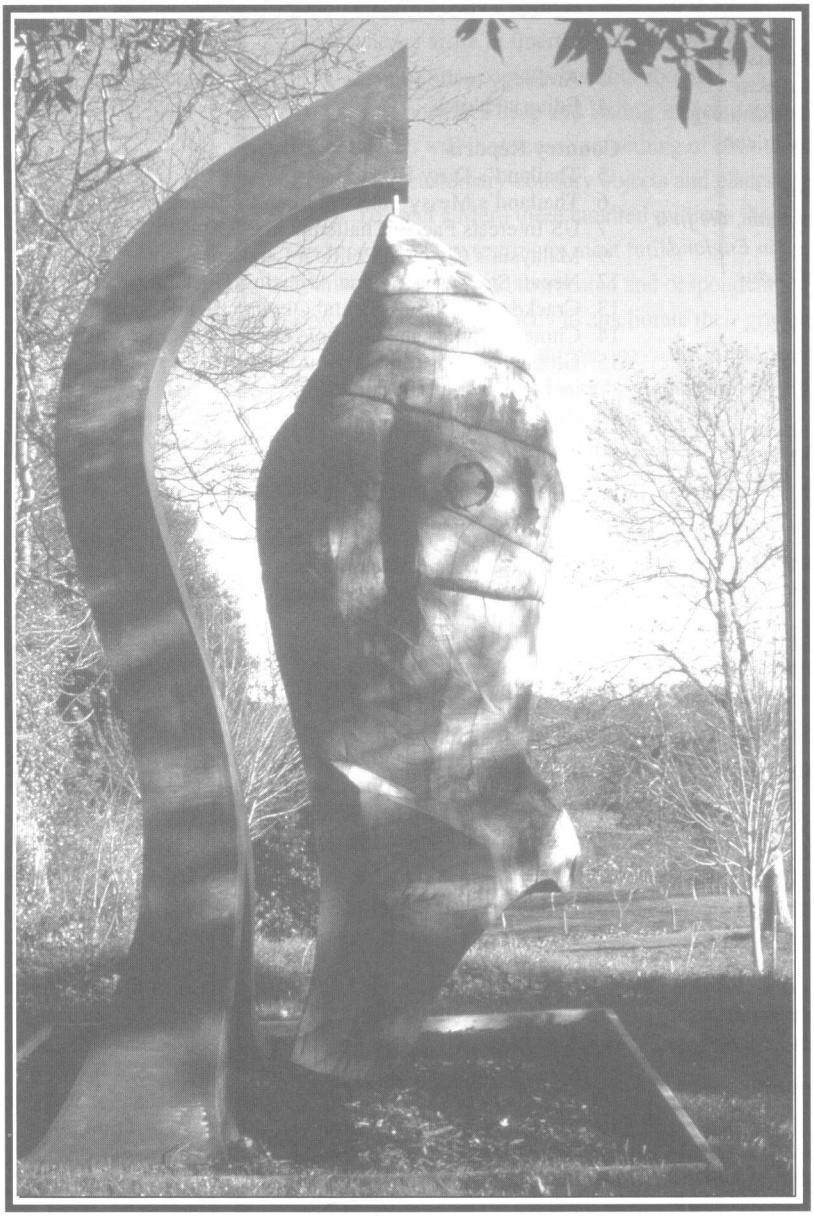
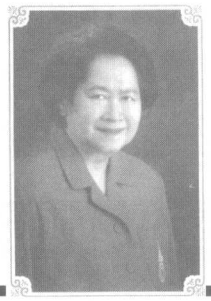
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Vol.24 No.2 May-Aug. 2551 (2008)



China: Purify your spirit with the Olympic Flame of Peace



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* H.R.H. Princess Galyani, elder sister to H.M. the King

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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An Elegy to the Princess Galyani
(6 May 1923 - 2 January 2008)

◎ Chao Fah Krom Luang has crossed over the earthly realm
Into the expanse mortals often abide with qualms,
Where the livings fear to traverse
To offer one's merits is, indeed, a measure magnanimous.
◎ Be wary not to squander wastful expenses
Expend only in so much as to up-lift the regal eminence.
Liken the instances Her Royal Great Uncle's demise,
From whence arose in finery, Siriraj infirmary, a commemorative site.
◎ From Siriraj copious benefits abound
To the vast populace deep and lasting, effects profound
From thence, will there ensue something of charity and alms
Beyond the customary obituary objects and places of homage past?
◎ To erect a Meru three hundred millions 'high'
A sheer pecuniary testimony most futile,
Whilst the population browbeaten and despondent
Devoid of remedial remedy to ameliorate their grievances
◎ If there were to be the meting out of royal wealth and riches
It would impart the masses with bright and shimmering faces
Peace and elation would encompass the land,
And justly gratifying the regal wishes of the Royal Princess.
◎ While Raja's wealth scales the pinnacle of world's top five
The general populaces live in dearth and abject miseries
Listen to the sagacious words and critiques of the wises
Avoid eulogize in over-exaggeration of veracity.
◎ Hyperbole of tributes in heaving bursts of 'majestee'
Surely, an added iniquity to the prevalently outdated passé
To rouse the public sentiments far and wide
Knowingly or not, perhaps by pure design, it irks and riles!
◎ Public bereavements should be embraced in true circumspection
Suspend the summoning the entirety of the Siam Royal Governance,
Such afflicts all districts and regions throughout the land
From indigo blue, to yellow, to black dresses in shifts of rotation.
◎ The lofty should lend their attentive ears to lowly voices
Conducting themselves loyally in both vernacular and manner
Shield the Institution Most-High in the Dharmic Codes
Avert from unsightly acts that lend to ignominious and ruinous courses.
◎ Learn to discern the petitioner's outcries
This would bring meritorious approbation
Too, an impartment of merits to the departed Princess
Made clear and translucent to the eyes of the public.
◎ If executed in the manner of all things prudent and sensible
Her Royal Highness would be gratified with paramount approval
Likewise, it would enliven the people with glorious omen
Equally, the Raja would augur well with boon and eternal longevity!

translated from ***Pacarayasara*** January - February 2551

Editorial Notes

Before retiring from the Sathirakoses - Nagapradipa Foundation Sulak Sivaraksa, our editor, sought an audience with HH the Dalai Lama, our patron. His Holiness graciously welcome Sulak, his family and friends at his residence in Dharamasala on 20th February.

Later the group had a private meeting with His Eminence the Kamapa and the most venerable Samdhong Rinpoche, prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile, hosted our editor as guest of the government. Sulak was asked to talk to Tibetan NGOs as well as Tibetan officials. The whole Thai group was entertained to a formal luncheon party, for all these we are very grateful.

On 6th March, the Central Institute of Tibetan Higher Studies, at Sarnath, Varanasi, kindly granted an honorary doctorate (D. Litt) to Sulak together with Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former president of India. The degree ceremony was conducted entirely in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

For the next three days, there was an international symposium on Buddhism and World Culture. Sulak was asked to be a keynote speaker.

On the evening of 7th March, there was a Buddhist drama *Nagananda Natakam* by Sri Harshadeva (663-704 AD) in Sanskrit, which was first performed in the 7th century at Nalanda University in honor of I Ching, the famous Chinese pilgrim. After the performance, Sulak was asked to propose a vote of thanks. He reminded the audience that when he first received a B.A. degree at Lampeter, in Wales, the citation was in Latin. In the 1950s, he also kept his terms at the Middle Temple in London. Every summer there would be an Aristophanes comedy performed in classical Greak near the round pond outside the Middle Temple. He said that if classical languages are being kept alive, it means that we are still rooted in ancient civilization.

On Friday 11th April, Sulak was invited by the Garison Institute to attend Philip Glass' opera on *Satyagraha : M.K. Gandhi in South Africa* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Subsequently, invited guests proceeded to the Institute for a retreat on Gandhi's "truth force" in the Age of Climate Change.

On Sunday 13th, there was a free public forum at New York's Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, where Sulak was one of the speakers on applying Gandhi's truth force and nonviolence appropriately for the future of all sentient beings and mother earth.

When he reached home on 19th April, there was an Olympic torch ceremony in Bangkok. Mom Rajawong Narisa Chakrabongsa, great grand daughter of King Rama V, refused to carry the torch because of the Chinese atrocity against the Tibetans. Indeed there were protests everywhere the Olympic torch passed through unless that country is under a dictatorial or totalitarian regime. The Tibetans paid dearly for their moral courage and their aspiration for democracy, human rights and autonomy. Worldwide demonstrations helped conscientise the public that the Olympic game in China is not a symbol of humanity and sportsmanship but expressing clearly that imperialism, whether Chinese or American, works closely with transnational corporations to promote greed (capitalism and consumerism), hatred (imperialism, militarism and dictatorship) and delusion (lying to the people, distorting the truth etc.) Gandhi's Satyagraha nonviolently destroyed the British empire eventually, the most powerful imperialism up to then. We feel that by applying Gandhi's message appropriately with wisdom and compassion, the American and Chinese empires too will crumble together with the transnational corporations. The world will certainly be a more proper habibat for all of us.

Thailand's Dirty History

HONG KONG, China. The new prime minister of Thailand has outraged many by refusing to admit that an infamous massacre ever occurred. In two separate interviews Samak Sundaravej claimed that only one person died on Oct. 6, 1976, when police and paramilitaries stormed Thammasat University, killing at least 46 and forcing thousands into hiding. He denied that he provoked the violence along with other rightists, saying that it is "a dirty history."

He's right about that. But there's a lot more to this dirty history than a single day of bloodshed or the marginal role that the prime minister may have played in it. Violence on the scale of Oct. 6 does not erupt unexpectedly. It is the finale to a thousand other lesser events. It is the day-to-day writ large.

In a doctoral thesis submitted to Cornell University last year, Tyrell Haberkorn follows one of the trails of repeated, silent incidents that culminated in the mayhem of 1976: the unsolved murders of dozens of farmers' leaders in the north of Thailand.

The farmers became targets in part because they were trying to organize their fellows when their country was a hot spot in the Cold War. With communist neighbors and ideologues calling for the downfall of Bangkok, modest demands for rent relief and land reform were enlarged and distorted.

But that they made demands at all, Haberkorn argues, was already cause to aggravate landholders who felt that "the farmers' claims challenged their public, and self, image as generous individuals who took care of the people who worked their rice fields." By expressing their needs as rights, rather than privileges, the farmers crossed the line from acceptable request into unacceptable protest.

The response was calculated and unforgiving. In mid-1975, 21 leaders of the Farmers' Federation of Thailand were killed, eight in Chiang Mai alone. Using the same methods as those of the 2003 war on drugs, the killers came in broad daylight, unconcerned to hide themselves. And like in 2003 the official response was to treat the dead not as victims but as persons who somehow deserved whatever they got, a category of people to which ordinary rules didn't apply.

The story of Intha Sribunruang, which Haberkorn retells in detail, is illustrative. Intha was a 45-year-old gardener who had sold his paddy fields to pay the school fees for his five children. He had served as a local government official and was keenly concerned for the welfare of other villagers in Chiang Mai.

After a new land rent control act was passed in 1974 Intha travelled around the province to inform others of its terms and how farmers could exercise them. His work angered sub-district officers and landholders who were doing their best to prevent people from knowing about the new law and how to use it.

On the morning of July 30, 1975, Intha was at home alone when two men on a motorbike stopped outside. One dismounted and asked to buy some cigarettes from the family's small general store. As Intha was giving the man his change, he pulled a pistol and killed Intha instantly.

Again as in 2003, the police in 1975 cited a lack of evidence and uncooperative witnesses as among the reasons for closing their inquiries. The provincial commander demanded to see proof not with which to catch Intha's killers but rather with which to show that the target was really a farmers' leader.

Of the 1975 killings, only in Intha's case was anyone ever arrested. But despite admitting to having been paid to do the job, the accused later reversed his statement in court and walked free shortly thereafter.

The killings had the desired effect. Support for the farmers' federation waned. The public was obliged to bear witness to crimes on which the state declined to act and refused anyone else the opportunity to do otherwise. The stage was set for the following October.

Haberkorn's question is not so much about why it was that the killers could not be found in 1975 but why up to today, over three decades later, they and the persons behind the murders still cannot be named, let alone tried.

The answer lies in the nature of dirty history itself. Acknowledged histories are not dirty. Secret histories are. Thailand's history is dirty not because stuff happened, but because even now nobody is able to tell the truth about what really went on, or name names.

This inability is largely the result of police, prosecutors and judges altogether failing to do their jobs. Without criminal pro-

cedure, no official records exist from which to draw a coherent picture of what occurred or why. Without this much, even a prime minister can cast doubt on established facts before a global television audience. No one was caught, so was there anything wrong? And did it really happen anyway?

Thailand's dirty history is an example of what arises when the rule of law is willfully and consistently undermined. It is an example of what happens when constitutional order is shamelessly displaced and parliamentary authority trivialized, both from without and within. For as long as these practices continue so too will there be dirty history, not only in the past, but also into the present.

(Haberkorn's thesis can be downloaded in PDF format from: http://ratchasima.wordpress.com/files/2008/02/haberkorn-cornell.pdf).

Awzar Thi, February 28, 2008, available at http://www.upiasiaonline.com.

(Awzar Thi is the pen name of a member of the Asian Human Rights Commission with over 15 years of experience as an advocate of human rights and the rule of law in Thailand and Burma. His Rule of Lords blog can be read at http://ratchasima.net.)

Thailand's Messy Telecom Loan to Burma Returns

Did Thaksin really push the original loan for personal gain? Stay tuned for courtroom drama.

Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej has cleared the way to pay the remainder of a controversial US$120 million soft loan by the Export-Import Bank of Thailand to the Burmese government that played a role in the political demise of Samak's predecessor, ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra.

Samak's order clearing the release of the remaining funds came one day after his return from a March 15 meeting with Burma's top leader, Senior General Than Shwe, in the Burmese capitol Naypyidaw.

Noppadon Pattama, Thailand's foreign minister and former lawyer for Thaksin, said the loan was revived because "political wrangles" should not get in the way of building ties with neighbors. "Thailand's internal problems have no effect on the right of Burma to get the money," he said.

Thailand's Assets Examination Committee alleges that Thaksin abused his powers in increasing the loan in order to benefit Shin Satellite, a subsidiary of his family business, Shin Corp. Following the 2006 coup that ousted him, the loan was suspended due to allegations that Thaksin's business interests would profit from the loan.

In addition to the potential profit Shin Corp—now owned by Singapore's Temasek Holdings—may receive out of the renewed loan, the new Thai government seems keen on assisting Burma's military rulers any way they can. The clearance for the loan followed comments by Samak that Burma was a country at peace because it is run by a regime of meditating Buddhists and that, "killings and suppression are normal there." Noppadon, during a visit to the United States, further stepped up Thailand's engagement policy with Burma by telling reporters, "We have to help Burma and engage them," he told reporters following a meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in which he reportedly said US sanctions against Burma would achieve nothing and encouraged the US to engage in multinational talks instead.

The assets body is set to rule on Monday whether Thaksin will have to stand trial for his involvement in the soft loan to Burma. Sak Korsaengruang, the assets panel chairman, said he would recommend that Thaksin be tried as the sole defendant. The committee had previously agreed to press criminal charges against Thaksin in August 2007.

The loan is one of four charges laid against Thaksin for abuse of authority during his time in power. The charges are all related to alleged concealment of shareholdings in Shin Corp and his administration's alleged favoritism towards what was then the family telecoms empire. Together the charges carry the possibility of 26 years of imprisonment. Shin Corporation was sold to Temasek Holdings of Singapore in January

2006. Whether the sale of Shin Corp was improper is one of the charges being investigated by the AEC and US$2.1 billion of the $2.3 billion Thaksin's family gained from the sale has been frozen.

The investigation into the Burma loan centers on Thaksin's alleged role in ordering the Exim bank to lend an additional $28.8 million on top of $96 million already loaned to the Burmese government to improve its telecommunications infrastructure. According to the asset committee's secretary, Kaewsan Atipho, the loan came with the condition that Burma buy materials and services from Shin Corp's subsidiary, Shin Satellite Plc, a satellite, broadband internet and fiber optic firm.

Thailand's *Matichon* newspaper reported in August 2004 that Burma's Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications had requested funding for three telecommunications projects worth over $30 million as a part of the Exim Bank's loan. The reportedly used the loan to buy telecom equipment to link up with the iPSTAR satellite owned by Shin Satellite and used the satellite's services to provide mobile phone and broadband internet services.

Thaksin's role allegedly not only allowed Shin Satellite to profit from the purchase of goods and services by the Burmese government, but also transferred any business risk from the project to the Finance Ministry. The Finance Ministry is legally responsible for risk surety on loans made by the Exim Bank and the AEC estimates that the deal caused $3.2 million in damages from the interest subsidy paid by the Finance Ministry to make the loan available.

Following the loan agreement, Shin Satellite leased satellite services for broadband internet and telephone services to Bagan Cybertech Ltd. in 2004. The company was nationalized and placed under the control of Mynamar Post and Telecommunications in 2005 after its owner, Ye Naing Win, son of deposed Prime Minister Khin Nyunt, was jailed on corruption charges.

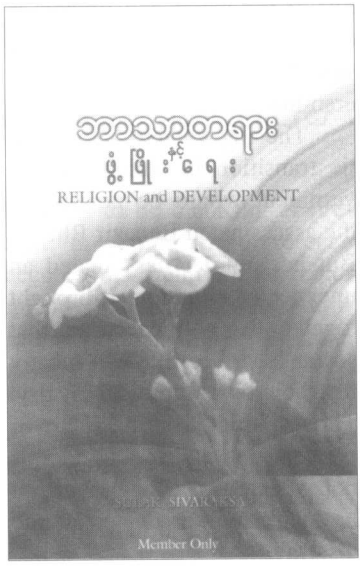
Although Thaksin and his lawyers maintain that the former premier had nothing to do with the loan, former Deputy Prime Minister Surakiart Sathirathai told the assets committee on April 30, 2007, that Thaksin himself gave the order to lend Burma the money. Surakiart, who was Thaksin's foreign minister at the time, claims the loan was given over his objections that the funds were going to be used by the Burmese for leasing satellite transmission signals from a satellite owned by Thaksin's family. He also claimed that Thaksin not only ordered the approval of the loan but for the Exim Bank to increase the loan by $28.8 million so Burma could buy extra telecoms equipment and services from Thailand.

The loan proposal was reportedly approved in February 2004 and an agreement was signed with the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (MFTB) in June 2004. The soft loan was granted at special interest rates of 3 percent per annum with a five year grace period on payment of the principal. The money was to be used by the MFTB to allocate loans to various Burmese agencies to purchase capital goods and services from Thailand. The original loan was for road construction and infrastructure improvement and the Exim Bank argued the loan would create jobs and income for 16 Thai export firms as well as boost ties with a neighbor.

Thaksin sued the assets committee in August 2007 for defamation, accusing the spokesperson for the committee of telling reporters that Thaksin ordered the loan increase. The papers allege that this caused the public to falsely believe Thaksin ordered the increase for personal gain. The suit claims the loan was based on a contract between the Exim Bank and the Burmese government and Thaksin had no power over the decision. Thaksin has asked for compensation of $45 million with interest

What remains unclear is how much of the Bt4 billion (US$126.9 million in current dollars) remains unpaid. Noppadon has said that only $32 million has been given so far. The Exim Bank, however, said in a September 2007 statement that all but $11 million had already been given.

Brian McCartan,
28 March 2008,
www.asiasentinel.com



US Interests Face a Challenge in Pakistan

The Bush Administration confronts a new and daunting situation in its efforts to control jihadists

Although the ascendancy of Yousuf Razaf Gilani to power as prime minister may have reduced, however temporarily, Pakistan's capacity for political chaos, it throws the future of Washington's global war on terror into uncertainty, making the job of NATO forces and their allies far more difficult. Certainly, while the February 18 election has managed to restore a semblance of democracy, it has also completely altered Pakistan's political equation.

President Purvez Musharraf, who has been spearheading Pakistan's effort to contain the jihadis, is now seriously constrained as his loyalists have been routed and in their place the new coalition of the late Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and the Muslim League (N) headed by Nawaz Sharif has come to power. Sharif's role as one of the major constituents is complicating the US's agenda since Washington earlier considered him soft on Islamists.

The US wanted a democratic transition in which the government would be headed by the assassinated Benazir Bhutto. But her murder has created an unexpected situation. It brought together two political parties that so far have been known mostly for their bitter political rivalry. Though this is a marriage of convenience and the alliance is not expected to be long-lasting, it has sent the war on terror into disarray.

The new government has pledged to cut Musharraf's powers and review his US-backed counterterrorism policies. Already, partners in the new government have said they would negotiate with some militant groups – an approach that has not been favored by Washington, which has provided about US$10 billion in aid to Pakistan since 2001.

The US knows that in the new setup, not everybody is its friend. In fact, constituents like the Muslim League (N) are outright hostile to the US role in Pakistan. To attempt to reduce the problem and to smooth the relationship between the coalition and Musharraf, it is trying to build bridges with the new government through a two-pronged strategy.

Two US envoys, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher, were sent to Pakistan on the day the new government assumed power. The two met with Sharif, Pakistan People's Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and Musharraf. They also met Awami National Party president Asfandyar Wali Khan in Peshawar.

Unfortunately, this has only aroused hostility towards the US and is considered unnecessary meddling in Pakistan's internal affairs. The two got a cold response from Nawaz Sharif. But this was expected as Sharif now wants to take a very different approach towards the war on terror. He stated that parliament would review Musharraf's "one-man" strategy against Islamic extremism. Sharif also feels that US policies are responsible for the recent wave of suicide bombings by militants that has hit Pakistan. He wants a new strategy focusing on Pakistan's needs.

Gilani has been less hostile, telling US President George W Bush that a broader approach to the war on terror is necessary, including political solutions and development programs. But the efficacy of his strategy is doubtful. In the past, attempts at peace deals with militants in the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan have collapsed with further bloodshed and caused alarm in Washington.

Though Gilani told Bush "that Pakistan would continue to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations since it is in Pakistan's own national interest," his suggestion to have a rethink on the policy is an indication of the new situation. The Parliament, he said, is a sovereign body and all important policy matters and decisions on important national issues are to be taken through it. Every effort will be made to ensure the parliament's supremacy, he said. The PPP ended up with 121 seats of the 336 seats in the Majlis-e-Shoora, the lower house, and the Pakistan Muslim League got another 90, forming a coalition with the Awami National Party. There are 10 different political parties in a parliament that can be characterized as fractionalized at best.

The second strategy adopted by the US is to intensify unilateral strikes against Al-Qaeda militants in Pakistan's tribal

areas. The US is now attempting to deal with the very real concern that Musharraf's powers will be reduced in the coming months. It also fears that the new government in Islamabad will curtail such attacks. Hence it wants to do as much damage as it can to Al-Qaeda before the new government gets going. Reports have indicated that the strikes have followed after a tacit understanding with Musharraf and army chief General Ashfaq Kayani US strikes would be permitted on foreign rebels in Pakistan, but not against the Pakistani Taliban.

The US describes its new approach as a "shake the tree" strategy designed to force Osama bin Laden and key lieutenants to move in ways that US intelligence can detect. The US managed to kill a senior Al-Qaeda commander, Abu Laith al-Libi in January in a similar attack. Pakistan has never formally acknowledged allowing such missile strikes and Musharraf earlier this year said that unauthorised military actions on Pakistani soil would be treated as an invasion.

There is nothing wrong with the idea that Gilani would go for a political solution and economic development. But the experience shows that things have been different in Pakistan. Besides political rulers, there are other actors like the Pakistan's Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, which has played a decisive role in arming Islamic extremists in Afghanistan and other areas, and the Pakistan army, which have their own interests.

The US has been donating funds to Pakistan hoping that its support can be sustained. Bush has used his authority since 2003 to exempt Pakistan from a law that restricts funding to countries where the legitimate head of state was deposed by a military coup. Even this time he has pledged US$750 million over the next five years for development in the lawless and impoverished tribal regions. Out of this the United States will provide about US$300 million this year to boost Pakistan's counter-terrorism operations.

Unfortunately, so far a very small part of this donation has gone into fighting jihadis or bringing development to the border area. The money provided by the US for economic development is being used by Pakistan to buy arms and ammunition and is thus unlikely to bring development to the region. If a civilian government tries to restrict this, once again a struggle for power will emerge. The army in Pakistan is not used to civilian control.

Then there is the problem of the Taliban, which has been operating seamlessly in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Any strategy to uproot it was bound to reach Pakistani territory sooner or later. Hence the argument that the US action against the Islamist extremists has turned that country into a killing field is not justified. Clearly, various actors in Pakistan are working at cross-purposes. This kind of approach will not help defeat the challenge of al-Qaida and their ilk. A streamlining of Pakistan's counter-terror strategy is crucial if the Global War on Terror is to be fought with any success. So far, the prospects appear daunting.

Anand Kumar,
30 March 2008,
www.asiasentinel.com

Malaysia's Changed Political Landscape

The cracks in Malaysia's ruling coalition and biggest party are widening after the shock of the March elections

The March 8 national elections in Malaysia have left politics in such a state of flux that one could construct about as many scenarios as there are politicians in the country over the future of the just-elected parliament. With the opposition for the first time strong enough to mount a serious challenge to the Barisan Nasional, or the ruling coalition of ethnic parties, the country appears to have been forced by the elections to embark on a bout of democracy.

Just how messy things have become, at least for the United Malays National Organisation, is shown by the success of the Sultan of Terengganu, who also happens to be the King at present, in getting his preference accepted as Mentri Besar (chief minister) rather than the nominee of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Badawi, universally known as Pak Lah, at first declared the move unconstitutional but an UMNO Supreme Council meeting on March 27 decided to accept the sultan's choice to end

the dispute and avoid having to face a by-election that could have led to the loss of yet another state to the opposition.

The sultan's override of the premier's UMNO candidate is both an exhibit of Badawi's weak position and the most blatant illustration of the royal rulers' attempt to use the changed political situation to turn their heretofore nominal powers as constitutional monarchs into real ones. Earlier the Sultan of Perlis also overrode the PM's choice, but on this occasion with the support of the UMNO assemblymen.

The UMNO Supreme Council also knocked back a suggestion that party elections for top posts be postponed to next March, by which time, so Badawi's supporters believe, his position would be strengthened. As it is, branch and division elections will be held between July and November and the top posts in December.

It will still be difficult for challengers to get on the ballot as they need the support of 30 percent of the divisions. However, anti-Badawi sentiment could easily snowball. Meanwhile there remains the possibility that things can be brought to a head much earlier if Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah succeeds in his effort to gather enough support to call an Extraordinary General Meeting to discuss the reasons for the party's electoral failure and to force Badawi to step down. Razaleigh, a onetime finance minister in the 1980s, has not been in government since he split with former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad two decades ago but cultivates an elder statesman aura at a time when UMNO is devoid of obvious younger talent

Sketching Scenarios

These are only some basic alternative possibilities. The number of more detailed scenarios is huge. Here are a few:

1. Badawi hangs on by the skin of his teeth. By the time of the UMNO elections and party meeting later this year, the blame game within the party has subsided and division heads look to restoring party unity as a first step to regaining favour with the electorate. He is helped by UMNO's loyalty traditions and the lack of an obvious immediate successor with sufficient support. Razaleighi is viewed by many as too old and tainted by the way he split the party when he lost to Mahathir.

   Anti-Badawi dissidents prove insufficiently united to mount a successful challenge, and deputy prime minister Najib Tun Razak remains unwilling to do so for fear of unleashing a barrage of allegations about defense contract kickbacks, his wife's behavior and his relationships with parties involved in the notorious murder of Altantuya Shaariibuu, a Mongolian translator allegedly executed by two of his bodyguards in 2006 on behalf of his best friend. All three are standing trial for the murder.

   Najib figures his best chance of succeeding is to leave Badawi where he is on the understanding that he will make way for Najib well before the next election. Mahathir's efforts to unseat Badawi are blunted by revival of the issue of the 1988 sacking of Chief justice Salleh Abbas and other independent judges who would not do Mahathir's bidding. Badawi keeps his son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin, focus of much unpopularity, out of sight. He is also helped by some new ministers who proving to be active in introducing fresh ideas and appearing to respond to public complaints on corruption, inflation, reform of the judiciary and non-Muslim religious issues.
2. Razaleigh fails to get an EGM, but chaos reigns at state levels with pro- and anti- Badawi factions squabbling a long the lines of what has been happening in Terengganu, with the country's nine sultans using the situation to enhance their own power and show up Badawi's lack of authority and credibility. As a well-known defender of royal privileges, Razaleigh stirs the pot.

   Under this scenario, opinion polls show Badawi to be still very unpopular which makes it easy for UMNO delegates to be in denial over broader dissatisfactions with UMNO rule, originating in the corruption, authoritarianism and abuse of power of the Mahathir era. Members decide that Badawi must go. But with many harbouring concerns about Najib, Razaleigh's bid for power looks viable. Najib is opposed to letting in Razaleigh who, despite his age, may stay PM long enough to block him or provide a stepping stone for the return to UMNO of the current de facto opposition leader, former Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim,

whom Mahathir sacked and was jailed, or the emergence of new, younger UMNO candidates.

But Najib is not strong enough to stop Razaleigh, who gets support from Badawi's former supporters as the party turns to an elder statesman, albeit one who badly split the party in the past, and who still carries some baggage from the Bank Bumiputra scandal of the 1980s. Even Mahathir is prepared to forget the past in order to spite his successor.

A variant on this is that the situation within UMNO deteriorates even faster, Badawi loses control of the Supreme Council more divisions and the EGM does take place with the above result.

3. Badawi's nerve fails. Already nicknamed "Sleepy" because of critics' belief that he is inattentive, he decides that the strain of being prime minister under these circumstances is too much. He is willing to resign and let the party decide whether to choose Najib, Razaleigh or a third candidate (International Trade Minister Muhyiddin Yassin looks the most likely of the current bunch of senior party figures) with the proviso that son-in-law Khairy and other members of his family are protected.
4. As UMNO disarray develops, Anwar's feelers to disgruntled UMNO legislators and some non-UMNO BN members from Sarawak and Sabah to move to Parti Keadilan Rakyat, the People's Justice Party and the leading party in the Barisan Rakyat, the opposition coalition, provide it with sufficient numbers to oust UMNO. Already one Sabah member has resigned from a deputy minister position. The arithmetic makes this looks unlikely at present as 30 would need to change sides. But there is no UMNO loyalty among the local parties from Sarawak, which hold 54 of the Barisan Nasional seats.

Recent statements threatening to make party-hopping illegal suggest that UMNO, which has plenty of experience luring opponents into its fold, is worried. Such a scenario would pave the way for the return of Anwar who, despite his many enemies, has greater stature at home and abroad than any of the other candidates. From May, when his period of ineligibility due to his 1998 jailing ends, he will become eligible to stand for parliament and appears likely to become official leader of the coalition.

5. Desperate to find a formula which will reverse the erosion of support for UMNO - whether or not Badawi stays for the time being - the party offers Anwar the right of return and the top job after a short interval. This would be bitterly opposed by many in UMNO, particularly those close to Najib and Mahathir, but UMNO feels Anwar is too popular to be left outside the tent. Anwar's ambition to be prime minister overrides his commitment to the Barisan Rakyat and he takes a big chunk of Keadilan with him, all the while promising to reform UMNO and to remake the Barisan Nasional in the multi-racial image of the Barisan Rakyat.
6. Determined to hang on regardless of losing the support of large numbers of UMNO legislators, Badawi offers to go into a grand coalition with the Barisan Rakyat. Despite opposition from the majority of UMNO, he has enough support from reform-minded UMNO figures, including recent respected and independent ministerial appointees like Shahrir Abdul Samad and Zaid Ibrahim, to proceed. He stays as Prime minister, at least for now, and agrees to a reform agenda with Anwar, who thus become heir apparent again.
7. When parliament assembles in late April, the opposition tables a no-confidence vote against Badawi. Enough UMNO or other Barisan Nasional members stay away for the vote which is carried, forcing the prime minister to resign. Up steps Najib, or Razaleigh, to claim the crown. The BR rapidly comes to regret this move as the new UMNO administration decides to put an end to Badawi's tolerant ways, blaming him for giving space for the opposition to develop. It cracks down on new found freedoms and threatens or even imposes a state of emergency.

These are all UMNO leadership scenarios of varying degrees of likelihood. Some of them the BR can view from a distance, preferring to focus on trying to keep its coalition together and make a success of government in

the five states it controls – which together with the Federal Territory, also a BR stronghold – account for more than half the Malaysian economy. However there are also some more worrying possibilities.

Too Early for Congratulations

Malaysians have rightly congratulated themselves on the calm atmosphere in which the political near-revolution has taken place. Some initial nervousness has given way to a degree of euphoria about Malaysian political maturity and advances in ethnic harmony. Whereas a similar government setback in 1969 sparked a violent Malay reaction and days of race riots, this time the anti-government result was achieved because of an unprecedented level of harmony as the three opposition components put aside some communal issue for ones on which they could agree. In the process all became more moderate and able to talk to each other.

But some fear that this national mood of calm is fragile. Missteps by opposition-held state governments could yet spark racial tension – this is most problematic in Penang where Malays are in a minority and the newly ascendant Chinese-dominated Democratic Action Party will need to keep its Chinese chauvinist instincts on a tight leash. Some at least in UMNO will want to use any sign of tension or Chinese over-confidence to claim that Malays are threatened. Already some of the Malay press, Utusan in particular, is full of letters (written in-house, say critics) warning Malays of the dangers they face and the need for unity under UMNO.

As in 1969, there are surely some in UMNO who would like to fan communal flames to create a crisis which both provides UMNO figures with keris-waving opportunities and an excuse for a crackdown on the opposition generally and the non-Malay opposition in particular.

Given the support that ethnic Malays have given to Keadilan as well as to PAS, this looks improbable – it is estimated that in Peninsular Malaysia 47 percent voted for the Barisan Rakyat, and in Kuala Lumpur and the Klang valley surrounding the city the figure was well above 50 percent. Nonetheless, UMNO still controls the levers of central power and Malays dominate the armed forces, the police and other key institutions.

Some may feel, or allege, that the influence of the non-Malays within the Barisan Rakyat and its effort to de-emphasise Malay preferences are a threat to Malay supremacy. Although most Malaysians, even Barisan Nasional voters, seem happy with the zeal for reform, for racial harmony, and for the upsetting of entrenched interests, represented by the election, there are dangers that a wounded UMNO, deprived of access to funds in the states it has lost, will be unwilling to learn lessons, will become a nastier not a new UMNO.

That may depend on who becomes leader, and under what circumstances.

Philip Bowring,
29 March 2008,
www.asiasentinel.com

Nepal: Stop Abusing and Arresting Tibetans

Restore Tibetans' Rights to Assembly, Expression and Movement

(Washington, DC, April 1, 2008) – The Nepali police's recent abuses of and threats to deport Tibetan protestors in Kathmandu betray the government's own record of restoring rights, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said in a joint letter to the government today.

The letter to Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala identifies several key concerns about the treatment of Tibetans since demonstrations began on March 10. Since that time, Nepali police have arrested and detained more than 1,500 people and preemptively arrested others they believe likely to participate in demonstrations, targeting in particular anyone they believe to be Tibetan. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are particularly concerned about increasing evidence of the police's use of sexual and other forms of assault. Police have further threatened Tibetan protesters with deportation, which would

also constitute a serious violation of Nepal's international human rights obligations.

Despite being a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, senior government officials have denied the rights to assembly and expression on the grounds that "anti-China activities" are prohibited in Nepal.

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch called on the government of Nepal to immediately restore the rights to freedom of assembly, expression, and movement, by allowing Tibetans to go about their daily lives and carry out peaceful protests without fear of arrests or threat of deportation.

Crackdown: China's Brutal Olympic Echo

China's crackdown against Tibetan protesters ahead of the Summer Olympics in Beijing carries with it a brutal echo from the past. Scores of people, including school children are reported dead and more repression has been promised. The People's Daily, the official newspaper of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), said "[We must] resolutely crush the 'Tibet independence' forces' conspiracy and sabotaging activities."

Even after decades of occupation, the ruthlessness of the crackdown has shocked much of the world. It happens the week after the US State Department removed China from its list of the world's worst human rights offenders.

Yet the concern expressed by world leaders has seemed less for the people of Tibet than the fate of the Summer Games, with Olympic cash deemed more precious than Tibetan blood. The Olympics were supposed to be China's multibillion-dollar, super sweet sixteen. Britain's Minister for Africa, Asia and the United Nations, Mark Malloch-Brown told the BBC, "This is China's coming-out party, and they should take great care to do nothing that will wreck that."

Other countries hankering after a piece of China's thriving economy have rushed to put daylight between the crackdown in Tibet and the Olympics. No surprise, the Bush's White House, underwriting their war in Iraq on loans from Beijing, headed off any talk that President Bush would cancel his appearance at the Olympic Games when spokeswoman Dana Perino said Bush believed that the Olympics "should be about the athletes and not necessarily about politics." Earlier, the European Union said a "boycott would not be the appropriate way to address the work for respect of human rights, which means the ethnic and religious rights of the Tibetans."

While the nations of the West have ruled out the idea of boycotting the games, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said Tuesday that the EU should at least consider boycotting the opening ceremony if violence continues. Later Kouchner backtracked, saying "We're not in favor of it. When you're dealing in international relations with countries as important as China, obviously when you make economic decisions it's sometimes at the expense of human rights. That's elementary realism.''

Whatever happens next, China's crackdown is not happening in spite of the Beijing Olympics, but because of them. It is a bold play by China to set a tone for the remainder of the year. Since its occupation of the country in 1951, China has suppressed its Buddhist faith and made Tibetans a persecuted minority in their own country via the mass migration of millions of Han Chinese. As monks and young Tibetans took their grievances to the streets over the weekend, the government made clear it would brook no protest and tolerate no dissent.

But it's helpful to remember that in many countries, including our own, pre-Olympic repression is as much of a tradition as lighting the torch.

In 1984, Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates oversaw the jailing of thousands of young black men in the infamous Olympic Gang Sweeps. Gates also sent the LA Swat Team to Israel and West Berlin for special training.

The 1996 Atlanta games were supposed to demonstrate the gains of the New South, but the New South ended up looking much like the old one, as public housing was razed to make way for Olympic venues, homeless

people were chased off the streets and perceived troublemakers were arrested. As Wendy Pedersen of the Carnegie Community Action Project recently recalled in Vancouver, BC, another city poised to crack down on crime, drugs and homelessness in preparation for the Winter Olympics in 2010, Atlanta officials "had six ordinances that made all kinds of things illegal, including lying down. Lots of people were shipped out, and lots of people were put in jail. [The Olympic Planning Committee] actually built the city jail. Activists there called it the first Olympic project completed on time."

Repression followed the Olympic Rings to Greece in 2004. As the radio program "Democracy Now," reported at the time, authorities in Athens "round[ed] up homeless people, drug addicts and the mentally ill, requiring that psychiatric hospitals lock them up." The pre-Olympics "cleanup" included detaining or deporting refugees and asylum-seekers. Being the first Olympics after 9/11, police surveillance of immigrant Muslims and makeshift mosques in Athens greatly increased.

But the worst example of Olympic repression—and the most resonant to the current moment—came in 1968 in Mexico City, where hundreds of Mexican students and workers occupying the National University were slaughtered in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas on October 2, 1968, ten days before the start of the games. Recently declassified documents paint a picture of a massacre as cold and methodical as President Luis Echeverría's instructions.

Echeverría's aim was the same as China's: a pre-emptive strike to make sure that using the Olympic games as a platform for protest would not be on the itinerary. The irony, of course, is that while Echeverría succeeded in crushing the protest movement outside the games, on the inside US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their black-gloved fists in an expression of Black Power, cementing the 1968 games as a place defined by discontent. It's a lesson the 2008 athletes might remember. Officials may try to smother dissent on the streets of Lhasa and elsewhere in China, but in the games themselves—from the path of the Olympic torch up Mount Everest to the opulent venues constructed in Beijing—the risk for protest, and the opportunity, is real.

Dave Zirin,
March 25, 2008
www.zmag.org

China: International Olympic Committee Operating in Moral Void

(Geneva, April 1, 2008) – The Ethics Commission of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) should articulate human rights standards for host countries to end the moral void in which it operates, Human Rights Watch said in a letter released today. The IOC, which is scheduled to hold meetings in Beijing from April 1 to April 12, has refused to publicly articulate concerns about the human rights situation in China.

The refusal of the IOC to dissociate itself from the abuses directly linked to the preparation of the Beijing Games is undermining human rights in China and flouting the spirit and the letter of the Olympic Charter, Human Rights Watch said.

"The question isn't whether the IOC is a human rights organization," said Sophie Richardson, Asia advocacy director of Human Rights Watch. "It's whether the Olympic movement respects human rights. If it does, remaining silent as China's crackdown intensifies isn't acceptable."

The IOC has not spoken publicly about a wide variety of human rights abuses in China, including: ongoing restrictions on foreign media that violate China's formal commitment made to win the right to host the Games; the jailing of two civil rights activists who criticized the Beijing Olympics, Yang Chunlin and Hu Jia, on charges of state subversion; and the decision to carry the Olympic torch relay through Tibet despite an ongoing crackdown on ethnic Tibetans, a military lockdown of the region, and a denial by the Chinese authorities to allow an international commission of

inquiry to go to Tibet.

The letter urged the Ethics Commission, an independent body in charge of elaborating ethical principles based on the values and principles enshrined in the Olympic Charter, to articulate standards compatible with the respect of human rights to guide the Olympic movement. Human Rights Watch is also urging the IOC to publicly assess the extent to which current human rights violations linked to the preparation of the Games were violating the commitments made by China at the time of its bid to host the Olympic Games, and to establish a standing mechanism to address human rights concerns.

According to the IOC rules, the principles elaborated by the Ethics Commission must be respected by the IOC and its members, by the cities wishing to organize the Olympic Games, by the Organizing Committees of the Olympic Games, by National Olympic Committees as well as by the participants in the Olympic Games.

"The IOC seems determined to take the Chinese government's line – that human rights are a political matter and shouldn't be discussed," said Richardson. "But that's inconsistent with the Olympic movement's original aim of fostering 'respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.' If the IOC does not find its public voice now, will it ever?"

Global Responsibility Towards Peace and Democracy in Myanmar

The present crisis in Myanmar (Burma) portrays a critical episode of the long drawn peoples' movement for democracy. The struggle between the brutal power of military junta and the democratic aspirations of the civil and political society is continuing for over fifty years now. All civil, political and democratic voices have gradually been dismantled and forced into submission or shunted out in exile. The military in Myanmar has always taken great pride in ruling the empty streets for long as a sign of peaceful reign. The military dictatorship in Myanmar is neither legitimate nor natural under any political circumstances. Therefore acts of political resistance have periodically emerged to resist the unjust and the oppressive military rule. The leaders of political resistance have been changing from one situation to another. They can broadly be classified as leaders from the political parties, ethnic communities, students, party and non-party political activists, and more recently the Buddhist monks. The cause and commitment of the movement has remained the same: restoration of democratic political process, dialogue and national reconciliation. The position of the military junta has not changed. The pre-conditions for dialogue and charges against the democratic movements' and their leadership have also strikingly remained the same. It is the politics of stalemate for long but the mood now is defiant.

Whenever the streets are crowded by people protesting for more freedom and democracy in Myanmar the global community responds with an understandable enthusiasm of support and the military junta with a sense of caution and purpose. The Burmese military junta rarely acts in panic because of their historical ability to reinvent themselves and camouflage under a new political-military dispensation or military regrouping. In many ways the establishment of a caretaker government in 1958 under General Ne Win was a precursor to the political developments that Myanmar came to witness in the following decades. The elected government under U Nu was overthrown on 2 March 1962 by the military coup. Myanmar came directly under the influence of the military for the second time in less than four years. This time how ever the military wanted a more lasting and permanent role than being a mere caretaker government. The Revolutionary Council led by General Ne Win became the engine of the military government that soon abolished the constitution and suspended the democratic rights of the people. All the legislative, executive and judicial powers came to be vested in the Revolutionary Council and ultimately in the hands of General Ne Win. The

military has survived for long in different formations and versions of political role. First, by proclaiming itself as the Revolutionary Council and then as the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) under the late General Ne Win in 1974. Later it incarnated itself as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) under General Saw Maung in 1988.

The current version, as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) under the foursome led by senior General Than Shwe since 1997, is an irony and contravention of truth. There is neither peace nor any conditions for genuine development inside Myanmar today. The SLORC dissolved itself on 5 November 1997 and appointed a new 19-member State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in its place. Only the four most senior members of the SLORC, senior General Than Shwe, General Maung Aye, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt and Lieutenant General Tin Oo retained their positions. The remaining posts were filled by the younger military commanders and this includes the heads of the military's 12 regional commands. The former SLORC members who could not be retained were shifted into an advisory body but this was how ever subsequently dissolved. General Shwe Mann and General Soe Win became other members of this Gang of Four after replacing General Khin Nyunt and General Tin Oo. This group awaits another subtle power shift after the death of General Soe Win and there may even be a dramatic change implying the emergence of General Maung Aye. These are the crucial steps that will guide or impede the democratic transition within Myanmar in the next few months.

More than 6000 people were detained after the August 2007 protests inside Myanmar. The crackdown is continuing as the government is expanding its search network around the monasteries and students' hide outs. The students' leaders and the political activists are once again targeted by the government. The reports of a split within the ruling military junta have to be seen from the earlier experiences of how the Burmese military junta dealt with the challenge of mass movements. The divide within the military junta is always about the means and methods of handling the protests than about the transition to democracy. It may now be the turn of General Maung Aye, (commander-in-chief and second only to General Than Shwe) to stake claim to the top post and move General Than Shwe to a safety net as a way of demonstrating the new political space and scope for reconciliation in the country after the brutal attack against the Buddhist monks. There are not many options left for the military junta who fear ceremonial boycott by the Buddhist monks and the social boycott of the military establishment and their families by the monasteries and the civil society. Also there are no political myths left after the long years of reign by military junta such as freedom, democracy and development that are advanced to sustain power.

The military has stretched its reign far too long and has systematically been engaged in destroying the socio-political institutions in the country. The Buddhist monks and the monasteries were the last and unsaid hope of the common people towards a democratic transition in Myanmar. Though the military is deeply aware of the potential of the Buddhist monks it took no more caution than the routine watch over the monasteries since 1988. The interval during the period from August 1988 to August 2007 has been painfully long and also revealed the extent of damage and destruction of civil and political society within Myanmar. The political decay and the agony of the people could not have been better expressed than the monks who in the Buddhist society are both held in high esteem and regarded for committed non-partisanship in the affairs of state and politics.

It is the gradual eclipse of democracy and the oppressive rule of the military junta for long that has moved the Buddhist monks to act beyond their conventional role in Burmese polity and society. In religious terms, the Buddhist monks have acted within their scriptures to pursue a 'Just and Democratic Order' for their people. It is relevant to quote here, according to the witnesses, the prayer chanting of 1,000 monks, who walked past the home of Aung San Suu Kyi on 22 September 2007 where she has been detained for most of the last 18 years, *"may we be completely free from all danger, may we be completely free from all grief, may we be completely free from poverty, may we have peace in heart and mind."* The contents of this prayer chanting is determined by its political function rather than by the subject of spiritual doctrine which it purports to describe. The students' community, Buddhist monks and the military are three most important institutions recognized by the civil and political society of Myanmar. After the 8.8.88 movement and the subse-

quent repression against the students, military and the monastery were the only two major institutions left in the country. It was hoped for long that the monks would lead the resistance of a society that is in a state of fear and disarray.

The camel's straw has been broken by the crackdown against the Buddhist monks though monasteries have long been suspected by the military junta. The Buddhist monks have shed blood and their maroon robes stained. The suspense is out and the military junta is looking for a way out of the woods. The military may have succeeded in bringing the situation under control by arresting the leaders, raiding the monasteries and continuing its searches throughout the country. There is little need for more evidence regarding the state of affairs within Myanmar and the extent of political unrest in the civil society. The military junta in Myanmar can neither justify their power exclusively by *de facto* possession of it nor can find a moral and legal basis for it. The power therefore wielded by them is "tyranny" that even obligates resistance. It is the responsibility of the international community to convince the junta about the inadequacy of violence as a stable base for the possession and exercise of power. As Hobbes, the 17th century English philosopher puts it more succinctly: "Even the tyrant must sleep."

We may not hear more about the political unrest and the democratic upsurge within Myanmar because of the nature of crackdown and iron curtain that the military junta is gradually enforcing around its own people. There cannot be a more serious evidence of oppression than the condition of the Buddhist monks and the monasteries that need protection from the international community against the military junta. The international community has a moral responsibility to speak and stand up for the people of Myanmar. The United Nations Security Council has deplored the military junta's crushing of the pro-democracy demonstrations in a statement agreed by all its 15 members, including China. But the military junta is capable of negotiating its way out with the help of China in case of further concrete actions. This is the historical blunder of our world system built on the weaknesses and ambitions of nation-states. China would no doubt strive to buy time and defend the military junta by referring that there are no international security threats emerging from the situation inside. It would even hand over to ASEAN another fresh road map for democracy in Myanmar. India is continuing to explore and expand its ties with the military junta in Myanmar unmindful of the global public opinion. Neither there is any political wisdom nor enlightenment in pursuit of a policy based on national self-interest by India.

The present situation in Myanmar demands an immediate attention of the international community to the grave humanitarian crises and human rights violations inside Myanmar. The response has to be similar in both scale and intent that the international community upheld against the apartheid regime in South Africa. We need to close in and end the brutality of this military regime through effective embargoes and boycotts of countries that continue to support the military junta. This will also help dampen the spirit of powers and interests that continue to support the military junta in Myanmar. The Chinese do have more stakes in Myanmar than any other major power in the world today. But the Chinese would be wise to let go their stakes inside Myanmar than risk their global trade fortunes and the prestige of Beijing Olympics scheduled this year. The developments inside Tibet since March this year and the scrutiny of Beijing Olympics under Tibetan scan have brought new and more challenges to China's Tibet policy. We also need to reactivate and enforce the communication that the French Ambassador to Myanmar conveyed to the Burmese military junta, in the wake of Buddhist monks demonstrations in September 2007, that the global community is watching the human rights violations committed by the regime and no one will be immune from the acts of human rights violations committed against their own people. Japan has a clear role to play while India may take time to rediscover its voice of freedom and justice lost in the heap of economic, military and political interests it has built as stakes in its ties with the Burmese military junta.

The meeting of three foreign ministers from Russia, China and India in Beijing due to the pro-active diplomacy by the United Nations Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari, the special mission of the human rights rapporteur Paul Sergio Pinheiro, the appointment of interlocutor by the military junta to negotiate with Aung San Suu Kyi, the softening of China's stand over its ties with the military junta and the imminent democratic transition, the newly found 'in-

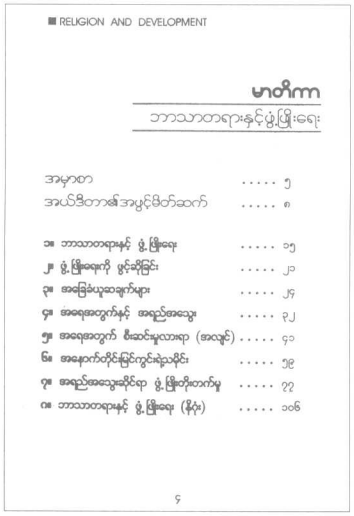
clusiveness' in India's foreign policy towards Myanmar are clear indications of the winds of change blowing across the world. The meeting of the ASEAN in Singapore marking forty years of its formation also sent a clear message on Myanmar that there is no going back on the agenda of democratic transition. The European Union (EU) has already agreed to reinforce existing sanctions against Myanmar besides a new series of targeted sanctions against the military regime.

There are visible road blocks that needs to be tackled before addressing any collective proposals such as the deliberation by six nations(China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand) as proposed by the Prime Minister of Thailand. The people of Myanmar and the international community should not be subjected to another road map that winds according to the political climate, economic interests and moods of neighbouring countries in the region including China, India and Thailand. There is a need for clear timeframe to the dialogue process and the time bound agenda for the democratic transition. Trust, Transparency and Transition (3Ts) are the keywords of this process towards democratic change in Myanmar. The lessons of peaceful change in South Africa should become the guiding spirit of this transition. The pain, bitter memory and the fear of change of both the oppressed and the oppressor must be addressed with the opening of the window of truth and reconciliation in Myanmar as was done in South Africa. Aung San Suu Kyi can be trusted to take a lead in guiding the peaceful transition. The military junta must shed its fear to step forward. There is no better time than to act now. A crucial component to any deliberation of conflict resolution in Myanmar is that it is to be done under the aegis and moderation of the United Nations.

The United States of America, Britain, France and other Western powers including Germany should insist and negotiate for an international unarmed peacekeeping role through United Nations or preferably invite a team of unarmed international peacekeepers as part of the restoration of democratic process. This is important because of the need to provide witness, protection and accompaniment to the civil society leaders, ethnic communities and political activists as part of transition to democracy. We need to move beyond the visits of United Nations Special Envoy to Myanmar and the statement of the United Nations Security Council. It is more important to translate these efforts into reality than relegate and regard them as mere political records. The difficulties within the United Nations Security Council to evolve a political consensus in addressing the Myanmar situation and the diffident attitude of the military junta in moving forward towards a dialogue with the National League for Democracy and Aung San Suu Kyi are other limitations in the working of the international system. A concerted political action at the global level will help prevent genocide of ethnic communities and mass human rights violations within Myanmar.

The best and brightest hope for future in Myanmar lies in the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi and her unconditional openness for dialogue and national reconciliation. This is the most inspiring component to the political transition that the international community must recognize and extend to the future as a thread of hope. She is committed, as Nelson Mandela in case of South Africa, to guide and save her country from further bloodshed and violence. She must be encouraged and supported to this effect by the global community. She represents the soul-force of Myanmar and follows the path of nonviolence and reconciliation. She has faced several years of imprisonment with great courage and dignity of human spirit. The world awaits her release as the monks and the Burmese civil society are awake to the challenges of democratic transition. Myanmar is at the gates of morning twilight after several decades of gloom and darkness. We have a global responsibility to alleviate the pain and sufferings of the people of Myanmar. This is the *loving kindness* that the Myanmar needs from the international community now.

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■ RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT

ဗာဂသာတရားနှင့်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး

အမှာစာ ၅
အယ်ဒီတာ၏အမှုခင်းဆက် ၈
၁။ ဘာသာတရားနှင့် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး ၁၅
၂။ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးကို ဖွင့်ဆိုခြင်း ၂၁
၃။ အခြေခံယူဆချက်များ ၂၄
၄။ အရေးအတွက်နှင့် အရည်အသွေး ၃၂
၅။ အရေးအတွက် စီဆင်မှုလားရာ (အလွှာ) ၄၁
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BIOFUELS IN BURMA
Junta's Horribly Misguided Energy Experiment

Biofuels have long been hailed as a solution in the fight against global warming and increasing scarcity of petroleum. But recently it is becoming increasingly clear that unless sufficient precautions are taken, biofuels can snatch food from the mouths of the poor and can be a human rights disaster.

Nowhere is this truer now than in Burma. In its typical brutal, heavy-handed fashion, the Burmese junta has combined forced labour, ham-fisted implementation and superstition in a disastrously misguided nationwide biofuel project that is creating yet more suffering for this desperate country.

There were unprecedented demonstrations in August and September 2007 from gasoline and diesel price hikes. Biodiesel made from oil squeezed from the jatropha seeds, the generals hoped, would replace Burma's 40,000 barrels per day of petroleum imports and help the junta retain social stability in an economy on the verge of collapse.

The junta also has plans to export biodiesel, and the Burmese jatropha project has attracted unscrupulous investments from Thailand, Singapore and Britain.

Jatropha also reportedly has superstitious significance: jatropha's name in Burmese, jet suu, is believed to help the regime annul the powers of jailed democratic opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Burma's military ruler, Senior General Than Shwe, has commanded that eight million acres—an area the size of Belgium—be planted with Jatropha Curcas trees within three years. Each state and division of Burma must grow 500,000 acres. In Karenni State, to meet this quota, every man, woman and child will need to plant 2,400 seedlings.

Biofuel by Decree, a report released today by seven community development organisations working in Burma, details the suffering caused by this programme.

Farmers, civil servants, teachers, school children, nurses and prisoners have been forced to purchase seeds and fulfil outrageous planting quotas, consuming precious time, land and resources essential for subsistence.

"They said it would be a three-year project," one farmer said. "What are we going to eat in the meantime?"

Those who have refused to participate have reportedly been fined, beaten or arrested.

From Shan State alone, at least 800 refugees have fled to Thailand as a result of the programme.

Despite huge "contributions" of time and resources, the technical result has been a fiasco. Two years into implementation, crop failures as high as 75% have been reported due to haphazard growing techniques and lousy seed stock.

Even when the trees themselves grow, often they bear few seeds because climate and soil conditions have not been adequately taken into consideration.

Burma has little capacity to extract oil from seed, and much of the biodiesel produced so far has been of such poor quality that engines will not run on the stuff.

There is no doubt that renewable energy—solar, wind power, biofuels—can play an important role in meeting our planet's future energy needs.

But the Burma biofuels case shows that so-called "clean energy"—if implemented with violence and ignorance—can cause far more harm than good. Biofuel by Decree is available for download at: http://www.terraper.org/key_issues_view.php?id=17

Chris Greacen is Co-Director of Palang Thai.

Chris Greacen
Bangkok Post, 1 May 08



Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear readers and the INEB Members,

We are now in mid - 2008. Time flies. Perhaps the 2007 INEB Youth Exchange participants think so, too. This March, the first batch of the exchange finished their 10-month (April 2007 - March 2008) mission abroad and returned home. And we also welcome a new batch of seven young people who have joined the exchange. We will introduce them to you in the following pages of the INEB Section.

By the time you read this letter, you might have already seen several articles on Tibet and the Olympic Games. We are very concerned about the violence in China's Tibet region. We all observed the actions by people in many countries along the Olympic Torch Relay route. The Secretariat Office also welcomed the torch by joining the peaceful gathering in the streets of Bangkok to voice our concern about violence that may obstruct the understanding and the peace talk between China and Tibet. It surprised us so much to see around 100 Chinese students from Thai universities clad in the red t-shirts with Coca-cola logo on them, who came to the very same spot and expressed their patriotism in a passionate manner that is very close to aggressiveness.

Our position is clear. We want dialogue for peace and the protection of lives. With the teachings on inter-relatedness, there is no point to be against China. China is going to rise as a new superpower. If we communicate with China to be a compassionate empire, like King Ashoka's, the whole world will benefit. For the time being, we would like to invite you to be alert to any violence that might happen along the torch relay and the Olympic Games and help to stop it. The most vulnerable moment is when the torch reaches Tibet on the 8th of August when the game begins. We all remember the 8888 incident in Burma, right?

Another big event for INEB this year is the Inter-religious and International Walk for Peace in Burma. Tentatively, it will be in mid - October to the first week of November. We are in the preparation process, but you can see some details on page 23.

Finally, all the works at the Secretariat Office need your support. If you feel that our work is beneficial and we are on the right track as socially engaged Buddhists, please help us. We would be much grateful to your donation, in cash or in kind, to keep our work going.

Yours in the dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary

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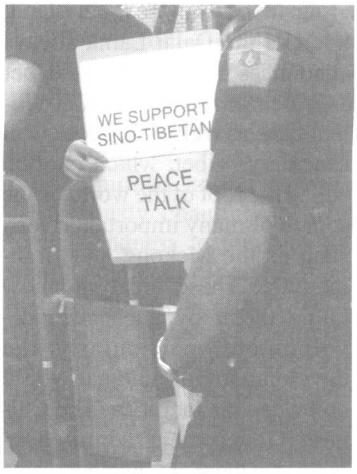
May we remind our readers to renew your subscription or help others who cannot afford to pay for ***Seeds of Peace*** so the publication will be available to all who seek something to read beyond those provided by the mainstream mass media. The suggested rate is USD.50.00 per year. If you can support more, we would be very grateful for your generosity. Your money will go to support INEB activities for grass-root people in poor countries.

Open Letter to Olympic Torch Bearers

As noted in the global media, the Olympic torch relay has been met with protest in many cities around the world. This is because, for many, this year's relay has become a symbol of something other than what the Olympic Torch was meant to represent. Many well-respected international personalities have already announced their withdrawal from the torch relay in order to express their disagreement over the violent repression of freedom in Tibet and throughout China.

First, we would like to congratulate you for being one of the few outstanding figures selected to bear the Olympic torch. We understand that this honor is due to your outstanding achievement in your own country. This distinction should be applauded and should not go unnoticed. Although we would love to see you express your moral integrity by withdrawing from the torch relay, we are aware that it is your complete right to make the decision.

However, if you do choose to bear the Olympic torch, which is claimed to be the flame of peace, we would like to invite you to follow through on your duty as a 'Peace Ambassador'. We hope that you can use your position to light the flame of compassion within to encourage the Chinese government to stop the violence against the Tibetan minorities in China. We invite you to encourage the Chinese government to allow international fact-finding groups to enter Tibet to meet with the people who have been affected by the violence, and finally to encourage the Chinese government to continue the peace talk with



This is the hand of your INEB Executive Secretary.

Tibetan Administration in Exile. With many across the globe now expressing concern for the people of Tibet, it is the perfect time for the Chinese government to resume talks.

Hence, we would like you, the bearers of the Olympic Flame, to monitor the progress of the torch as it continues around the world. The most vulnerable moment will be when the Olympic torch reaches Tibet. As Qianba Puncog, the Chairman of the Chinese Administration in Tibet, announced to those who turn out to voice their concerns: "We will without doubt deal with those persons severely. We will not be merciful!" This statement is a reminder of our duty to assure that the torch will bring peace to wherever it may go, and not fear. We ask you to please assure that the torch you carry will never become a source of fear to those living along its path.

Throughout their struggle for their constitutional rights within China, the Tibetan people have attempted to remain true to the principles of non-violence. In the face of so much injustice, torture and death, Tibetans have refused to use violence or terrorism as a political tool. As you may be aware, the non-violent approach is the most powerful and sustainable way to solve any problem and the Tibetans have been committed to this process



The Olympics (as frequently said) is not about politics !!! Then it's about business, right?

for many decades now. We now have an obligation to show them our support.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his exiled administration have made it clear that they do not aspire for the complete independence of Tibet. They do not wish to split away from China. What they are struggling for are conditions of meaningful autonomy for Tibet in the three traditional provinces, where large areas have been annexed to provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan. They call for their constitutional rights to preserve their environment, culture, and religion. They are not asking for anything that has not already been granted to every Chinese citizen by the Chinese Constitution. Their requests are fair, righteous, and based on respect of every culture and ethnic group in the Chinese motherland.

HH the Dalai Lama always announces his hope to see Tibet as a demilitarized and non-violent zone as well as an ecological sanctuary. Tibet, which is often called the roof of the world, is the source of many important rivers, such as the Mekong and Brahmaputra. These areas are now under threat by unchecked development, particularly the development of nuclear waste and weapons facilities. The Chinese Government admitted in 1995 that there are nuclear waste dumps in Tibet. This waste may potentially flow down the rivers to contaminate our very own soils. So, this is an issue that affects us all.

We are confident that as you represent the true spirit of the Olympic Torch, you will also speak for the suffering of those in Tibet who are very much in need of Peace. May peace prevail in Tibet and in all our hearts very soon.

Yours sincerely,

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)
Bangkok, Siam (Thailand)
e-mail: ineboffice@yahoo.com
http://www.inebnetwork.org

Distressing Situation of Children and Monks under Burmese Military Junta

Last September, monks in Burma who went into the street to peacefully protest against the military junta were brutally cracked down. Many monks were killed, tortured, forced to disrobe and imprisoned. Some of them had to escape. Our INEB members are worried about this violence. A small group of four Buddhists decided to visit Burma to see the situation last December. These INEB senior members are the Venerable Paisan Visalo from Siam with his assistant Mr. Noppanart, Alan Senauke from Buddhist Peace Fellowship, the USA and Jill Jameson from Australia.

According to the Venerable Paisan's report, the group observe that the general situation is quiet; people lead their normal lives. But for the monks, the situation is different. In many temples, there are fewer monks because they had to flee for their safety. There are a lot of distrust and conflict between the monks who supported the government and those who were against it. The Ven. Paisan was informed that more than 90% of monks are anti-government, including those in high-ranking positions. And they got widespread support from the laypeople.

Yangon is quiet, however only at the surface. Suffering persists in the heart of the people. The salary of a doctor in a government hospital is around US$32 per month and around US$16 for a teacher, while the cost of living has increased especially bus fare. Nevertheless it is obvious that a small number of people there are enjoying affluent lifestyles.

The education system and welfare system are not functioning, as the group observed. Even university graduates are not well-trained. Poverty prevents many children from going to schools. The number of orphans is increasing. It's the non-government sector that has to take care of these children, especially Buddhist temples and Christian churches, though the fund is limited.

The group visited two temples that set up schools for poor and orphan children. There are 500 children in each temple, which is a heavy burden. Education is not only provided for free, but the monks also give food and shelter to the orphan, or deserted children. Many are sick. Classrooms are not in good standard. But the temples are trying their best. In Yangon alone, the group was informed that there are more

than 160 Buddhist temples that are doing the same thing. So are many Christian churches.

Needless to say it is unclear how many children in the provinces are in need of help.

In one temple that was visited, our group was told that before the September crackdown, there were 200 monks and novices. During the demonstration, 150 of them joined the protest and had to flee for their safety. The remaining monks were teaching in the classroom at that time and could not join the demonstration.

The group met with two Americans who provide alternative education to the middle class in Yangon. They observed that the university education in Burma is very weak. Universities have been closed down many times to prevent the anti-government assembly of the students. To help solve the problems, they provide education that promotes analytical skills and creativity in learning.

It seems that temple schools are the only way out for the poor.

After the 5-day trip to Yangon, the group went to visit the Burmese monks who escaped to the Thai border. One monk said that during the crackdown, his fellow monks and him were continuously chanting to send loving-kindness to the soldiers. Many soldiers respected them and did not want to hurt them. They were replaced by soldiers from other places who are ready to hurt the monks. Those who were able to escape to the Thai border province were now facing a new challenge of how to remain meaningfully in robe as monks. They feared that, in order to survive, they might have to give up their monkhood.

Upon their return to Bangkok, INEB was given the suggestion that, there are two urgent things to do. The first work is to provide financial support for food, shelter and education for the poor children inside Burma. The second one is to help the Burmese monks who came for refuge in the Thai kingdom to set up a Dhamma Center in order to enable them to continue their Buddhist studies as well as their role as spiritual leaders.

Summarized from the report
by *The Venerable Paisan Visalo*
December 2007

Now, The Venerable Paisan Visalo and his organization Buddika Network are working with the Yangon Office of Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and Foundation for Children in a project to raise fund to support food and education in temple schools in Burma. If you are interested to help, please contact directly to the coordinator Mr. Somboon Chungprempree at e-mail: <c_somboon@hotmail .com>

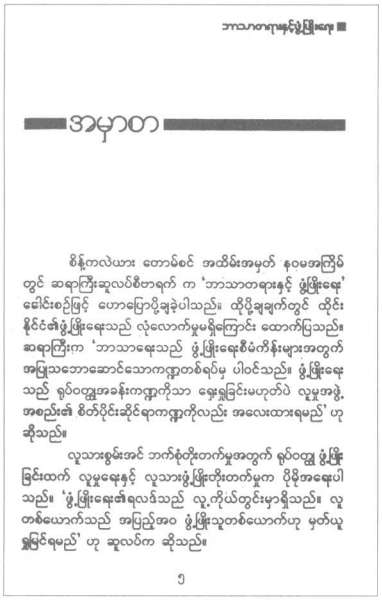
Let's Walk for Peace in Burma

Along Thai-Burma border from 18 October - 9 November 2008

Peace walk is one of the powerful non-violent tools to raise the awareness of the sufferings of the people, to cultivate loving-kindness in the walkers and to bring about significant changes in society. Famous examples of peace walk include Bhudana Walk by Vinoba Bhave, Dhammayietra by Ven. Maha Ghosananda in Cambodia, and many anti-war peace marches in Europe and the USA.

INEB together with many organizations are now planning for Inter-religious Walk for Peace in Burma. We hope that the Peace Walk would raise global awareness on the suffering of the people and the environmental condition of Burma under the military regime. It would encourage global non-violent actions to stop all kinds of violence and the restoration of peace in Burma, and it would give moral support to the people of Burma. And fortify their moral courage and commitment on peace and non-violence as the foundation to bring positive changes to their beloved country.

For more information
and application to join the walk,
please contact INEB
at ineboffice@yahoo.com


ဘာသာတရားနှင့်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး

အမှာစာ

စိန်ကလဲယား တောခံစင် အထိမ်းအမှတ် နဝမအကြိမ်မြောက် ဆရာကြီးဆွေလပ်စီတရက် က 'ဘာသာတရားနှင့် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး' ခေါင်းစဉ်ဖြင့် ဟောပြောပို့ချခဲ့ပါသည်။ ထိုပို့ချချက်တွင် ထိုင်းနိုင်ငံ၏ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးသည် လုံလောက်မှုမရှိကြောင်း ထောက်ပြသည်။ ဆရာကြီးက 'ဘာသာရေးသည် ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးစီမံကိန်းများအတွက် အပြုသဘောဆောင်သောကဏ္ဍာတစ်ရပ်မှ ပါဝင်သည်။ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးသည် ရုပ်ဝတ္ထုအခန်းကဏ္ဍာကိုသာ ရှေးရှုခြင်းမဟုတ်ပဲ လူမှုအဖွဲ့အစည်း၏ စိတ်ပိုင်းဆိုင်ရာကဏ္ဍာကိုလည်း အလေးထားရမည်' ဟု ဆိုသည်။

လူသားစွမ်းအင် ဘက်စုံတိုးတက်မှုအတွက် ရုပ်ဝတ္ထု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးခြင်းထက် လူမှုရေးနှင့် လူသားဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်မှုက ပိုမိုအရေးပါသည်။ 'ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေး၏ရလဒ်သည် လူ့ကိုယ်တွင်းမှာရှိသည်။ လူတစ်ယောက်သည် အပြည့်အဝ ဖွံ့ဖြိုးသူတစ်ယောက်ဟု မှတ်ယူနိုင်ရမည်' ဟု ဆုလဝက ဆိုသည်။

Youth Exchange for Peace

During the past five years, the main focus at the secretariat office of INEB is the empowerment program for young socially engaged Buddhists. The leadership training is arranged annually. And last year we started a new program called Youth Exchange for Peace.

With support from sisters and brothers within INEB circles, we were able to accomodate the 10-month learning cum working for three young people. Ding, a young man from PADETC in Laos PDR and Kunny, a young woman from KYA in Cambodia were posted in Deer Park Institute in India. Praveen from India was sent to KYA.



The seven participants of the 2008 Youth Exchange during the orientation session.

Ten months passed by quickly and the three young individuals who participated in the Youth Exchange program already flew home last March. We are very happy to know that they learned a lot during the exchange.

Ding was sent to learn about film making and the skill of deep thinking. He is now equipped with both skills. He said that his view on culture and education changed a lot when he interacted with Deer Park and NGOs in India. He now understands how globalization is changing the lifestyle of young people in his home country.

Praveen is the youngest among the three, but his learning ability is not the least. He was touched by the sorrow of the Cambodian people due to the violence during the Khmer Rouge regime while he was encouraged by KYA's attempt to bring peace to the young people. He is now working in his local network on stopping violence, especially domestic violence.

This year, we welcome seven new participants in the 10-month exchange: Pornpimol from Siam is to be posted with Dharmajala in Indonesia, Sophon from KYA and Youdon from India to PADETC in Laos, Sengathid from Laos to KYA, Malis from KYA and Sengsouly from PADETC to Deer Park and finally Deepak to the INEB Secretariat Office in Bangkok.



Ding and Praveen (the 2007 Youth Exchange Participants)

Curse the Devil, Stay in Touch with Humanity

Have you ever wondered why our political system only allows those who have sold their souls to the devil to reach the zenith of power? Ever wondered how we have managed to survive these devils' determination to suck our blood?

The devils' power trick is probably quite simple. Maybe they have succeeded just by making us wholeheartedly believe that they are taking us by the hand to heaven when they are leading us to hell.

And by sugar-coating a dream of grandeur with words like modernity, progress, development, economic growth—and national security—they have convinced us that it is okay to do a bit of lying, stealing, even some killing, to get things done.

Another simple trick: Keep drumming up the nationalist frenzy and spice it up with ethnic and religious fervour. Creating an enemy to keep people in fear and hatred allows the powers-that-be to establish themselves as the "protector" and legitimises their violence as a necessary tool to eliminate those who cause problems.

As much as we'd like to condemn the power-mongers, however, the truth remains that their tricks never fail because they strike a chord with the little devil in all of us.

We must ask ourselves why we shrugged our shoulders when Interior Minister Chalerm Yubamrung insisted we must bypass human rights and justice in the war on drugs; why we ignore police torture and state terrorism in the deep South; why we support the Samak-Thaksin administration's assortment of mega projects which will destroy the environment and farmers' livelihoods; and why we remain forever deaf to the voices of the poor?

Isn't it because we believe that violence is just when used against the baddies? Isn't it because we measure our success, our self-worth, with material wealth? Isn't it because we have become the devil's alliance?

If our society has managed to survive the devils at the top through time, it is because there are still many people who refuse to lose touch with humanity. They not only question the prejudices that divide people, they also work persistently to help us transcend the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices so we can experience the bliss of oneness.

These people are following in the footsteps of the Bodhisattva. Their big hearts have inspired many who have lost hope in society and in themselves.



Ticha Na Nakhon is one of them. As Auntie Mon to hundreds of boys at Ban Kanjanapisek Remand Home, Ticha believes there are no juvenile delinquents; there are only kids who have made mistakes; troubled souls who desperately want acceptance when the rigid and unsympathetic education system keeps telling them they are no good.

Her plea: Dismantle the education system and the prejudices that favour violence, for they prevent us from rekindling our children's trust in humanity.



Pramuan Pengchan has a similar plea.

In 2005, he walked penniless from Chiang Mai to his home village in Surat Thani to undo his clinging to security. Last year, he made a pilgrimage to India alone, with little money, to appreciate other ancient religions' paths to beauty and truth. Despite the hardships, he has discovered that humanity is everywhere when you are free from fear and prejudice.

His message: Dismantle the mental barriers that trap us in fear and superiority. Open your heart. If not, hatred and violence will make it home.

Another Bodhisattva personified is Ouyporn Khuankaew, a peace activist with boundless energy to empower women with spirituality. Her message: See through the patriarchal values in organised religions that keep women down. And nurture loving kindness for all beings. For anger, hatred and ideologies cannot create meaningful change. Loving kindness can.

This is because loving kindness does not only nourish our thankfulness and energy to give



in return, it also helps shed light on the little devil inside us.

It is only when we understand that external problems are rooted in our fear, can we break free from the devil's power game which traps us in the cycle of violence.

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email:
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Bangkok Post, February 28, 2008

A King's Lessons in Democracy

The dramatic return to Thailand of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra—after 17 months of self-imposed exile following a bloodless military coup—marks the next round in the bare-knuckled free-for-all that characterizes this country's deeply polarized politics.

There's Thaksin versus the courts—his battle against corruption charges filed by the junta and the five-year ban from politics imposed on him and his party, which regrouped under a new name and prevailed in recent elections.

There's Thaksin versus the opposition People's Alliance for Democracy, which two years ago led massive protests against his autocratic rule and which—suspicious of his pledge to "never, ever" return to politics—is threatening more protests if he evades the rule of law.

There's the civilians versus the military, which—though now back in its barracks—succeeded in leaving behind a new Constitution that weakens civilian rule, including that of the new prime minister, Samak Sundaravej, who countered by naming himself defense minister.

There's even Thaksin versus Samak, who—initially seen as Thaksin's puppet—recently ruled out early amnesty for Thaksin and, as Thaksin began receiving political allies at his hotel headquarters here, declared "I am the real prime minister!"

And underlying it all is city versus country—the Bangkok bureaucracy, intelligentsia and urban middle class that opposed Thaksin and backed the coup versus Thailand's poor and rural majority, which benefited from his populist policies of debt forgiveness and low-cost health care and which put Thaksin's proxy party back in power.

But what makes this moment especially ominous is the prospect of losing the nation's foremost political referee—King Bhumibol Adulyadej, revered as a dhammaraja (a righteous Buddhist king) whose interventions during political crises are credited with preventing a slide into chaos.

"We keep in the middle, neutral, in peaceful coexistence with everybody," Bhumibol once said of the monarchy. "We could be crushed by both sides, but we are impartial." But with the king now 80 years old and in failing health, Thailand could, in the not so distant future, lose its greatest safety valve against a political meltdown.

"His Majesty's reign has, of course, helped with economic and political development," a former Thai diplomat told me, insisting on anonymity since lèse-majesté laws make criticism of the monarchy punishable by up to 15 years in jail. "But maybe he has been so influential that Thais never learned to help themselves mature politically."

Moreover, the king's likely heir—the 55-year-old Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn—"is not prepared to guide the country through its turbulent road to the future," said the diplomat, reflecting the fears of many

Thais. "He does not have a few decades to grow into his office, as his father did."

Yet the topic of life after Bhumibol remains taboo. "Many have conjectured privately that Thailand may enter a period of tension in the coming years, including royalism versus republicanism," a member of a prominent Thai family tells me, also requesting anonymity. "It's the elephant in the room that everyone conveniently ignores."

Indeed, Thai politicians and power brokers would be wise to heed the lesson their king has apparently been trying to teach them for several years—it's time to grow up and start solving your own problems without royal intervention.

Although celebrated for supporting democracy movements that overturned military regimes, most notably in 1973 and 1992, Bhumibol has cautioned Thais against relying on the monarchy as a one-stop cure-all. When massive protests urged him to oust Thaksin two years ago, he called the idea "irrational," adding "you cannot think in haste and pass the buck to the king."

And although he has blessed many of modern Thailand's 18 coups—including the most recent one—Bhumibol is reported to have discouraged other military takeovers and had supported the progressive constitution that the recent junta voided. "Soldiers and civilians must work in harmony," he said in his annual birthday speech in December. "If there is no harmony the country will face disaster, the country will fall. And when it falls where are we going to live?"

Fortunately, despite lèse-majesté laws and bans on recent books about the monarchy, Thais appear to begin thinking about the unthinkable. Resisting pressure from the palace, several hundred Thai and international scholars recently convened a remarkable series of seminars in Bangkok on the monarchy, including criticism of the "Sufficient Economy" philosophy of economic moderation championed by the king.

"It was unprecedented," said Andrew Walker of the Australian National University who spoke at the conference, which proved that "the sky will not fall in if we talk freely and frankly about the king's role in contemporary Thai politics."

Let's hope so. Because if Thais cannot talk openly about their monarchy, they can't begin to resolve the current challenges to what one scholar has called their "demi-democracy." And if Thai leaders, civilian and military alike, are to pass perhaps their greatest test yet, they ought to heed perhaps the greatest lesson of their monarch—the buck doesn't stop here, it stops with you.

Stanley A. Weiss
is founding chairman of Business Executives for National Security, a nonpartisan organization based in Washington.
Published: March 11, 2008

Guantanamo: The American Dreyfus Case

I taped the Turner Classic Movies program *Life of Emile Zola*, featuring Paul Muni, thinking I might learn some useful history from this 1937 film masterpiece. I was curious about the circumstances of the miscarriage of justice in the accusation of treason against Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), in 1894 during the Third Republic in France. He was falsely condemned for espionage and unjustly sentenced to solitary confinement on Devil's Island, virtually for life.

The story unfolds around the defense waged by novelist Emile Zola, with his celebrated article *J'Accuse*. This appeared in the January 13, 1898, edition of *l'Aurore*, the socialist newspaper of Georges Clemenceau. Dreyfus had already languished without hope in tropical misery for over three years. Zola was brought to trial for libel by the military he had accused of a massive cover-up. His plea to the jury is a deeping moving sequence of the film and worth remembering. His argument went unheard, and he fled to England. As a result of democratic demands, Dreyfus was released in 1899 and after subsequent court martials formally rehabilitated in 1906 to his rank in the French army. After distinguished service in World War I, he was awarded the Legion of Honor.

Until today, it has been anti-Semitism that has been deplored

when the Dreyfus case is recalled. But to review that history shows political parallels wih the Global War On Terror that are strikingly familiar. Fear of war with Germany led to preemptive use of inconclusive evidence. Dreyfus was called a threat to national security. His alleged betrayal was equal to an act of terror. Witnesses were not permitted to testify or were not cross-examined because of presumed national interest. Documents were withheld because of military secrecy. Intelligence was untrustworthy because of bureaucratic confusion. The courts flagrantly denied due process because of the influence of the government. Pressure on honest men and women made them trust testimony void of merit. Conviction was the assumption of unconfirmed charges. Special interests took advantage of the crisis.

A sector of the journalistic media of the times exercised reactionary and inflammatory publicity willfully against a man who turned out to be innocent. Devil's Island admitted no right to habeas corpus, and the isolation itself was tantamount to torture, if not its unspoken permission. The defenders of Dreyfus were called unpatriotic and dangerous radicals, subversive of confidence in the Army and the glory of France. This was especially sensitive,because of the defeat in the Franco-Prussian war just twenty-five years earlier. The long-term result was years of division in the nation.

In an objective view, Guantanamo becomes our Dreyfus case. Even the anti-Semitism is mirrored in the treatment of Muslims. France suffered the collapse of its international reputation for justice for a generation, until Vichy revealed its underlying facist potential. The shame of criminal misuse of authority and unconscionable neglect of human rights is a danger we face in our beloved Republic. Even a seventy-year old movie can teach us our herritage of liberty, justice, and equality before an impartial judiciary.

Bill Nottingham
15 January 2008

The Globalisation of 'Development'

France, especially the French countryside has long been able to project a romantic image, one of carefully tended vineyards are ruined castles. This still holds true and, having moved here over eighteen months ago I can testify to a rural charm and genteel society. The well off retired English have been coming here in droves for years, high flying careers have enabled them to live like feudal lords. Not wishing to be a hypocrite, I suppose I have to describe myself as well off and English too. It is certainly a very insular existence, our neighbours rarely, if ever deign to speak to us unless it is to make a complaint. I suppose they must view us in the same way as some of the local Thai people in the Southern tourist island resorts of Phuket and Samui. Perhaps with a weary acceptance of cultural and linguistic ignorance. Nevertheless, as with the legendary hospitality the Thai people extend to even the most ignorant visitor, we as a family have begun to slowly make steady friendships.

We live in a rural idyll, the famous Plum village of Thich Nhat Hanh is a few kilometres away. Our commune is dominated by a twelfth-century abbey, a powerful reminder of the sway the Christian faith once held over Europe. Eventually replaced as Ajahn Sulak might well say, by the new religion of consumerism. As a nation, France is impressive, her buildings are beautiful, cuisine healthy and delicious and culture famous for its philosophy, arts and literature. These are things any one who visits her can appreciate, but what of French folk of the *campagne*, how are they faring in the jaws of the all consuming globalised world? The answer is pretty much the same as most country folks in the modern era, that is, facing the struggle to make their cattle or crops add up enough to provide a decent existence. From my discussions with friends from the locality, it is clear that financial problems have driven many farmers, often with young families to suicide.

Of course it is not fair to compare France with Siam or another South-East Asian country. France is an ex-colonial power, with tentacles throughout the world. Even the Thai word for foreigner, *farang*, is a bastardisation of the word *Farangset*, which is used to described France or the French. That is due to their military garrison present in the city of Bangkok in the seventeenth-century. But for me the interesting comparison is one of what

might Siam become in this new world of homogenos globalisation. The new political administration under the dynamic Nicholas Sarkozy, is determined to shake up the cosy relationship between French workers, trades unions and the state. Those long fought for and hard won rights and ideals of fraternity long respected in the national life are beginning to look ropey. It would be well to remember that Sarkozy, when a lesser ranking member of government called the rioters of the Paris banlieues 'scum', and thus revealed his (sadly often) middle class attitude to the have-nots.

I met my friend Laurent through participating in a weekly class of escrime. Once a week we don white outfits and face masks, take charge of our epee, then proceed to have a go at each other like schoolboys playing at the noble art of sword-fighting. Laurent is a gentleman and one of the first to open his door and extend the hand of friendship to us. Over a family dinner he and his wife Ann-Marie treated us to good food and of course,this being France, even better wine. We talked a little about ourselves and our respective cultures, and Laurent was clearly a man with an open mind and a great deal of Gallic charm. He told us that he worked at the Ford manufacturing factory in the suburbs of the city of Bordeaux. Those of us with a keen interest in 'green issues' which, nowadays means only those without any access to, or interest in the major media themes of our day, will have some thoughts on the motorcar.

His factory was being closed by Ford, and being relocated to India or China,wherever the labour will be cheapest. To those countries gains one might think, but for me it illustrates perfectly the utter indifference of big business in partnership with governments to the ordinary man. China will develop, India will develop as will Siam and the rest of South-East Asia. But into what? Will their citizens lose touch with their faiths, cultures, sense of community, knowledge of the lay of the land? When I look at Europe I see as much anxiety as success. This is most clearly manifested with urban blight, but one doesn't have to dig too deeply at the roots of the country to see badly sown seeds. The word for this process is alienation and it is the theme for many a great novel. The reality of it is an uncomfortable existence and one known to have detrimental effects on the well being of people, both mental and physical. This is something that has been going on since the industrial revolution and looks like in no way slowing down. The Dalai Lamas, Aung San Suu Kyis, Sulak Sivaraksas and Thich Nhat Hanhs of this world are needed more than ever as a moral bulwark that promotes the condition of human happiness above that of human avarice.

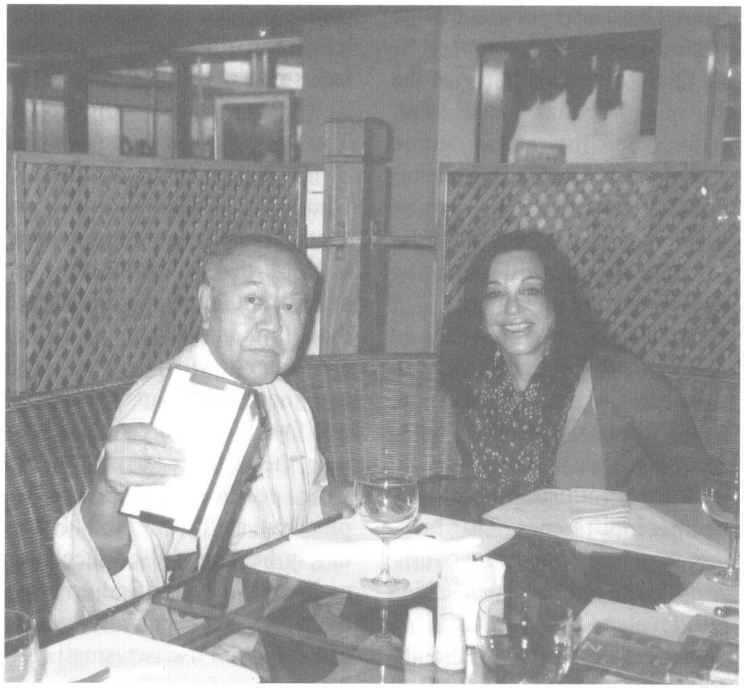
Laurent will have been given two months pay and a cheerful goodbye after many years of service, the skills he learned at Ford were specific to their processing plant and are transferable. Fortunately he is a skilled mechanic and can hopefully find employment as such, especially in light of having to raise two small children. So my friend Laurent's loss is a gain for a man of the East who will be happy to have a well paying job and of course he deserves and is entitled to it. He would be wise though never to forget the ways of living his ancestors had adopted over many generations, or be prepared with an adaptive contingency plan, when Ford decide they can squeeze more money out of the rock of multifarious nations.

Danny Campbell
15 January 2008

Thai-Swiss Cooperation on Aids

"By the end of this decade the planet will have over 100 million AIDS orphans," said Albina du Boisvouvray, the French Countess whose destiny became intertwined with Thai and Burmese AIDS orphans since the last decade of the 20th Century. Countess Albina, founder President of the Swiss based Francois Xavier Bagnoud (FXB) Foundation was a recipient of the prestigious Thai Komol Keemthong Foundation Award in 2004, for her dedicated service to vulnerable women, children and orphans affected by AIDS in Thailand and Burma.

On December 1st thousands marched in Bangkok, Chiangmai, Buriram and other cities in Thailand to mark World AIDS Day. Thailand alone has about 500,000 AIDS orphans and around 1.2 million AIDS infected people who have yet to develop symptoms, according to recent estimates. Thailand was also the country



Albina with Sulak Sivaraksa in Bangkok in 2004

which was the most hard-hit by the AIDS pandemic, during the 80s, as the disease swept through Asia. But AIDS is not native to Thailand although theories, about the diseases' distant origins in Africa, are still being lively disputed.

Thais tend to view AIDS as a foreign borne disease riding the wave of globalization and washed on Thai shores during the decade of economic boom in the 80s. AIDS was the dark underbelly of Thailand's exploding prosperity before the bubble of Asia's economic miracle burst in 1997. Thailand was ill prepared to cope with this curse of globalization.

Thailand's SOS was answered from abroad. With the help of UNAIDS, international organizations (IO), non-governmental organizations (NGO) and foreign governments, Thailand began to put in place a national strategy for coping with the AIDS crisis. Political will combined with innovative programs to raise AIDS awareness, including a national campaign to distribute free condoms to commercial sex workers, helped to contain and eventually reduce the incidence of AIDS in the country.

Among the many international NGOs which extended a hand to help Thailand battle against the AIDS pandemic, during the 1980s was the Swiss based Association Francois Xavier Bagnoud (AFXB). AFXB was among the first to respond to Thailand's AIDS crisis. AFXB's story in Thailand and her innovative experimental approach in responding to Thailand's AIDS problem, reflected the metamorphosis of the AIDS crisis as it evolved in "The Land of Smiles."

Since AIDS began, in Thailand, as a sexually transmitted disease during the decade of the 80s, Thai government policy tended to focus on exercising greater control over brothels and entertainment locations. During 1990 Minister of the Prime Minister's Office H.E. Dr. Saisuree Chutikul received a tip-off from the AFXB that young girls and women from Myanmar were forced into prostitution in the brothels of Ranong on the Thai-Myanmar border. The Royal Thai Police to raided 3 brothels and freed about 150 girls and women held captive by Mafia style brothel keepers.

Following the crackdown in Ranong Dr. Saisuree contacted Countess Albina du Boisvouvray, her long time friend, to render good offices in providing temporary shelters for the young sex workers who had escaped from the brothels. Through the initiative of Countess Albina FXB, began to work with Dr. Saisuree to free sex workers from brothels and lay the framework for Thai legislation to regulate the sex trade. With collaboration of the Foundation for Children, the European Union (EU) and Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF), 3 rehabilitation homes were set up for young women rescued from the sex trade.

FXB also, facilitated the repatriation of about 100 young Myanmar women, who were liberated from the Ranong brothels, back to their homeland. FXB funded and built a professional rehabilitation center in Yangon, for the repatriated Myanmar women to facilitate their reintegration into Myanmar society. FXB continues to operate in Yangon.

During the early phase of the disease, in the late 80s and early 90s, in Thailand, young women and children tended to form the locus of the AIDS crisis because women and children are at the forefront of the AIDS transmission chain. FXB quickly shifted her focus from rescue and shelter operations to providing profes-

sional AIDS care for women and children.

In collaboration with a Thai immunologist, Countess Albina opened 4 FXB Houses, in Chiangmai, to provide professional tender loving care for children infected by HIV/AIDS. The FXB Houses are currently operated by The Support the Children Foundation.

As the disease progressed, the locus of Thailand's AIDS crisis shifted from women and children to full blown AIDS cases. Thailand's health care system was poorly equipped to cope with the growing numbers to full blown AIDS cases. Official denial of the true dimensions of the AIDS pandemic and social stigmatization caused many medical establishments to shun terminally ill AIDS patients. Consequently, terminal AIDS victims began to pour into Buddhist temples as a haven of last refuge. The Buddhist religion enjoins monasteries to open their doors to all sufferers seeking solace in a Buddhist temple.

At Wat Prabhat Nambhu, a secluded Buddhist temple in central Thailand's Lopburi Province, a Buddhist monk named Phra Alongkot had begun to work with terminal AIDS victims. Lacking medicines and equipment the monastery could only help to prepare full blown terminal AIDS patients for death by offering compassionate attention combined with Buddhist meditation and spiritual contemplation to provide spiritual relief from the physical suffering of living with AIDS. However, the numbers of full blown AIDS patients had grown rapidly, threatening to overwhelm the resources of the monastery.

Through the good offices of Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, founder of the International Network of Buddhists (INEB), Countess Albina was put in contact with Phra Alongkot at Wat Prabhat Nambhu. What ensued was a productive and innovative ecumenical collaboration between the Swiss based FXB and the Buddhist temple Wat Prabhat Nambhu to establish a professional AIDS hospice for terminal AIDS patients in Lopburi in 1993.



Albina and the children in India

The hospice is currently run by the Buddhist Dhammaraksanives Foundation and represents a model of how Buddhist monasteries can assist in providing compassionate terminal AIDS care. It was the first instance, in Thailand, of an ecumenical collaboration, between a leading Buddhist monk and a Western NGO, to provide shelter and health care for terminal AIDS victims who have no place to turn to due to HIV/AIDS related social stigmatization.

Eventually, the nightmare that AIDS would precipitate economic depression, by killing off the world's population in the productive age bracket was not borne out. Developments in modern medication proved able to contain the disease and mitigate its most dreadful consequences. Mainstream Thai society learned to cope and live with AIDS without being able to completely eradicate the latter. The locus of the disease also began to shift towards the national periphery, along the borders separating Thailand from Burma and Cambodia.

The social metamorphosis of AIDS in Thailand, called for a re-thinking of methodologies, as proven strategies, in dealing with the AIDS problem became less effective. FXB Thailand's shift in priorities and experimentation with new methodologies reflect the social metamorphosis of AIDS in Thailand.

FXB Thailand's new long march to establish a base area in Buriram, near the Cambodian border, is in tandem with the marginalization of the disease towards the border areas. Unlike the traditional FXB House-shelter-cum-rehabilitation center concept, the new FXB project at Buriram is based on an entirely new concept.

Part of the reason for abandoning the FXB House model is because the latter is not cost effective. FXB Houses are expensive to operate. The cost of

delivering intensive, professional tender loving care to large numbers of children can be prohibitive.

The Buriram project is based on FXB's Village Module concept which proved capable of utilizing local traditional extended family networks, making it suitable for large scale operations. The Village Module concept was imported to Thailand from Rwanda, in Africa, where the latter has a successful track record.

The Buriram project is also economical because it is jointly funded by FXB International and external donors. The Buriram project receives funding from FXB International, the Government of Switzerland and Swiss Solidarity. Building on the apparently successful start of the Buriram project FXB has launched another project to care for AIDS orphans, in Thailand's north-east region of Mahasarakham, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

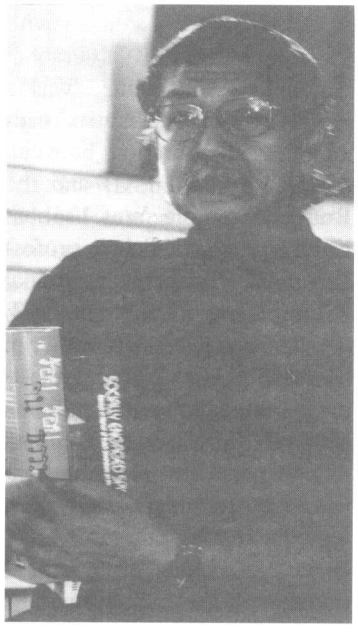
Jeffery Sng
8 October 2007

Buddhism in the Age of Globalization
Seksan Prasertkul

Buddhism explicates the law of nature. The Buddha simply drew on the truth and disseminated it to the people in his time. The teaching has been recorded and passed on to present time. Essentially, Buddhism deals with truths related to human life. It is an attempt to come to term with suffering, its causes, the quelling of suffering and how to end suffering. It invites us to explore the inner life and proposes that our mental conditions are the source of all problems. Thus, to solve them, one needs to purify the mind, endeavor to overcome the mental conditioning (self-attachment) and attain pure mind with an awareness of the *anatta* of things.

In the age of globalization, things seem to contradict the Buddha's teaching. At the same time, it poses many unprecedented opportunities for the explication of the Dhamma. Due to its multidimensional nature, many problems have risen up, though solutions for existing problems have always emerged.

Via globalization the world has shrunk and is made to spin faster by communication tech-



nology. Human beings in all parts of the world can communicate among themselves and get to know what is happening with others instantaneously. Their communication is no longer restricted by time and space. The most forceful drive of globalization is capitalism which basically spans beyond the national border and affects relationships between humans and society, humans and the physical world and among themselves.

Meanwhile, the capitalist world and the more liberal culture in the age of globalization do give rise to the renunciation of old values. But all in all, globalization, like the one in Siam, has led to an expansion of vast abandoned spaces in the cultural and spiritual spheres. A number of people, particularly, youth and the middle class, have been overwhelmingly dominated by the free trade notion. Freedom of information simply propels a lifestyle tied up with extreme materialism, consumerism and individualism. It gives rise to a new well of suffering in which many people are stuck in. People live their lonesome lives separated from others and as opposed to the truths of the universe. We all become drifting individuals with no roots and affiliations. From outside, it looks as if we are bestowed with overwhelming freedom and prosperities. But deeply, we are so empty, so hollow, so weak and destitute.

Prevailing sufferings in the age of globalization include expansive wars, poverty, social mayhem, pollution, environmental catastrophes, or climate

change, all of which are attributed to our destructive behaviors. And the root cause of the havocs lies in the unstable mind of human beings.

Mere political engineering does not suffice to restore spiritual well being and peace in people's minds, though continuing efforts to promote political and economic reform to engender justices are still necessary. Fundamentally, human beings need to learn to liberate themselves from the dominant structure of powers and culture. To some extent, the attempts have brought us freedom from the shackles. However, many of us are still chained by the sense of selfness and thus the freedom we have attained is far from perfect.

Countervailing maladies in the age of globalization needs to be done through attempts to help people to reclaim their consciousness. And it can be carried out either through individual maneuvering or social movement, or both combined. Crises faced by all humans are deep-seated at the spiritual level. Thus Buddhism can have a role since it principally aspires to help people to liberate themselves from self-indulgence. It was the main purpose for the Buddha's teaching after all. Thus, to utilize the Buddha Dhamma as a creative force is not a daydream. There is high possibility to do so and to do it concretely.

Meanwhile, globalization is not always an obstacle. It has much potential to help the propagation of the teaching and the practice of Buddhism. Thus, we need to harbor the positive forces of globalization including the potentials of communication technology and material wealth to work toward creating a consciousness of interrelatedness among all humans. Freedom to recreate individualism will also help to expel darkness. Through these attempts, we can help fellow human beings to realize the existence of vast alternatives and the unfathomable wisdom of Buddhism which people can use as their leverage.

Attempts to study Buddhism in the age of globalization thus differ from customary practice. Nowadays, much learning and practice is carried out outside the monastic realm and interpretation of the teaching has been increasingly left at the discretion of each individual, many of whom are residing in countries where Buddhism is not the major belief, especially in the Western hemisphere. Integration among Buddhist sects and compatibility between Buddhism and other sciences has become the norm rather than the exception.

Buddhism in the age of globalization is neatly wrapped in trendy packages making it easy to access and to gain wider acceptance. It even accommodates better to the way of life in the free market world. Thus, efforts to help people in this era to draw on Buddhism become more convenient than ever.

An abridged translation of the speech delivered at the 14th Sem Pringpuangkaew Annual Lecture on "Buddhism in the Age of Globalization" on 10 February 2008 at the Ruanroi Chanam, Suan Ngern Mee Ma, Bangkok.

The full text in Thai and English will be published soon.

Permanent Tibet Forum in Bangkok?

"Will it benefit China if the Tibetans are forced back into their notorious warrior nature of the pre-Buddhist past?" questioned Rosanna Tositrakul, recently elected Senator and powerful consumer activist in Thailand.

Rosanna was one of the speakers at a Tibet Forum held recently at Thammasat University, Bangkok. Two forum discussions titled 'Tibet's contribu-



tion to the world' were organized by a network of organizations including the Thammasat Women and Youth Study Programme. Wongsanit Ashram, INEB, etc. More public forum exchanges are planned in the future to monitor the situation in Tibet and to contribute towards building a permanent network of platforms for dialogue at all levels.

Tibetans are known for their peaceful character and mystic determination to overcoming the extreme challenges of climate and the Tibetan natural environment. Venerable Dhammananda, a Therevada Buddhist nun, gave several lively accounts of her own experiences while traveling in Tibet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is dearly loved by the Tibetan people. Why does the Chinese government not respect the rightful struggle of Tibet to maintain the integrity of its unique Buddhist culture by means of genuine autonomy? Why is cultural diversity not accepted in truth within the modern Chinese 'empire'? Is it in the benefit of the Chinese people if Tibetans were provoked to abandon non-violent activism? Will sustained oppression result in regression to uncontrolled protest and destabilizing destruction?

It seems the Chinese government tries to hide behind its blunt promotion of nationalism, exemplified in its frenetic handling of the Olympic torch ceremony, that it discreetly transformed into an unbending capitalist society; be it a one-party capitalist society. Contrasts between (urban) rich and (rural) poor are growing quickly in the once communist utopia state.

China tries to convince the Tibetan population that the Peoples Republic's central governance brings unprecedented



progress. According to Reuters the economy of Tibet has been growing at more than 12% of GDP annually over the past five years. However, Tibet stands for its cultural integrity and that includes economic and social reforms in its own right. Within the 'One China' obsession Tibet claims its genuine autonomy. The Central Tibetan Administration (government in exile) in Dharamsala is fully democratic and promotes a Gandhian approach to economic development based on the real needs of all citizens.

Former Ambassador Surapong Jayanama and China expert Worasak Mahadhanobol, Chulalongkorn University, did not show much optimism about the responsiveness of the Chinese government. However, Human Rights lawyer Somchai Homlaor maintained that the argument that Tibet is an internal affair of China cannot be upheld. The right of self-determination cannot be ignored in any situation.

A global debate that challenges development models based on GDP-growth, whether forced by China on Tibet, or by other empires on the rest of the world, is required to fully understand contemporary conflicts.

The Chinese government imposes strict taboos on attempts towards engagement in NGO exchanges. This is certainly the case for the ASEM people's forum to be hosted in China parallel to the ASEM (Asia-Europe) Summit 24-25 October 2008, according to Dorothy Guerrero of Focus on the Global South. NGO partners are not allowed to discuss the three T's: Taiwan, Tibet and Tianman Square!

"So, China and Tibet. Not separate. Help each other, interdependent," summarizes His Holiness the Dalai Lama in his book *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*. The book was written with Chinese journalist Victor Chan. The Thai version of *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*, an intimate narrative of the Dalai Lama's daily life recounting his dedication to non-violence and compassion, was launched by Garden of Fruition publishers at the first Tibet Forum.

M.R. Narissa Chakrabongse, member of a branch of the Thai Royal family, with Russian ancestors, rejected to carry the Olympic torch in Bangkok. She found the crackdown of the Chinese government on the initially peaceful protest of Buddhist monks in Lhasa incompatible with the Olympic spirit.

The ideal of the Olympic

Games is to provide a competitive platform for the youth and through them to promote peace, using sports as a base, according to Edward Thangharajah, sports columnist, in an article in the *Bangkok Post*: "When the ancient Olympics were launched, leaders and rulers signed peace pacts, laid down all arms and buried controversies. That was the sacred manner the Games were celebrated". (..) "That's why I believe that the Dalai Lama's call for a peaceful dialogue is a wonderful idea. That should help bring sanity to the current unhappy situation".

Sulak Sivaraksa, who recently received an honorary doctorial degree from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, showed optimism. Also in China a younger generation inspired by alternative development is emerging. People all over the world are awakening to the need to change the course and China will play its role in global transformation.

So what should be the direction of development? Putting this question to our hearts may be the important contribution of Tibet to the world.

Hans van Willenswaard

40 Years of Activism for Social Change and Challenges in the Modern World



Council members of SNF

In the past four decades, the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) has been growing as a social institute and working in various fields that benefit people from all walks of life and the environment.

Forty years under the leadership of Sulak Sivaraksa, a noted social critic and intellectual, SNF has proposed solutions to major issues faced by Siam and the world. Ajahn Sulak becomes a forerunner to seek alternatives to the unjust society which is

blinded by greed, hatred and delusion embodied as consumerism, materialism and militarism.

Directly or otherwise, Ajahn Sulak's roles to expand SNF's contributions to society are undeniable. At 75, he asked to resign from SNF's administration, but has agreed to continue to advise the Foundation. Before his retirement, he helped to raise funds to build *Ruan Roi Phan* Building at the premises of the SNF and donated the two plots of land inherited by him to the Foundation.

The Foundation's objectives have recently been reviewed to reflect changes including;

1. To promote and support creators of artistic and cultural works and any activity for the prosperity of arts and culture

2. To carry out activities to promote education, development, spirituality, arts and culture in collaboration with international communities, provide social work, environmental and natural resource preservation, promote peace and human rights and implement initiatives for public interest inside and outside the country for human progress

3. To disseminate information concerning the Foundation's activities inside and outside of the country

4. To cooperate and collaborate with other charitable organizations to work for public interest

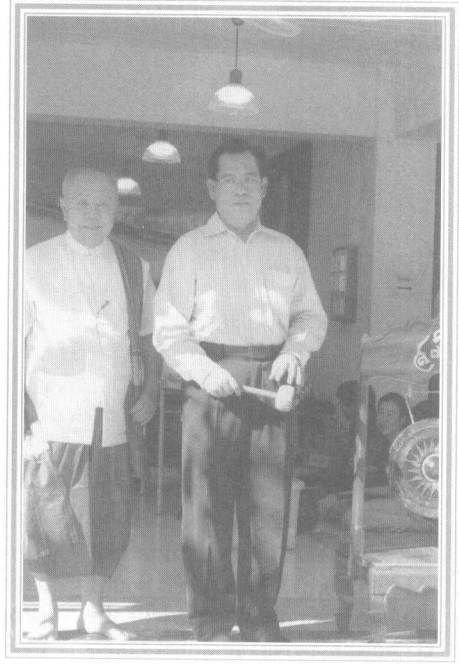
SNF has the following individuals as its committee members to implement the aforementioned objectives:

Advisory Board of Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) for 2008

1. Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa	Honorary Chairperson
2. Mr. Tuladilok Tulalampha	Vice Honorary Chairperson
3. Mr. Siroj Angsuwattana	Committee Member

Board of Directors, Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) for 2008

1. Mr. Surasee Kosolnavin	Chairperson
2. Mr. Preeda Tiasuwan	Vice Chairperson
3. Ms. Chirayong Anumanrajadhon	Treasurer
4. Mr. Chongrak Kittiworakarn	Committee Member
5. Mr. Thawat Damsa-ard	Committee Member
6. Mr. Pravit Yiamsaensuk	Committee Member
7. Mr. Preeda Ruangwichathorn	Committee Member
8. Mr. Pipob Udomittipong	Committee Member
9. Ms. Wallapa van Willenswaard	Committee Member
10. Ms. Siriporn Chotechatchawankul	Committee Member
11. Mr. Santisuk Sobhonsiri	Committee Member
12. Mr. Somchai Chomrenu	Committee Member
13. Mr. Somkiat Apinyachon	Committee Member
14. Mr. Anant Wiriyapinit	Committee Member
15. Mr. Uthai Dulyakasem	Committee Member
16. Mr. Ekachai Chutipong	Committee Member
17. Mr. Dhamrong Pattamapat	Secretary



Old and new presidents of SNF

Sulak Sivaraksa: An Appreciation

Talking about development of a country, there are at least two emerging views. On the one hand, there are those who believe that it is a natural process from the state of nothingness into something because human beings, with the help of science and technology they possess, are able to make it happen. As such, the factor of human resources is a decisive one as it will process existing natural resources. Sometimes, even without the existence of natural resources, something can be created out of nothing and become a market product. In this case, the capital factor becomes something very important because it is part of a process which leads to the existence of a product in the market. Therefore, capital becomes something inherent in the process of producing goods as required by market needs.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the process of producing goods through the use of capital and human resources depends entirely on the structure of the society which is being developed. In this situation, capital owners or capitalists are very powerful because they are able to shape societal structure as they wish. The technology factor, procedure to sell the products, and other technical matters are strongly determined by the societal structure determined by capital owners. These people have massive power in building societal structure and as such, shaping it as they want to. Science, technology, and even religion are determined by the capital owners. Therefore, the societal structure must be seized by force if one does not have capital. Mao Zedong's dictum that power comes from the barrel of a gun is another form of the view that societal structure is determined by the power holders.

This view is the result of the socialist analysis which looks at the societal structure, and automatically the power structure, as the most important requirement in implementing development. This view is the most important part of the analysis by Marx and Engels on the process of the production of goods and its relations to the societal structure, was a continuation of the view by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin who saw the important existence of a group of people who held power and used it for the benefits of the people at large, and not for the benefits of the capitalists who sought their own profits. Lenin's view, which saw the need for the existence of communists as a group of people who were aware on the importance of power, was indirectly opposed by Milovan Djilas who even considered that the communists as a "new class" which replaced the capitalists and used state resources for their own benefits. This can be seen from the existence of Aparachik within the communist party in the Soviet Union and other countries.

The first view is the classic capitalist view, which does not link the process of producing goods with the existing societal structure. With all sincerity, they looked at the process of producing goods and their dispatch to the market as being entirely unrelated to the existing societal structure. This classic capitalist view is also influenced by people capitalism (Volks Capitalismus), which were put into practice by US President Jackson and West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard. Jackson was of the view that the US central bank should serve not only the capitalists, but also the people in general. Therefore, the bank central director must be appointed by the President at the recommendation of the Congress, which represents the interest of the citizens in general. At a glance, this view seems to look at the state entity as unrelated to the process of producing goods. As such, this view seems to become the third theory besides Capitalism and Marxism.

However, a deeper analysis shows that a country is also supported by the tax collected from existing companies and this confirms the role of the capitalists in determining the process of producing goods. It must be remembered that the bureaucrats never pay attention to the societal structure and as such, they only follow the wishes of the capitalists. As this is not Marxist in nature, this view is capitalist in nature. This is where the author's doubts are toward the third view —whether it is just a variant of capitalism or it is a view which is independent of Marxism.

Jackson's view, which was put forward by Arthur Schlesinger Jr in his dissertation at the Harvard University, which was later published, managed to make himself appointed as resident intellectual by President John F. Kennedy in the 1960's. Erhard's view with his doctrine on the "sufficiency principle and market choice" in the 1950's and 1960's was clearly influenced by the capitalist view above. The two views only made minor modifications without touching

the main issue which was tackled by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, namely on the relations between societal structure and the process of producing goods.

A different view emerged in recent years. This view believes that the societal structure is also determined by that society's own conviction. Therefore, there will never be a society which is purely capitalist or socialist. With such societal structure, there will be another factor which must be considered. This includes the belief system practiced by that society, which also includes the religious belief. Whether this fourth view constitutes something unrelated to capitalism and socialism cannot be answered by this author.

Why does this fourth view give rise to doubts on the part of the author as to whether it is unrelated to capitalism and socialism? The doubts arise from the fact that it does not pay attention to the societal structure and the process of producing goods. This view does not show direct correlation between societal structure and ownership of capital so it is not considered as independent. However, it shows other relations beyond the ties between societal structure and the process of producing goods, namely the existence of religious teachings as well as independent conviction unrelated to capitalism and socialism. Does this view have its own existence as well as other scope like what capitalism and socialism have ?

Sulak Sivaraksa can be included into this fourth category because he looks at things directly from the Buddhist teachings but he also uses socialist paradigm. Does his view belong to its own dimension, which has nothing to do with the two above views? If so, that means that the fourth view is something which stands on its own. If that is not the case, it is just a variant of the two opposing views above. This is something that must be borne in mind when reading and following his views. However, our perception will not distract us from the fact that Acharn Sulak has steadfastly fought for the democratization of the Thai society and liberated it from the existing power system. In this way, he has become a teacher and a writer who rejects the use of violence by the existing power system. These two things have immortalized his name in the history of Thailand and put him as a tireless and relentless Asian fighter. Showing his respect to Acharn Sulak, this author wants to deliver this book to the readers. Hopefully his tireless struggle can be continued by the next generation.

KH Abdurrahman Wahid
Singapore,
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A Socially Engaged Buddhist View of Globalization and the Environmental Crisis

How much healthier would all our societies be if they were based on value systems that truly advocated sustainability rather than unlimited growth! A society where people help each other out in hard times, a society where power is shared rather than fought over, that reveres and respects nature rather than controlling and using it as a resource, a society unsullied by the poisons of craving (*tanha*), and a society with values steeped in spirituality and wisdom. Concrete steps are being taken to manifest this vision through initiatives inspired by spirituality in general and Buddhism specifically. A good number of committed people are working on these initiatives. They do not have all the answers, but they have a clear awareness of the structural violence and a strong determination to work with the violence within their minds. They take the path of contemporary bodhisattvas, a path in the Buddhist tradition where one takes a vow to confront the suffering in themselves and in society in order to work for the liberation of all sentient beings. It is a very challenging yet enriching path, a combination of contemplation and activism, spirituality and politics, humor and seriousness. These committed people are returning to the very roots of the traditional Buddhist teaching and using this

power to move toward a wholesome and sustaining future.

For if we do not develop an alternative path to the globalized consumer culture our traditional religions will remain at the periphery of the new dominant value system that reduces human beings to the mercy of greed. In today's world the desire to earn more and more money and consume more and more unnecessary goods is a dominant force at the expense of spiritual growth and contentment.

Globalization indeed is the new demonic religion. It uses the media to create a sense of lack. Hence we are driven to earn more in order to acquire more, yet we can never reach a point of contentment. Consumerism and unlimited growth directly contradict the concept of environmental sustainability and technological advancements and can only delay the impending ecological disaster. This leads to the question of whether the whole international capitalist system from its institutions and structures, to its basic culture and ideology is inherently defective. From a Buddhist perspective it definitely is. For if we follow the First World lifestyles there will be insufficient natural resources for all of us. Most of us will not be happy with a style of life that is harmful to ourselves, our family, our society and our natural environment.

In a 1990 talk, Vaclav Havel lamented that although we know a lot more empirically about the universe and the natural environment than our ancestors did, we do not understand their essence or substance as well. In many respects our lives have benefited substantially from advances in technology, but at the same time, we feel at a loss. We do not know where to turn. We become, have become, increasingly estranged from our lives, from the meaning of living. With a heavy heart, Havel concludes that the postmodern world teeters dangerously close to a nihilism where everything is possible, and where anything goes.

The basis of Western philosophy that dominates the globalized rhetoric emerged out of the Age of Enlightenment, when Rene Descartes argued that 'I think therefore I am'. Any being which cannot think was regarded as inferior and could therefore be exploited by those who could think. Even among thinking beings, the clever ones who can think better are in a position to exploit the weaker. Besides, the more we concentrate on thinking, the more our thoughts become compartmentalized. The deeper we think, the more we bury our thoughts and ourselves. We cannot see the wood for the trees. We are unable to perceive the world holistically. Hence the products of this thinking and our experiments with matter, scientism and technology, cannot be questioned.

The world can now be characterized by the intensification and universal spread of an extreme form of modernity which devours all other forms of actualization of human beings. Technology and modernity uproot and destroy the traditional way of life and conception of beauty. Ugliness is supplanting beauty; as goodness is dimming. The quest for truth is now skewed by falsity and injustice, guided by money and power. All this is done in the name of being civilized and following the Western example. Science and technology are claimed to provide the solution to every problem. The fact that the latest technology may trample on beauty and goodness is easily and conveniently ignored. Scientific knowledge conditions humans to be like machines, and we perceive the world and the universe as only composed of matter. Matter is merely things. Things have no life or feeling. Hence we feel justified in destroying Mother Earth, cutting down trees and damming rivers. Self-reliance has immeasurably weakened; nature is raped and its diversity leveled; millions of people are exploited merely for financial gain or in the name of economic development. Human relationships are replaced by impersonal commercial, technological and bureaucratic connections. Modernization has increased alienation, distrust and fear among people, making it easier for them to be manipulated and controlled.

In the years ahead the corporate control of both human and nonhuman planetary life will broaden and deepen as bio-technology and genetic engineering are more widely used. Corporations are able to alter the genetic structure of common plants and animals and claim patent rights or ownership to these modified products. Local producers, including indigenous people and farmers have rapidly lost their rights over plants and animals that they have been using for millennia. We must be wary of green capitalism: that is environmentalism as defined and managed by dominant global interests.

To counteract these global forces, we need to take a different road from the one offered by international capitalism. One that does not exploit the earth or any aspects of nature, for then

nature will grow holistically, heal itself and help us human beings to grow physically, mentally and spiritually. All of us who are interested in freedom, justice, non-violence, democracy, and environmental sustainability should intensify our activism, criticism and analyses. We should not seal our lips, refuse to think and disengage ourselves from the sufferings in the world. The teaching we need in order to walk this path already exists. The challenge facing humanity is not the development of more and more technology, markets and bureaucracies but strategies for spreading wisdom and compassion.

We must realize that the real enemies are within us: the enemies of greed, hatred, and delusion. In other words, external enemies are merely just a projection of our inner fears. Once these internal enemies are overcome we will no longer have external enemies. All sentient beings will be our friends. There is no such thing as a non-relational '1'; we all are interrelated and depend on one another. We should be grateful to all sentient beings, not only human beings. Without trees we will not be able to survive either.

Thich Nhat Hanh explains this interdependence in the following way:

In one sheet of paper, we see everything else, the cloud, the forest, the logger. I am, therefore you are. You are, therefore I am. We inter-are. I know that in our previous life we were trees, and even in this life we continue to be trees. Without trees, we cannot have people; therefore, trees and people inter-are. We are trees and air, bushes and clouds. If trees cannot survive, humankind is not going to survive either. We get sick because we have damaged our own environment, and we are in mental anguish because we are so far away from our true mother, Mother Nature.

As a Buddhist, I feel that the teachings of the Buddha have much to offer to mitigate the suffering in the world. The real meaning of the word Buddha is "to be awake". When we are awakened to simplicity and humility and aware of the suffering engendered by greed, hatred, and delusion, our consciousness is restructured. We become mindful about ourselves and others and are naturally led to try to restructure human society. The restructuring of the individual human consciousness and the society is complementary to each other and both are desperately needed.

If I were to go to the Buddha to ask him for a simple magic to rid us of our modem predicament, contrary to Descartes famous dictum, he would most likely suggest the following, 'I breathe therefore I am'. Breathing is the most important element in our lives. We breathe in for the first time as we leave our mothers' wombs, and we breathe out for the last time when we expire from life. Yet we do not take care of our daily breathing; we breathe in suffering, anxiety, hatred and greed. If you breathe properly then you don't rely entirely on your intellect. Your heart and your head link holistically. You learn to be more humble. You learn to understand yourself not dominated by the ego. The ego becomes less and less important. We will then have understanding and compassion rather than arrogant intellectual knowledge.

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

Traditionally, the first part of training the mind is to achieve a state of tranquility (*samatha*). This helps to focus or calm the mind. This will allow us to plant seeds of peace within. Once we have mastered this simple breathing we are ready to develop deep insight meditation (or *vipasana*) which is an analytical method for exploring causal relations and problem solving. It is based on a technique for understanding the nature of one's psychophysical constitution and of the world. It develops into an internal factor for wisdom or right understanding by fostering detachment. This involves developing critical self-awareness (*yonisomanasikara*).

In this way we become less selfish and beingable to look for peace and justice in the world, with a real understanding of ourselves and of the world. Once you know how to relate to each other, how to relate to nature, then of course you take from nature with respect, not aggressively. You take from your

friend with respect, with friendship, not aggressively. We are no longer controlled by biased views of love, hatred, fear or delusion. Our magical formula could look like this:

'Let us meditate for world peace, social justice, and environmental balance, beginning with our own breathing. I breathe in calmly and breathe out mindfully. Once I have seeds of peace and happiness within me, I will try to reduce my selfish desire and reconstitute my consciousness. With less attachment to myself, I will try to understand the structural violence in the world. Linking my heart with my head, I perceive the world holistically, a sphere full of living beings who are all related to me. I expand my understanding with love, to help build a more nonviolent world. I vow to live simply and offer myself to serve the oppressed. By the grace of the compassionate ones and with the help of good friends, may I be a partner in lessening the suffering of the world so that it may be a proper habitat for all sentient beings to live in harmony during this millennium'.

Meditation is used to enliven and nourish the mind. When we have learned to calm our minds there will be inner peace. We will no longer dwell in our monologues. We will be aware of the superficiality of sensual pleasures and prestige. Instead, we will be able to give birth to true love that is not centered on lust and possessiveness, which are inextricable from greed, hatred and delusion. In other words, only by reducing self-attachment will we be able to overcome or at least criticize the dualisms that inhibit our minds and lives.

Once this duality is overcome will we appreciate the real states of the mind: compassion, generosity, sympathetic joy and equanimity. We will be able to perceive non-judgmentally and be awakened from the various forms of mental domination rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, which are manifested by capitalism, militarism, and compartmentalized knowledge systems such as mainstream science. Meditation leads to wisdom; that is, the ability to know various states in their reality, without self-attachment. This will instill loving-kindness, and forgivingness in us. We will live in freedom. This will help alleviate or resolve the crises in the present world resulting from myopia and selfishness: obtaining short term gains at any cost. We can then see our society critically and meaningfully with a nonviolent and compassionate approach. We can then transform society to be peaceful and just, with environmental balance We must overcome our 'selves' (e.g., the conception of a translucent, autonomous self) to overcome these crises.

I am not suggesting that the spiritual dimension of security can ignore the role of that social, economic and political institutions play in society. The injustices occasioned by these institutions should be confronted in our spiritual practice. If I allow myself a certain conduct, I implicitly affirm the acceptability of that conduct. If I accept a system which serves to exploit or repress others, I reaffirm the exaltation of self-interest. This practice will clearly conflict with the path to liberation which is grounded on the doctrine of no-self (*anatta*). For the Buddhist, personal and social liberation are merely different aspects of the same practice. The Buddhist tradition provides a clear and direct methodology for overcoming greed, hatred and delusion. This methodology is more definitive and realizable than any other proposals I have seen for changing the institutional base of society.

I will know move to the core teaching of Buddhism known as the Four Noble Truths, namely, the suffering, the causes of suffering, and the cessation of suffering and the path to that cessation. If we do not confront suffering, we do not know the essence of suffering. Suffering that is both individual and social. What we call globalization or modern development does not show any understanding of the essence of suffering. Global development today appears to celebrate a way of life that not only leads away from understanding this reality of suffering but appears to discourage people from even recognizing its existence. Global development, springing from Western civilization, claims to adore life but actually starves it of any real meaning; it endlessly speaks of making people happy but in fact blocks their path to the source of real peace and happiness.

Through medtiation we become aware of the roots of social suffering on a basis on Buddhism's three main root causes of evil, namely, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and ignorance (*moha*). In narrow terms of interpretation, understanding the three root causes of suffering can help us to get rid of pain and disturbance in our personal lives. But in broader terms in the social context, they can really help us to envisage the causes of and give hints about the ways the causes can be ceased.

In my view, consumerism and capitalism can be explained as the most important modern

form of greed. With them, our values are geared towards satisfying the emptiness of our life by ever-increasing consumption and accumulation. By failing to understand the power of advertising we are at its mercy. This inevitably leads to conflicts of interest, and more importantly exploitation is justified by the concept of the 'invisible hand.' The lust for power, which leads to widespread human rights abuses, is a prime example of how hatred can manipulate individual minds and lure them to install an unjust social system in order to uphold the power of the governing elites.

Ignorance, another of the root causes of suffering, is largely caused by inappropriate education. Students are taught not to think holistically, but to compartmentalize their minds, and merely memorize useless facts needed to meet examination requirements. Modern education deals almost exclusively with the heads, not the hearts, of students. Often times, students are trained and equipped only with the skills they need to become employees for multinational and other modern companies, ready to exploit both their own countrymen and the natural environment.

Thomas Berry, a scholar of both the European and Asian classics, claimed that universities were "the most dangerous institutions in the world". They produce armies of economic rationalists and set them marching in a direction exactly opposite to where the real problems lie, programming them to do damage to society and the environment by pursuing rationalist economics and the so-called value-neutral science while remaining oblivious of the moral issues and religious dimensions involved. The preservation of indigenous species of animals and plants, and respect for ethnic minorities, their languages and cultures, are integral to the functioning of sustainable ecologies without which life on our planet could not survive. Berry advocates that all universities appoint Deans of Morality (by which he probably means non-market morality) to ensure that these crucial questions of value orientation and practical politics be faced in all faculties.

Many would find this program utopian, but the point is well taken: universities themselves are deeply implicated in a global process which puts rationality at the service of financial interests, and in so doing sub-verting the political process. Universities are corporatized, so to speak. Big money for big science for big business: this, despite a smoke screen of token appreciation for the humanities and the liberal arts, is the bottom line as far as university administrators who want to be successful are concerned. In the evolving environment of standardization, quality assurance and public accountability, it is a condition of universities' survival that they become, if not businesses, at least more businesslike and business orientated.

We must also challenge Scientism (not Science), which refers to the narrow minded and dogmatic application of scientific methods to all fields of knowledge. Scientism developed out of the enlightenment period in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries. Scientism is based in a reliance on the rational human mind to observe and understand all aspects of reality. As such, there has been a great focus on the material and quantitative, as what is spiritual and qualitative is often considered irrational. What is irrational is out of the bounds of scientific inquiry, private to the individual and ultimately of little value to the organization of society. Such a focus has given birth to the idea of machines which measure or produce material quantities. Beginning with the industrial revolution, this mechanization process has not only transformed the way we produce and consume material goods, but also the way we view ourselves, organize our societies, and inter-relate. Scientism is misused in studying human relationships such as psychology, politics and economics

I admit that mainstream science has benefited our world a lot, especially during the past century, but we must ask at what cost. For instance, our knowledge about the universe has expanded exponentially, we have gained some control over malevolent natural phenomena, and we can cure many diseases. It is possible to travel around the world in a few days (but only if you belong to the rich propertied class) and to communicate with others who live thousands of kilometers away from us. We often marvel at these accomplishments without considering the price we have had to pay: deforestation, the destruction of natural landscapes, the dwindling of nonrenewable resources, the reduction in biodiversity, the concentration camps, and the weapons of mass destruction. We have to try to understand these bifurcations of reason. Only the few have access to these magical inventions, medical advances, and technological development. Those who possess these highly specialized knowledge systems are akin to theolo-

gians in the past: they have the power over life and death by determining our worldview, advancing policies that impact on millions of lives, legitimizing war and peace, and so on. These highly compartmentalized knowledge systems are often lacking an ethical component.

In the Buddhist tradition, all this suffering can be reduced or totally extinguished by the right understanding of the nature of things–Buddhism is unique amongst the world religions as its approach is not reinforced by faith, but rather by practice. Thus, to attain understanding, one has to experience the truth itself. Buddhism also gives me a sense of inter-belonging. With this view, I feel the inter-relatedness of all beings. It helps to internally affirm a common phrase among Buddhists that we all are friends in suffering. Globalisation does not acknowledge the essence and meaning of life at all. Globalisation might be claimed to improve the livelihood of some people, but it ignores a true path towards true happiness, which is peace.

"There is no greater happiness than peace" (*Natthi santi param sukham*) so spoke the Lord Buddha. I am afraid that many of us do not believe in these words anymore. From a Buddhist perspective, for human beings to live happily there must be freedom on three levels:

The first freedom is the freedom to live with nature and the environment. We could call this physical freedom. This is freedom from want and deprivation: an adequate supply of the four necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter and medicine. This also includes freedom from natural dangers and the ability to deal with such dangers when they arise.

The second freedom exists in our relationship with fellow humans. We must have social freedom so that we can live safely together without being exploited by others.

These two kinds of freedom will not be truly effective if they are not connected to inner freedom—this is freedom on the personal level. Having physical and social freedom, people must learn how to live independently, to be happy and contented within themselves.

The most important kind of development is human development on a personal level leading to inner freedom. This leads to a happiness that is independent of externals; with it we are no longer dependent on exploiting nature or our fellow beings. We become more and more capable of finding contentment within our own minds and through our own wisdom, with the ability to be content independent of natural or social conditions. With a more independent kind of happiness, social and physical freedom will be preserved and strengthened. Human beings will then have the best possible relationship with both the natural environment and human society.

The Buddhist tradition itself contains a wealth of pertinent insight into exactly these issues. It is highly appropriate and indeed crucial that those Buddhists who are concerned with the welfare of humanity, spiritual, political, environmental and social, should join together to try and utilize the wisdom of the Buddha in a socially relevant way; by initiating alternatives to the mainstream. A Buddhist contribution to making our global society more peaceful and fair can draw on two main strands from its wisdom. Firstly through an analysis of structural violence using Buddhism's rich tradition of exploring the roots of selfishness and violence within human individuals. Progressive Buddhists have been applying these teachings to social issues with increasing creativity, depth and practical clarity. Secondly, the Buddhist ethical tradition has often challenged the status quo of economic, political, and cultural power values and structures. The Buddha actually never referred to his teaching as being one that is entirely intellectual or entirely moral. He often referred to his teaching (*Buddhadhamma*) holistically as, a noble discipline (*ariya vinaya*). In this sense noble not only means high or great, but also all-encompassing. This concept of a noble discipline applies both to the monastic lineage and to lay people. One of the main projects I am involved in, initiated through consultation with HH the Dalai Lama, was inspired by this idea of noble ethical discipline. With help from His Holiness we are presently engaged in a progressive series of dialogues with Buddhists from various traditions expanding to other world wisdom traditions.

It is this kind of balanced approach that is also being used by the engaged Buddhist movement. Almost two decades ago, some of us felt a need to develop an appropriate role of Buddhism in the modern world. Some call it Buddhism with a small b that is not clinging to any particular culture, school of thought, or country. Hence a Socially Engaged Buddhist movement was created to become a Buddhist liberation movement in Asia and beyond. This movement is applying spirituality, which has

an element of intellectuality, of knowledge and personal salvation or wisdom, to social issues, the practical and tangible. This includes solidarity based on compassion and the appreciating of diversity. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) represents a first effort to link together socially engaged Buddhists worldwide. The network is linked to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in the USA and with similar organizations in Europe and Japan. INEB deals with alternative education and spiritual training, gender issues, human rights, ecology, alternative concepts of development, and activism. I believe that the challenges and prospects for contemporary Asian Buddhists is to convey the teachings of the Buddha in an appropriate way for the 21st century.

What does it mean to be a Buddhist these days? We must find the appropriate light to interpret the teachings of the Buddha in order to awaken us from various forms of domination. We must understand the complexity of modem society, especially structural injustice and violence. We must ask ourselves what is the meaning of our lives: to have, to buy, to indulge, to possess, or simply to be? If we realize that the meaning of life is to be, rather than to have, we will know our role and identity in society. We will know how to behave to others and to the environment. Buddhist teachings from the past do not have power in themselves and cannot deal with the malaise of industrialized and globalized economies where transnational corporations rule supreme.

If we can bring the traditional teachings of the Buddha to light in solving modern conflicts, it can have a great effect on ordinary people. With moral courage, generosity and commitment to Buddhist understanding and practice, we can develop an extraordinary ability and can, in our own small way, become peace-makers in our time. I have already outlined the path for personal transformation leading to social transformation but I want to emphasize that the future must be built on traditional wisdom and culture. The future of the world must not neglect the spiritual perspective. Despite being primarily a Buddhist network, INEB nevertheless has interfaith elements and seeks to consolidate the communities of those holding the same values and tenets of Buddhism worldwide. There is a wealth of wisdom that can be garnered from religious traditions.

As Buddhists we can learn from the Quakers, and also from the other religious traditions of Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. I am sure all these spiritual paths, including those of the indigenous peoples, can help us to enrich our understanding and our practice in facing conflicts mindfully and overcoming them non violently. The Buddha says a good friend is important for everyone. We need to have good friends, good companions and good friendships. We can learn from others to develop ourselves and to help our society to be peaceful and just, starting with ourselves. When we can transform our consciousness to be less selfish with help from good friends we can transform our societies to be free from human oppression and exploitation. It may not be easy, but it is possible. With critical self-awareness that helps us to change ourselves to be less selfish and to be nonviolent and with good friends, we can look at our society and the environment with hope and encouragement to overcome social ills and environmental degradation.

For example if we follow indigenous people's way of life, we can all live simply and have time to enjoy ourselves and to become part and parcel with the community as well as with our mother earth.

We should learn from the indigenous people about the wholeness of life and the sanctity of the natural order. We should learn to be alone with nature, to live with birds and flowers, to appreciate and respect nature. Through this understanding, we can realize that intellectualism and social engineering cannot liberate us from suffering. We need to return to the best of our spiritual traditions, to shamanism, mythology, traditional rituals, songs and dances, to experience life as it is available and alive in many indigenous communities. Too many of these are being threatened by corporate entities.

For corporations, natural resources are merely a source of economic benefit. When one area has been exhausted they can move on to another. The people are relevant only to the extent that they serve to generate income either as laborers or consumers. Money is less important for indigenous people. Of greater significance to them and us is to live happily with dignity, with a sense of the sacred, and with a spiritual dimension to our lives. This means to be in harmony with the earth, revere our ancestors, and respect our communities with a commitment to the generations to come.

Consumerism and unlimited growth directly contradict the concept of environmental sustainability and technological advancements and can only delay the impending ecological disaster If we care for our survival, we must not only question the economic policies espoused but also policy structures that have emerged which are no longer accountable to the people. We must also question the legal and judicial systems that maintain the status quo. We need alternative economic and political strategies designed, like E.F. Schumacher says, "as if human beings matter." Indeed, we need alternative educational programs which encourage us to integrate the manifold aspects of our being. Also empowerment education for grassroots communities and individuals from all social strata providing tools to counteract these trends is crucial. We must be able to link our head with our heart so that we escape compartmentalization and develop the capacity to grow seeds of peace and joy within ourselves. We will bring about change through this process. Not by hating the oppressors, but by challenging structural violence. Through nonviolence we can seek a transformation to create a just and peaceful world.

A relevant project for today that INEB works on is the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), which was founded by several prominent alternative thinkers to counteract the negative trends of Western education. From humble beginnings in Siam, working in rural communities, it is founded on the philosophy that education must be spiritually based, ecologically sound and must offer a holistic view of life. The philosophy is underpinned by Buddhist wisdom and green principles, but also welcomes and associates with other spiritual and ecological wisdom. We aspire to create an environment to awaken Buddha nature and cultivate wisdom as well as the intellect. We aspire to benefit people by increasing individual and collective confidence in their traditional wisdom, skills and heritage. We hope to move individuals from selfishness to compassion, from a lack of meaning in life to fulfillment, and from negativity to positive thinking.

SEM is just one example of alternative education challenging the status quo. Tolerance for socio-economic diversity and alternative models of development and education are almost non-existent. Formerly diverse ways of life worldwide are being eroded and freedom, democracy, and human rights are destroyed. I humbly and sincerely recommend that these negative trends may be overcome by looking to our spiritual, religious and indigenous traditions. As a Buddhist I find transformation in the teachings of the Buddha. I want people world wide, especially those indoctrinated into capitalist and consumer culture, to see the Buddha simultaneously as the Enlightened One and as a simple, humble monk. It was simplicity and humility that enabled the Buddha to achieve enlightenment. This is the antidote that is needed.

By simplicity, I mean freedom from attachment to material and sensual pleasure. The Buddha, who wandered as a monk for six years before enlightenment called these the eight worldly conditions and stated that whoever is bound to these will never be free from the cycle of birth and death. Simplicity contributes to the realization of a noble life because it guides us down the Noble Eightfold path. Where consumerism holds personal material success in the highest esteem, one learns from the Buddha to constantly reduce attachment and to envision success as overcoming attachment to personal possessions. Free from these attachments, we have sufficient time and energy to nurture the seeds of peace within. From the Buddhist perspective, a prosperous person is self-reliant; has self-dignity, is proud of his/her culture; is content, generous, and mindful. Income and wealth are not indicators of prosperity in Buddhism as is the case with capitalism. With the right understanding of simplicity a peaceful life relates harmoniously to all sentient beings and to the natural environment. The five senses are not indulged through abuse of thought, speech, or action. We understand that consumerism endangers the earth's biosphere and strengthens transnational corporations that care more for profit than the well-being of people. We must be mindful of how to create and use wealth by giving more than taking from others.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a renowned Buddhist monk and thinker in Siam, who died more than a decade ago, felt it was important for human beings to live a life close to nature; people should be friends with nature and not try to conquer nature. His favorite saying was that the Buddha learned, lived, taught and died in nature. For him a good society was not one full of artificial artifacts that separate us from the natural environment. Rather, the ideal habitat for Buddhist culture to grow was in a rural environment. In his own

life, Buddhadasa observed his natural surroundings and came to the conclusion that nature works in a cooperative way. To prove this to visitors, he always pointed to a big tree in front of his hut, where many small trees and plants grew together with the tree, along with a number of wild animals such as birds, squirrels, and lizards. He suggested that human society should be organized in this cooperative way. Nature operates under specific laws; the most important of these is the law of interdependence. So, he would say, as human beings we have to understand this and behave accordingly if we want to have a good life and good society. For Buddhadasa, the cultivation of a free mind, cooperative spirit, and living close to nature are practices in harmony with the laws of nature.

There is a growing movement of people who believe the same. And although it is clear that inequality and exploitation dominate our society there are movements across the world for peace, social justice and ecology. There are inspiring stories of people applying their ingenuity to protecting nature. In Siam, Buddhist monks preserve forests by ordaining trees into the priesthood. In Thai culture, ordained persons are much respected, so the trees are protected. Such creative resistance is also seen in the struggles of indigenous groups against deforestation and the damming of rivers; in the struggles of local farmers against biotechnology, and countless examples of people making a stand – however small. These struggles are full of passion, and need to be better integrated. Their common agenda must be firmly placed on a non-violent and spiritual path.

Through a spiritual context, life becomes a process of self discovery and self-knowledge through solitude, meditation or prayer, art and learning. Society becomes the way people connect and reaffirm their cooperative nature through proper partnership, family and community. Nature becomes the way all beings connect and this is practiced through a constant immersion where environment no longer exists as a separation of man from nature. In this way, spiritual requisites extend the process of inner transformation and development outwards to society. This is the way we can overcome the violence and destructiveness of the dominant world order.

Lecture delivered at the Enlightenment Centre in London for the Temenos Academy, under the partronage of HRH the Prince of Wales, on 2nd June 2007.

"Tibetan Non-Violent Struggle Must Have to Triumph"

Dharamsala, February 22: A group from Thailand led by Sulak Sivaraksa, founder and president of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, are currently in Dharamsala, the seat of the Dalai Lama led Tibetan Government-in-Exile, to express their solidarity with the Tibetan cause and encourage preservation and promotion of the "unique and peaceful Tibetan Buddhist culture".

The group on Thursday met with members of Tibetan NGOs and media to hold an interactive talk.



Earlier on Wednesday, the group had a private audience with the Dalai Lama and was looking forward to meeting the exile Tibetan Prime Minister Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche on a later date.

The group said their visit was to interact closely with the Tibetan community and accordingly draw up future plans for the Tibetan cause.

An official from the Central Tibetan Administration introduced Sulak as being "very active in supporting Tibetan cause for a long time in Thailand and around the world" through his influence.

"Ajan Sulak is a very old friend of Tibet from Thailand," the official said. He was accompanied by 14 others from Thailand.

Expressing admiration to the Tibetan struggle, Sulak said "Tibetan Non-violent struggle based on truth must have to triumph someday" and added that the recent peaceful protests by Buddhists monks in Burma could have been inspired by Tibetan non-violent movement.

"Violent is destructive and will fail and bring more destructions. We must work together for peace," he said. Having worked for Tibetan and Burmese and "untouchables in India" for a long time, Sulak thinks "the world is changing through compassion now".

"I admire Tibetan people for their determination and wisdom to preserve their peaceful culture," he said.

According to him, "Tibetans are nurturing a Buddhist democracy" and said that it would be a unique contribution to the world polluted by corrupt politicians.

An ardent admirer of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Sulak said: "His Holiness is perhaps the one voice leading the world. People around the world now admire him for being a simple Buddhist monk full of sincerity and compassion, and one who practices what he preaches".

"Through His Holiness' wisdom we must cultivate peace. The future of the world depends on peace," he said.

"Under Chinese hegemony, many South East Asian countries are unwilling to invite His Holiness. And the Chinese fear His Holiness the Dalai Lama. When you fear 'a man of love', there is something wrong with you," Sulak told the Tibetans.

In his interaction with Tibetans, Sulak said he is personally supportive of the Dalai Lama's stance of the middle way approach seeking autonomy rather than independence for Tibet. "Autonomy is more practical in this situation," he said.

He, however, said he would support the idea of "exiled Tibetan people's protest march to Tibet" due to embark from Dharamsala, India, on March 10. He suggested the march should be made international. "Do it with big publicity," he said.

Sulak and his friends are now hoping for a possible revisit to Thailand by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in a very long time.

Phurbu Thinley
Phayul 22 February 2008

The Monarchy Must Serve the People's Interests

The royal anthem was first played at entertainment venues in Siam before the 1932 revolution. According to *State Ceremony of Siam*, which describes ceremonial affairs during the reign of Rama VII, prior to the democratization of Siam, an elderly lady failed to rise at the royal anthem and was arrested by the police. Prince Boribat, who was Minister of the Interior, ordered the immediate release of the woman. He reasoned that standing is a Western custom, and it had just recently been adopted here; the lady did no wrong in not rising.

The feudalist structure in Siamese society is not as rigid as in the Brahmin caste. The mother of the present king and his brother was a commoner. Similarly, the mother of Rama III was also a commoner. Chao Phya Yamaraj who ascended to the highest honour in the bureaucracy was also a commoner. This shows that the caste system in Siam is flexible and an individual can ascend to higher honours. It was the aim of the 1932 revolution to change these feudalist customs, but it failed to do so.

Regarding the topic "Human Rights and the Right to Differ", we owe much to the two persons (who failed to stand up during the playing of the royal anthem in a Bangkok cinema and have been threatened with lèse majesté charges). They have challenged in public the importance of human rights and the right to differ. Similarly, we owe much to those who are opposed to the Olympics that is going to happen in August. It is the first time that people the world over have been made to be aware of how the Olympics is used simply as a tool to propagate imperialism and serve the vested interests of multinational corporations. With this campaign, I am sure the MNCs and China will change.

We need to deal with the nightmares that Pravit *(The Nation* reporter and speaker on the same panel) have underwent.

There are two relevant points here. First, it is not just the *Manager* newspaper which is a corrupt representative of mainstream media, *The Nation* is equally bad. It gets worse as the editor-in-chief of the paper will be awarded the Sri Burapha Prize this year. "Sriburapa" was the last journalist to side with those who cherished democracy and human rights and the destitute. On the contrary, *The Nation's* boss has no such qualification. He even told a blatant lie such as writing that he went to see his old teacher, Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, even though he had never met him before. *Matichon* is the same. Khanchai Boonpan, its managing director, ordered his staff to refrain from reporting any news by and about me. No one cares to criticize *Matichon*, or the *Manager*. Many papers are ready to utter lies rather than truths and have never made any stand on morality, freedom of expression and human rights.

Just like any institution in Siam, including the press, in order to survive, the Siamese monarchy needs to be subject to criticism, accountability and transparency. Like all of us, the king is first among equals, but not God. During the feudal period, the power of the king was checked by the nobility, particularly, during the reigns of Rama IV and Rama V. It is only after Rama V got rid of the nobility that the monarchy reigned supreme. If the problem is not addressed, the system will collapse. I am saying this out of my loyalty and am ready to go to jail if the statement is found to constitute lèse majesté.

Few people realize the importance of the monarchy. Feeling discontented, many would opt for dismantling the system altogether. Out of fear, they simply dare not speak out about this. And fear is one of the most treacherous prejudices. According to the Buddha, there are four kinds of prejudice; prejudice caused by love, hatred, delusion or fear. Many Thai people are now dominated by prejudice caused by fear. The monarchy has become an object of fear. We need to renounce this fear and draw on moral courage. Unfortunately, most media do not show moral courage and simply enjoy the income from printing commercials.

If we really care about the monarchy, the institution needs to be subject to criticism. I am not sure if the intention of the *Manager* is a genuine desire to retain the monarchy, or if it simply uses the institution as a vehicle for their agenda and to fight against Thaksin (former Prime Minister of Siam).But to be fair, the institution should not be used as a political ploy. It is blatantly shameful for the *Manager* to abuse a powerless individual (like Chotisak who did not stand up when the royal anthem was played at the cinema). To make such a charge against people who commit no wrong is shameful. This method has been used since the 1950's to bring down Pridi Banomyong and Tiang Sirikhan, two pioneers of democracy. The latter was even killed by the indifference of the public, just like the case of October 6.

We need to abandon this method. Unfortunately, the mainstream media and even educational institutions have failed to renounce it. There was news before this seminar that the President of the University attempted to foil this seminar.

I recently had a chance to see an opera about Gandhi in New York. Gandhi relied on truth to overcome British imperialism. People in America are realizing how vicious the actions committed by President Bush have been even though the mainstream media tend to indulge people with nonsensical things. The most destructive contribution of capitalism seems to be that it turns lies into truth and vice versa, and makes people cherish violence rather than non-violence.

We need to preserve the monarchy, but the monarchy must serve the interests of the people. The last few sentences of the royal anthem go as follows: "to whatever His Majesty wishes, may all be accomplished, and Long Live His Majesty". So if His Majesty wishes to build a dam, then no one can stop it and it will turn out to be a nightmare for us all. But if His Majesty wishes to work in the service of the masses and to promote truth, then the nightmare can be avoided.

Presented at a seminar held at the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 2 May 2008. The Thai version can be found at http://www.prachatai.com/05web/th/home/12059.

On that day, the police inspector of Chanasongkram Station wrote to the President of the University that Sulak Sivaraksa and Chotisak Onsong were accused of lèse majesté. They should not be allowed to speak in public. The President asked the Dean of the Facutly and a Vice President to be cautious. The seminar, however, went on as planned, but there was no report of the event in any mainstream mass media.

Petition to the Administrative Court

On 28 April 2008 Sulak Sivaraksa filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court against the following parties: 1) the printing authority for Bangkok; 2) the Ministry of Interior; 3) the printing registration authority for Bangkok; 4) the Department of Fine Arts; 5) the Royal Thai Police Headquarters; and 6) the Prime Minister. The lawsuit is excerpted below.

1. The indictor is the author of the book *A Quarter of a Century of Thai Politics: A Path Strewn with Thorns*.

   The first defendant ordered the banning of the book and the confiscation of copies of the book and book mold by virtue of Article 9 of the 1941 Printing Act.

   The second defendant is the state agency under which the Minister of Interior serves. The Minister of Interior is in charge and control of the execution of the 1941 Printing Act and is vested with the power to appoint the first defendant.

   The third defendant was appointed to the job by the Prime Minister by virtue of Article 9 of the 2007 Printing Registration Act....

   The fourth defendant is the agency under which the third defendant serves.

   The fifth defendant is the agency under which the first defendant serves.

   The sixth defendant is in charge and control of the execution of the 2007 Printing Registration Act and by virtue of the 2000 National Police Act is vested with the power to appoint the first and the fifth defendants.

2. The indictor is a person recognized and respected by the public, domestically as well as internationally. He is a thinker, a writer, and a critic concerned about social problems. He steadfastly upholds and protects democracy. He is the recipient of numerous international awards. The book *A Quarter of a Century of Thai Politics: A Path Strewn with Thorns* has contents that oppose the military coup d'etat and that criticize the country's politics. As stated in the preface, it was published with the following objective: "the awaken the reader from mainstream domination, or to enable to the awakened to have the moral courage to demand for the legitimate rights of citizens for the country as well as humanity."

   On 2 October 2007 the indictor was informed by the printing authority, the first defendant, that the said book contains messages that "may cause unrest and degrade good morals' in Thai society." Therefore, by virtue of Article 9 of the 1941 Printing Act, the book is banned and book copies have been confiscated.

   The indictor has appealed against this administrative order, contending that it is unlawful, to the Minister of Interior since 8 October 2007. When the deadline to deliberate on the appeal was reached, the Minister of Interior did not inform the indictor that it would be extended despite the fact that the indictor had closely followed the process and had made inquiries pertaining to the appeal on several occasions.

   Subsequently, members of the National Legislative Assembly passed the 2007 Printing Registration Act. This Act repealed the 1941 Printing Act, rendering the latter unenforceable. Furthermore, the first defendant was not vested with the power by virtue of the 1941 Printing Act to confiscate copies of the indictor's book. In fact, nothing in the law now enables the first defendant to confiscate copies of the book.

   The first defendant later informed the indictor about the deliberation of the appeal by the printing authority of Bangkok. This was however after the repeal of the 1941 Printing Act. The indictor's appeal was revoked. This reply was however very late and not done in accordance with the law. The reply was also made when the defendants were no longer vested with the power to counter the indictor in accordance with the law.

3. The indictor would like to inform the Court that Order 5/2550 issued by the printing authority, the first defendant, is unlawful because in making the order the printing authority did not provide sufficient opportunity for the indictor, potentially the person injured, to be informed about the truth of the situation.
4. The indictor would like to inform the Court that the administrative Order 5/2550 banning the book *A Quarter of a Century of Thai Politics: A Path Strewn with Thorns* and confiscating copies of this book by virtue of Article 9 of the 1941 Printing Act is

unlawful because Article 9 of the said Act is contrary to or inconsistent with Article 45 of the 2007 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Therefore Article 9 could not be enforced.

Requests

Given these facts and legal provisions, the indictor would like to request the Court to make the following orders and judgments.

1. The Administrative Court should postpone the judgment of this case and forward the indictor's opinion to the Constitutional Court to rule on this point.
2. The Administrative Court should rescind the order banning and confiscating copies of the book *A Quarter of a Century of Thai Politics: A Path Strewn with Thorns.*
3. The Court should order the five defendants collectively or on behalf of one another to return copies of the book confiscated by the first defendant to the indictor.
4. The Court should order the second and the fifth defendants together or on one another's behalf to indemnify the indictor for the abuse of the freedom of expression.
5. The Court should order the defendants to send copies of the said book to Court to be used as evidence in its judgment. Since the 1941 Printing Act was repealed by the 2007 Printing Registration Act, it is uncertain which defendant has a hold of the confiscated copies of the book.





Cyclone Disaster In Burma Humanitarian Aid Needed

The death toll in Burma as a result of the devastating Cyclone Nargis has now risen to more than 22,000.

Another 41,000 are missing three days after the cyclone hit the country, causing a huge tidal surge to sweep inland, according to state radio.

The report came as aid agencies begin what they expect to be a major relief operation to help hundreds of thousands left without clean water and shelter.

Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) under the Sathirakoses - Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF), would like to request funds to support relief work in Yangon and the Ayerwaddy delta region, through the local network of partner social activists inside the country.

If any of you wish to contribute support for the cyclone victims, please donate to:

Sathirakoses - Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF)
Registration with the Thai's Ministry of Education, 1969

Bank Details:

Account Name	:	***Sathirakoses - Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF)***
A/C Number	:	***024-2-59705-9***
Bank Name	:	***Siam Commercial Bank***
Branch	:	***Charoen Nakorn***
Bank Address	:	***Siam Commercial Bank, Charoen Nakorn Road, Klongsan, Bangkok 10600***
SWIFT CODE	:	***SICO TH BK***

Dear Sulak,

It was special to be with you at the opera and St.John the Divine. Your words in the church were strong, direct, and humorous. All the different elements came together beautifully.

Thank you for the indigo cloth with its lovely gold embroidery. Our house is filled with your generous gifts.

Please use the enclosed check for any purpose at all—it is but a token of our appreciation.

Ken joins me in sending our best and love.

Trudy Kraft
Millbrook Lane
Haverfrod, PA 19041

Dear Prof. Sivaraksa,

In my responsibility as the director of "Lehrgang Weltreligionen", an Austrian study programme on interreligious dialogue, I would kindly ask you if it is generally possible for my students and myself to have a short meeting and talk with you on your vision of and experience with Engaged Buddhism when we come to Bangkok on our study trip in the end of this month.

During last year my students got their lectures on Buddhism and of course learned also about the movement of Engaged Buddhism and its founders, so it would be a real pleasure and honour for us to have this opportunity. The whole study programme with participants from all over Austria and also Germany, Rumania and other European countries is run by several Catholic and other Christian institutions and supported by our Austrian governmental offices. Its major aim is to learn about the different world religions, their spiritual heart and also the role they play in society, be it empowering as well as endangering. If you are interested, I could give you much more information on this programme, but I do not want to elaborate on this too much in this first contact.

The mentioned study trip will lead sixteen students from Austria, Germany and Romania and myself to Bangkok, Luang Prabang and Angkor in order to deepen their understanding of Buddhism. We will start on February 12th and return home on February 26th. During this time, we will also have the pleasure to stay some days at a Buddhist monastery (Wat Pa Charoenrat). For a meeting with you, February 24th (afternoon or evening) or 25th (afternoon or evening) or 25th (whole day is possible) would fit best to our itinerary.

I would be grateful for a short and some general answer to our intention, of course even more if it could be an affirmative one. In this case, I would immediately give you all necessary futher information from my side. If such a meeting were not possible for you, maybe because of your really great international schedule, I would be happy if you could help me in contacting another person meeting our interests, although I am convinced that there will simply be nobody like yourself.

With kind regards from Austria
Markus Lanstter

Dear Sulak,

Again—words cannot express my gratitude for your presence and your contributions to our meeting at the Yale Club last week. Many partcipants have spoken to me about how your presentations made the vision of "engaged Buddhism" come alive for them—it is one thing to read about it; it is quite another to be engaged in conversation with someone who is an inspired thinker and actvist.

J. Ronald Engel, Ph.D.
Senior Research Consultant
Center for Humans and Nature
www.humansandnature.org

Dear Sulak,

I saw the piece in yesterday's *Bangkok Post* about the celebrations for your 75th birthday, and I wished I could have been there to congratulate you in person. But I send my hearty congratulations anyway with all good wishes for you to continue healthy and active for many years to come. Your voice is sorely needed now, not only in Thailand.

Ian Mayo - Smith
570/128 M.5. Roy Lang
Pattaya Chonburi 20150

Dear Ajarn,

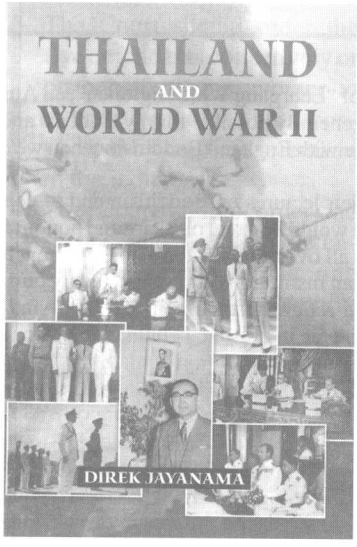
Happy 75th Birthday!

As the years go by. I can see your influence on Thailand more and more deeply, not through any empires you have built or even in the recognition of your name, but in the change in spiritual culture for which you and Ajarn Buddhadasa have served as refuges for so long, and in the strong networks of socially and spiritually engaged people who not only care for development of political change but also care for culture and the arts. May the power of the influence of your spirit continue to grow in these golden years.

Jonathan Watts
Kamakura, Japan

Thailand and World War II
Direk Jayanama
(Silkworm Books)

The revised English edition of *Thailand and World War II* came out at the begining of 2008. As before, Jane Keyes laudably undertook at gratis to rework and make her first edition that appeared in print in 1978 more complete. It was an endeavor by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and Foundation for Children to honor Khun Direk Jayanama's centenary in 2005. Due to circumstances, the book could not be brought out in time. Besides, both the Thai and English versions of the book had been out of print for quite some time already.



Jane Keyes has done an exceptional work in both her translation and editing, in transposing the readers into the realm of Khun Direk Jayanama's Thai narration. In reading this revised English version, I sense the incredible Thainess of the 40's and 50's, running through the entire English text.

In modern Thai history, since the founding of Chakri Dynasty 200 years ago, the uneventful years from 1939 (the outbreak of WW II) to 1948 (a few years following its ending), Thailand had not been in more precarious a position. The colonial expansion of the Western powers in the 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in the reigns of Rama IV (1853–1868) and Rama V (1868–1910), that led to Thailand's lost of over one third of its territories came back to haunt its governments. The rise of the Axis powers in Europe and East Asia, followed by the decline in the established European rules in the latter, opened up an opportune prospect for Thailand to air its claims over its lost territories. Caught between the swift and far-reaching tides of external changes around the world and rising military might within, during its early years of democracy, Thailand drew upon set foreign policies to steer itself through these difficult times. It called on educated men of integrity who were far sighted and entrenched in the love for their country like Khun Direk Jayanama, Khun Seni Pramoj, Ajahn Puey Ungphakorn, etc. to serve its causes. It would be a wonder to locate such able men of the highest moral rectitude in the Thai government today!

The book unravels, through the calm and collected eyes of Khun Direk Jayanama, a civil servant, high-ranking diplomat, and minister, how these policies were effected in a day-by-day account. Having taught at Thammasat University and a number of higher institutions of learning in and outside of Thailand, and served as the first Dean of Political Science Faculty at Thammasat University, it was his solemn intention to leave a written account of Thailand and WW II, from the Thai perspective, as his legacy to the younger generation. Perhaps, having been educated in a Catholic school in Bangkok, he wished to follow the footsteps of educated men of the West.

To make the book accurate and factual, he refrained from dwelling on matters he was not involved first-hand, lamentably leaving out much of the under current Thai politics, even though he himself might have been acquainted of those events. Thus, the book tends to present the making of Thai foreign policy and the interactions with foreign governments in a clinical exactitude of a surgery room. However, not to have done so would have killed the main purpose of writing the book in the first place, if not, making it less worthy of reading. There is little of the squabbling and gory in fighting behind the scenes that one is familiar with in all politics.

Khun Direk Jayanama had also asked three close and trusted friends and colleagues, Khun Thawi Bunyaket, Ajahn Puey Ungphakorn, and Phra Phisansukhumwit to fill in on matters outside his scope of work or direct responsibility,

each contributing a chapter. They all had been assigned important tasks during and after the Great War, particularly those involving the advancement of Free Thai Movement in Britain, the United States, and Thailand.

Surprisingly, there seems to be one slight discrepancy, although seemingly unimportant, between his accounts after the Cabinet meeting on 8 December 1941 held at Suan Kularb Palace and that of his fellow minister and one of the contributors to this book, Khun Thawi Bunyaket.

For those wishing to learn more of Thailand and WW II, it is a highly recommended book. It would serve as an excellent textbook for students wishing to enter any Foreign Service. It tells how diplomacy could best serve a nation – not by lust for power, anger, or hatred, but only through mindful understanding, sincerity, and friendship. Through all his dealings and contacts with his colleagues and foreign counterparts, Khun Direk Jayanama put forward the best that is in a person, a human being relating to another human being. Through his integrity, respect, friendship, and sincerity he built up through the years with his fellow diplomats, whether their countries were at war with Thailand or not, had helped in the development of better understanding, and amelioration of international conflicts.

As to the events leading to WW II, and period during and a few years following WW II, apart from the Thais themselves, in many cases scores of foreigners, whether British, Americans, Japanese, French, etc. were involved in enhancing the position of Thailand in the eyes of the free world. If it were not through their helping hands and connections, the Thais would not have succeeded as much in their missions. The book brings to mind such historic personalities like Mr. Scholtz who later set up the International Engineering Company; Mr. Otto Praeger, the former Advisor to the *Thai Post*; Mr. Darrell Berrigan, the owner and editor of the *Bangkok World*; and Mr. Edwin Stanton, later to be appointed the Ambassador to Thailand. On the British side, there were Mr. William Doll and Mr. D.W. Reeve; both were the British Financial Advisors to the Ministry of Finance who helped with the negotiation with the British government. The author particularly was in praise of General Nakamuara for being a foremost Buddhist at heart in showing leniency towards Thailand, even with the knowledge that Thais were carrying out acts of sabotage against the Japanese.

For those wishing to dwell at greater depths in the official documents exchanged between Thailand and other foreign countries during this period, the more than 150 pages of the appendixes would serve the purpose well.

On a lighter note, it did not come to mind until now that an assurance by Thailand not to build Kra Canal and the hand over of the Emerald Buddha to France was initially the two pre-conditions set by the British and French governments respectively, in return for the state of normalcy between Thailand and these two countries. The Thais surprisingly thought the latter intended it to be all of a joke more than any real expression of seriousness.

Siroj Angsuwattana

Inspiration from Above: A Closer Look at a Down-to-earth Living Being

***The Wisdom of Forgiveness**: Intimate Conversations and Journey*
Victor Chan with
His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Translated into Thai as
'Panyayarn haeng karn a-phai' by Saipin Kulkanokwan Hamdani,
Suan Ngern Mee Ma, 252 pp., 220 baht

It is quite astonishing to see a political refugee exude such joy, playfulness and wholehearted compassion towards those who mean him harm. Throughout the 49 years of his exile, the highly revered political and spiritual leader of Tibet, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, has stood firmly by his belief that only through non-violence and peaceful dialogue can conflicts be solved. Knowledge devoid of a good heart may lead humanity to destruction, warns the Dalai Lama. The infamous September 11 incident and seemingly never-ending wars are good examples.

The Wisdom of Forgiveness: Intimate Conversations and Jour-

neys provides insight into the life and mind of this world-peace icon. The book, divided into 20 short chapters, does not detail a step-by-step how-to guideline. Yet, through a Buddhist perspective, rich and lively details of the Dalai Lama's routine and practices of interconnectedness and compassion, we can learn how to cultivate non-anger as well as foster true forgiveness.

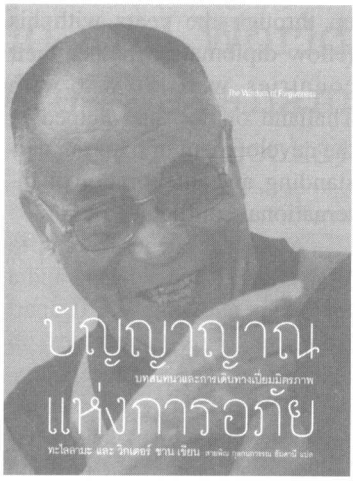
Ironically, the book is written by a Chinese author—Victor-Chan—who has become His Holiness's long-time friend and confidant for over 30 years. For this book project, Chan began interviewing His Holiness in 1999.

He had audiences, joined rituals and journeyed with the Dalai Lama to various places until he completed this book and had it published in 2004.

Chan starts his book by giving us a vivid portrait of the Dalai Lama as a charismatic leader widely admired by the media and listeners to his talks on dharma. When asked the reason for his followers'sense of deep reverence for him, the Dalai Lama replied that perhaps it was his positive thinking and feelings of being connected to others as fellow sentient beings.

The public impression of the Dalai Lama is that of a monk with a smiling visage, a playful streak and an irresistible laugh. However, he can also have sorrowful, though brief, moments. It reminds one of the ocean with waves on the surface, but deep down, the water is still, the author notes. This characteristic of the Dalai Lama is confirmed by his friend and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who expressed the view that the Dalai Lama made people around him happy to be human beings.

Chan himself has been highly impressed by the Dalai



Lama since their first encounter in 1972. Then, the author had fled from being held hostage in Kabul, Afghanistan. After his dramatic escape with other kidnapped friend, one of whom was a Tibetan Buddhist, Chan had the chance to meet the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, during which he raised the bold question, "Do you hate the Chinese?"

The then 37-year-old Dalai Lama, Chan remembered, looked at him seriously and replied "No", adding that despite the continuing abuse and exploitation, Tibetans still considered the Chinese their friends, for the cause of conflicts, was the Chinese Communist Party and that, even so, Tibetans were ever-forgiving.

That answer touched Chan's heart deeply and inspired him to learn more about Tibet.

Born and raised in Hong Kong, and being Western-educated, Chan knew very little about the country. His ideas of Tibet was shaped by kung fu novels written by Jin Yong, which painted Tibet as a land of lamas with physical prowess and long years of meditation in a hermitage. Moreover, kung fu fiction is invariably filled with stories of revenge and retribution.

Since his first audience with the Dalai Lama, Chan has taken a more scholarly interest in Tibet. He has travelled there more than a dozen times and has written several books on the "Roof of the World".

For *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*, which he co-wrote with the Dalai Lama, Chan was granted special audiences with His Holiness, which included joining in special occasions such as Tibetan rituals, and participated in the Nobel centenary festivities in Oslo. He was invited to observe His Holiness's routines and practices in his private chambers—including getting up for joint meditation sessions and prayers at 4 am.

Despite his tight routine and busy travel schedule, Chan observed, the Dalai Lama appeared ever-youthful. Chan attributed that to his meditational practices and non-attachment to emotions, especially anger.

Apart from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Chan invites us to learn the path of non-anger from other role model, too. for instance, Lopon-la, a Lhasa monk who was arrested by Chinese soldiers and tortured in jail for 20 years; Richard Moore, who was blinded at the age of 10 in a shooting incident in Belfast, Northern Ireland; and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, who had to listen to 21,000 witnesses' accounts of human rights abuses and atrocities committed during the apartheid era. The Dalai Lama himself has undergone vigorous exercises to reduce anger and hatred and to foster compassion.

One of the astonishing accounts of His Holiness's compassion, Chan writes, is his denunciation of the Chinese government on their handling of the student unrest at Tiananmen Square in 1989. At that time, China and Tibet were just about to start negotiations. However the Dalai

Lama choose the rare and significant opportunity to protect the rights and freedom of Chinese students, rather than the hopes of Tibetans

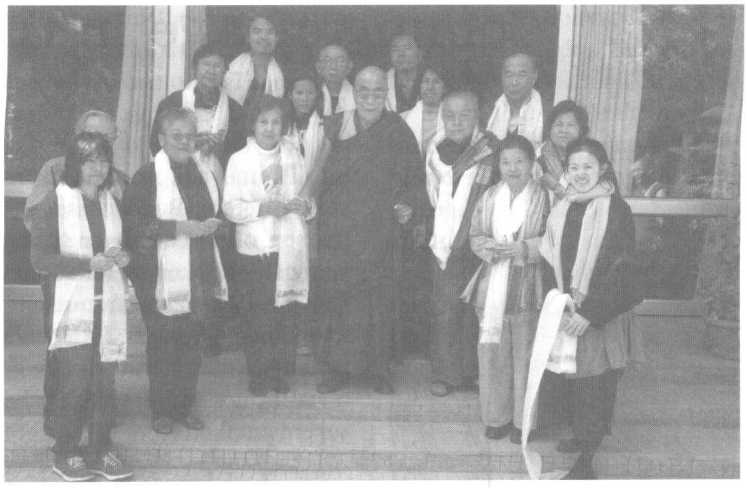
During his first trip to Europe, he mentioned very little about Tibet in his dharma talks. Instead, he talked about compassion and a good heart and collective responsobility. When he was criticised by his consultant for this, the Dalai Lama explained that the people he met in Europe had lots of problems and wished that he could help them. So, he did not feel it was right to burden them with his agenda on Tibet.

Another story of his deep compassion concerns a young blind man who had sold his house and then travelled with his aged mother through Tibet, Nepal and India to have an audience with the Dalai Lama at the Kalachakra Initiation ceremony. His Holiness saw that young man and his ailing mother among the crowed, and then walked towards and talked to them. When he learned of their plight, he ordered his medical practitioner to take care of them. Later, a Tibetan monk willed an eye to that young man. Chan was amazed by these compassionate feelings and actions.

His Holiness's meditional practices of forgiveness are based on compassion and awareness of the interconnectedness of things and his relisation of the three ultimate natures: suffering, impermanence and non-self.

The Dalai Lama started his practices according to the path of the Bodhisattava when he was 12. He practiced compassion and wisdom by cotemplating on *sunyata* (emptiness). The two practices of compassion and wisdom yield enormous merits, he said.

"The theory of interdependence allows us to develop a wider perspective. With a



broader mind comes less attachment to destructive emotions like anger, and therefore generates a more forgiving attitude," the Dalai Lama said.

In Buddhism, everything is interconnected. An action inevitably begets an effect—a postulation akin to today's theory of the butterfly effect. By understanding this truth deeply, we can understand the root of all the violence and conflicts in this world—that all of us are a part of it, more or less, one way or another. To get rid of the seeds of violence is to avoid, and heal, the violence within us.

During the last phase of his trip with the Dalai Lama, Chan went to Bodhgaya with him to take part in the Kalachakra Initiation ceremony. His Holiness was so ill that he could not preside over the ceremony. Two months later, Chan met him again, and the Dalai Lama shared with him the experience of his ailment. On his way to hospital, His Holiness witnessed many people on the streets who had no one to tend to them, unlike himself who was being cared for. Despite his suffering, the Dalai Lama took it as his spiritual teacher and learned to maintain his equanimity.

Before the last interview session with the Dalai Lama, His Holiness took a turn as the questioner. He asked Chan if he had had any spiritual transformation after all the years of conversation and journeys with him. Chan humbly replied that he believed he could be a good example to his children. At the end of the book, Chan points to the spiritual connection between the spirit and the body. According to several doctors, the Dalai Lama's heart is as healthy as that of a 20-year-old, even though he's in his seventies. Chan asserted that this was perhaps the result of his simple way of living and deep contemplation of things. Anger cannot penetrate his heart and destroy his peace of mind.

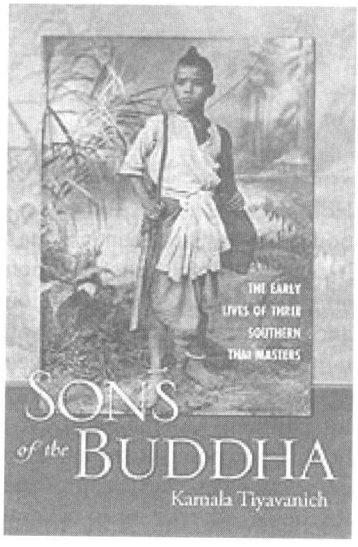
The book does not show a picture of an heroic action monk or a religious monk. It portrays a down-to-earth living being who is committed to the path of non-violence and peace, who is seriously devoted to the practices of compassion and ultimate understanding. His narrative should inspire us to follow His Holiness's footsteps, to heal our hatred and negative emotions, and to move towards happiness, peace and service to all sentient beings.

Translated from Thai into English
by Karnjariya Sukrung.
from ***Bangkok Post***, Saturday,
March 29,2008

Coming of Age in Old Siam

To be a monk or bandit? The story of three men who chose the former

Chris Baker



Sons of the Buddha: *The Early Lives of Three Southern Thai Masters by Kamala Tiyavanich Silkworm Books, 277pp, 495 baht ISBN 978-974-9511-34-3*

This book reconstructs the early lives of three famous monks. Acharn Buddhadasa became the most creative philosopher of Thai Buddhism in the modern era. Acharn Panya transformed the art of Buddhist preaching for a modern, urbanised world. Acharn Jumnien won fame as a meditation teacher and healer with an international following.

All came from southern Thailand. But their common regional roots and their shared lives in the robes are almost irrelevant to the first achievement of this remarkable book—describing childhood and growing up in a world that has now vanished.

Their backgrounds were very different. Buddhadasa was the son of a second-generation Chinese shopkeeper and poet manque. Panya came from a family of middle farmers. Jumnien's father was a former monk, traditional healer and dabbler in the supernatural arts.

The common motif of their early lives is hard work. All three seem to have begun labouring almost as soon as they could stand up. Buddhadasa helped out in his father's shop and became the family cook. Panya herded buffalo. Jumnien was his father's aide and pupil in making herbal cures. All three also spent much of their time in the hunting and gathering activities that supplemented the family's food supply. They fished, trapped insects, shot birds and gathered herbs and vegetables. From this, all three became fascinated with the intricacy of nature and troubled over the conundrum of killing other living beings in order to sustain their own lives.

For all three, their families were close but not enclosing. They learned about life from their parents, but also from a penumbra of relatives and village neighbours. As the wat was the school, hospital, social centre and even provider of entertainment for the village, it played a large role in the lives of all three children. They shuttled between the family bosom and spells as temple boys, which again meant more hard work. The monks beat some basic education into them and put them to work cleaning, painting, building, carrying and cooking—learning for a tough life. Buddhadasa and Panya both grew up in the 1910s and 1920s when modern state-controlled primary schooling was just taking root. Jumnien was born a generation later, but the schooling system had progressed little in the interim. For all three, this modern schooling was not the dominating environment of their childhood as it is for children today. Rather, it was a peripheral activity that they found awkward and unnatural. The school discipline of timetables and rules did not come easily to boys raised in the village environment and accustomed to physical labour from an early age. Buddhadasa goofed off most of the time. Panya disliked the discipline so much he went back to being a temple boy. Jumnien spent more time with his teacher father.

All three grew up fast because they had to. Jumnien's mother died and his father fell apart mentally so that by the time Jumnien's age reached double figures he was the virtual head of the family. At the age of 10 he had made his name locally as a healer, astrologer, preacher and solver of local problems. He tested himself by fighting with crocodiles and sharks. He stood up to the local bandits.

Panya had to fend for himself by the age of 15 when his father was stricken with illness. He spent time in Ranong, became a tin-miner in Phuket, did a string of odd jobs and fetched up as a schoolteacher. Buddhadasa also became the family mainstay at 16, when his father died. By the time they had passed their teenage years these three men had learned a lot about life.

All were fiercely intelligent and headstrong children. The

local saying of the time was that such lads had a choice between two fates—becoming a bandit or becoming a monk. Bandits and buffalo rustlers were a prominent part of the social landscape. For a young man with quick wits and high ambition, this direction was a natural career choice.

Yet, nudged by various preceptors, and tempted by learning, all three finally gravitated towards the robe. Buddhadasa became fascinated by the books that were sold in the family shop. He started to read the output of the novelists, social commentators and political ideologues from Bangkok and drifted from there into reading Buddhist texts. He ordained at the age of 20 with the aim of staying for the usual three months but found that the life suited him and never left.

Panya stumbled into Wat Khachon in Phuket while trying to sneak away from his fellow tin-miners who had taken him along on a brothel outing. He became the odd-job man for the wat, ordained at 18, became fascinated by reading dharma texts and did brilliantly in the Nak-tham examinations for the monkhood. He moved to Nakhon Si Thammarat and by the age of 20 had laid the grounding of his fame as a remarkable preacher. Jumnien also began reading texts in his local wat library while in his late teens, and became fascinated by the itinerant forest monks passing through his village.

At 20, when his father died, he decided to spend the rest of his life in the monkhood and gave away all of his meagre inheritance of family possessions. Kamala Tiyavanich's account of these three men's early lives is gleaned from their own autobiographical writings, from interviews and from some third-party biographies.

Unsurprisingly, their life stories, especially as they emerge from their own mouths and pens, is stamped by their aptitude as preachers and teachers. These are stories of life as lessons for the living. They tell of the importance of nature, compassion, learning and morality.

In her previous two books (Forest Collections and The Buddha in the Jungle), Kamala celebrated the forest monk tradition as a way to criticise the modern state-controlled Sangha for being over-regimented, antagonistic to learning and increasingly irrelevant to society.

Here she continues the same theme by celebrating the humanity and simplicity of three of Thailand's most effective religious teachers of the past century. These three monks came from a traditional local background but became famous for making the practice of Buddhist teaching more relevant for a changing world. In its own subtle way Kamala's book is a sermon which honours the three monks by replicating the simplicity, directness and humanism that is part of their own style.

As an intimate portrait of coming of age in old Siam, or as a subtle sermon about life and learning, this is a very lovely book.

Bangkok Post,
19 January 2008

The suffering of Cambodia has been deep.

From this suffering comes Great Compassion.

Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart.

A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person.

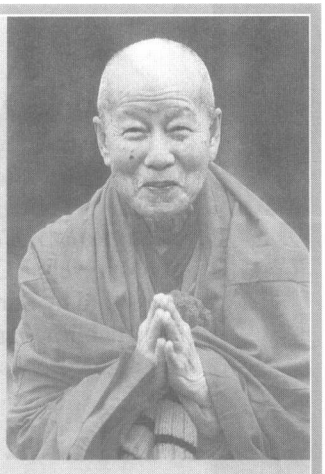
A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Family.

A Peaceful Family makes a Peaceful Community.

A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation.

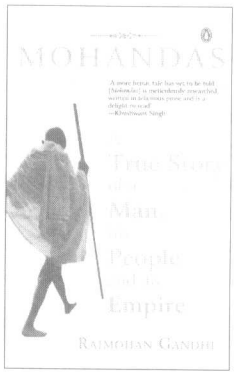
A Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World.

May all beings live in Happiness and Peace.

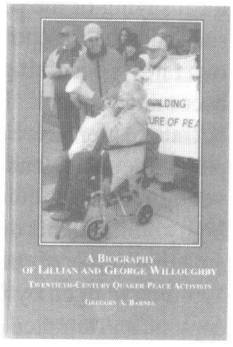


Venerable Maha Ghosananda

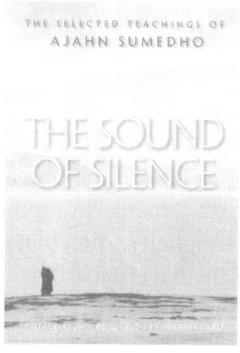
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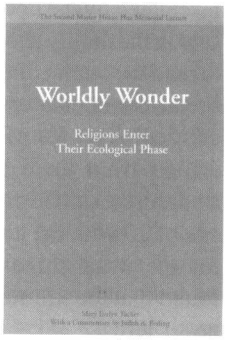
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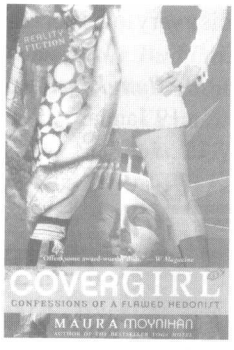
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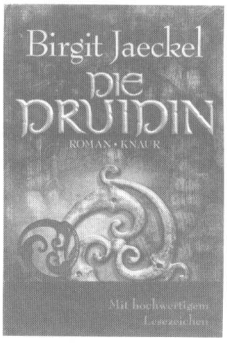
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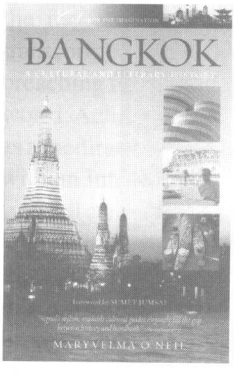
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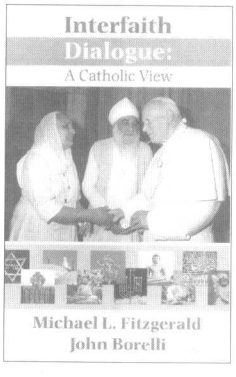
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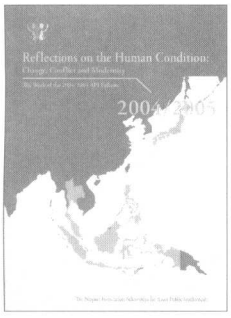
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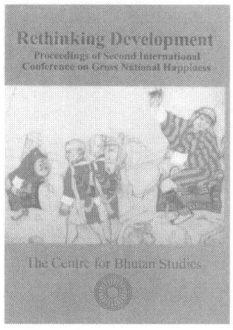
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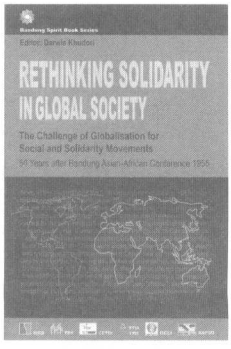
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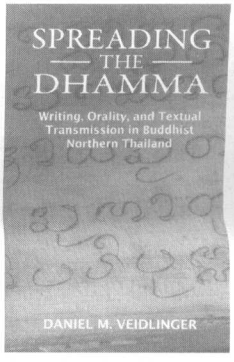
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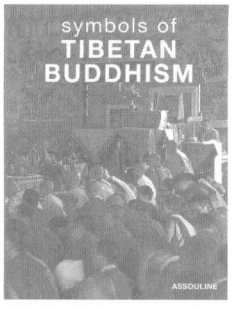
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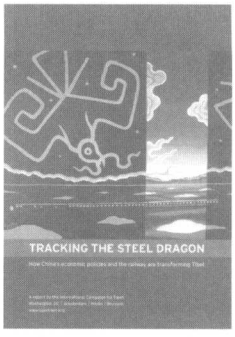
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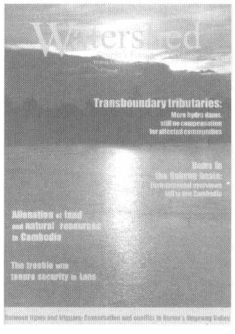
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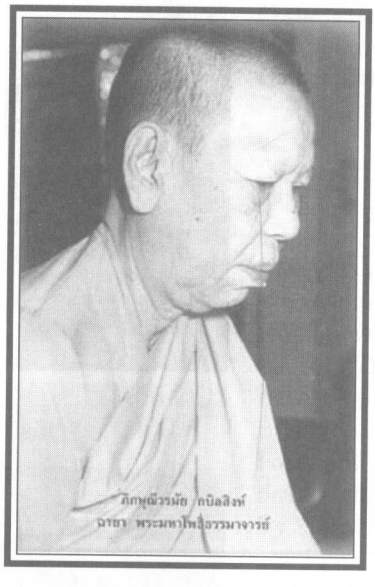


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Editor: Witoon Permpongsacharoen
Vol. 12 No. 2 March - October 2007

Centenaries of Three Siamese Commoners



Venerable Phra Dhammacetiya (Kee Marajino)
(13 March 2451 - 16 March 2522)
late abbot of Wat Thongnoppakhun,
the best Pali professor and Sangha administrator of his time.



Venerable Varamai Kabilasingha
(6 April 2451 - 24 June 2546)
first Siamese Bhikshuni ordained in Taiwan in 2514 and remained in the holy order until her death.



Mrs Supan Hemajayati
(9 April 2451 - 12 April 2525)
whose land and house were donated to the Sathirakoses - Nagapradipa Foundation, which erected a memorial building in her honour on 9 April 2551.