chinese porcelain craft, with its beautiful photographs.

Jeffery Sng

Samdhong Rinpoche
UNCOMPROMISED TRUTH FOR A COMPROMISED WORLD:
Tibetan Buddhism and Today's World;

Conceived, recorded and edited by Donovan Roebert
World Wisdom, 2006
Pages 245

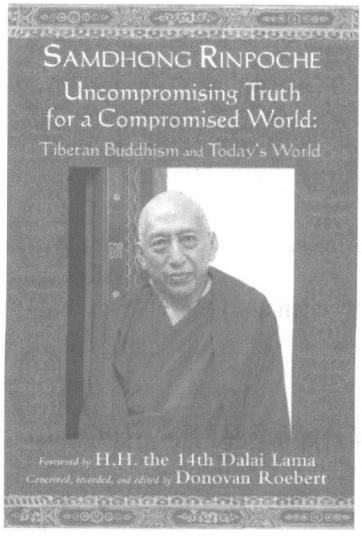
D. Roebert is a devoted practitioner of Mahayana Buddhism and a painter whose work is known internationally. Born in East London, South Africa, he is the founder and coordinator of the South African Friends of Tibet.

Samdhong Rinpoche is the first ever political leader to be directly elected by the Tibetan people in exile; the present Prime Minister of Tibetan Government in Exile, Rinpoche was born in Tibet in 1939 in the province of Kham. He began his monastic studies at the age of 12 but in 1959, he fled to India as China invaded Tibet. He lives in Dharamsala, India where the Tibetan government in exile is established. He is also known and respected for being an enlightened teacher, scholar, philosopher, great practitioner, influential politician and true Gandhian.

In the first ever series of dialogue with Rinpoche, Dr Roebert has helped us see through the insight and realities of what Rinpoche views on many issues in this modern world.

A must read book for all the people who are global citizens, especially the youth as in my culture it says youths are the future seeds of the nation, the success and failure of the nation depends entirely on the youth. Because it offers in depth understanding of how human endeavors have brought us the way we live today and how our ignorance has swallowed up our power to act correctly, to speak correctly and to think correctly, for it tells us the harsh realities of how the modern world has eventually compromised with the ancient wisdom so as to fit into today's politically correct realms. Also revealing the nature of truth and how it has been perceived by the contemporary world in terms of society, culture, government, economics, law, art, civilization and many more. One of the terrible aspects of modern civilization is that humanity has acquired more information, knowledge but no insights, like, how the modern medical science can be accessed by the rich but is of no use to the poor! How humanity has enlarged its knowledge but has failed to acquire wisdom.

He also talks about how modern individualism gives much importance to self, not realizing the true nature of self and how this self has led us into more competitions, not only with others but also with nature leading to "after me the flood", emphasizing how modern individuals are so much driven by human greed and wants. In a nut shell, Rinpoche argues against how the modern political-economic system has contradicted itself by claiming to be "fair and free". In reality it leads to the imbalance of wealth, power, resources and finally destroys inner spiritual growth, cultural



diversity and human intelligence. He firmly shares his vision on the future Tibet economic system which would be totally based on a fair system.

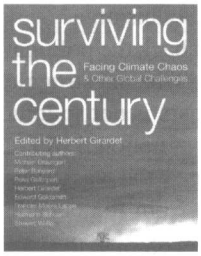
As I flip through the pages of this book, it gives me hope for Tibet and a strong message of importance of standing for the truth as he says acceptance of violence is also violence, acceptance of injustice is also injustice. Despite facing lots of challenges Rinpoche has full faith and trust in the path of TRUTH-INSISTENCE [Satya-graha] and NON VIOLENCE [Ahimsa].

As he highlights the case of Tibet, despite it is known for its non violent struggle, unfortunately the genocide of the Tibetan people, the theft of territory and assassination of deeply rooted culture have been ignored by international organizations for fear of the Chinese political economic power. When Dr Roebert reflects the situation of Tibet, its people, its culture and especially those youngsters who are losing their patience with the non violence struggle, Rinpoche gives us two perspectives : one as the prime minister of Tibetan government in exile and the other as a true bodhisattva.

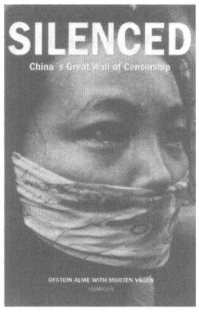
He flashed back the political history of the Tibetan struggle [stating "47 years is not so long for the lifetime of nation"] where he acknowledges the vast support Tibet got from the outside world [considering the present political-economic structure of the world]. On the other hand he emphasizes how the non violent struggle has not only kept alive the Tibet issue in the world but at the same time has never lost a soul of both Chinese and Tibetan, which for him is the great achievement to preserve the human life which is considered sacred in Buddhism. And also coming to the question of patience, he states very clearly and firmly that by nature patience means patience forever, not for certain time frame and giving up. Otherwise it's not patience but a temporary solution or strategy.

Thus for this Buddhist politician monk, a deep rooted Buddhist perspective is something that he uses to lead life and nation with uncompromised principles, no matter how the world has eventually compromised with its ultimate truth.

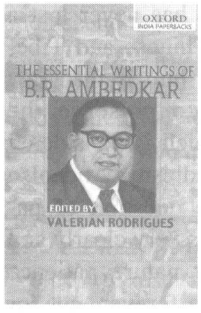
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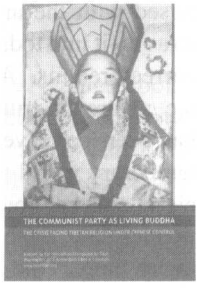
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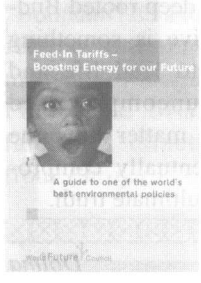
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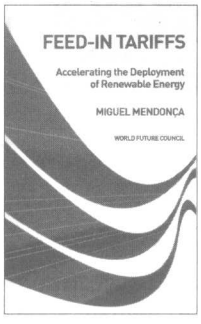
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Law
Magazine for The Ultimate Insider Analysis
Issue 1 Jun-Sep 2007
Thammasat Law Association, Bangkok
pamela@hongsakul.com

The Great Stupa of Mother Tara

"WHOEVER SEES, HEARS, REMEMBERS OR TOUCHES THE STUPA WILL RECEIVE ALL THE JOYS OF THE BUDDHA' S AND ALL THE BLESSINGS"

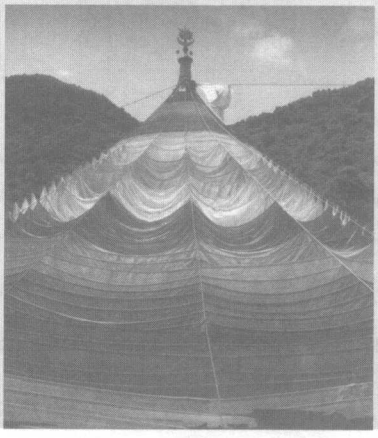
The Stupa represents the Buddha's holy mind, Dharmakaya, and each part of the Stupa shows the path to Enlightenment. Seeing, worshipping and circumambulating the stupa and making offerings by becoming faithful to the Three Jewels; the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, the minds of the faithful will enter the stream of dharma and that will bring immense merit.

If the stupa is built in the open air many beings, human and non-human, will go around it and thus many will benefit. Building a stupa is a way to emanate loving kindness and compassion, for it carries immense benefit in this life as well as in countless future lives.

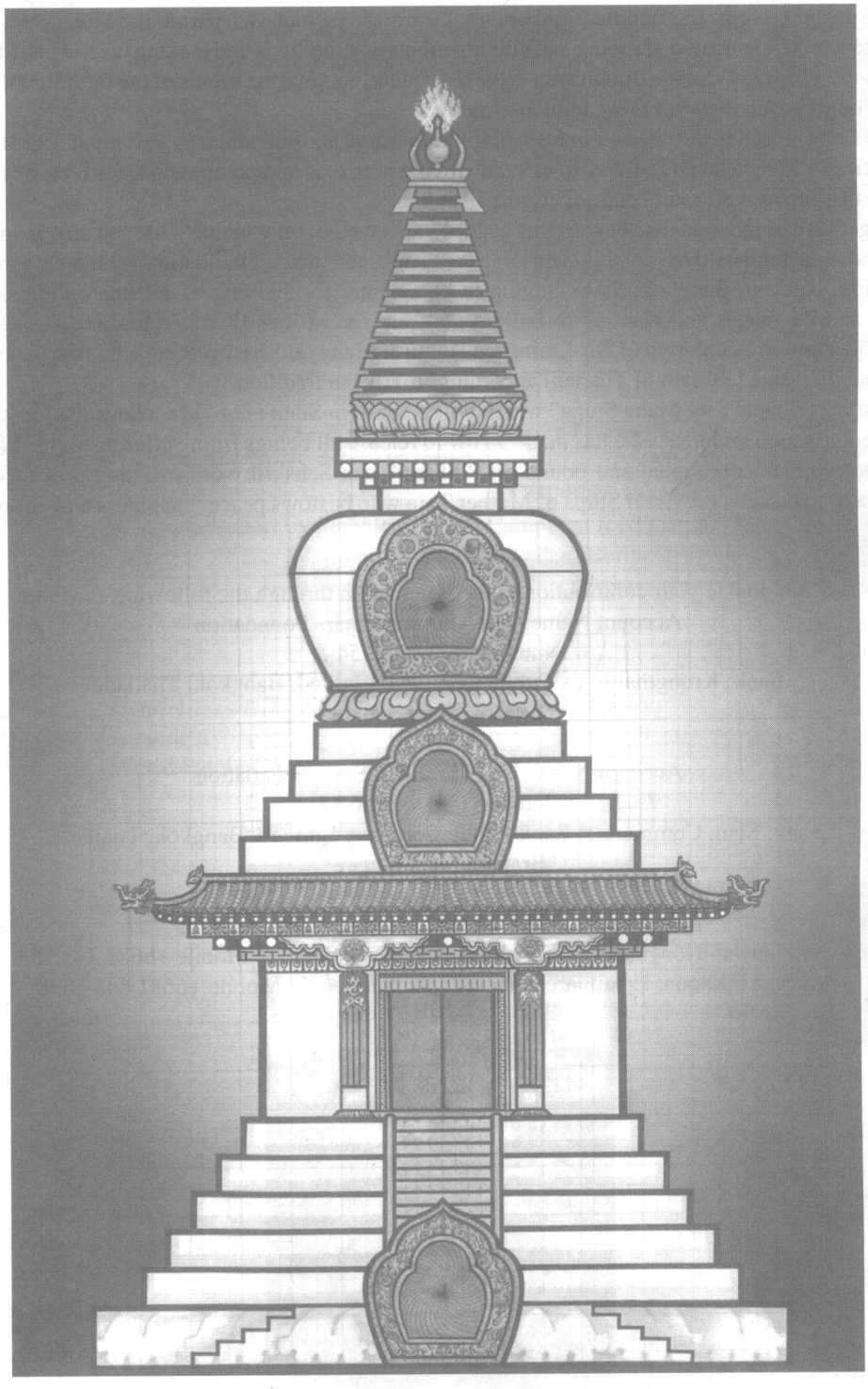
Being aware of the immense benefit that a stupa can have not only in one's life but also to many other human and non human lives in this samsara, the Thousand Stars Foundation which is a non profit organization, based in Bangkok, Siam, aiming to be a centre for learning of Tibetan cultures, religious traditions and languages and wanting to build a platform for various Buddhist traditions especially for those in Tibet and in Siam, invited His Eminence Kundrol Mangyal Lhasray Rinpoche from eastern Tibet to construct the stupa [chorten in Tibetan] according to Tibetan tradition.

The stupa "Shanti Tara Maha Stupa" which will be built in Siam is of Tara who is the female Bodhisattva of compassion and love. She has made a vow to release all beings from suffering and her love to all sentient beings is unconditional and boundless. "Shanti" is a Sanskrit word meaning peace. So, Shanti Tara Maha Stupa means the Great Stupa of Mother Tara who bestows peace, happiness and elimination of Evil.

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The First Vajarayana Stupa
to be built in Siam



The Tara Great Stupa for Peace and Harmony