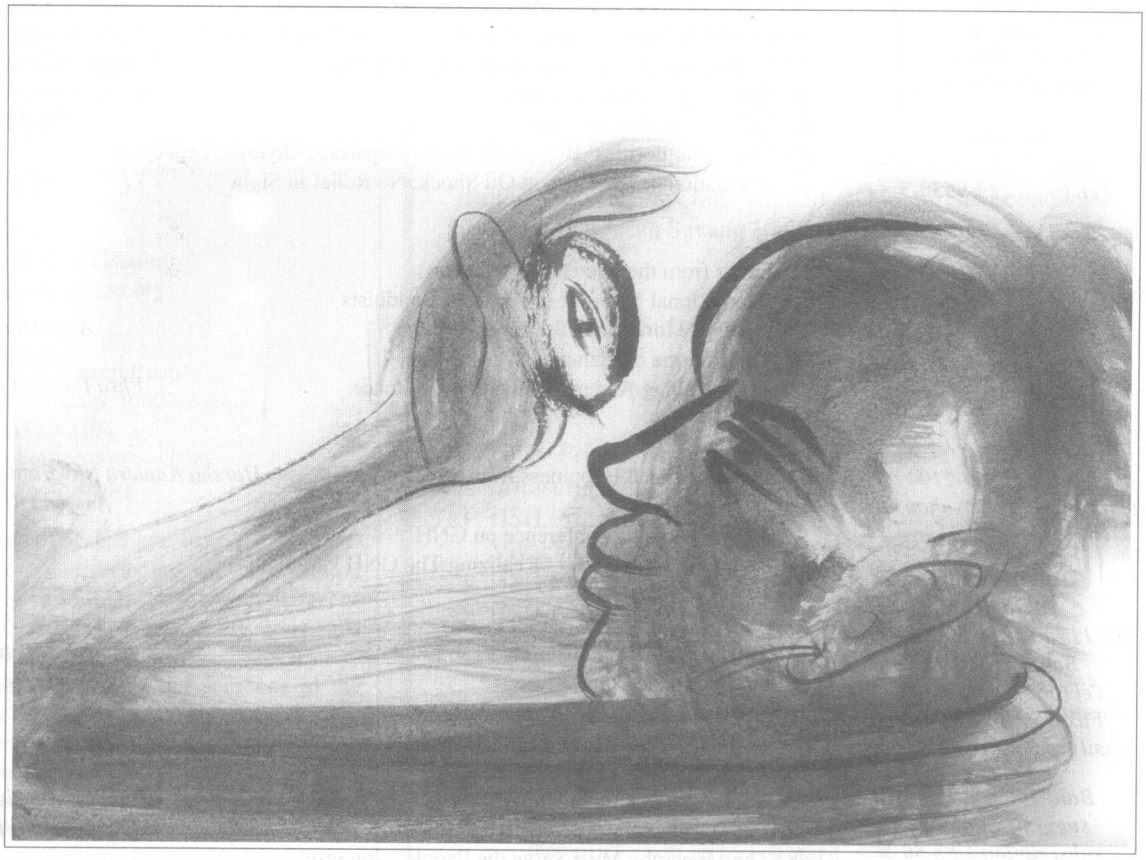
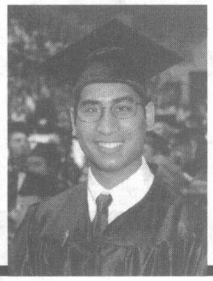
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Healing Ourselves, Healing the World



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PEACE

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The goals of INEB are to:

1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate the perspective of Engaged Buddhism regarding these problems and train Buddhist activists accordingly.
4. Serve as a clearing house of information on existing Engaged Buddhist groups.
5. Cooperate with activists from other spiritual traditions.

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Palace Law of Succession

The **1924 Palace Law of Succession** (Thai: กฎมณเฑียรบาลว่าด้วยการสืบราชสันตติวงศ์ พ.ศ. 2467) governs succession over the Throne of the Kingdom of Thailand. Established during the reign of King Vajiravudh, it attempted to systematically resolve previous succession controversies. The 1997 Constitution of Thailand relied on the law with regards to succession, but the 2006 Interim Constitution made no mention of succession, leaving it to "constitutional practice."

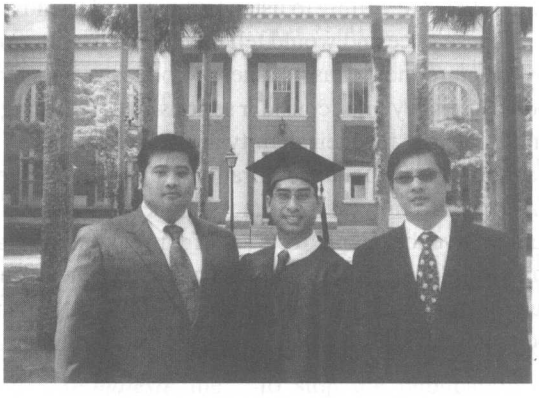
Key features
The law based on the principle of primogeniture, with first in line being the eldest son of the previous monarch and second in line being the next-oldest son, and so on. The law expressly ruled against women ascending the throne (this clause was abrogated in later constitutions).

The 1924 law specifically established the primacy of descendants of each of King Chulalongkorn's Queens: Queen Saowabha, followed by Queen Savang Vadhana, followed by Queen Sukumala.

Possible Line of Succession (January 1, 2008)

1. HRH Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn (son of Rama IX, current King)
2. HRH Prince Dipangkorn Rasmijoti (Son #1 by Princess Srirasmi)
3. HSH Prince Juthavachara (#3-#6 by former Mom Sujarinee Vivacharawongse
4. HSH Prince Vasharaesorn
5. HSH Prince Chakriwat
6. HSH Prince Vatchrawee

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



Three brothers in Florida

Editorial Notes

In Siam, we had a new constitution on 24 August 2007. This was the result of the coup d'état on 19 September 2006. The constitution was drafted by the General Assembly, which was appointed by the military junta. The military junta stepped down from power on 29 January 2008. We had a general election on 23 December 2007. The ruling party, People's Power Party, is known to be a puppet of the former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, who was toppled by the September coup. His Thai Rak Thai party was dissolved.

In fact some believe we could have removed Thaksin from power by constitutional means, but the powers-that-be seemed to prefer a military putsch. Thus far, Thais had experienced 18 coups since the beginning of the reign of King Rama IX. Indeed, the People's Alliance for Democracy was gathering in the middle of Bangkok for 33 days and nights with the average of over one hundred thousand citizens each night. There were gathering in thousands at many provincial towns too — in order to get rid of the corrupt regime at that time. ASTV broadcast the events live to those who could receive this channel, 24 hours daily all over the country and in many other countries too.

Since most members of Parliament were elected by fraud or trickery, the government has no moral legitimacy. The speaker of the House of Representative was bogged down by a corruption case and had to be removed from power — not to mention quite a number of cabinet ministers. The prime minister, Samak Sundaravej, was in fact charged for corruption when he was the elected governor of Bangkok, but the legal process in this country is so slow and the man has neither *hiri* (moral shame) nor *ottappa* (moral dread) so he is still running the country, not unlike his predecessor, but he is less clever and has no fear to tell any kind of lies, e.g. he claimed that only one person died as a result of the bloody coup of 6 October 1976 when he was minister of interior. At the time, he said there was nothing wrong to kill the people in Thammasat University since they were all Vietnamese communists!

Since 25 May 2008, the reassembled People's Alliance for Democracy has been protesting against the government. The pattern was similar to what they had done vis-à-vis the Thaksin government. Citizens joined the gathering peacefully in Bangkok and elsewhere but unfortunately thugs were used by vested interest groups especially in Udon Thani to crack down on the protestors on 24 July 2008. Characteristically, the government responded by doing nothing.

The PAD on the whole behaved well but sometimes their speakers did not tell the truth and they tended to think that they alone know the right track to real democracy. They were not tolerant of criticisms. They even exploited the people on the issue of the sacredness of the monarchy and fanned ultra-nationalism. They sometimes mixed Buddhism with superstition in a highly degraded manner.

If the PAD are willing to listen to their good friends *(kalayanamitta)* who could be their external voice of conscience and would tell them what they normally do not want to hear, they can then perhaps restructure their consciousness to be less arrogant and would really serve the people for real democracy i.e. they must consider seriously the suffering of the people up and down the country who fight nonviolently for their dignity and human rights as well as for preserving the natural environment against transnational corporations supported by the government and the powers-that-be. Then the PAD could really use the mass gathering and their television channel as a real educational medium to give the people facts and figures about local and national as well as regional suffering in the name of globalization and modernization. They could also help guide the people to overcome various forms of social suffering nonviolently. If this is the case, Siam may achieve real grassroots democracy, with seeds of peace for each and for many, if not for all.

Siam:
Thailand at the Crossroads with Lèse-Majesté

On paper, it appears clear: the Thai law code protects the king, queen, heir-apparent (and a regent when there is one) from insult, defamation, and threats. But since the 1970s, this apparent clarity has become increasingly muddled. The letter of the law seems clear, but the use of it has extended beyond protecting these three royal personages from defamation, and come to encompass the institution itself, and all of the meanings that Thais may attach to it. Thailand is now at a crossroads. One way bounds off into utter absurdity where literally anything can be interpreted as a challenge to the monarchy. The other way takes the law for what it is—a normal legal measure protecting three royal persons from insult and defamation. The widening divergence between these two paths tells the story not of just a law and its use, but says much about current Thai politics.

At a public speech in 1957, Kosai Mungjaroen said, among other things, that the present king had killed his brother. Certainly, Kosai did not have any proof to back up his words. This is a clear case of defamation—accusing someone of having committed a crime, and follows a simple schematic: Mr. A says that Mr. B did something illegal. Mr. A has no proof. Mr. A is found guilty of defamation. There were two famous cases that used poetic license, thus making this simple schematic harder to follow. In a 1975 case, Pradoem Damrongjaroen was accused of writing a poem about angels coming down to help mortal people. It just so happens that the king and queen were deeply involved in providing aid to hilltribe people, arriving with various forms of aid in helicopters. The prosecution tried to make the case that the poem referred to the royalty. One of the contentions surrounded the question of sheep. The poem referred to sheep. Had the king given sheep to the mountain people? If yes, then by inference Pradoem was guilty. The Schematic: Mr. A says in a poem that angels coming down to help mortals are not really helping. Mr. C, a prosecutor, says that Mr. A was really referring to Mr. B. Mr. C must find a connection between the words of Mr. A and the activities of Mr. B. In this case, the prosecution failed to convincingly make the connection, and Pradoem was acquitted.

In a 1988 case, Wira Musikapong said in a campaign speech that if he could choose, he'd choose to be born in a palace and be Prince Wira. He could then stay out of the hot sun and lounge around. Here, Mr. A said that he'd choose to be in an invented reality if he could. If that invented reality can be shown to refer to a real reality in which Mr. B inhabits, then Mr. A's words about having it easy refer to Mr. B alleged real situation. Therefore, Mr. A's invented reality where he could take it easy refers to Mr. B's situation, implying that Mr. B is lazy. This is where it *lèse-majesté* goes beyond defamation, though. Is it defamatory to purport that someone else has it easy or is lazy? Not normally, but in cases of *lèse-majesté*, the actual truth of the allegation cannot be considered. In any case, Wira was found guilty.

Since then, there has been increasing distance between what is said and any direct reference to the king, queen, or heir-apparent. There is the 1996 near-case of Ya Mo in Khorat. A MA thesis that purported Ya Mo to be "constructed" inferred, in the minds of the tens of thousands who protested against the author, that Ya Mo was a myth. Rama III gave a royal title to Ya Mo. Only an insane king would give a title to a myth, an insult to an ancestor of the present king. Therefore, to say Ya Mo is a myth is *lèse-majesté*.

That didn't become a case, although the next did. In election campaigning, a candidate for the Democrat Party distributed stickers, one quoting the king—"The King said 'The richer people are, the more they cheat,'" and "Corrupt people will be cursed"—and the queen—"The Queen said 'Poverty is no disgrace while evil and fraud are disgusting and shameful'." Not only do these words not refer to the royalty, they are words of the royalty themselves. Nonetheless, the police had to check and see if the quotes distorted the words of the king and queen. The case was ultimately dropped in 2006.

This brings us up to 2006 and nine recent cases, evaluating each in terms of how direct the reference was to the persons of the king, queen, or heir apparent.

1. *Direct Reference*: Efforts by the Thai government to pressure Yale University Press failed to stop the publication of *The King Never Smiles* by Paul

Handley. Legal action against Handley, such as suing him for libel in the US, would no doubt have increased the exposure of the book and brought increased focus on a number of troubling questions surrounding the monarchy. The Thai government has instead tried to ban not just the book from Thai bookstores, but also any books that make reference to Handley's book, such as the cases of Giles Ungpakorn of Chulalongkorn University and the social critic Sulak Sivaraksa.

2. *Mostly Indirect Reference*: Sulak Sivaraksa and the editor of the publication, *Fah Diew Kan*, Thanapol Eawsakul, were charged for distributing comments made by Sulak in an October 2005 interview. The main thrust of the article, "Having A Monarchy Is Less Costly Than A Presidency," was that the monarchy, and related entities, such as the Crown Property Bureau, should be subject to public scrutiny and criticism. Police have said the case is closed, although neither of the principals received documentation.

3. *Indirect Reference*: Silapakorn University Professor Boonsong Chaisingkananont's examination questions 8 and 6 came under attack as *lèse-majesté*—"Do you think the monarchy is necessary for Thai society? How should it adapt to a democratic system? Please debate," and "How does the yellow shirt fever reflect problems in Thai society? Are they problems that need to be tackled? If so, how?" At one point, police were reportedly seeking student answers to these questions as well, violating the confidentiality between teachers and students, and alarming students about what might happen to them if their answers were "wrong." Police reportedly dropped the case, though again, there was no official notification.

4. *Both Direct and Indirect*: Both *Fah Diew Kan* and the web newspaper *Prachathai* are dedicated to the right of free speech. In 2008, both came under attack for comments made by visitors to their websites. In April, a man from Khon Kaen, claiming he could stand it no longer, submitted a request with the police to have the websites closed down, an action backed by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the Democrat Party.

5. *Indirect?*: In 1978, a student was found guilty of *lèse-majestè* for not showing respect when the royal anthem was played. In September 2007, Chotisak Oonsoong and his friend refused to stand up for the playing of the royal anthem in a movie theatre. Formal charges were placed against the two in April 2008. Police documents show that Chotisak said, "Why must I stand up? There's no law forcing me to." This case goes to the core of the question about the *lèse-majesté* law. Does the law protect the persons of the king, queen, heir apparent, or does it protect the institution of the monarchy and all of its accompaniments such as the royal anthem? Is it an insult to the monarchy or to the king not to stand? Or is it, as Chotisak contends, that Thais should have the right to think differently? Is it an insult to the king to express republican sentiments?

6. *Indirect*: Jakrapob Penkair, former government spokesperson, made a speech at the Foreign Correspondents Club in Bangkok in September of 2007 entitled, "Democracy and the Patronage System of Thailand." It is a fairly academic critique that argues that at least *this* form of constitutional monarchy is antithetical to democracy. The exact items that allegedly constitute *lèse-majesté* are not readily apparent. A lot has to be read into his words to come out with a clear critique of the monarchy. The police relied on a Chulalongkorn teacher, Anan Lao-lertworakul, to uncover the true meaning of Jakrapob's words. The result was a report, "Decipher a secret code: a dangerous attitude of Jakrapob Penkair"—proving in a sense that it took some work to make Jakrapob's words *lèse-majesté*. This case shows that even when there is no defamation or insult of the king, queen, or heir-apparent, certain words, as the letter of the law becomes applied to the institution of the monarchy itself, can still be adjudged as *lèse-majesté*. It may have even been his criticism of Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda, who is not covered by the law. Nonetheless, the connection can be seen from a reporter's question to Jakrapob: "Do you think a privy councillor is part of a monarch's surroundings?"

7. *Very Indirect*: As focus intensified on Jakrapob, police began looking into the record of the BBC's Thailand correspondent, Jonathan Head, who chaired the session in December 2007 called, "Coups, Capital and Crown." The investigating policeman noted that Head had interviewed Thaksin Shinawatra and posted several stories on the monarchy on the BBC website (which also had a picture of the king *under* that of Thaksin). He concluded that there was "some conspiracy" to the whole matter, between Thaksin and the BBC.

8. *Hopelessly Indirect*: July

of this year saw what surely must be one of the most absurdly indirect *lèse-majesté* cases on record. PAD leader Somkiat Pongbaiboon was charged for "making improper comments about Rachawinit Secondary School, which is located on a land plot donated by His Majesty the King and has the emblem that contains the royal insignia." In response to the school's teachers calling for PAD to move their rallies elsewhere, "Somkiat allegedly said the teachers could be Cambodians and the school could have belonged to Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen." In other words, to attack a school whose land was donated by the king is a form of *lèse-majesté*. When Somkiat then said "the school could have belonged" to Cambodia, his infraction was even greater, given that the land had been the king's.

9. *Intensely Direct*: In late July of this year, Daranee Charnchoengsilpakul (better known as Da Torpedo), an anti-PAD activist, allegedly spoke so harshly against the monarchy that no newspaper has dared to reveal even a hint of what she said. Some accounts have said she accused the queen of criminal acts and threatened her. That's serious enough, but even greater is the response of the crowd listening to Daranee. In the 1988 Wira case, the police noted that people cheered to what turned out later to be *lèse-majesté*. The prosecutors in the case dismissed the phenomenon by implicating the entire population of Buriram province, where Wira was speaking, as a bunch of commies. Deputy editor-in-chief of the *Bangkok Post*, Veera Prateepchaikul, wrote, "It was unthinkable that the audience was not offended by her offensive remarks. They just cheered her on and clapped their hands in joy." Yes, it is unthinkable because it goes to the very core of the *lèse-majesté* charge. All Thais love their king, we are always told. As such, they serve as the standard of what constitutes *lèse-majesté*. But what if some Thais cheer at the thought of violence being done to the royals? It simply cannot be. They must be traitors, which Veera implies. His solution? Have the police be even more vigilant of *lèse-majesté*. Arrest quickly.

In these nine cases, we see a few direct references to the king, queen, or heir-apparent. Most are indirect but more refer to what many feel should be fair game: Privy Councillors, the Crown Property Bureau, the social and political system—or fair practices—good exam questions for students, the right to think differently, and the right to freedom of information. Ultimately, there needs to be debate in Thai society about what the *lèse-majesté* law really means. Is there a possible Thailand that allows people to think differently? Does there always have to be a witch hunt for "the enemy"? In the charge sheet against Jakrapob, the police point out that when asked about Thaksin's loyalty to the throne, Jakrapob said Thaksin had "some." This was the moment that all became clear to the investigating officer. "Only one sentence can explain it; all his intensions in saying other things were excuses" that obscured the real crime of Jakrapob: "...people who have studied English or foreigners, even ordinary Thai children who study English in primary school can tell you that 'some loyalty' means 'partial loyalty' not 100 per cent. In considering what Jakrapob said, you have to think about his attitude, and the attitude of the people behind him, towards the institution." It is all or nothing. Thais must be monarchists. To not be a monarchist is to be against the throne, and to be against the throne is not to be Thai.

Thailand has finally come to the crossroads. It can continue down this road of madness, allowing the *lèse-majesté* law to consume everything, and probably end up destroying the institution by creating intolerable demands of authoritarian loyalty. There were clear indications that promoters of this path acted in force last October by attempting to expand those covered by the *lèse-majesté* law—royal children and privy councilors—and to codify heresy to ensure a strict state-sponsored interpretation of Buddhism.

Or Thailand can begin an open and frank decision about what the *lèse-majesté* law really covers. If the monarchy as an institution is protected, then the law should be revised to reflect it. If not, then it seems that the sometimes outrageous uses of the law should be strictly limited to protecting the king, queen, and heir apparent. Rather than thinking that "protecting" means "silencing," perhaps the idea of "protecting" needs to be rethought. Instead of calling for repression when faced with criticism of the monarchy, perhaps Thailand should do as other constitutional monarchies in the world: counter criticism of the monarchy by arguing its merits.

David Streckfuss

Cambodia/Siam:
Historian Pessimistic over Temple Crisis

Southeast Asian studies expert, historian and former rector of Thammasat University Charnvit Kasetsiri talks to *The Nation's* Pravit Rojanaphruk about the feud between Thailand and Cambodia over Preah Vihear Temple that is threatening to turn ugly. Excerpts:

What do you think of the sudden frenzy of ultra-nationalistic feeling among Thais over the past weeks?

I see it as a very sad case. It's a reversal of the development wheel which turned the [Indo-China] battlefield into a market place and looks very dangerous. The second observation is that on one hand it is escalating into a serious conflict between Thailand and Cambodia and on the other hand it's worsening Thai domestic politics, which is already complicated. It might be the last straw before a calamity.

What calamity are you referring to?

Calamity in the sense that society is coming to the end of an era. Strange enough, considering that Preah Vihear and Phanom Rung, which was recently vandalised, are both involved. [Hindu God] Shiva would dance the dance of destruction and destroy everything. Vishnu would spring out of a lotus with Brahma the God of creation in there and Brahma would recreate a new order. I think it symbolises the end of an era. Preah Vihear is a black hole and a lot of people will go up there and fall down the Mor E-Daeng cliff.

Isn't it surprising to you that many Thai protesters may have never visited the temple or even paid any interest to its history?

For politicians and de facto politicians, they discovered that Preah Vihear is very useful and effective because most people from the generations who are now in their 50s to 80s grew up under an intense nationalistic campaign [by Thai state] of the 1940s to the 70s. That's why the issue is so effective.

When we lost Preah Vihear in 1962, people in more than 50 provinces staged protests and contributed one baht each.

They were made to believe that Thailand would win the case [at the World Court] 300 per cent. That's why it was a shock for the Thai public.

So it's a psychological problem and a wounded history and that's why it can ignite right away. We don't listen to any reasoning or any explanation at all. We don't even think that King Chulalongkorn agreed with France in 1904 and 1907 to trade Siem Reap, Preah Vihear and other areas for what today is the central eastern provinces of Thailand. We don't look back at that part of history anymore. This year Trat province is celebrating its 101st year of its return to Thailand.

Some are saying the issue, fuelled by the People's Alliance for Democracy, is bringing out the worse in Thai nationalistic sentiment. Do you see any difference between patriotism and ultra-nationalism?

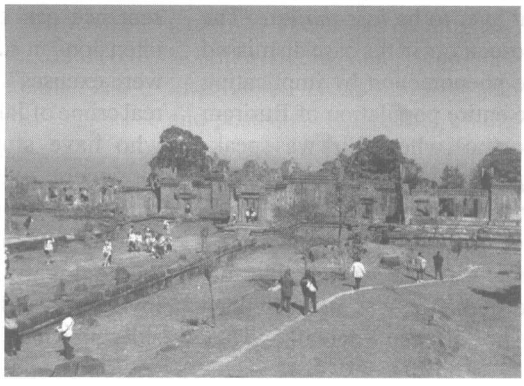
In Thai I use the expressions *rak chart* [love for one's country] and *klang chart* [infatuated about one's nation]. Love is a good thing but madness is no good. Madness leads us into all kinds of trouble and we'll go down the black hole. The current frenzy has nothing to do with local people in Si Sa Ket province [where Preah Vihear is situated on the border]. This is a very urban nationalism.

Any advice to the Samak Sundaravej administration or the anti-government PAD?

Well, I don't know. I'm very pessimistic. I see almost no way out. I have suggested that we should get the two governments to sit and create a peace land there—no-man's land.

[As for the PAD] I don't think they will listen to me. I think the situation is hopeless. They are burning down the forest just to get rid of one big [political] rat.

Pravit Rojanaphruk,
The Nation, 25 July 2008



Siam:
Protect Opposition Rallies From Attack

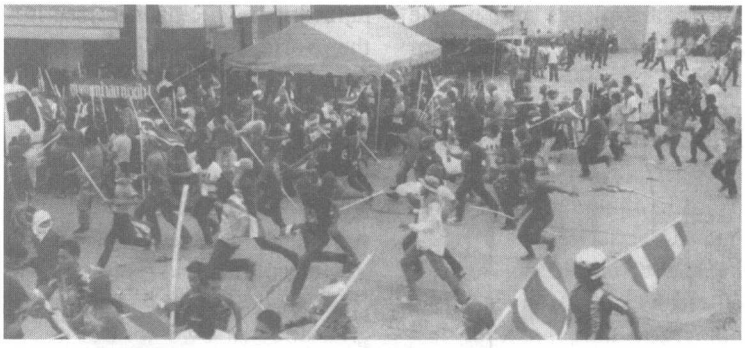
Investigate Violence by Pro-Government Groups
(***New York***, July 26, 2008)

Thai authorities should ensure that opposition political rallies are protected from attack by pro-government groups, Human Rights Watch said today.

Since late May 2008, pro-government groups have attacked about a dozen rallies across Thailand organized by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), a coalition of groups critical of the government. On July 24, 2008, in the most serious incident to date, police stood by while pro-government thugs beat and critically injured at least 13 PAD supporters and destroyed public property at a rally in Udorn Thani province.

"Thai authorities have failed to protect their citizens' basic right to peaceful assembly," said Elaine Pearson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "By allowing pro-government thugs free rein to unleash violence, the authorities are putting Thailand's fragile democracy at risk. Officials should investigate these attacks and hold to account those responsible for the violence, as well as any officials who failed to stop it."

On July 24, Kwanchai Praipana and Uthai Saenkaew, the younger brother of Agriculture Minister Theerachai Saenkaew, led some 1,000 members of the pro-government Khon Rak Udorn Club to forcibly break up a peaceful rally of about 200 PAD supporters at Nong Prajak public park in Muang district,



Udorn Thani province. Local radio station FM 97.5 reportedly urged pro-government supporters to carry out violence against the rally. Pro-government supporters were armed with swords, axes, knives, iron clubs, wooden clubs, and slingshots.

News footage and eyewitness accounts show that local authorities made no effort to stop the violence. Some 500 police and district defense volunteers at the rally did not try to perform their duties — even when thugs beat PAD supporters nearly to death right in front of them. And they made no attempt to arrest those who destroyed property at the rally.

Since May 25, tens of thousands of people have joined the PAD in rallies in Bangkok and across the country to express opposition for the administration of Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej. The PAD has accused the government of corruption, abuse of power, and being unpatriotic, among other criticisms. Although the PAD often uses strong language to criticize the government and has staged lengthy roadblocks in Bangkok, most of its activities have been peaceful. On June 20, PAD supporters tried to force their way through police barricades to seize the Government House where Cabinet sits.

At least on 11 occasions in Bangkok, Udorn Thani, Sakol Nakhon, Chiang Mai, Sri Saket, Chiang Rai, Mahasarakham, and Buriram provinces, pro-government groups that are often associated with members of parliament from the ruling party have attacked PAD supporters, causing scores of injuries and damaging public property. In one instance, at a PAD rally in Mahasarakham province on July 23, former senator Karun Sai-Ngarm was on the stage when he was hit in the face with a marble from a slingshot and had to be rushed to hospital.

To date Thai authorities have failed to take action against those responsible for the attacks. In some cases, local police and provincial governors have promised to investigate the attacks and arrest those responsible but there is no evidence that this has occurred.

"The government of Prime Minister Samak should uphold the right to peaceful assembly as a basic component of democracy guaranteed in the Thai Constitution," said Pearson.

Human Rights Watch

Burma:
Why Burma Matters?

There are places and people who suffer sorrow on top of sorrow. I am thinking of Burma. Forty-six of military dictators have replaced abundance with desperate poverty. Using weapons of fear and brutality, the junta has treated Burma's people like so much old furniture, broken and discarded. The inspiring democracy movement of last September and October has been crushed...for now. Prisons are full, and monasteries, where red-robed monks bravely conspired to oppose the regime, remain empty with military vehicles blocking their front gates. And then Cyclone Nargis, a storm whose like had never before come to Burma, cut across the Irrawaddy Delta, killing at least 130,000, with tens of thousands still unaccounted for, and 1.4 million in urgent need of food, medicine and shelter. Sorrow on top of sorrow, insult piled on insult. And now Burma, with all its urgencies and emergencies, is again fading from the headlines.

Why such tragedies have happened is beyond me. I have studied Burmese history and have stretched my notions of karma. The SPDC junta (State Peace and Development Council) bears a central responsibility, of course. In the cyclone's aftermath, it held the world's best intentions at arm's length, allowing tens of thousands of Burmese to perish needlessly. All along, the junta has suppressed democracy, undeveloped agriculture, traded Burma's natural resources for weapons, murdered, imprisoned, and brutalized its own citizens. I see it, the world sees it...I just can't comprehend such calculated neglect.

But my question turns inward. As a western Buddhist, what is my connection to Burma, what is my responsibility? Three points come quickly to mind. First is the bottomless debt of gratitude we owe to Burmese teachers who worked so hard to bring us the dhamma. Even though I am of the Zen persuasion, I bow to our Burmese teachers, at once so peaceful and passionate: Sayagi U Ba Khin, S.N. Goenka, Mahasi Sayadaw, Sayadaw U Pandita, Rina Sircar, U Lakkhana, Sayadaw U Silananda, and others. These wise men and women poured their hearts into us, that we might become vessels of the dhamma, transmitting ancient teachings of peace and awakening to future generations in the west. They had no trouble finding good students in Burma, but they understood that we needed their help here in the West, where we risked being consumed by our own materialism. So they responded. We can repay this debt by making the dhamma our own, finding forms that fit our culture, honoring our Burmese teachers. We can also repay them by keeping Burma in our mind's eye, offering material aid wherever and however we can. We reach out to Burma as our Burmese elders reached out to us. This is just and proper.

The second point is compassion. 2.4 million people have been displaced by Cyclone Nargis. Here in the U.S. we remember the impact of Katrina in late 2005, tearing through the Gulf Coast much as Nargis attacked the Irrawaddy. Donations to Katrina victims from the international community—including poor Asian nations like Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Cambodia — were humbling given the wealth of America. But this is the essence of generosity, *dana*: just responding appropriately to need as it arises.

While the U.S. government, and other well-intentioned countries and international agencies were effectively blocked from delivering aid, thousands of individuals in the U.S. continue to give millions of dollars of aid to the cyclone's victims. Grassroots organizations here are creatively linked with Burmese in-country, who are better able to get into the flood-torn communities, carrying food, water, clothing, and medicine to people who had little to begin with and have now lost everything. Sayadaw U Pandita wrote, "Compassion must lead to action. Furthermore, wisdom is required so that action may bear useful fruit." This is compassion in action.

My third point is a matter of speculation on which intelligent people might disagree. Weather patterns around the globe are changing radically. Tropical seas are quickly warming. High altitude jet streams are shifting. In the U.S. we have had a season of unprecedented floods and tornados. Cyclone Nargis is part of this pattern. A U.S.-based meteorologist called Nargis, "...one of those once-in-every-500-years kind of things."

The Centre for Science and

Environment, a respected Indian environmental monitoring group, sees Cyclone Nargis as an effect of global warming, a sign of things to come. Sunita Narain of CSE said "The victims of these cyclones are climate change victims, and their plight should remind the rich world that it is doing too little to contain its greenhouse gas emissions." He added that large-scale polluters bear responsibility for what is happening in Burma.

If this is true, then our connection to Burma runs deeper than appreciation and compassion. It is a matter of dependent origination — "because there is this, that arises" — cause and effect. Could it be that the cyclone's devastation arises from developing nations' voracious addiction to fossil fuels, which causes global warming, rising sea levels, and new weather patterns? Along with global warming, could it be that China, India, Thailand, and the west's hunger for Burma's oil and natural gas is precisely what allows Burma's generals the economic leverage to stay in power? If our national habits of consumption contribute to Burma's hardships, then what are we to do?

Here are a few suggestions:

- Remember the suffering of Burma in your practice. This might include special services, *metta* practices, and dedicated periods of meditation.
- Make a donation to an organization (*see below*) supporting cyclone victims, political prisoners, and exiles.
- Join with the All Burma Monks Alliance and the International Burmese Monks Organization and other activists inside and outside Burma to urge the UN Security Council to act: allowing free delivery of necessary aid and supplies to all those affected by the cyclone; freeing Aung San Suu Kyi, and all those locked away in Burma's prisons; urging the SPDC to engage in dialogue about the present and future wellbeing of Burma with representatives of the National League for Democracy. We can contact our elected representatives with these concerns; we can write directly to UN Secretary General Ban Ki- moon <inquiries @un.org>.



These are a few things we can do. You may have more ideas of how to help Burma's people. If so, please share them with friends and sangha. Like the Burmese, dedicated to a path of political and spiritual liberation for so many years, we have to take the long view. In some translations, the practice of right mindfulness, *samma sati*, is seen as "right recollection." So, because we are bound up with the fate of Burma, we remember her day by day. And with our friends, half a world away we have to cultivate *khanti*, the perfection of patience—bearing the unbearable, until Burma emerges from its long life among nations in the shadow.

Hozan Alan Senauke
7.08

Hozan Alan Senauke is vice-abbot of Berkeley Zen Center in California, where he lives with his family. Recently Alan founded the Clear View Project, developing Buddhist-based resources for relief and social change. In another realm, Alan has been a student and performer of American traditional music for forty-five years. Donations for Burma relief are still urgently needed. Tax-deductible gifts can be made through the BPF/Clear View Project (see www.clearviewproject.org/) or through the Foundation for the People of Burma (see www.foundationburma.org/).

USA:
From JFK to Obama: Shared Service to "the Triple Evils That Are Interrelated"

In completing a recent book on the Barack Obama phenomenon, I found much to dispute in the Obama campaign's description and marketing of the junior U.S. Senator from Illinois. Among the more dubious aspects of his biography and "branding" that I criticize and expose as deceptions are his claims to: come from a disadvantaged and alienated background; to be "from the South Side of Chicago;" have been conceived as a result of the early victories of the Civil Rights movement; have been consistently against the Iraq War from the beginning; represent a popular challenge to big money and corporate control of American politics and policy; "transcend race;" lack an ideology; and embody the spirit and lessons of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr..

The Obama portrayed in my study is an openly (for those able and willing to look beneath the marketing campaign) imperial and corporate-neoliberal symbol and agent of business rule, Superpower hegemony, and racial accommodation and denial. Obama, I show, has consistently lined up on the conservative, that is, power-friendly side of each of what Dr. King called "the triple evils that are interrelated": racism (deeply and institutionally understood), economic exploitation (capitalism), and U.S. militarism.

It's all very consistent with mainstream journalist Ryan Lizza's statement at the end of a recent New Yorker article on Obama's early political career in Chicago: "Perhaps the greatest misconception about Barack Obama," Lizza notes, "is that he is some sort of anti-establishment revolutionary. Rather, every stage of his political career has been marked by an eagerness to accommodate himself to existing institutions rather than tear them down or replace them" [Ryan Lizza, "Making It: How Chicago Shaped Obama," ***The New Yorker***, July 21, 2008]. (Revealingly enough, this does not stop Lizza from saying that Obama is "ideologically a man of the left.")

One aspect of the Obama mystique I do NOT question, however, is the Obama campaign's effort, largely successful, to link its candidate to the record and "Camelot" legacy of John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK). It's a reasonable linkage, I think, but not for admirable reasons. Besides also being a relatively young, agile, telegenic, and articulate, Harvard-educated U.S. Senator with little record of substantive policy accomplishment and taste for lofty and outwardly idealistic, JFK inhabited much the same power-serving faux-progressive ideological space in his time as Obama does today. Also worshipped by many liberals and enjoying a strong following with academics and intellectuals, the proto-neoliberal President Kennedy spent much of his time on the cunning, right (starboard), and power-serving side of King's "triple evils." This hardly prevented him from being adored as a man of peace and justice by millions at home and abroad — something worth recalling as Obama embarks on his explicitly Kennedy-esque tour of Europe and the Middle East and as preparations continue for Obama to accept his presidential nomination before 70,000 plus chanting fans in a mile-high football stadium that will have to suffice since Mount Sinai is unavailable.

CLASS: "IN THE SERVICE OF CORPORATE CAPITALISM"

Take JFK and economic injustice, the second of King's "triple evils." More than a decade before officially neoliberal Democrats emerged to explicitly steer the Democratic Party to the corporate center, JFK's frequently declared sympathies for the poor and working class took a back seat in his White house to what political scientist and Kennedy chronicler Bruce Miroff called "the real determinants of policy: political calculation and economic doctrine." As Mirroff noted in his brilliant and largely forgotten study ***Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy*** (New York: Longman's, 1976), "political calculation led Kennedy to appease the corporate giants and their allies in government. Economic doctrine told him that the key to the expansion and health of the economy was the health and expansion of those same corporate giants. The architects of Kennedy's 'New Economics' liked to portray it as the technically sophisticated and politically neutral management of a modern industrial economy. It is more accurately portrayed as a pragmatic liberalism in the

service of corporate capitalism." (Miroff, p. 168).

Numerous Kennedy administration economic programs followed closely along lines that favored and had already been marked out by the corporate sector. As Miroff noted:

"His wage guidelines, and other efforts at terminating labor-management conflict over the distribution of income, fit neatly with business's longstanding objective of holding wage costs steady. His liberalization of depreciation allowances furnished business with a tax break which it had sought unsuccessfully from the Eisenhower administration. His proposed reduction in corporate income and personal income taxes in the higher brackets approached tax reductions earlier proposed by the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Corporate executives may not have had Kennedy's ear, but the functional result was not so different than if they had. Economic doctrine and political calculation were enough to make him respond more often to business desires than to those of the economic constituencies that actually supported him."

The Kennedy administration's "economic growth" policies conferred significantly greater advantage on the affluent than they did to working-, middle- and lower-class Americans. Seen against the backdrop of JFK's frequently expressed empathy for America's underdogs, his administration's record on economic equity was less than progressive. The regressive nature of his "New Economics' was cloaked by his recurrent, much-publicized spats with certain members of the business community (the executives of U.S. Steel above all), his repeated statements of concern for labor and the poor, and his claim to advance a purely "technical" and "pragmatic" economic agenda that elevated "practical management" and administrative expertise above the "grand warfare of ideologies" (Miroff, pp. 182-183, 217-218). It was for doctrinal as well as for emotional and calculated political reasons that many of the early proponents of what later came to be known as the Democratic neoliberals (e.g. Senators Gary Hart and Bill Bradley, Governors Bruce Babbit, James Hunt, Richard Lamm, and Bill Clinton, Congressmen Al Gore and Timothy Wirth) made JFK their inspiring role model (see Randall Rothenburg, ***The Neoliberals: Creating the New American Politics*** [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984]).

Consistent with the JFK legacy on class, "Obamanomics" has been business-neoliberal from the start. The Wall Street-sponsored Obama appointed the pro-corporate Democratic Leadership Council and University of Chicago economist Austan Goolsbee (the fellow who told Canadian diplomats to discount Obama's "campaign rhetoric" against the North American Free Trade Agreement) as his chief economic adviser during the primary campaign. "Obama, Inc." has brought in the Wal-Mart-applauding economist Jason Furman from the corporatist and aptly named Hamilton Group to serve as his economic policy director. Obama's health care, economic stimulus and mortgage/foreclosure crisis proposals have all been positioned to the right of those of John Edwards and even the centrist Hillary Clinton, not to mention Dennis Kucinich, the only actually Left candidate in the primaries, And just like JFK, Obama has falsely sold this conservative economic agenda as a form of a neutral "get things done" pragmatism emphasizing "technical expertise" over and beyond mere "ideology."

RACE: CAUCASIAN-FRIENDLY CAUTION AND CALCULATION

JFK inhabited the same centrist, cautious, cunning, and "pragmatic" place on race, the first of King's triple evils. He found it politically useful to intervene on Dr. Martin Luther King's behalf during the latter's jailing in the election year of 1960 and, later, to wrap himself in the aura of racial progress and equality by offering some partial and belated federal protections to participants in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). But the Kennedy administration worked hard to discourage, dilute, and divert the CRM and gave some elementary shelter to activists and southern blacks only when Jack and (his youthful brother and Attorney General) Bobby Kennedy calculated that rabid white southern reaction was undermining their ability to sell America's capitalist and imperial concept of "democracy" in the non-white Third World. Along the way, the Kennedy brothers were inordinately obsessed with alleged Communist connections to King and the CRM.

Subsequent "Mississippi Burning" iconography and revisionism aside, Kennedy was no great friend of the struggle for black equality during the late 1950s and early 1960s. His response to the movement was dominated by the tension between two competing calculations of political pragmatism: (i) the threat of politically alienating white Americans (especially traditionally Democratic white Southerners; (ii) the risk of losing

Third World hearts and minds in the supposed U.S. struggle to advance "freedom and democracy" (falsely conflated with capitalism and subjugation to U.S. influence) against supposed Soviet-sponsored "communism" (national independence and social justice in the "developing world"). The actual lives and struggles of black Americans were not an especially relevant consideration in the Kennedy administration's behavior. When southern racist authorities managed to defeat the black struggle for equality without excessive televised bloodshed and bitterness, as in Albany Georgia, JFK was more than happy to withhold support for the CRM.

Walking in JFK's cautious and calculating footsteps on race, the technically black Obama has been careful to distance himself from the fact and claim that racial oppression and white supremacy continue to pose steep barriers to black advancement and racial equality in the U.S. He talks about the racism that stokes the fires of living black anger as if it was merely a troubling overhang from the past (Rev. Jeremiah Wright's ancient era). Obama advances no relevant or explicit policy agenda to take on the deeply entrenched institutional racism that lives on beneath white America's readiness to elect a president who is "black but not like Jesse." He has made numerous speeches and comments suggesting the black Americans are personally and culturally responsible for their disproportionate presence at the bottom of the nation's steep socioeconomic and institutional hierarchies. He has failed to link himself strongly to contemporary Civil Rights struggles around the small-town southern white prosecution of the "Jena 7" and the monstrous 50-shot New York City police murder of Sean Bell. Obama responded to the exoneration of Bell's killers with a terse statement lecturing black New Yorkers on the need to respect "the rule of law." Such behavior has provoked the understandable ire of Reverend Jackson, whose psycho-sexualized revenge fantasies are music to the politically pragmatic ears of Obama's handlers in the "post-Civil Rights era"-when racism is officially over.

EMPIRE: "THE AMERICAN MOMENT MUST BE SEIZED ANEW"

JFK's foreign policy record is militantly imperial and militarist, contrary to his subsequent hagiographers' laughable efforts to re-invent him as some sort of Sixties peacenik. That record includes the Kennedy administration's decision to dramatically and dangerously escalate the international arms race after Kennedy campaigned on the deceptive claim that the U.S. was on the wrong side of a mythical Soviet-American "missile gap." Kennedy's nuclear machismo helped bring the world to the brink of annihilation on at least two occasions.

Referring arrogantly to the U.S. as "watchtower on the walls of [global] freedom," JFK undertook numerous provocative actions meant to overthrow the popular revolutionary government of Cuba. He supported numerous Latin-American dictatorships and oligarchies in the name of "progress" and "democracy." He "raised the level of [U.S.] attack [on Indochina] from international terrorism to outright aggression in 1961-62" (Noam Chomsky), justifying the use of U.S. airpower to napalm social revolutionaries, defoliate Vietnamese countryside, and "kill a lot of innocent peasants" (Roger Hillsman) with the false claims that "we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless [Soviet-Marxist] Conspiracy" and that failure to stop "Communism" in Vietnam would open the gates to Soviet world domination. Contrary to subsequent myths trumpeted by JFK-worshippers like Oliver Stone (who needed to do a movie on the execution of Dr. King) and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Kennedy had no intent of pulling back from his mass-murderous assault until "victory" was attained (see Noam Chomsky, Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture [Boston, MA: South End Press, 1993], Chapter 1: "From Terror to Aggression").

Kennedy epitomized the strictly conditional nature of "democracy" as a U.S. foreign policy objective when he remarked that while the U.S. would prefer democratic regimes abroad, it will choose "a [pro-American dictator] Trujillo" over "a ["anti-American" dictator] Castro" if those were the only choices. "It is necessary only to add," Noam Chomsky noted in 1991, that Kennedy's "concept of 'a Castro' was very broad, extending to anyone who raises problems for the 'rich men dwelling at peace with their habitations,' who are to rule the world according to [Winston] Churchill's aphorism, while enjoying the benefits of its human and material resources."

Walking in JFK's imperial footsteps, Obama has advanced mealy-mouthed and ever-shifting positions on Iraq, clearly (however) indicating that an Obama White House will maintain the criminal occupation of oil-rich Mesopotamia for an

indefinite period of time. He takes brazenly imperial positions on Israel/Palestine, Columbia, Cuba, Afghanistan, Iran, the "defense" (Empire) budget, and the broad role of the United States (which Obama absurdly calls the "last and best hope of the world") in the world. Here is an interesting formulation from an essay Obama published in the U.S. Council of Foreign Relations' journal Foreign Affairs in the summer of 2007:

"The American moment is not over, but it must be seized anew... A strong military is, more than anything, necessary to sustain peace.... we must become better prepared to put boots on the ground in order to take on foes that fight asymmetrical and highly adaptive campaigns on a global scale...I will not hesitate to use force unilaterally, if necessary, to protect the American people or our vital interests ...We must also consider using military force in circumstances beyond self-defense, in order to provide for the common security that underpins global stability - to support friends, participate in stability and reconstruction operations, or confront mass atrocities."

The article in which these words appeared was published while liberal and left peaceniks all over my home town (Iowa City) were putting up Obama signs next to peace posters quoting Dr. King on how "War is Not the Answer." Ronald Reagan or JFK couldn't have given more brash forewarnings of imperial adventurism to come!

In the openly imperial foreign policy chapter of his Kennedy-esque campaign book "The Audacity of Hope," Obama criticized "left-leaning populists" like "Venezuela's Hugo Chavez" for thinking that developing nations "should resist America's efforts to expand its hegemony" and for daring (imagine!) to "follow their own path to development." Such dysfunctional "reject[ion] [of] the ideals of free markets and liberal democracy" along with "American" ideas like "the rule of law" and "democratic elections"—interesting terms for the heavily state-sponsored U.S. effort to impose authoritarian and corporate-state capitalist policy imperatives on impoverished nations—will only worsen the situation of the global poor, Obama claimed. Obama's bestselling book and supposed proclamation of "progressive" faith (the candidate used that word to describe himself on numerous occasions in the volume) ignored a preponderance of evidence showing that the imposition of the "free market" corporate-neoliberal "Washington Consensus" has deepened poverty across the world in recent decades. Billions are forced to live in ever-more extreme poverty as Obama's book audaciously instructed poor and exploited states that "the system of free markets and liberal democracy" is "constantly subject to change and improvement."

Obama did not comment in "Audacity" on the remarkable respect the U.S. showed for "democratic elections" and "the rule of law" when it supported an attempted military coup to overthrow the democratically elected Chavez government (because of his opposition to the U.S neoliberal agenda) in April of 2002. It is doubtful that Obama's concept of the democratically elected Chavez is much different than "Kennedy's concept of a Castro."

Those who have the time and energy to examine the overwork-plagued U.S. "homeland" might want to note the ever-escalating inequality of U.S. society and the related, ever-deepening insecurity experienced by American working people. Such is the ugly reality of "life," even in the U.S.—home to what Obama's book obsequiously called "a prosperity that's unmatched in history—under the rule of the neoliberal doctrine that big business upholds and which Kennedy helped advance before the last embers of the social democratic and New Deal traditions had died out in U.S. political culture. Those traditions were snuffed out with no small help from the criminal Vietnam War that Kennedy did so much to escalate.

Obama can have the Kennedy mantle that he craves and hopes to don for the world to see at the Brandenburg Gate (or some other suitable historic location in Germany). Look for Obama to be crowned the new King of Camelot by the last living Kennedy brother on the centrist 50-yard line in Denver next month-a sight to be anticipated with trembling souls by hopeful and dreamy masses at home and abroad. The cunning, corporate and imperial Kennedy legacy is actually what Obama is all about, morally and ideologically speaking, something that would cause trepidation in a western political culture that hadn't been subjected to the relentless Orwellian erasure of the richly bipartisan crimes of American Empire and Inequality.

Paul Street,
July 24, 2008. Available at
www.zmag.org



China:

Authorities' Broken Promises Jeopardize Olympic Legacy

The Chinese authorities have broken their promise to improve the country's human rights situation and betrayed the core values of the Olympics, said Amnesty International in a new report ... .

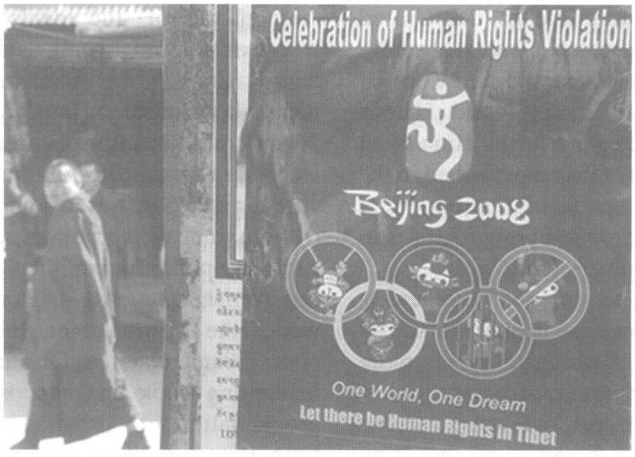
"By continuing to persecute and punish those who speak out for human rights, the Chinese authorities have lost sight of the promises they made when they were granted the Games seven years ago," said Roseann Rife, Asia-Pacific Deputy Director at Amnesty International at a press conference in Hong Kong.

"The Chinese authorities are tarnishing the legacy of the Games. They must release all imprisoned peaceful activists, allow foreign and national journalists to report freely and make further progress towards the elimination of the death penalty."

Amnesty International's report "The Olympics Countdown: Broken Promises" evaluates the performance of the Chinese authorities in four areas related to the core values of the Olympics: persecution of human rights activists, detention without trial, censorship and the death penalty.

The document concludes that in most of these areas human rights have continued to deteriorate in the run-up to the Olympics. In preparation for the Games, the Chinese authorities have locked up, put under house arrest, and forcibly removed individuals they perceive may threaten the image of 'stability' and 'harmony' they want to present to the world.

Amnesty International believes that local activists and journalists working on human rights issues in China are at particular risk of abuse during the Games.



Human rights activist and writer Hu Jia continues to serve his sentence for "inciting sub-version" by writing about hu- man rights and giving interviews to foreign media. Hu Jia suffers from liver disease due to a Hepatitis B infection but the authorities have prevented his family from providing him with medicine in the prison.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) President, Jacques Rogge, recently claimed the IOC's their quiet diplomacy had led to several human rights reforms, including the new regulations for foreign media.

"We welcome the IOC's recognition of its role on human rights, but given the current reality, we are surprised at their confidence that foreign media will be able to report freely and that there will be no internet censorship," said Roseann Rife. "And they must speak out when the authorities violate the wider Olympic principles."

"Additionally, world leaders who attend the Games need to raise their voice publicly for human rights in China and in support of individual Chinese human rights activists. A failure to do so will send the message that it is acceptable for a government to host the Olympic Games in an atmosphere of repression and persecution."

Note to editors

Amnesty International's report concluded that:

Many human rights defenders continue to be held in prisons across China and under house arrest; others are tightly monitored by police to ensure they will not disrupt the Olympics in any way.

The Chinese authorities have extended the use of punitive administrative detention — including "Re-education through Labour" and "Enforced Drug Rehabilitation" — to "clean up" Beijing before the start of the Olympics and ensure activists stay out of sight during the Games.

Temporary media regulations that were supposed to allow

greater freedom of reporting for foreign media have not been fully implemented. The Foreign Correspondents Club of China reported 260 cases of reporting interference since 1 January 2007. The regulations do not extend to Chinese journalists who continue to be prevented from publishing stories on issues deemed sensitive by the government.

The death penalty continues to be used for some 68 crimes, including some non-violent crimes such as economic and drug-related offences. Despite assurances that the number of executions has dropped since the Supreme People's Court reinstated the review process, the Chinese authorities have not published actual figures.

Liu Jie, a rural activist, was detained in Beijing and assigned to 18 months "Re-education through Labour" (RTL) in Heilongjiang province, northeast China, where local sources say she has been physically abused for having organized a public letter urging leaders to carry out political and legal reforms, including abolition of RTL.

In June 2008, the police detained Sichuan-based human rights activist Huang Qi on suspicion of "illegally acquiring state secrets". Huang had been involved in assisting the families of five primary school pupils to bring a legal case against the local authorities. The five pupils died when the school buildings collapsed in the earthquake in Sichuan in May.

In 2001, when China was granted the hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games, Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee said: "We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China. (...) We are confident that the Games coming to China not only promote our economy but also enhance all social conditions, including education, health and human rights."

Amnesty International,
29 July 2008

International:
The Current Oil Shock, No Relief in Sight

When will it end, this crushing rise in the price of gasoline, now averaging $4.10 a gallon at the pump? The question is uppermost in the minds of American motorists as they plan vacations or simply review their daily journeys. The short answer is simple as well: "Not soon."

As yet there is no sign of a reversal in oil's upward price thrust, which has more than doubled in a year, cresting recently above $146 a barrel. The current oil shock, the fourth of its kind in the past three-and-a-half decades, and the deadliest so far, shows every sign of continuing for a long, long stretch.

The previous oil shocks—in 1973-74, 1980, and 1990-91—stemmed from specific interruptions of energy supplies from the Middle East due, respectively, to an Arab-Israeli war, the Iranian revolution, and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Once peace was restored, a post-revolutionary order established, or the invader expelled, vital Middle Eastern energy supplies returned to normal. The fourth oil shock, however, belongs in a different category altogether.

Nothing Like It Before

Unlike in the past, the present price spurt has been caused mainly by global demand for energy outstripping available supply. Alarmingly, there is no short-term prospect that supply will match demand. For a commodity like petroleum that underwrites and permeates every aspect of modern life—from fuel to fertilizers, paints to plastics, resins to rubber—"balance" requires a 5% safety factor on the supply side.

At present, however, spare capacity in the oil industry is less than 2%, down from more than 6% in 2002. As a result, the price of oil responds instantly to negative news of any sort: a threat against Iran by an Israeli cabinet minister, a fire on a Norwegian offshore drilling rig, or an attack on an oil facility by armed rebels in Nigeria.

Behind the present price surge, other factors are also at work. Take the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the U.S. It flared almost a year ago, drastically lowering the market value of the stocks of banks and allied companies. The concomitant downturn in other equities led investment fund managers and speculators to direct their cash into more productive markets, especially commodities such as gold and oil, driving up their prices.

The continued weakening of the U.S. dollar—the denomination used in oil trading—has also encouraged investment in commodities as a hedge against this depreciating currency.

The earlier oil shocks led non-OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) nations to accelerate oil exploration and extraction to increase supplies. Their collective reserves, however, represent but a third of OPEC's 75% of the global total. By the turn of the century, these countries had pumped so much crude oil that their collective output went into an irreversible decline.

A mere glance at the oil production table of the authoritative BP Statistical Review of World Energy—published annually—shows declines in such non-OPEC countries as Britain, Brunei, Denmark, Mexico, Norway, Oman, Trinidad, and Yemen. Over the past decade, oil output in the U.S. has declined from 8.27 million barrels per day (bpd) to 6.88 million bpd.

The exploitation of the much-vaunted tar sands of Canada—expected to cover the global shortfall—only helped to raise that country's output from 3.04 million bpd in 2005 to 3.31 million bpd in 2007, a mere 10% in two years.

In the 1990s, overflowing supplies and cheap oil had led to an overall decline in oil exploration as well as under-investment in refineries. These two factors constitute a major hurdle to hiking the supply of petroleum products in the near future.

In addition, new hydrocarbon fields are increasingly found in deep-water regions that are arduous to exploit. The paucity of the specialized equipment needed to extract oil from such new reserves has created a bottleneck in future offshore production. The world's current fleet of specialized drill ships is booked until 2013. The price of building such a vessel has taken a five-fold jump to $500 million in the last year. The cost of crucial materials—such as steel for rigs and pipelines—has risen sharply. So, too, have salaries for skilled manpower in the industry. Little wonder then that while, in 2002, it cost $150,000 a day to hire a deep-water rig, it now costs four times as much.

Static Supply, Rising Demand

While the oil supply remains essentially static, worldwide demand shows no signs of tapering off. The only way to cool the energy market at the moment would be to reduce consumption. Luckily—from the environmentalist's viewpoint—soaring gasoline and diesel prices have begun lowering consumption in North America and Western Europe. Gasoline consumption in the United States dropped 3% in the first quarter of 2008, when compared to the previous year.

When it comes to energy conservation, there is a far greater opportunity for saving in the affluent societies of the West than anywhere else in the world. An average American uses twice as much oil as a Briton, a Briton twice as much as a Russian, and a Russian eight times as much as an Indian. It was therefore perverse of U.S. energy secretary Sam Bodman to focus on the way the Chinese and Indian governments subsidize oil products to provide relief to their citizens—and to urge their energy ministers to cut those subsidies to "reduce demand."

It is true that China and India, which together account for two-fifths of the human race, are now major contributors to the growth in global oil demand. But it's an indisputable fact that only by increasing per capita energy consumption from current abysmally low levels can the Chinese and Indian governments hope to lift hundreds of millions of people out of grinding poverty.

In a country like India, for instance, half of all households lack electricity, so hurricane lanterns, fueled by kerosene, are a basic necessity. Subsidized kerosene, also used for cooking stoves, helps hundreds of millions of poor Indians. To cut or eliminate the subsidy on kerosene would only intensify poverty.

In truth, when it comes to energy conservation, the main focus at the moment should be on the 30-member Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a group of the globe's richest nations which cumulatively consumes nearly three out of every five barrels of oil used anywhere.

Among OECD members, Japan provides a model to be emulated.

Japan's Exemplary Performance

When it comes to energy conservation, Japan provides a glaring counterpoint to the United States. Consider what's happened in both countries since the first oil shock of the mid-1970s when prices quadrupled.

That price hike initially led to a drive for fuel efficiency in the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan. It also gave a boost to the idea of developing renewable sources of energy. Ever since, Japan has followed a consistent, long-range policy of reduction in petroleum usage, while the U.S. first wavered and then fell back dramatically.

Under the presidencies of Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter,

the U.S. modestly improved the fuel efficiency of its vehicles, as stipulated by a federal law. President Carter also announced a $100 million federal research and development program focused on solar power and symbolically had a solar water heater installed on the White House roof.

During the subsequent presidency of Ronald Reagan, when oil prices fell sharply, energy efficiency and conservation policies went with them, as did the idea of developing renewable sources of energy. This was dramatized when Reagan ordered the removal of that solar panel from the White House.

In the private sector, utilities promptly slashed by half their investments in energy efficiency. President George H.W. Bush, an oil man, followed Reagan's lead. And his son, George W. (along Vice President Dick Cheney, former chief executive of energy services giant Halliburton) has done absolutely nothing to wean Americans away from their much talked about "addiction to oil."

Even now, instead of urging Americans to cut oil usage (and putting a little legislative heft behind those urgings), politicians of both parties are blaming soaring gas and diesel prices on "speculators," conveniently ignoring how thin a line divides "speculators" from "investors."

In Japan, on the other hand, the government and private companies have stayed on course since the First Oil Shock. Despite the doubling of Japan's gross domestic product during the 1970s and 1980s, its annual overall levels of energy consumption have remained unchanged. Today, Japan uses only half as much energy for every dollar's worth of economic activity as the European Union or the United States. In addition, national and local authorities have continually enforced strict energy-conservation standards for new buildings.

It is, again, Japan that has made significant progress when it comes to renewable sources of energy. By 2006, for instance, it was responsible for producing almost half of total global solar power, well ahead of the U.S., even though it was an American, Russell Ohl, who invented the silicon solar cell, the building block of solar photovoltaic panels, which convert sunshine into electricity.

What to Do: Medium-Term Solutions

Worldwide, over half of all oil is used for transport. Though we instantly associate a car or truck with an internal combustion engine (ICE), it was not always so. At the turn of the twentieth century, cars were also powered by steam engines or batteries.

Now, our salvation lies in finding a way back to the pre-ICE era. It is incumbent upon the automobile companies in rich nations to accelerate the process of divorcing vehicles from the internal combustion engine. Cars of the future can be powered by batteries, hydrogen cells, or solar panels — or a combination of the above.

Typically, Japanese companies are in the forefront of research and development on this. It was Toyota which first introduced a "concept" hybrid car in 1995, combining batteries with the internal combustion engine, and began mass producing them some years later.

This June, Honda set up an assembly line for producing a hydrogen-powered car, the FCX Clarity. This model already can travel 280 miles on a tank of liquid hydrogen. But it will go into mass production only after there is an infrastructure of liquefied hydrogen stations in place in Japan and in California, which will take time. So far there are only 13 hydrogen stations, funded by the government, in the Tokyo area. Meanwhile, aware of the enormous cost of its product, it is initially planning to lease the FXC Clarity to drivers for $600 a month.

Another Japanese corporation, Mazda, has come up with a hybrid car using hydrogen cells as well as an internal combustion engine.

As the mass production of non-ICE cars takes off in rich nations, the cost will fall, and such models will find markets in the fast expanding (yet comparatively poor) economies of China and India.

Medium-Term: The Nuclear Option

Besides powering transport, oil is a major source of fuel for electricity-generating plants. With even Royal Dutch Shell CEO Jeroen van der Veer conceding publicly that we are nearing peak oil production (after which oil reserves will decline irretrievably), attention is increasingly turning, in the West, to coal and nuclear power as medium-term solutions.

The very mention of nuclear plants revives nightmarish memories of the partial meltdown of a U.S. reactor at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania in 1979, and the catastrophic burning of the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine in 1986. On the other hand, nuclear stations now provide 79% of France's electricity and have, so far, been accident-proof. That country's leading nuclear company, Areva, expects to sell 100 power stations, fueled by third-generation Evolutionary

Pressure Water Reactors (EPWR), worldwide by 2030.

Areva also heads a consortium that is building the first nuclear power station in Europe in more than a decade—in Finland. On nuclear waste management and safety, the Finnish nuclear authority Posiva seems to have found a workable solution. After twelve years of public debate, it has allowed the construction of a $3.5 billion nuclear plant equipped with an EPWR reactor, on an offshore island.

The new plant is designed to last 60 years, twice the average life of a nuclear power plant today. If its control rods should fail, triggering a core meltdown, a special basin of concrete will be there to hold the debris, thus theoretically preventing the release of radioactive material. The nuclear waste will then be set in cast iron, encased in copper, and dropped down a borehole, half a kilometer deep, which would, in turn, be saturated with bentonite, a kind of clay. According to Posiva's metallurgists, under such conditions the copper barrier should last a million years.

Once this station is commissioned, nuclear-fueled electricity will rise from 27% to 37% of the total on the Finnish national grid.

So acute is the demand for electricity in India that three nuclear power stations are to be commissioned this year. Once on line, however, these plants will make but a marginal difference in meeting Indian energy needs. Only coal, which abounds in India, can help meet exploding demand, as is true in coal-rich China. There, an electric plant fueled by (dirty, conventional) coal is being commissioned every week.

Medium-Term: Cleaner Coal

In the hydrocarbon family, coal is the least efficient energy source, providing only half as much energy as oil, while producing twice as much carbon dioxide (CO2). But coal has the longest history of supplying energy to modern societies, and as the twenty-first century began, it was still one of the leading fuels for power plants worldwide.

Today, coal provides 28% of electric power globally, only marginally less than in the 1970s. Countrywide, percentages vary widely—from 20% in the United States to four times as much in China.

Because coal isn't going away any time soon, the challenge is obviously to burn coal more efficiently and, at the same time, capture its CO2 emissions before they reach the atmosphere. One possible solution to coal's polluting problems lies in producing de-carbonized coal-that is, in converting coal into petroleum products, thereby also reducing demand for crude oil. A hybrid technology involving de-carbonizing natural gas or coal already exists. In a coal-fired integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) facility, coal is broken up, extracting the hydrogen and leaving behind the carbon. Next the hydrogen is burned, emitting heat that drives the electricity-generating turbines, while carbon, in the form of liquefied CO2, is stored underground or under the seabed.

But, at the moment, an IGCC station needs one-fifth more coal as fuel than a conventional plant just to produce the energy needed to power the carbon-capturing mechanism. The price of the electric power thus generated would be a third to a half higher than that from dirty coal.

On the other hand, according to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the CO2 capture and storage (CCS) system could someday provide up to 55% of the emissions reduction needed to avoid the worst effects of global warming. Last month, the G8 energy ministers, meeting in Japan, called for the launch of 20 large-scale CCS projects globally by 2010. Soon after, the British government invited four leading European companies to submit tenders for such a project in the United Kingdom.

At the recent oil summit in Jeddah, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced that his country would work with Saudi Arabia on perfecting the technology for carbon capture. The United States and Australia are already committed to advance this technology with public funds. As it gets cheaper with frequent application, it will become affordable by countries like India and China.

With oil supplies peaking in the coming years and uranium following a similar path as the present century unfolds, the weight of humanity's needs will increasingly fall on coal. It is coal, for better or worse, that will provide the energy to sustain higher living standards for a growing segment of humanity, even as the search for, and development of, renewable energies proceeds at a faster pace. Last week, recognizing this reality, the G8 summit renewed its commitment to advance carbon capture and storage systems with all due speed.

This, in a nutshell, is the global energy future in the medium term. It is the reality we face.

Dilip Hiro,
July 18, 2008. Available at
www.tomdispatch.com

Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

Once again, it's the rains-retreat, which is special for many Buddhists. It is a time for cultivating more wisdom and compassion.

Last May we started our annual Youth Buddhist Leadership training for six weeks as usual. It is our pleasure to report to you that now INEB has over 120 alumni in 10 countries in Asia. They are amazing young men and women, ordained and lay. Most of them are still very active in serving their communities.

In this year's training, we emphasized the importance of understanding structural violence and social action skills. I am surprised that the issue of structural violence is quite difficult for the participants to grasp. Unlike direct violence such as wars, it is indirect and invisible. We spent several weeks to comprehend it. It is critical for socially engaged Buddhists to realize it if we want real social transformation.

INEB youth training creates a spiritual network for the participants. They learned about and empathized with the sufferings prevailing in Asia such as the plight of Burmese people under the military regime, violence against the Tibetans, caste discrimination in India, war and conflicts in Sri Lanka, exploitation of Indonesian migrant labors, etc. The idea is not simply to make them knowledgeable about these issues. Nor is it for them to feel hopeless. Rather it is for them to make a change and support one another. They learned to cultivate moral courage and to translate what they had learned into action.

And not just learning it, the participants really practiced it. Together, they came up with an action plan (campaigning for an environment issue) and went out to talk to the people on the streets. I appreciate their creativity and enthusiasm. Though the action plan is simple, it is meaningful. And I hope they would be more confident in making social changes at home.

I am writing this letter on the 20th anniversary of the uprising in Burma (the 8888). Unfortunately, this event is being overshadowed by the opening of Olympic Games in Beijing (the 888). Despite the difficulties and the fact that many leaders are either in jail or in hiding, I heard that there are some quiet events to commemorate the uprising inside Burma. It is more active worldwide. I would like to take this opportunity to pay respect to the people in the non-violent struggle for peace and democracy in Burma.

The secretariat office of INEB is now preparing the activities to mark our 20th anniversary. It is a time to commemorate the commitment of many Buddhist leaders and scholars for peace and social change. More information will come out in the next issue. To help our activities, your support is critical. Please remember that this issue is the last one for the year 2008. Please continue your subscription for the year 2009 so that we will celebrate the 20th anniversary together.

Thank you.

Yours in the dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary
INEB

Did you renew your subscription?

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.

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

The origin

INEB began in February 1989. It was created by a group of leading Buddhist figures from many countries. From the outset, INEB members are Buddhist leaders, scholars, social activists who share the same aspiration, i.e. the integration of social action with Buddhist practices. They conduct activities to serve their own communities. But the members are supportive of one another. INEB's areas of concern have centered on peace, human rights, gender issues, spirituality based development, tolerance and interfaith dialogues.

The INEB Secretariat Office, operating as an autonomous organization under the auspices of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation is based in Bangkok. The office maintains the flow of information and support by offering programs to strengthen members' capacity as well as organizing joint activities.

The Progress

For almost two decades, INEB has been working to fulfill four objectives.

1. To develop the perspective of socially engaged Buddhism

Socially engaged Buddhism has been developed throughout the existence of INEB by its scholars and social activists dealing with various issues. INEB, its members and affiliate groups have organized seminars and discussions, published books and articles that shed a new light on issues such as development, poverty and wealth, gender equality, politics, consumerism, educations, human rights and equality, environment protection, etc.

2. To promote understanding, cooperation and networking between Buddhists and between Buddhists and other communities, religious or otherwise.

INEB members have well understood that to achieve a world of peace and justice, we need to reach out and work with other religious groups and secular groups. INEB is often invited to join international inter-religious activities and events, as a representative of Buddhist groups especially in the Asian region where the Secretariat Office operates. Some examples include the Inter-religious Cooperation Forum, where INEB sat in its committee as the Buddhist representative, and Word Social Forums, Conference of Asian Religious Women Leaders co-organized with Christian Conference of Asia and World Conference of Religions for Peace, etc. INEB is also involved in a series of interfaith dialogues and activities particularly on peace and non-violence issues.

3. To act as a center of information pertaining to the areas of interest

The third objective as an information center is not fully successful thus far. Perhaps, this is because the INEB Secretariat Office lacks continuity. Nevertheless, long involved in the fields of their work, the members themselves accumulated sufficient knowledge and information. INEB will be an invaluable asset if this objective can be fulfilled in the future.

4. To facilitate training and workshop that support and strengthen Buddhists as well as other individuals and groups involved in social activism.

INEB is often remembered as the organizer or co-organizer of many trainings and workshops especially on peace and conflict resolution for our members in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma, etc. During the past five years, when many younger Buddhist social activists are blooming, INEB continuously organized Youth Leadership Training programs for those in South and Southeast Asia. The youth program also enables us to support the work of the new members in countries such as India, Indonesia, Burma, and Tibet in exile, etc. In addition, every two years, an INEB conference is held as the platform for discussing new insights in socially engaged Buddhism and also for supporting the work of fellow members.

Future activities

INEB will continue its commitments namely, the teaching and practice of socially engaged Buddhism; understanding structural violence and searching for alternatives; and actions for self and social transformation. We will continue our activities on peace and justice, including those for Tibet and Burma especially.

Besides, in the INEB Executive Committee Meeting in 2007, INEB Secretariat Office proposed the network development plan which included the following activities: Survey the needs of INEB members; Youth Leadership Training program;

Volunteer/internship program; Senior-Junior Camp; Database/ directory of socially engaged Buddhist organizations/groups; Communication/website development and the 20th Anniversary of INEB. After discussion, the Executive Committee gave approval to the plan in principle and suggested ideas for further development.

Getting (More) Socially Engaged:
The Future Path of Indonesian Buddhists



Buddhists constitute 1 percent of Indonesia's total population, or approximately 240 million people. Most Buddhists live in the big cities of Sumatra and Java islands, especially those of Chinese origin. While many others, mostly indigenous Javanese Buddhists reside in several villages in Java, especially in central and eastern part of Java. After experiencing the revival of Buddhism in the late 60ûs, currently, Buddhists are enjoying their freedom to exercise their religious rights. Despite facing few practices of discrimination in certain local villages, the overall atmosphere is decent for Buddhists in Indonesia. For the last 40 years, it is appropriate to mention that the Indonesian Buddhist community has accomplished in terms of recognition from society and government, the increasing number of Buddhist temples, organizations, publications, practitioners, and others. However, in terms of their contribution to society, it is still a long way to go: Buddhists still have plenty of homework to work for the real essence of humanity. The following article would provide a brief chronological and critical outlook on how Indonesian Buddhists have gone through their journey starting from the revival of Buddhism in the late 60's and to how they got to know the engaged Buddhism movement.

The euphoria of revival

To understand why Indonesian Buddhists deal more with the religious than the social when practicing Buddhism, it is important to take a brief look at the late 60's, when Buddhism marked its revival in Indonesia. As the presence of religious infrastructure was very minimal, this period witnessed vigorous efforts of various local Buddhist elements. Limited sources and places to learn and practice Buddhism were the main obstacles. Boosted by these shortcomings, Buddhists—old and young—showed their eagerness in resolving the restrictions hampering the ways for the public to learn and practice the Dharma. The

focus was to make sure that the need to learn Buddhism could be accommodated and fulfilled.

Some significant achievements should be mentioned in this era. Basic Dharma classes and retreats were started. Sangha denominations as well as laymen institutions were established to perform religious services and to facilitate Dharma learning. Today, more monks have been ordained and sent to remote places, reaching the eastern part of Indonesia. The laymen institutions are doing good as well. Better management and more human resources make them possible to attract more Buddhist practitioners. Gradually, facilities to study and practice Buddhism can be found more easily.

Universities students also joined the move. To fulfill the needs to have Buddhist lecturers in colleges and universities, several medical students of University of Indonesia (UI) — the leading and distinguished university in the country — assembled to establish the first Indonesian Buddhist students campus organization in February 1971. A month later, The Union of Jakarta Buddhist Students (KMBJ), the first Regional Buddhist students union in Indonesia was founded. Later, these student activists become the leaders of major laymen Buddhist institutions in several sects. KMBJ together with Buddhist students in other provinces established The Union of Indonesian Buddhist Students (HIKMAHBUDHI). A special note on this youth movement should be taken here. The seeds of thought that Buddhists should get involved and be an integral part of the nation in dealing with social matters had existed in the minds of youths, however due to the bigger and urgent need to build basic religious framework, the seeds didn't have enough space to grow in that period.

The self-oriented perspective

Unfortunately, in this period, a misguiding mainstream perspective was shaped: Good Buddhists should focus more on working and dedicating themselves for Buddhism. It can be realized by going to the temple every week, donating food and funds to the monks and temples, or being active in religious and social activities organized by their respective temples. Good Buddhists should not get involved in demonstrations or speak against government policies. Buddhists are peaceful, so everything should be solved quietly. Any misfortunes suffered by the poor result from their karma. Before dealing with others' suffering, we should deal with our own suffering first. And to deal with personal suffering, one should practice Buddhism diligently.

Only a few thought that Buddhists should have a more inclusive perspective. They should get more socially-engaged with people's life. Buddhists should also address their views on poverty and people's suffering, how to deal with and eliminate them. However such opinions and involvements were regarded as harmful for the community. In part, this was triggered by the fear of the Soeharto regime.

This stand and perspective were not without effect. Buddhists tended to be 'alienated' from the national community and were dubbed as an exclusive community. For certain parties, especially for politicians and those who have vested interests this was an advantage. This exclusive and silent community became a prime potential target and tool for them to extend their political, business, and individual ambitions. Once, a Buddhist leader even claimed that Buddhists undoubtedly supported the ruling political party, Golkar, as Buddhist monks wear yellow robe: the symbolic color of the party.

The 70's and 80's also saw a silent competition between sects and groups, especially at the elite level. Each group was inclined to centralize their energy and time to expand their temples, activities, and followers in the name of Buddhism. Undoubtedly, concerns about the broader social and national issues were neglected. This phenomenon was contagious. Regrettably, some the young intellectual students were also dragged into this current. Young, still naïve, and eager to work for Buddhism, they were driven by some elites to achieve selfish hidden agenda. However, like a blessing in disguise, this condition had even boosted the young having the spirit to revive Buddhism to become more socially engaged. Slowly but sure, they consolidated the proponents of the idea that Buddhism should benefit all walks of life, be rooted in people's daily life, and finally manage to end sufferings. This is a move that eventually bore fruits.

The wind of change

The period of the mid 90's brought about a fresh atmosphere. Thoughts of getting more engaged to the social problem of the country's weak and poor were regaining ground. Sulak Sivaraksa was one of the initiators. Invited to address a speech in a sharing session of The Union of Indonesian Buddhist

Students (HIKMAHBUDHI) in 1994, Sulak revived the idea of how Buddhists should also go out of the temple and get involved actively in the cessation of people's sufferings. Since then, gradually Sulak has been one of prominent sources of engaged Buddhism in Indonesia.

Thanks to Sulak and friends, HIKMAHBUDHI has had the chance to attend INEB conferences and activities since 1995. Considerable exposure to the INEB networks was definitely an invaluable asset for the Indonesian Buddhist Community. Some INEB friends such as the late Ven. Maha Ghosananda and Jonathan Watts of Think Sangha have definitely enriched the discourse of socially-engaged Buddhists with their visits to Jakarta. Watts dedicated himself as a source for numerous engaged Buddhism discussions, and Ven. Maha Ghosananda once made a keynote speech in a national seminar held by HIKMAHBUDHI attended by various prominent religious leaders and activists in Indonesia. The seminar was held in the middle of an outbreak of violence in Indonesia. It discussed about the book Love in Action by Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh which had been translated into Indonesian. Subsequently, the incumbent executive secretary of INEB, Anne, successfully managed to run the youth leadership training which further added the fuel to foster the engaged Buddhism movement in Indonesia.

All of these experiences and interactions boosted young activists' longing for reforms in the Indonesian Buddhist community. It soon had a snowball effect. More young Buddhists, mostly students began to break their silence. This coincided with the downfall of the Soeharto regime. Going down to streets to voice people's sufferings was no longer a novel thing and one to be afraid of. Getting involved with pro-democracy, environment, human-rights activists' discussions and actions have been already developed as a habit. Working with poor villagers to empower them in empowering project has been going for the past 9 years.



The Long Journey Ahead

At first, the idea of socially engaged Buddhism was viewed suspiciously as it is too critical and breaks the traditional stand of being silent. However, as the reformation swept the country, the Buddhist community found its courage to step forward. Step by step, they began to change their inward and exclusive perspective to a more outward and inclusive one. More monks and temples have opened their door for greater involvement with national affecting-people issues. Several monk leaders from Buddhayana and Mahayana even gave Sulak chances to share his critical thoughts on how to practice Buddhism in a more socially-engaged outlook. To some extent, their activities have begun to take the interests of the poor more effectively and seriously. They now also join the force to spread the idea of engaged Buddhism. This is indeed a good prospect for the future path of Buddhism in Indonesia. With greater involvement and attention towards the real sufferings and problems of people, Buddhism can work best at its essence: the cessation of suffering.

However, much more need to be done by Indonesian Buddhists to transform Buddhism from a path for personal liberation to one for social emancipation. This would be a long journey, and it needs support from various parties. The idea of socially engaged Buddhism can be a constructive alternative for the future of Buddhists in Indonesia since a more socially engaged Buddhist community surely can help alleviate the suffering of millions of lives in Indonesia as well as in the world.

Agus Hartono

The Dharma of Planetary Crisis:
Time for a Seventh Buddhist Council?

Today we live in a time of great crisis, confronted by the gravest challenge that humanity has ever faced: the ecological karma of our own actions. Scientists have established, beyond any reasonable doubt (more on that later), that human activity is triggering environmental breakdown on a planetary scale — a collapse that is happening much faster than originally predicted only a few years ago.

An increasing number of scientists agree with Thich Nhat Hanh that the survival of human civilization, and perhaps even the human species, may be at stake. We have reached a critical juncture in our biological and social evolution. What role might Buddhism play in our collective response to this predicament? Can the Buddhist tradition help us meet this challenge successfully? These urgent questions can no longer be evaded.

We don't like to think about this ecological crisis, any more than we like to think about our own mortality. Both individually and collectively, our main reaction has been denial. We repress what we know to be happening, but repression carries a high price: haunted by a dread we do not understand and cannot acknowledge, the widespread social competition for power, fame, sex, and profit has become more obsessive. The psychologist James Hillman claims that people in advanced industrial societies are psychically numbed by being cut off from nature, unable to feel the beauty of the world — or respond to its distress. The pervasive influence of advertising works by promising to fill this void we cannot avoid. We spend our time pursuing commodified substitutes that never satisfy, because you can never get enough of what you don't really want. Escaping this attention-trap will require conscious choices based on greater awareness of our true situation.

As Joanna Macy says, denial of what is happening is itself the greatest danger we face. Unfortunately, our collective denial has been manipulated by strong economic and political forces, whose well-financed advertising and PR campaigns have succeeded in muddling the issue.

In June 2008, James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies and one of the world's most respected climatologists, called for the chief executives of large fossil fuel companies to be put on trial for crimes against humanity and nature. Twenty years ago his groundbreaking speech to the U.S. Congress had warned about the grave dangers of global warming due to human activity. Since then the crisis has become much worse: carbon gas emissions have increased radically, and if trends continue, present levels will double by mid-century. According to Hansen, radical steps need to be taken immediately if the "perfect storm" of irreversible climate change is not to become inevitable. Not only must we reduce our greenhouse emissions, we need to find ways to remove some of the carbon dioxide already in the atmosphere.

Arctic ice provides a dramatic example. Global warming is occurring most rapidly at the Poles. For much longer than our species has lived on this earth, the Arctic has been covered by an area of ice at least as large as Australia. Now, due to rising air and ocean temperatures, this ice has been melting quickly. In 2007 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forecast that the Arctic might be free of summer sea-ice by as early as 2100. It is now apparent that summer sea-ice will disappear *within five years* — perhaps in two years. There is general agreement that if Arctic summer sea-ice disappears, the massive land-based glacial ice-sheet that covers Greenland will begin to melt down as well. Without the albedo effect (white ice reflecting the sun's rays), the arctic ocean will absorb even more solar radiation, warming the surrounding land masses, whose permafrost could melt and release vast stores of methane, a greenhouse gas over 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

All kinds of extreme weather events (hurricanes and typhoons, floods, heat waves and droughts) have quadrupled in frequency since the 1950s. The planetary hydrological cycle has been thoroughly destabilized, producing bizarre flooding in some places and expanding desertification elsewhere. For the last 30 years, however, our corporations, politicians and the media — an "unholy trinity" — have actively resisted the mounting "inconvenient" scientific data on the causes and consequences of global warming. As

a result, the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere is now about 387 parts per million (ppm), the highest our species has ever experienced. Not only is that level rising, it is rising at an accelerating rate: by 30ppm in the 17 years since the Kyoto Protocol was devised to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gases.

What has been the corporate and governmental response to the sudden disappearance of Arctic ice? Oil companies are excited about the prospect of accessing new oilfields. Nation-states are jockeying to claim possession of new territories whose fossil fuel and mineral resources will soon be available for exploitation. This behavior reveals the gap between the economic and political systems we have and the ones we need. Ecologically, it is no less crazy than the alcoholic who thinks that the solution to his hangover is another stiff drink in the morning.

Another area already much affected by global warming is the Tibetan plateau. The mountain ranges that ring it are the source for rivers that supply water to almost half the world's population: the Ganges, Indus, Mekong, Yangtze and Yellow Rivers. Mountain glaciers maintain those river systems by accumulating ice in the winter and melting slowly in the summer. According to the IPCC Report (2007), however, "glaciers in the Himalayas are receding faster than in any other part of the world and the likelihood of them disappearing by the year 2035 and perhaps sooner is very high, if the Earth keeps warming at the present rate."

In his recent speech, Hansen's sharpest criticism was reserved for the special interests he holds responsible for public confusion about the nature of the global warming threat. He accused the CEOs of oil firms such as ExxonMobil of being fully aware of the misinformation about climate change they have been financing, and said that he anticipates testifying against them in court sometime in the future. "The problem is not political will, it's the alligator shoes — the lobbyists. It's the fact that money talks in Washington, and that democracy is not working the way it was intended to work."

At their annual Group of Eight summit in Japan this summer, leaders of the developed world apparently committed themselves to *trying* to do something ... by 2050. "We, the G8, arrived at a common view which is to seek to adopt as a global target the goal of at least a 50% reduction of global emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050." (This was not in the official G8 declaration, but was announced by the Japanese Prime Minister.) Deferring the problem allows the G8 leaders to avoid making hard decisions today and proceed with business-as-usual. According to James Hansen, however, the next U.S. President has only a short window of opportunity in his first year of office to begin reducing carbon gas emissions. Otherwise, course correction may well become impossible.

Global warming is one of a number of ecological crises, yet it plays a major role in most of the others — for example, in the extermination of many of the plant and animal species that share this earth with us. Almost all biologists are agreed that the biosphere is now experiencing a massive extinction event, the sixth to have occurred in Earth's geological history. Edward O. Wilson of Harvard University, one of the world's most respected biologists, is among those who predict that business-as-usual could cause the extinction of half of all species within this century. For a Buddhist, this may be the most sobering statistic of all. What does it mean for a bodhisattva, who vows to save all sentient beings, when most of them are being annihilated by our economic and technological activity?

The effectiveness of corporate misinformation about global warming (more successful in the U.S. than in other parts of the developed world) suggests that our biggest, immediate problem is lack of awareness — which brings us back to Buddhism. The Buddhist path is about awakening from our delusions. As Thich Nhat Hanh puts it, today we need a collective awakening from our collective delusions, manipulated as they are by fossil fuel corporations. The task is complicated by the fact that the fossil fuel industry currently controls the White House and most of Congress. Even if that changes next year, the mainstream media — our collective nervous system, so to speak — will remain mega-corporations whose primary concern is advertising revenue, rather than informing us about the true state of what is happening to the Earth. We cannot simply rely upon our present economic and political systems to solve the problem, because to a large extent they themselves are the problem.

What does all this mean for contemporary Buddhism? Its traditional teachings offer no easy solution to our environmental crisis, but the familiar critique of greed, ill will and the delusion of a separate self — the three poisons, which function institu-

tionally as well as personally — point us in the right direction.

Moreover, it could be argued that Buddhist emphasis on impermanence and non-self implies an insightful diagnosis of the roots of our predicament. To a large extent, our ecological situation today is a bigger and more fateful version of the perennial human predicament. Collectively as well as individually, we suffer from a delusive sense of self that feels disconnected from other people, and from the earth itself. This feeling of separation is uncomfortable *(dukkha)*, because a delusive, insubstantial self is inherently insecure. In response, we do many things that (we hope) will give us control over our situation, yet such attempts often reinforce that problematic sense of separation. This describes our collective economic and technological obsessions: no matter how much we have or do, it can never be enough, because the basic problem is not insufficient power but the alienation we feel from the Earth. We need to wake up and realize that the Earth is our mother as well as our home, and that the umbilical cord binding us to her can never be severed.

Whether or not this particular argument is persuasive, there is an urgent need for Buddhists to reflect upon our ecological predicament and bring to bear the resources of our great traditions. The environmental crisis is also a crisis for Buddhism, not only because Buddhism too will suffer if human civilization suffers, but most of all because Buddhism is the religion most directly concerned with the alleviation of suffering — not just that of humans, but of all living beings. Buddhism may well have something distinctive to contribute at this crucial time, a time when humanity needs to marshal the best of what it has learned over the course of its history.

What must be done for this to occur? We believe that it is time for a Seventh Buddhist Council, in which all Buddhist traditions will come together to consider a joint response to this collective challenge. According to scripture, the first Buddhist council took place in Rajagaha soon after the *parinirvana* of the Buddha; the sixth occurred in Rangoon (Yangon) in 1954. All these councils have been called to affirm and preserve the Dharma and Vinaya, but today something radically different and more comprehensive is called for.

There are various benefits to be gained from such a pan-Buddhist council. The challenge of a global eco-crisis also challenges our Buddhist traditions to learn from each other, to help us respond better. By clarifying the essential dharma of the Buddha, inherent in its diverse cultural forms, we can strengthen the vital core message of the Buddhadharma for this pivotal time. Although religions tend to be conservative, Buddhist emphasis on impermanence and insubstantiality implies an openness and receptivity to new possibilities that we certainly need now.

Finally, what an inspiring example Buddhism would provide to the rest of the world, and particularly to other religions, if the various Buddhist traditions were able to gather and work out a joint response to the predicament of our planet. Given the failure of our economic and political systems, this is the time for religions to rise to the challenge in a way that no other human institutions seem able to do.

In this time of great need, the Earth calls out to us. Can we hear its cries for help? Will we respond to them?

David Loy

Transcending Anger, Dismantling Violence

We gather here today to commemorate our beloved and respected Ven. Supoj Suvajo who left us three years ago. We make merit for him. We also intend to make his demise meaningful to the people who are living. How can his demise create well-being and peace for the people?

Three years have passed but many people still wonder why a good monk like Ven. Supoj was brutally murdered. Some say that it was because of his karma. Some say it is the convergence of causes and conditions. To me the more appropriate question is not why Ven. Supoj was slain but why someone chose to kill him. Despite our attempt to answer the first question, it cannot bring him back. It can only quench our curiosity. The second question is more critical because if we cannot solve it, this incident will continue to take many more lives. We have to answer the second question in order to prevent future violence.

To answer why someone killed Ven. Supoj, we need to see the situation clearly. In fact "someone" here may not refer to

one or two individuals. That "someone" may not even be a person. It may be a set of causes and conditions that pushes a person to commit a crime. If we look carefully, we will see that the violence three years ago happened not because of the perpetrator himself or herself. That person was conditioned by many causes. That person might only be a pawn.

That the culprit has yet to be captured tells us that the causes of Ven. Supoj's death are in fact very big, too big for us to see them thoroughly. Put differently, the murder is also systemic or structural, violating not only Ven. Supoj but others as well. Ven. Supoj had no known conflict with anyone. But the murder was fundamentally driven by anger and greed which grew into violence.

In Thai society nowadays, violence is so pervasive that even monks become its victims. It mirrors the ineffective judiciary system and the growth of powerful groups that can make use of state apparatuses from the local to the national levels for their own interests. Therefore, the death of Ven. Supoj is not the result of personal conflict. Instead, it is the result of resource grabbing by powerful groups, which comes in many forms such as a corrupt national policies that only benefit particular groups at the expense of others, bribery, and the open use of violence like assassination of anyone who is obstructing their interests.

Violence is now being integrated into many systems of the country. It merges with the economic system and stimulates consumerism and the exploitation of resources. Then it enables the capitalists to make use of or plunder resources, to harass or get rid of anyone who gets into their way.

Such exploitation is the result of unjust development. Unjust development takes advantage of the powerless for the sake of the powerful, especially in the industrial sector. It is related to the political system and to the structure of power, which is concentrated in the hand of the few. The system becomes violent because it takes advantage of the weak, such as lowering the price of agriculture products, seizing farmers' lands or public property like forest or water resources, manipulating the national budget for their own interests, etc.

This violent structure is real. Many of us experience it directly because it makes use of state power, inflicting violence on the people. Worse still, it convinces many who are in positions of authority to remain silent as injustices happen. These powerful groups are not only inside Thai politics. They become part and parcel of it, and also of the development scheme. During the past fifty years, national development has focused on the industrial and the service sectors at the expense of the agricultural sector.

I can say that this country is full of violence, which comes from three sources: state authority, powerful groups and people who could no longer endure the violence being inflicted on them. The unrest in the southern provinces of Siam is due to the explosion of anger by people who have long been impacted by structural violence. They refuse to be victims any longer.

Such system makes violence a part of people's daily life. It can be seen in crimes, killings, domestic violence, violence in schools, students' gang fights, violence on the streets, etc. People use violence as a way out, either for themselves or others. We are witnessing a culture of violence. According to the Global Sheet Index, indicating the scales of peace, Siam is positioned at 105 from the 120 countries indexed. This means that this country has more instances of violence than Ethiopia and Uganda. It also means that, in spite of its propaganda as a peaceful Buddhist country striving to become the world's center of Buddhism, there is more violence in Siam than in these two countries which are at war.

It shows that there might be something wrong with our study and practice of Buddhism.

This is probably because Thai people are only interested in the subjective dimension of Buddhist practice. They want to be good individuals. They do not kill but do not mind, or perhaps even secretly enjoy the extrajudicial killing of alleged drug dealers. They are interested in personally upholding the precepts, but do not care whether or not society itself is violating these precepts. If the people condone the violence of the politico-economic system, it means that they support the Wrong View; that is, that might (or exploitation) is right. To put it differently, people are now enabling hatred and delusion to penetrate deeper in society, making killing common. Personal practice is now insufficient. We must extend the practice of Buddhism to the opposition of structural violence.

For people who did not know Ven. Supoj, his death can be seen simply as the result of structural violence. But for those of us who got to know him, his death makes us angry. But our anger at the murder cannot solve anything. In fact our anger is useless in the context of structural violence unless we make drastic changes. But if we act

out of anger, at best we can only bring down the old system with no guarantees that we will establish a better one.

According to Buddhism, when we encounter loss, violence or an unpleasant situation, there are two things that we need to do. One is to respond to the external factors, e.g. the occurrence, the cause, the solution, etc. The other thing is to respond to the internal factors, e.g. our responsibility, whether or not we are driven by anger or hatred, etc.

If anger arises in our heart, it promptly divides us from the other and transforms them into the enemy. People who think, believe or look differently can activate our anger. Anger then tries to justify itself, making us believe that we are absolutely right, and others are absolutely wrong. We are now justified to harm the other because they are wrong. Take for example, the killing of students during the October uprisings (in 1973 and 1976) in Bangkok....People who are victims of injustice feel righteous to be angry and to inflict violence on others. Anger enables us to kill the innocent in the name of righteousness.

To deal with anger, we have to be mindful. Mindfulness makes us know what is righteous and prevents us from becoming a demon like the one we hate. To end anger, we must forgive.

Why do we have to forgive? In fact human beings are not our enemy. The real enemies are greed, hatred and delusion that motivate a criminal act. But if we are aware of this truth, we will see that a criminal deserves our compassion and forgiveness. We will also see the positive side of that person. Anger makes us blind to the fact that a person deserves our forgiveness because s/he can change. Forgiveness releases us from the hell of hatred that burns only the living not the dead.

There is an interesting story, a story about Kim Phuc, a Vietnamese woman. Forty years ago when she was young, she appeared in a photo running naked and crying on the streets because her village and her family were destroyed by napalm attacks by the American troops. She survived. Her body wounds were cured by many surgeries, but her mind still burns with anger. Twenty five years later, she traveled to the US to give talks on the dangers of war. She finally met the soldier who dropped the napalm bomb on her house and told him that she is no longer angry and forgives him. Kim Phuc said that she was angry because her house was destroyed. She found out that the angrier she became, the more difficult it was for her to live happily. Her anger was killing her. The only way for her to survive is to forgive. Then she found out that her heart has become more compassionate. Anger cannot make her live a human life, only forgiveness can.

This is an example of how anger is transformed into creativity or a new life. If we are aware of anger, we can overcome it. It is especially important in this time of violence. Even if we are unable to forgive those who think differently from us or those who are harming us, at least we should be patient and open-minded. We must see that people whom we hate today can be our friends in the future, or were our friends in the past. We actually share the very same world.

Fighting against the culture of violence means fighting against hatred and anger, using mindfulness, compassion and forgiveness. If we cannot contain such culture, it will spread more widely—even into Buddhist temples, as in the case of Ven. Supoj. Buddhists must be aware that they have dual responsibilities. One is to cultivate wisdom to release them from suffering. Another is to foster well-being, peace and happiness in society. Buddhism is not only useful in the prayer room. It is also useful in the workplace, on the streets, and in the struggle for justice in order to create a new social order.

If we understand Buddhism only at the personal level, the space for Buddhism will shrink. People can be good only at home. But at work, they cannot be good. They have to be competitive, selfish, exploitative, corrupt, sneaky, etc. This is a problem which is specific to Buddhists. It is us who have enabled the spreading of violent structures and consumerism to the extent that our space is shrinking. We need to expand our space, not by preaching but by going out to work for society, to make the power of Dhamma visible to the public at large. We must liberate our society from the jaws of capitalism and violence. We must challenge, oppose and rupture the structures of violence. To do so, we must take care of our heart. If we cannot overcome violence in our heart, we will not be able to overcome the violence in our society. Unless we accomplish both of these things, we will not be able to protect the lives of good people such as Ven. Supoj. Otherwise, Buddhism has no space in society, and it will become a mere cult.

Phra Paisan Visalo

Summary of speech commemorating Phra Supoj Suvajo who was brutally killed on 17 June 2005 in his meditation center in Chiangmai.

Gross National Happiness from the Bottom Up:
Thoughts on Happiness from the Teardrop of the Indian Ocean

An Island Transformed

We can still see remnants of our traditional values and culture, but there is no question that Sri Lankan society has been transformed over the years. This story is certainly not unique to Sri Lanka. Under the British, all land that was not permanently cultivated or demonstrably under private ownership was taken as Crown property. Altogether, an estimated 6 million acres were claimed, including common forest, *chena*, and grazing lands that once belonged to the villages. In many areas, forests were sold and cleared to establish large tea, rubber, and coconut plantations. Laborers were brought in from India to work the plantations and cheap rice was imported from Burma and India to feed the workers. By the end of the colonial administration in 1948, we were dependent on imports for seventy percent of our major food staples.

At the same time, a grain tax was imposed. The tax was payable in cash or kind, but because it was based on land area, not yield, a bad season would cause the villagers to fall behind in their payments. The government policy was to recover the debts by evicting the villagers and selling the land on the open market. Eventually, land began to accumulate in the hands of a few. The evicted villagers either became tenants on their old land or wage laborers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, a new Sri Lankan capitalist class had emerged.



Sri Lanka did not win its independence through a popular uprising, non-violent resistance, or broad-based struggle like many of the other countries in the region. Political power was handed over to a group of English-speaking Sri Lankan elite in our capital city of Colombo. The process began around the turn of the century. The mood in the UK had begun to shift. Social welfare policies were being introduced in Britain, and conventional forms of colonialism were being questioned. Sri Lanka was seen as a model colony so when a group of wealthy Sri Lankans began pushing for more power, the colonial administration responded by widening the voting franchise, enlarging the Legislative Council to include more elected Sri Lankan representatives, and opening more of the top civil service posts to Sri Lankans.

In 1931, 17 years before our formal independence, the British government granted universal suffrage and democratic self- government, making Sri Lanka the first colony where the 'rural masses' were given the right to vote. Although financial authority remained with the non-elected Executive Council, which was made up of British civil servants, the newly elected representatives had the power to make policy decisions. These English-speaking, urban elite were a very small minority with very little in common with most Sri Lankans. Under a majority-rule electoral system with universal suffrage, they needed to show they were legitimate representatives of 'the people,' and they needed to demonstrate they were looking after the welfare of the rural villagers.

The politicians looked to the past. They spoke of returning to Sri Lanka's golden age and traditional cultural values. Some even claimed to be directly descended from the ancient dry zone rulers. These new leaders argued that the colonial government caused the deterioration of rural society by focusing on the plantation sectors,[1] and they promised to revitalize peasant agriculture and restore the peasant farmers to the dignity and virtue that they formerly enjoyed. They initiated large state-funded programs based on the British social welfare model. The Sri Lankan nationalist leaders was able to make the non-elected British Executive Council appear increasingly illegitimate, and in 1948, Sri Lanka was formally granted political independence.

From 'Development Model' to Teardrop of the Indian Ocean

Our future looked very

[1] Interestingly, many of these leaders had earned at least a portion of their wealth through these same plantations

promising. We had strong cultural values and a proud history. Our elected leaders were prioritizing the well-being of the common people. They rejected the advice of the international development agencies and invested in small-scale farmers and national self-sufficiency in paddy production. They restored the ancient irrigation systems, established village-level societies to play the role of the ancient *gamsabawa*, and passed land reforms, environmental protection policies and labor laws. They promoted vernacular languages and established a Ministry of Indigenous Medicine. They provided universal health care, free education, food rations and price subsidies. In the 1970s, international development agencies spoke of Sri Lanka as an alternative development model. Even though our GNP was low, we ranked very high on the Physical Quality of Life Index because of our high life expectancy, low infant mortality rates, and excellent literacy rates.

Sri Lanka should have a high Gross National Happiness. Instead, we've had ethnic riots, violent uprisings, armed conflict, and bombings that have terrorized people throughout the country. In the north and south combined, more than one hundred thousand people have been killed by political violence.[2] Hundreds of thousands more have been wounded by combat or by the nearly 2 million landmines that have been planted in our soils.[3] Over a million people have lost their homes to ethnic riots and war.[4] More than eight hundred thousand of our people have fled their homes and have been 'internally displaced.' Another eight hundred thousand have left the country and sought refugee status overseas.[5] And these statistics cannot even begin to capture the emotional, social, and environmental impacts of violent conflict on our beautiful island.

National policies provided for the rural people, emphasized cultural traditions and protected the environment, so what happened? How did Sri Lanka become associated with tears, not happiness? Obviously, there are many interconnected reasons, but there seems to be one point that is particularly relevant to discussions on GNH: a national government, even one with good intentions, cannot ***provide*** happiness. Happiness has to come from the bottom up.

Local Action and Happiness

Our experience in Sri Lanka suggests that when a centralized government tries to do everything ***for*** its people, new problems are inadvertently created. One reason is related to diversity. The interventions of the government have not always matched the needs or aspirations of our country's diverse population. Wealthy, Colombo-based politicians spoke of 'the people' as if all villages and families in rural areas were the same,[6] but even two neighboring villages can have different contexts and different priorities and two neighboring families can face different constraints. The government's paternalistic policies did not account for the diverse needs, interests, and capabilities of different households.

The government simplified the traditions of our dry zone ancestors and compartmentalized them into many different national-level Ministries. Priorities, like national self-sufficiency in rice production, were set in Colombo. The urban-based politicians and bureaucrats were disconnected. They did not recognize the importance of other components of traditional cultivation systems and rural diets. They did not understand that most rural people were more concerned with their total household income than they were with increasing paddy yields. They did not consider that their vernacular language policies placed restrictions on ambitious rural youth in both the north and the south. They did not see that their definition of 'the people' left many of the people on our island feeling excluded and alienated.

Our ancestors made decisions about local level problems at a local level. If there was a disagreement or a problem with the village tank, they were able to quickly respond. If the solution did not work, there was immediate feedback. If their situation changed, they could take local action to make the necessary adjustments. They understood their local context and could make decisions based on local

[2] There are no official statistics that are agreed upon by all sides. The estimate of war casualties in the north ranges from 70,000-80,000. The first JVP uprising resulted in 3-6,000 deaths. The second was probably closer to 45,000.

[3] Bhatt, S. and D. Mistry. 2006. *Cost of Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Mumbai, Strategic Foresight Group.

[4] Peiris, G. H. 2000. Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation: A Retrospect. *Pursuit of Peace in Sri Lanka: Past Failures and Future Prospects*. K. M. de Silva and G. H. Peiris. Kandy, International Centre for Ethnic Studies: 345-382.

[5] Bhatt, S. and D. Mistry. 2006. *Cost of Conflict in Sri Lanka*. Mumbai, Strategic Foresight Group.

[6] 'The people' was taken to mean land-owning Sinhala Buddhist paddy farmers.

needs, interests, and capabilities. It is true that the Sri Lankan government established 'village organizations' that were supposed to fill the role of the ancient *gamsabhawa*, but these societies had very little authority or decision making power. They were primarily used to channel government grants and subsidies to members. Even if they had been granted a larger decision making role, this kind of institution cannot be imposed from above. Civil society institutions have to grow out of local interest; there is no one-size-fits-all structure or formula.

If one problem was that the centralized national government had difficulty recognizing and responding to the diverse needs of the people, a second was that by trying to provide everything ***for*** the people the government created enormous expectations and dependency. In campaign promises and public programs, the government assumed direct responsibility not just for basic infrastructure, health and education, but also land, agricultural inputs, food, housing, and even employment. The politician was portrayed as the people's provider and the bureaucrat was their problem solver. Today, agricultural innovation comes not from the farmers, but from the government research centers. If an irrigation channel is silted or damaged, if a pest emerges, if farmgate prices are low, it is the responsibility of the government. If oil or food prices rise, it is the responsibility of the government. If a young university graduate is unemployed, it is the responsibility of the government. The government's paternalistic role has created enormous expectations and a deep sense of entitlement. When these high expectations aren't met, people become very frustrated.

Paternalism has also created what our development workers call 'dependency mind.' In the past, Sri Lankan villagers got together to solve their own problems. Today, they wait for others to come to the village and do things for them. The international aid that has come into the country since the conflict and since the 2004 tsunami has made the situation even worse. People wait for the government; they wait for donors. We have a proud past and many resources, yet we wait with our hands out like beggars. This too is linked to our unhappiness. People feel they do not have a say in their future; they do not have control over their lives. They are dependent on the decisions of others.

Many discussions on Gross National Happiness have focused on national government policies and international guidelines. Of course it is important that national government's provide a conducive, supporting policy framework, but this is not enough. Gross National Happiness cannot be provided by governments on their own. Top-down policies can lead to frustration, alienation, and a sense of powerlessness. Local action and civil society initiative is critical to well-being. Today, we are working in Sri Lanka to wipe away our tears and come together. We can no longer leave governance to a small minority in a distant capital. When we make decisions about the issues that affect us, when we have strong, active communities and we can see the results of our efforts, we feel proud, we feel fulfilled, and most of all, we feel happy.

Harsha Kumara Navaratne and Amanda Kiessel,
Sewalanka Foundation,
Sri Lanka

You did not hear from us for a long time. We are happy to be back with some good news.

The Center for Bhutan Studies (CBS) announced the dates of the 4th International Conference on Gross National Happiness! The conference will be held 24-26 November 2008 in Thimphu, Bhutan.

Information and Call for Papers are available at www.bhutanstudies.org.bt and the contactperson is Dorji Penjore dorpen71@gmail.com telephone 975-2-335872.

Shortly after 'GNH4', a unique gathering will take place in Thailand: the second conference of the Buddhist Economics Research Platform will be organized 5-7 December 2008 in Ubon Ratchathani. At the university (5 Dec.) and a Buddhist meditation centre in the nearby forest, founded by the famous Ajarn Chah. Gross National Happiness will be one of the workshop topics during this pioneering event. Information: www.buddhist-economics.info and Linda Nowakowski at lindern@gmail.com

Later the same month the ASEAN People's Forum will be held in Bangkok 13-15 December including a workshop on GNH and the parallel Green Fair Thailand '08. For the ASEAN People's Forum contact Somkid M. Mahitaya at somkid_tvs@yahoo.com and for the Green Fair: Wallapa van Willenswaard wallapa@suan-spirit.com

We have started updating our website www.gnh-movement.org again with among others reports on the heart-warming Planet Diversity conference in Bonn, Germany; the Paradiso workshop (on ICT and changing social paradigms)

organized in Brussels by the EU, Club of Rome and Oriones ; as well as announcements on our new GNH movement project.

Planet Diversity initiator and environmentalist Vandana Shiva will speak at the ASEAN People's Forum. She will address the food crisis with the question 'Can Organic Agriculture Feed the World?'.

For information on the GNH movement project of Suan Nguen Mee Ma (the organizer of GNH3) please visit our GNH movement website. The aim of this 'research development' project supported by Thailand Research Fund (to be confirmed) is to explore an effective mult-istakeholder approach to social transformation inspired by Gross National Happiness and a synthesis of similar movements towards change 'beyond GDP'. In the first year 2008-2009 six bi-monthly brainstorming workshops will be organized in order to shape a longer term action-research programme, probably including international comparative research.

Your participation in the process will be very much appreciated. If you are not living in Thailand our website and the internet will be the way. We are preparing a special interactive communication portal for this purpose to be launched in 2009.

The first workshop of the GNH movement project will take place Tuesday-morning 26 August 2008, SASIN business school Room 502, Bangkok. Resource persons will include Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa from the perspective of engaged spirituality, Magsaysay Awardee and media-activist Jon Unghpakorn, business leader Prida Tiasuwan and senator Rosanna Tositrakul. The theme will be 'Today's Crisis: Hidden Opportunities for Change in the Next Decade'.

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Redefining Progress – Realizing The GNH Paradigm

GNH4 in Thimphu, Bhutan

After the 3rd International Conference on Gross National Happiness in Nongkhai and Bangkok last year a number of initiatives are being developed by a diversity of groups all over the world. The most important next step however will be the **4th International GNH Conference** to be held in Bhutan, 24-26 November 2008. Information on the conference will be made available at www.bhutanstudies.org.bt.

The conference in Bhutan will be another major event in the auspicious year 2008, after the first democratic elections, the adoption of the Constitution and the coronation of the new King on 6th November. Bhutan also celebrates the centenary of the monarchy that started in 1907.

In Thailand the Mekong region NGO and Youth network met in Rayong to plan future activities while exchanges between Youth groups from Vientiane, Laos and Nongkhai, Thailand are taking shape.

The Japan Foundation organized a meeting in Bangkok with the local citizens of Minamata city to present their case: a transformation process from a severely polluted industrial area to a 'Green City'. Thai-Japanese exchanges between Rayong and Minamata have been initiated under the guidance of Prof. Takayoshi Kusago of GLOCOL, Osaka University.

Jean Timsit set up a unique *Project+* research group in the USA with Tibetan monk Mat-thieu Ricard as Buddhist resource person. Ricard's book *Happiness. A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill* in Thai will be presented in December in Bangkok this year.

Suan Nguen Mee Ma publishers are now developing, with support of the Thailand Research Fund, a series of six bi-monthly workshops under the title Redefining Progress. ***Realizing the GNH Paradigm***. The aim is to build up, in a process of transformative learning, a multi-stakeholder network that can initiate longer term action research in order to divert the obsession of policy makers for GDP driven economic growth towards happiness-for-all centered development attributing priority to culture. Our well-being will more and more depend on our capabilities to detach from material affluence and find enjoyment in - engaged - spiritual activity.



Here follows an overview of the workshops as provisionally planned.

Workshop 1 — Tuesday morning 26 August 2008

Today's Crisis and Hidden Opportunities for Transformation

Leadership in crisis from the perspectives of engaged spirituality by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa; civil society, Jon Unghpakorn; the business sector, Prida Tiasuwan and politics to be presented by senator Rosana Tositrakul.

Workshop 2 — Friday morning 10 October 2008

Transformative Learning and Happiness for Social Change

During the GNH3 conference Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, UNESCO Asia-Pacific Director, proposed to add a fifth pillar of education to UNESCO's major policy development framework, the Jacques Delors Report. The fifth pillar being: Learning to Transform.

The workshop will be conducted by Naropa University educated Nuttarote Wangwinyoo and several scholars including those who explore 'contemplative science'.

Workshop 3 and activities in December — **Rural/Urban Divide. Can organic agriculture feed the world?**, Saturday morning 13 December 2008. The international guest speaker will be **Vandana Shiva**, India, initiator of the *Planet Diversity* movement. The first *Planet Diversity* conference was held in Bonn, Germany, May 2008, parallel with the UN Biodiversity convention.

Workshop 4 — **Participatory Action Research, ICT and media**, March 2009. **Roger Torrenti** intends to be present the results of the Paradiso conference in this workshop. Paradiso (paradigm for society) is an initiative of Roger (Information and Communication Technology expert and resource person during GNH3) and the Club of Rome supported by the European Union. The Heinrich Boell Foundation has shown interest in media-ICT cooperation to shape public participation in the GNH movement.

Workshop 5 — **'The Global GDP Debate'**, May 2009.

Workshop 6 — **Conclusions, Synthesis and Action Research Plan**, July 2009

Information on the programme can be found on www.gnh-movement.org and please contact Wallapa and Hans at hans@gnh-movement.org

The Dollar's Reign Coming to an End?

One of the most significant trends in the global economy in recent years has been the decline of the US dollar. It is a trend that has far reaching consequences for all the inhabitants of this planet.

It is partly because the US dollar has declined so much in value since 2003 that the price of oil — a lot of the oil trade is denominated in the dollar— has shot up. According to an analyst, "against a basket of currencies, the dollar has fallen by 25 percent since 2003, and considerably more since its peak in 2001." What this means is that the dollar value of a barrel of oil today is much more than it was 5 years ago. Of course, there are other reasons why the price of oil is escalating.

Since oil is the lifeblood of contemporary civilization, the steep price hike has impacted upon all areas of life. With the higher cost of living, not only the poor but even those who are at the lower echelons of the middle class are struggling to make ends meet. The increase in food prices on a global scale, for instance, is linked to oil. The rising costs of both food and oil—it has to be reiterated—are directly connected to the decline of the dollar.

The adverse consequences of the declining dollar go beyond oil and food. Since the US runs huge trade deficits with countries like China and Japan, the declining dollar will not be in the interest of the latter. Neither will it be in the interest of countries which hold most of their foreign exchange reserves in the dollar. A number of them are already feeling the effects of the diminishing value of their reserves.

It is not surprising therefore that countries are converting part or whole of their reserves into other currencies, notably the euro. Some oil producing countries are also switching to other currencies. Expectedly, these moves have further weakened the dollar.

The US is not happy about this, though a weaker dollar may boost its exports and reduce its trade deficit marginally. The US knows that it is the dominant position of the dollar that enables it to exercise global financial and economic hegemony. It is because the dollar is the world's reserve currency that the US has so much political clout in the international arena. This is why the dollar has been described as one of the two principal pillars of US global hegemony, the other being its military power.

It explains why the US leadership was so incensed when the late Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, abandoned the dollar and switched to the euro in 2000. He also converted Iraq's 10 billion reserve fund at the UN to euro. Commentators have argued that it was partly because of these decisions that the US and British governments pushed hard for the invasion of Iraq which at the time of the currency switch was already under tough UN sanctions.

Since 2002, Iran, currently the world's second largest oil exporter, has converted all its foreign exchange reserves to a basket of currencies, excluding the dollar. In the second quarter of 2008, it went further and decided to denominate its entire oil trade in currencies other than the dollar. Is it any wonder that Israel, the US's closest ally, has become more bellicose in its threat to attack Iran in recent weeks? Of course, as in the case of Iraq, there are also other motives behind attempts by the US, Israel and their other Western allies to bring Iran to its knees.

For the US, any move by a major oil exporter to wean itself away from the dollar is a direct challenge to its hegemonic power. Look at its continuous manoeuvres to undermine Venezuela's democratically elected president, after Hugo Chavez placed a portion of his country's oil trade out of the dollar's orbit. It is not difficult to fathom why the US is so obsessed with perpetuating the oil-dollar nexus. It is partly because most of the oil trade — more than any other trade — is denominated in the dollar that the US currency is able to dominate the world economy. In fact, it was the US's agreement with Saudi Arabia in 1974 that the oil trade would be denominated in the dollar which gave a huge lift to the dollar's reign. The US will fight tooth and nail to ensure that that reign continues.

But the supremacy of the dollar must end if US hegemony is to end. US hegemony—like all hegemonies in history—has been a bane upon humanity. It has brought death and destruction to millions through wars and conflicts. It has widened the gap between the 'have-a-lot' and the 'have-a-little' right across the globe. It has reinforced global authoritarianism and stymied the growth of global democracy and

international law. It has given rise to antagonism and antipathy between civilizations, especially between the Western and Muslim worlds. It has denied equality and respect to civilizations and cultures outside the West. It has led to global environmental degradation and a global climate crisis. Global hegemony has also provoked a vile and vicious reaction from a fringe within the Muslim world in the form of global terror.

This is why citizen groups in both the Global South and the Global North should campaign with greater vigour to bring global hegemony to an end by weakening the role of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. More oil producing countries should be persuaded to switch from the dollar to other currencies. In international trade, countries should shift to other currencies which are more conducive to their short and long term interests. If foreign reserves are still in dollars a concerted endeavour should be made to convert them into other currencies which will at least protect their value. Citizen groups should also encourage their governments and corporations to accelerate regional trade and investment which could be conducted in their own currencies. Some Latin American States, such as Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia are showing greater enthusiasm for regional cooperation with the ultimate goal of ensuring that their continent is liberated once and for all from US dominance and control. Cuba and Venezuela have even stepped up barter trade, the former's health expertise in exchange for the latter's oil which minimises altogether the role of money. Intra-ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) trade and investment have also increased significantly in recent years With the emergence of China and India as important economic players, ASEAN and other states in Asia should consider using one of the major Asian currencies for regional trade and not continue to depend upon the US dollar.

Quite apart from all these efforts, citizen groups should demand comprehensive reform of the international financial system. This is the right time to make this demand. They should make it abundantly clear to all and sundry that the dollar can no longer serve as the world's reserve currency. It has to be replaced. Shouldn't we start working now — even if it takes a few decades — towards a common world currency which is not linked to any particular nation or region that can be used for international trade? Why shouldn't we let our imagination run ahead of reality at a time like this?

Chandra Muzaffar

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Future Finance — Building an Economy of Earth Stewardship and Global Equity

"Anyone can visualize the future. Not many know how to get there."

The promoters of the current economic order promised stability based on enterprise but have delivered chaos based on speculation. They promised transparency but have created a world ruled by occult financial knowledge. US President F.D. Roosevelt's inaugural words in 1933 ring true again today: "There must be an end to a conduct in banking and business which too often has given to a sacred trust the likeness of a callous and selfish wrong-doing.

Today's situation is even more serious. The crisis is deeper, more global and with longer-term implications. The current financial turmoil has its own roots, but is linked to the awareness that the limits to growth have finally hit us, as the Club of Rome warned many years ago. We are facing the predicted limits to key non-renewable resources a little later than they predicted. But, as we failed to listen and prepare, the consequences, especially of peak oil,

will be dramatic and messy. At the same time our "after us the deluge" lifestyles and blind trust in markets and techno-fixes have made scarce or destabilized key renewable resources: Climate, water, soil, air.

The pioneer of a "steady-state", ethical and ecological economics, Prof. Hermann Daly, warned that globalization is the last attempt to escape natural limits by growing into the economic and ecological space of other countries. Having now reached global limits from which there is no escape, we need to transform our "win-win" competitive "cowboy" economy into a co-operative "spaceship" economy, recognizing that natural laws overrule economic laws. You can negotiate with creditors but not with melting glaciers! Non-existent oil cannot be burnt at any price.

A recent critique of the ruling economic order is sub-titled "How blind faith in markets has cost us our future". Another is subtitled "How thinking like an economist destroys community," turning us into what Daly calls a "cosmopolitan non-community of globalized individuals". Market fundamentalism thus not only threatens the survival of our societies and of a healthy planet, but has also fostered a global belief system of "selfish capitalism" which undermines the human qualities needed to repair the damage done. "Economics is the method but the object is to change the soul", said Margaret Thatcher. Neo-liberalism has been successful, by planning and implementing their vision strategically over several decades, in doing just that. After I challenged the growth fixation of Economics Nobel Laureates during a debate in Stockholm a few years ago, the director of the Nobel Foundation replied that "when we had zero growth in Sweden, we had 15% unemployment." Thus, the only alternatives within the current economic order are social collapse through mass unemployment or environmental collapse through continued "growth".

In an argument with Hermann Daly, his colleague Lawrence Summers insisted that our natural environment is a dependent sub-system (a box within a box) of the human economy. If a resource becomes too scarce and expensive, "the market" will magically produce an alternative. From a common sense perspective, such a belief is not so much mistaken as crazy — comparable to the belief in a flat earth. If economics was a science, an economist with such crazy beliefs would face ridicule and professional ruin. But Summers has held some of the most powerful positions in our global order: World Bank chief economist, US Treasury Secretary, Harvard University President.

Despite its Nobel Prize — added to those created by Nobel despite the protests of his family — economics is a belief system in the service of power. Any reform attempts must face this reality: It is less a question of inventing "better" (more equitable, sustainable) economic policies, of which many already exist, but of de-legitimizing the current faith in order to create space for different ways of producing, consuming and valuing wealth.

In "The Gods That Failed" Larry Elliott writes about the private banking system's power of money creation through fractional reserve banking: "As with so much about high finance, this is a boring expression for something that is ultimately about power."

Before global neo-liberal brainwashing began, this was well understood, especially in the USA.

In his 1901 message to congress, Republican president Theodore Roosevelt noted that "Corporations exist only because they were created and safeguarded by our institutions and it is... our right and duty to see that they work in harmony with those institutions."

After the 1929 crash, President F. D. Roosevelt proclaimed that "the money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilisation. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths." Yet in 1948 President Truman — certainly no revolutionary — was again complaining about the "Wall Street economic dictatorship."

The arrogance of the corporate "global players" complaining about harmful government regulations supposedly distorting an economic state of nature is breathtaking. Without regulations (limiting liability, trust legislation, fractional reserve banking etc.), they would not be in business.

Of course, in reality they are very much in favour of regulation, as long as it is in their favour (corporate welfare), but "deregulation" is a more attractive slogan...

The key issue is therefore not more or less regulation, but in whose favour the state regulates. Whose interests are prioritized? Most of us would prioritize social and ecological stability over market efficiency. In times of crisis our ancestors often subordinated the market to the interests of the economically weak, who were given privileged access. Today we are warned not to politicize markets but "one man's politicization is another's democratic politics." (WFC councillor Stephen Marglin)

The challenge we face is huge. For while we need to prioritize real wealth production and preservation, which is currently priced out by the higher profitability of the financial sector, this sector "guarantees" the pensions of the workers in the whole economy. Yet this guarantee is hollow, as an estimated 80% of the value of investment funds is based on expectations of future capital flows now threatened by the multiple crises facing us.

The "perfect storm" is a term much over-used to describe the current crisis. Do those who use it remember that in the film thus titled no-one survived the storm?

Future Finance needs to re-connect economics with life. The triumph of economic ideology is most apparent in the global South where billions are supposedly being "enriched" by counting their (new) market transactions while ignoring the non-market wealth which has been lost in the transition from society-embedded markets to marked-embedded societies. Nowhere is the moral perversion behind this process more evident than in supposedly technical and value-neutral cost-benefit analyses, in which the lives of the poor are valued at a fraction of the value of the rich — because the poor can afford to pay less to save themselves.

As the costs of stopping climate chaos would fall mainly on the rich, economists in their pay not surprisingly conclude that it is cheaper to sacrifice the poor...

Environmental cost-benefit-analysis began by asking how much compensation residents would want in return for allowing e.g. a polluting factory to be built nearby. But the compensation expectations were so high, i.e. people valued a clean environment so much, that most polluting projects would need to be abandoned — which was not the result desired by those who had commissioned the analysis... In one case, residents near the US Great Lakes asked why they wanted so much compensation for a factory which would merely spoil their view, quoted a local saying that "a view of the bay is worth half the pay."

To get the desired results, residents were then asked how much they would be prepared to pay to prevent the polluting factory from being built. If the amount was higher than what the economists thought the person could reasonably afford, the figure was "adjusted" downwards.

Similarly, the interests and needs of future generations are discounted away, by assuming that our descendants will be richer and therefore will derive less satisfaction from the same product.

Discounting the future is presented by economists as an ethical argument in favour of the poor of today who would lose out if "growth" would be slowed by internalizing environmental costs.

"The assumption of growth (measured by GDP) justifies our using more resources and polluting more now than we would otherwise do. Therefore our descendants, who by assumption are supposed to be better off than ourselves, perhaps will be paradoxically worse off ... Perhaps the discount rate for biodiversity and ecosystem benefits should even be negative..." (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, 2008) What is the use of more and bigger fishing boats if there is no fish?

The economic bottom line obviously reflects what has been included and omitted in the top lines. These inclusions and omissions reflect power relationships. Thus a fossil fuel plant closed prematurely counts as "capital destruction". US "takings" laws give corporations the right to be compensated for lost potential profits caused by environmental legislation. Yet the huge daily natural capital destruction of today's unused potential solar and wind energy — lost forever — is not counted... Corporate power is most clearly illustrated by the succession of US Supreme Court judgements giving corporations constitutional rights, e.g. free speech including "the right not to speak", i.e. to withhold product information.

To reverse this trend requires the right timing, the right policies and the right strategy.

The time is now. In 1933 President Roosevelt noted that "the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence... and have abdicated." For all intents and purposes this is again the case.

When the core beliefs of the ruling order are ridiculed in its mainstream publications, then we know that — as in Eastern Europe 1989 — there are openings for drastic change. The US economic model, pushed worldwide by the IMF and World Bank, is rapidly losing credibility. Changes are "totally unprecedented and faster than anything we have ever seen." (Ford spokesperson, IHT 5.7.08) "Bank leaders are a disgrace to capitalism." (FT 2.7.08) The week before, after many years of denial, the Financial Times accepted that "the world economy ... is running into limits on resources." (Martin Wolf, FT 25.6.08)

Policy change proposals must not only be "problem-rea-

listic", recognizing that in times of crisis big steps — which can mobilize and energize — may be easier than small steps. They must also aim to fill the "trust gap"...

Policy proposals need to be integrated, need to encourage innovation, be easily understood and promote resilience and rapid change. The following are examples of the tax, market, financial and monetary policy reforms which the WFC Future Finance project could to research, publicize and help implement in regional/ national legislation and international agreements.

1. Measuring reality, not ideology.
   At an EU conference last year even the conservative EP President Hans-Gert Pötter-ing concluded: "We cannot say that we have seen our wellbeing increase because of economic growth." Several useful alternatives to GDP have been developed (e.g. Daly's and Cobb's Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare). The WFC could work with an interested government to introduce alternative national accounts. The New Economics Foundation would be an excellent partner. Even small steps in this direction would help de-legitimize GDP "rule".
2. An economy serving the people
   Corporate charter legislation should mandate responsibilities, in return for limited liability privileges. Such laws existed in several US states up to the middle of the last century and could be revived and spread as WFC best policies. Recent proposals to force corporations to account for the environmental damage they cause as "unbooked liabilities", illegal under the US Sarbox act, should be explored. While large corporations need to be more strictly controlled, small business should be deregulated. The problem of tax havens can easily be solved by "de-regulation", making contracts with them legally un-enforceable. Under anti-terrorist legislation, the UN Security Council can even freeze individual bank accounts, so political will is all that is required.
3. Taxing bads, not goods
   Ecological tax reform is a pre-condition for an energy-efficient economy. Exemplary policies exist in Sweden etc. A value-depleted-tax, as proposed by Pavan Sukhdev of Deutsche Bank, would compensate for the damage caused during a product's production process and redirect money flows quickly. "A land tax is 200 years overdue." (The Guardian 08.01. 07). The Financial Times agrees: "Land tax is something to build on" (FT 09. 06.06) The London Jubilee underground line cost £3.4 billion to build, but increased adjacent land values by £ 14 billion. The taxing of such unearned profits to pay for the construction and other community benefits cannot be objected to logically. But the fear of upsetting economic orthodoxy is such that Moscow's chief economist was clearly unhappy when I publicly complimented his administration on introducing such a law... Credit trading is not an alternative to taxes, but can complement them under tight conditions. Carbon credits suffer from multiple problems: most provide no net CO_2 reductions and the ones that do ("gold standard") are vastly over-subscribed. Future Finance needs to explore this field, including the US wetland and endangered species credits and the Australian biodiversity credit schemes. Properly controlled and directly linked projects, e.g. the UK-Indian "Converging World", offer scope for rapid upscaling.
4. Money as servant, not master
   To quote Merrill Lynch Executive Francisco Blanch, "Globalisation has to slow!" (FT 24.5.08) Economic re-localization and re-regionalisation will build resilience. Regional liquidity initiatives, e.g. the Chiang Mai Initiative in S.E. Asia and FLAR (L. America) need "best policy" investigation. Can the weaknesses of existing oversight authorities, e.g. the Financial Stability Forum and the Basle Committee for Banking Supervision, be overcome? Should country risk officers be appointed, with what mandates? Which banking controls, dismantled over the last 35 years, need to be re-installed, e.g. to prevent banks avoiding reserve requirements via credit default swops with clearly unsuitable partners? Does Islamic finance, with asset-based income streams, offer a sustainable alternative? Can regional and local currencies play more than a marginal role? Should Keynes' proposal for a convertible reserve World dollar be revived, in order to reduce the need for poor countries to hold foreign currency reserves?

Various proposals exist for taxing the uses and abuses of the global commons. Research is required to identify priorities

and how best to introduce them. A Tobin Tax can either maximize revenue or reduce exchange rate volatility, depending on the rate. Again, implementation is "only" a problem of political will.

But it is very unlikely that re-distributive taxes will provide the speedy and massive money flows needed to finance the required transition, e.g. the rapid upscaling of renewable energy capacity worldwide. To meet the global climate threat, "the single most destructive force actively confronting humanity today" (Kofi Annan), new funding can and must be created quickly. Innovative suggestions exist, e.g. from George Soros and Joseph Stiglitz, for a special issues of IMF SDR's or "Green Dollars", to be allocated primarily to fund the energy transition in the Global South.

Both Soros and Stiglitz know and respect the WFC, and could probably be persuaded to provide advice.

Future Finance will need to educate civil society on these issues. Many prominent activists do not understand monetary policy, which they see as technical and neutral, and regard monetary reform as the realm of cranks. Their mistrust of governments makes them unwilling to restore the state's seigneurage money-creating rights at the expense of private banks. Many environmental economists are hesitant to challenge growth, preferring to promote "qualitative growth", which will allow the current economic system to continue functioning. The WFC Future Finance commission needs to consider the consequences of thinking outside that box. How will a non-growing economy generate the revenues for a transition to a more co-operative society — and prevent a descent into barbarism?

Jakob von Uexküll

Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)

SEM is under the auspices of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. Its primary concern is alternative education, particularly focusing on spiritual transformation. For over a decade, SEM has been involved in initiating and cultivating ideas and knowledge systems that challenge mainstream thinking and explore new paradigms of thought. SEM's vision of education is holistic, which is essential if we want to find practical solutions to problems in everyday life.

The education process that SEM set motion in the previous year falls under two categories; that is, organizing general courses (20 in all) and specialized courses (37 in all). These courses dealt with a broad range of issues—life, relationship, cultivation of knowledge, aesthetic, and so on. Admittedly, SEM courses have yet to cover social and ecological dimensions fully. These two issues will be incorporated into SEM's new curriculum in order to be more holistic. The contents of SEM's courses also draw upon the Dhamma and ways of living that are simple and eco-friendly. Participants in SEM courses can adapt the knowledge and skills learned and use them in personal life, in community life, at work, etc.

Holding courses over the years made SEM realize that more and more individuals are interested in spiritual transformation. SEM participants come from all walks of life, representing different age groups, gender, class, and so on. Thus hopefully these courses will have far-reaching consequences. At the very least, people in society should be aware that there's another dimension that will help enable them to achieve happiness, the Good, truth, and beauty in life.

Responding to the growing interest in its courses, SEM is in the process of further developing its curriculum and staff. Since it's a non-profit organization, it often faces financial difficulties. In any case, SEM still steadfastly adheres to the virtue of self-reliance and -sufficiency. It will continue to subsidize the training of social activists/workers and their participation in SEM courses. Hopefully, they will help spread the words around reaching society at large.

SEM will thus persist in its resolution to cultivate new knowledge systems so that the people in society will have the capacity to envision new forms of being together and with one another.

A Conversation with Sulak Sivaraksa:
A Discussion with the Staff and Friends of the Center for Humans and Nature

The Yale Club, New York City, NY USA
14-15 April 2008



- *Nick*: Based on what you have shared, I am wondering about the importance of 'truth" from the Buddhist perspective and how this influences democracy and our understanding of history.
- *Sulak*: I think you are correct. Sadly, the so-called Buddhist nations have been culturally uprooted and now don't know the principles of Buddhism. Buddhism has been removed from Siam's richest classes' understanding of democracy but the poorer classes are starting, with a great deal of moral courage, to become the seeds of democracy, to infuse democracy with their understanding of the principles of Buddhism. Democracy is coming in Siam, and with some Buddhist influence, as the middle class changes, as has happened in my experience with the gas pipeline. Business people now need to be convinced to care for themselves (their mind and body) as well as their society. It is not true that business means abandoning our cultural roots. The Social Venture Network (care for heart, mind, body and colleagues and sales people...) started in Europe (own no car, pay less tax; own more cars, pay more taxes) is now coming to Siam. We must learn to listen to the poor—this is essential. Your whole lifestyle will change. Even Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank, knew this. He and I are friends. He asked economists at the Bank to live with the poor for four nights to

better understand them. We must see beyond compartmentalization. Caring is growing. We must meditate; get to know ourselves. Top economists, think they know everything. Arrogant. Spend 4 days with poor and think they know them. That is not enough but better than nothing. Must train them to be humble. "Voices from the Poor": dignity, way of living, respect own religions.

- *Paul*: Is there a way that you see Buddhism can help us to make the right decision when faced with so many possibilities, and especially when it is more difficult to see which is the best course of action?
- *Sulak*: Yes. Develop loving kindness. Then compassion. To love humanity is easy. To love your neighbor is not. Even love yourself is not easy often we love success, money, etc., more than ourselves; love your neighbor is hard. Develop that, develop compassion. Poverty is the product of the rich lifestyle. Share their suffering. Next learn. Learn not to hate oppressor, but oppression. Hate oppressive system. Next learn to develop equanimity, love, patient, understanding, open, accountable, transparent. Always, loving-kindness; compassion; share others' suffering; be with others; be arrested with them: this is the path, dharma, satyagraha, from hatred, fear, illusion to true democracy. The Tibetan Buddhists in exile are a democracy; Bhutan is now trying a true democracy. Buddha said: do not believe in me; believe in the nonviolent way.
- *Ron*: When Westerners think about democracy, as it has become so corrupted by all its perversions and delusions, some question whether it was an idea whose time has come and gone. But as I heard you speak, Sulak, you are talking about a moral and spiritual path by the name of democracy which embodies the core deep principles in Buddhism. "Democracy" — rule by law, equality, dissent, non-violence, humility, care, dialogue — is now the vehicle for the rediscovery, the universalization, and the contemporary relevance and practice of the authentic, life-giving spiritual and moral values of Buddhism It is emerging in places across Asia. But this must also mean leaving behind certain other aspects of this heritage, right?
- *Sulak*: At its best, democracy has a spiritual dimension or spiritual essence. [Sulak reads a quote from a Catholic Brother about the change of ritual from a useful practice to counterproductive dogma.] Singapore has a perverse democracy, the forms only, an empty ritual. Buddhism must also give up meaningless ritual to find its true essence. In this way, also, you see, democracy is a thing of substance, not form. Democracy not just elections, election is egoism. Tell how important you are. Should be: if you are good, step up. If someone better, step down.

Further Questions for Sulak

- *Michael*: The term democracy has been so corrupted by its perverse uses. Has it served its purposes? Should we look for other terms? We should resist abandoning powerful terms. People will appropriate powerful words to get people to stop using it. Strong word with many opponents. Don't let them take it.
- *Sulak*: Democracy is only name or word for a spiritual and political path. Must go beyond democracy as a mere mantra.

  Most especially it needs: (1) a practice that opens the mystery of being (teaching); (2) celebration of that experience (ritual); and (3) way of life that arises from it (precepts). Now, democracy becoming empty ritual, dogma: e.g. "we are economic animals."

  If we follow spiritual democracy we need to support the ordination of women. No scandals with women (money/sex). Social welfare good, but need social change. Democracy is substance, not form, such as election decides how right you are—only my party is the right way.

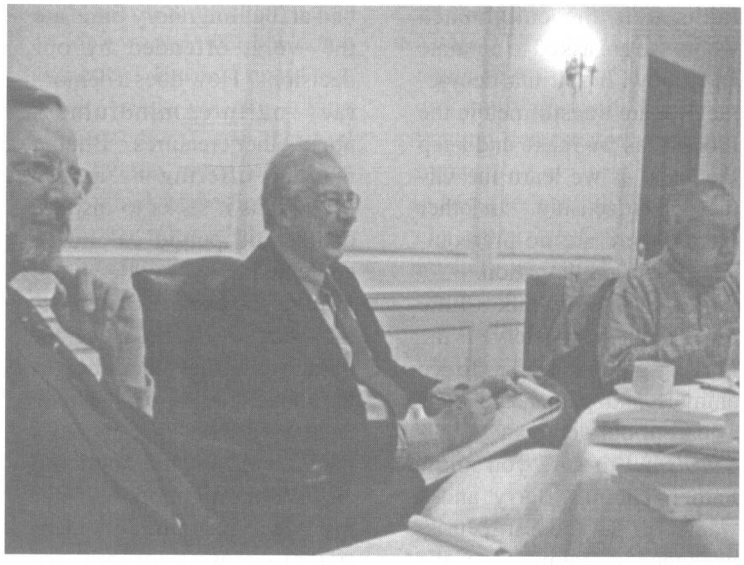
  In Buddhism, elephant is closest to man, just can't talk. They go to work at 10, retire at 60. During our struggles against the gas pipeline, the elephants knew we were helping them, they never interfered. They (elephants) were very hungry and didn't have any salt. After the arrest, the opponents had a party on the land and the elephants attacked and ate their salt, but they never hurt us.
- *Michael*: If democracy is a path then it is a process, there is no final end point.
- *Bruce*: Is there a paradoxical notion in democracy as a path in that it is sneaky? Citizens create community; but the experience of community also creates citizens. Maybe process versus end point is a false dichotomy. In other words, we do not have to be saved to be on the path, whereas in most

faiths it is the enlightened whom we are asked to emulate and follow. In spiritual democracy we are transformed in the process, as we make and keep the laws, as we learn the virtues of citizenship. In other words, there are no prerequisites to our participation.

- *Paul*: I wanted to talk a little more about the mystery. Is the mystery going to lead us to see animals and plants and soils as part of our democracy?
- *Carolyn*: I'm sure you know Father Thomas Berry and I wanted to put the Earth Jurisprudence movement on the table in that regard.
- *Brendan*: I think it's important that we not let vested interests appropriate our most powerful terms, however. Like other terms used often these days there is a lot of power in the word democracy, and also a lot of corruption, but I don't think that we should simply abandon the word in favor of another. If we do, that new word will simply be appropriated as well—we must fight that process.
- *Bill B.*: According to Sulak, aren't loving-kindness and mindfulness prerequisites to being on the spiritual path of democracy or engaged Buddhism? Granted our participation in democracy community transforms us as we transform it, are there not spiritual disciplines of the self that are pre-requisite if these are to be liberating transformations? And isn't the practice of mindfulness even harder to achieve than loving kindness? I'm curious to talk more about mindfulness.
- *Nick*: We make no space for creatures which we often displace. Large mammals we are bad at, but migratory birds are the worst offended by our decisions. How does a democracy nurture mindfulness about other creatures? Bhutan may be offering us a way forward as it seeks to instill a democratic public culture of contentedness.
- *Paul*: Is the essence of democracy that we make space for ourselves or that all our neighbors have space to do what they need to do (as in Leopold's land ethic)? We are not doing all that we might do. Self-humility, self-restraint, deep identification with others are needed.
- *Ron*: I wonder if Christian and western cultures ought not to reclaim the values of our original democracy, such as the republican notion of living within your means.
- *Bruce*: Republicanism involves rules and constraints that are pre-requisites or conditions for our participation, this is the constitutional tradition; whereas in democracy, conceived as "rule of the people," we must not have preconditions—moral growth through dialogue must be open to all. So we may need to accompany "small d" democracy with "small r" republicanism.
- *Bill B.*: I'm curious about the notion of beauty within nature as a source of joy for humans.
- *Joan*: Could it be that we have destroyed so much of the beauty along the way? We could hate the appliances we covet, but we don't. Destroyed so much beauty, that we have lost the opportunity to renew it. Hearts cannot be rejuvenated. We don't think appliances are ugly; we could, but we don't. We have given our hearts away.
- *Bill B.*: — We just don't live anymore within that period of human history where nature supplied humans with important sustaining qualities.
- *Bill S.*: I want to throw a little water on this fire. A lot of effort goes into the government as part of the democratic effort. I don't want to see us chuck 150 years of effort at making a society function in favor of a new exalted term. We need many of the things that our governmental institutions are set up to provide: roads, schools, healthcare, etc. Particularly at the local level, our governments are providing important services, but I don't see these individuals who hold these offices understanding their public service in the spiritual terms of democracy that we are talking about here. There is also a competitive side to democracy that needs to be taken into account.
- *Ron*: But what about the town leaders that I know? They are all persons of profound moral and spiritual dedication — although rarely do they, or anyone else, see it or speak of it as such. I believe participation in some of these local processes is a very important part of spiritual democracy. The most transformative democratic experiences I have had were the times I have served on jury duty.
- *Bill S.*: My point was, I think, that the enlightened democrats won't be able to get very far instilling their path into the necessary functions of our government as it works right now.
- *Nick*: I think the environmental impact assessment (EIA) is a great example of the power

of democracy to govern itself, at least in terms of environmental matters. They are being performed all around the world by local levels of governments—usually very poorly, but these, too, are important lessons. It is a revolution in environmental democracy. Iraq experience shows vote alone is not democracy.

- Brooke: I have a more personal question. Sulak, have you been able to keep your focus on your breath throughout this entire conversation?
- Sulak: Yes, I have. Not constantly, but yes, I am always focused on coming back to my breathing.



Sulak Responds

- *Sulak*: Thank you very much for all of your wonderful questions. I want to begin with the notion of the republic. This is an idea that the Buddha liked very much. The Sangha was the Buddhist association of monks, and the earliest democracy was the Vajji Republic, which was an organization of these associations along with villages.[1] The Sangha functioned according to constitutional principles: meet on time; honor resolutions passed; honor women; invite the participation of learned people and outside perspectives; respect monuments; protect the environment. Republic is the form of democracy that Buddha liked most. Lead simple life in unity according to a moral and political constitution.

We must learn to retrain our consciousness in order to function in our democracy. (1) We must realize that we are all ego-centric. We must learn that the majority is more important than you, the individual. But the majority is not always right; we must respect the ideas of the minority as well. We must do what is right, no matter what. (2) We must transform our consciousness. (3) We must learn what is right, this is always non-violent, peaceful.

Respect those who join earlier (monks) but no hierarchy.

Sangha is a model for celebration.

True happiness is happiness of homelessness.

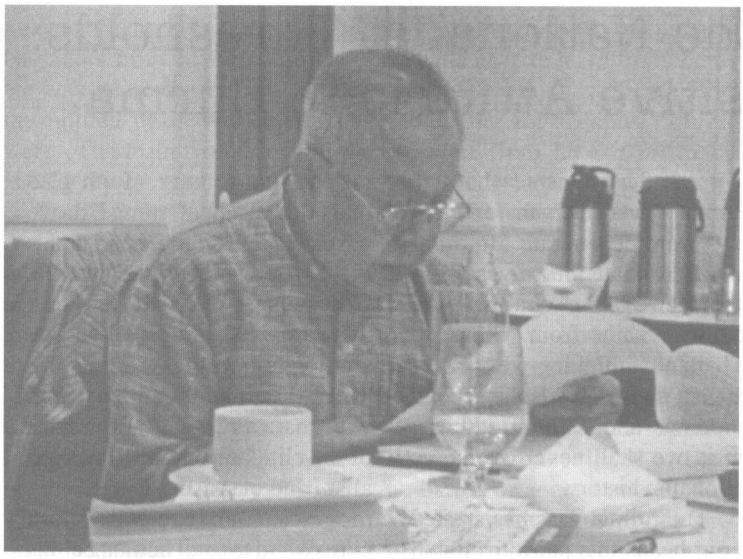
Volunteering in the democratic process is transformative.

Revolution is never complete. The price of democracy is eternal vigilance.

The ideal society in the Buddhist conception must celebrate life and live alone in the simple life, or in groups of five, ten, twenty people total. There must be rules to keep

[1] Editorial note — WIKIPEDIA background reference: It was one of the world's first democracies. It was known as *Vajji Sangha* (union of Vajji), which consisted of several *janapadas, gramas* (villages), *gosthas* (groups). The eminent people were chosen from each *khandas* (districts) to represent on their behalf in *Vajji gana parishad* (people's council of Vajji).These represetatives were called *gana mukhyas*.The chairman of the council was called *Ganapramukh* (head of the democracy), but often he was addressed as the king ,though his post was not dynastic.The other executives were *Mahabaladhrikrit* (equivalent to the minister of internal security), *binishchayamatya* (chief justice), *dandadhikrit* (other justices) etc.

Vajji's capital was Vaishali. It was a prosperous city. In the introductory portion of the *Ekapanna Jataka*, the Vaishali was described as encompassed by a triple wall with the three gates with watch-towers. The main gosthas were Lichchhavis, Mallas, Śakyas etc. In around 600 B.C. the Lichchhavis were disciples of Lord Mahavira, but later they shifted to Buddha Marga (Buddhism). During his life time Lord Buddha visited Vaishali several times, the *vihara* where he used to stay in Vaishali was called *Kuthagarshala*. It was gifted to him by a *Ganapramukh*, Chetaka.



this sort of society functioning, which are democratic.

There are 4 sins that lead to exclusion from Sangha society: sex, stealing, murder, and claiming supernatural powers. Do any of these, no longer a monk.

There are also 4 positive rules: you should not earn a living; you should not pay for food, you should not have permanent home; you should not have luxurious clothing; you should not use elaborate medicines. In all these cases you may use only what you are given by other members of society. Now there is more compromise, but simple living is still emphasized.

Giving is key. Look at why one is a farmer: (1) feed monks; (2) feed family; (3) feed others; (4) birds come and take rice, which is good; (5) animals and men come and take fruit, which is good.

Everything is impermanent in Buddhism.

Once you don't have truth, you don't have legitimacy.

Compassion is better than competition.

Mother Earth, Father Mountain.

We have been uprooted.

The Buddha founded the Sangha with fraternity and equality in order to obtain liberty from oppression and it has lasted for centuries.

The monks that tried to live in this ideal society transferred these values and culture to the people of society and the citizens tried to emulate it, and originally, there was not a large gap between the rich and the poor.

Another fundamental value was the importance of questioning all teachings — even those of the Buddha. In fact, all the heroes in the Buddhist fables (which were written by literate monks) criticized the kings and those with power. Our cultural tradition is to be critical and question our leaders to be sure that they are doing what is right.

In Siam, there is the feeling that since we have never been colonized, we can chart our own course with the West. What has happened is that my country has followed the West blindly. The King goes to the temple with his shoes on, as in the West! But Burmese monks are coming back to the democratic origins of Buddhism, to democratic rights and responsibilities, and are willing to die for them.

- *Brendan*: Do you have thoughts on China and democracy?
- *Sulak*: Yes, I do think that there is hope for China. Communism is a form of dictatorship. It then moves to capitalism. Switch from anger to greed. But Taiwan is far ahead of mainland China. Yet even here there is progress — Chinese Buddhists are now talking to Tibet Buddhists in Bangkok.
- *Paul*: Do you hold out hope for our own country, too?
- *Sulak*: Absolutely. People in Third World countries often say that the US government is their worst enemy (have all the money, have all the weapons, control all the mass media), but that American people are their best friends. There is a lot of change going on in my country and much of it comes from international participation with citizens of other countries that support our struggles. What happened at St. John's Cathedral on Sunday is unique to this country. Your interfaith relations are the best in the world. When people become more spiritual, they have more courage. May have money and power, but no spiritual courage. We must overcome the cause of suffering. Much more complex today because of the structures in place. No longer is it just feed the hungry.

Transcending the Nationalist Thresholds: Toward a Positive Attitude to Burma

On 11 July, panel discussions and a musical event were organized at the Chiang Mai University Auditorium to raise funds for the victims of Cyclone Nargis. Entitled "Sixty Days after Cyclone Nargis", the event featured a keynote speech by Sulak Sivaraksa from the Sathirakoses-Nagpradipa Foundation.

Thai nationalist history fundamentally stems from the impression that we have never been colonized by westerners. Thus, we look down on our neighbouring countries which used to be under colonialist rule. At the same time, we aspire to be just like Westerners even though we have so little idea who they are. Conventional westerners pride themselves on their fair skin, and despite many changes until now, a lot of mainstream westerners still hold on to the notion. Thus, this has given rise to nationalism and a contempt for our neighbours, i.e. Lao, Cambodia, and Malay. Subconsciously we have never overcome our historical grudges against people from Burma in particular, for having been defeated by them a couple of times. We have been inflicted with the notion that the Burmese razed Ayudhaya to the ground. A nation defeated in war grows malicious ideas. Similarly, the American may have a malicious view toward the Vietnamese since they once lost to them. This will simply make nationalism even worse.

As we worship westerners, we have been brainwashed by them to hold on to nationalism. Notions such as racism were never found here, but were instilled in us by westerners. Hitler, in particular, insisted that the Germans were Aryan, and the Jews were degenerate. In order to differentiate ourselves from others, we have changed the country's name from "Siam" to "Thailand", thinking we are better than them. This is the second ignorance and without addressing it, we shall never overcome nationalist history.

The ruling class has stuffed in our heads this patriotism, and films such as "Sri Suriyothai", "Naresuan", etc, have been made to instil the notion. Luckily, the story of "Thao Suranaree", who fought against the Lao rebels during Rama III's reign, has not been made into a film. In other words, we harbour nationalist attitudes against our neighbours and look down on them. Historical biases have been created and perpetuated by the dictatorial ruling class. The Burmese junta made a monument to Bayinnaung with his finger pointing at Thailand. It simply helps the dictators. Similarly, the case of Phrea Vihear is being used for similar purpose to oppress one's own population and to stir up hatred against our neighbours.

To transcend nationalist history, one needs to nurture the seeds of humanism, rather than nationalism. Nation is fake. The notion that one speaks the same language and belongs to the same nation is false. But humans are real. All human beings, regardless of language and religion are fellow beings in suffering!" With understanding, we can transcend nationalism, and humanism comes hand in hand with democracy. We shall not forget that it was Mr. Pridi Banomyong who brought democracy to this country. I am glad that a department store I drove past before coming here had a big banner with Pridi's picture. Otherwise, we will find that there are only pictures of just one single family that are put up everywhere, and I am so bored with that. Propping up pictures of the elite helps to instil nationalism and classism. But in a democracy, one needs to shun classes and take all human beings as equal.

If we understand Pridi Banomyong, we can go beyond nationalism. After democratizing the country, Pridi made a film, "The King of the White Elephant" in which he reiterated that Burma and Siam were no enemies. We have been friends. Those who fought were the King of Burma on one hand and the King of Siam on the other. They fought because of their greed, hatred and delusion. But among people of the two countries, we have been friends and loved one another.

Pridi was also a leader of the Free Thai Movement, and after World War II, he helped to set up the League of South East Asian Nations, 40 years before ASEAN. A meeting was held in Bangkok, and Aung San was here. Then, Burma was still not independent, yet as members of the League, we were on an equal footing. We were getting together as a democratic socialist bloc to withstand the power of the USA, which was taking over from England. We got together in order to overcome nationalist history.

And before Burma became independent, and while Aung San was still alive, after returning from the meeting to found the

League, he invited cultural ambassadors from Siam to Burma. He was interested in how close the cultures of the two countries were. The team from Siam was led by Phya Anumanrajadhon or "Sathirakoses". Aung San addressed the group by saying that the Siamese and Burmese must adore each other and stand in unity. The Burmese never hated the Siamese. Thus, we need to learn not to hate them, but to love them just like they love us. Most importantly, the Buddhism of the two countries is very similar. Thus we should learn from each other and once we can depart from nationalism, we shall learn from Buddhism in Burma. Only then shall we realize that their Buddhism is more advanced. The person who made this statement was Phra Vimaladhamma, President of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, and abbot of Wat Mahathat. He said that we need to learn from the school of Buddhist meditation in Burma. But the Thai monks are arrogant. They pride themselves for not having been colonized. 'How could the Burmese be compared to us?' they said. Thus without transcending nationalism, we can never learn from our friends.

A lesson learned from Nargis is that monks in Burma have always stood by the poor. They always devote themselves in the service of the destitute, victims of natural disasters, whereas their Thai counterparts simply want to be invited to eat in the royal palace, crave ecclesiastical titles, money, luxuries, etc. We should learn from people in Burma, and give the things needed to address their suffering. We cannot deceive ourselves and many westerners have done better than us on this. We need to share the suffering with our friends in Burma. Don't be arrogant and assume that we are better than the Burmese. We can and have to learn from them, and vice versa.

In the four Noble Virtues, we start from having *metta* or loving oneself, and then extend loving kindness to those who suffer more than we do or *karuna*. Then we nurture sympathetic joy *(mudita)* toward others; that is, we learn to love even those who oppress or exploit us, particularly the Burmese regime. We shall nurture this sympathetic joy toward them, and harbour no hatred or anger toward them. We only want to destroy the unjust structure. And the unjust structure in Burma is as vicious as the one in Siam. It could be worse in Burma since they are so blatantly dictatorial. But we have hidden dictators who keep on supporting the Burmese regime; both the Thaksin and Samak administrations are equally bad on this count.

With this understanding, we shall neither hate the Burmese nor the Burmese dictators. We shall not hate Thaksin or Samak. But we simply want to destroy the structure. We can learn from Burma, particularly from the Burmese monks who have come out to challenge the Burmese troops. But there have been no Thai monks coming out to challenge consumerism, capitalism or feudalism. Based on love, the Burmese monks have come out and recited the Metta Sutra which partly reads, just as a mother can sacrifice her life for her child, we shall extend our love to all living beings. They recited the sutra while being beaten by the Burmese army. Similarly, we have to learn from Tibetan monks who have to endure similar plight.

All these lessons can help us overcome nationalist history. In all history classes, we have been told that wars are good, and all heroes are noble. It is fake. We are made to look in awe at King Naresuan, and the more we worship him, the more we adore militarism, and the more we love to wage wars. We need to understand the many shortcomings of King Naresuan. Why don't we learn from King Ekathosarot who went to war with King Naresuan, but later, after he took the throne, renounced all wars and issued the best laws ever. All the 44 wars we have had with the Burmese are equally bad, and in all the wars, the most important person was not King Naresuan, but the army officers and private soldiers who lost their lives and were survived by widows, and all the elephants and horses which were killed. If we change our attitude toward history, we shall renounce nationalist history and start to realize the importance of studying peace, the point reiterated in Pridi Banomyong's "The King of the White Elephant".

Once we can overcome nationalism, we shall realize that those exiled in our country, including the ethnic Burman, Mon, Karen, Kachin, etc., and even those Malayu in the South, or the nomads such as the Moken, have the same dignity as we have. Based on humanism, we shall love them and want to fight to protect their human rights. We shall fight for their dignity just as we do for our own children. With this understanding, we will have more dignity and become nobler. We will then be interested in learning from our friends in Burma, Lao, and Cambodia, all of whom are akin to us.

Translated by
Pipob Udomittipong
http://prachatai.com/english/news.php?id=703

Prachatham News
17 July 2008

The Monarchy Must Serve the People's Interests

The royal anthem was first played in entertainment venues in Siam before the 1932 revolution. According to *State Ceremonies 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 police. Prince Nakhonsawan Vorapinit 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 present king and his brother were children of a commoner. Similarly, the mother of Rama III was also a commoner. Chao Phraya Yommarat who ascended to the highest honour in the bureaucracy was also a commoner. This shows that the caste system in Siam is flexible enough 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 Games that are going to happen in August. It is the first time that people the world over have been made aware how the Olympics are 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 had. 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 has been 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* editor has no such qualification. He even told a blatant lie such as writing that he went to see his old teacher, Ven. Thich Nat Hanh, even though he had never met him before. *Matichon* is the same. Khanchai Boonpan, its proprietor, ordered his staff to refrain from reporting any news by and about me. No one cares to criticize *Matichon*, only 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 merely a God-like being, but not God himself. During the feudal period, the power of the kings was checked by courtiers, particularly, during the reigns of Rama III and Rama IV. It is only now that absolute monarchy reigns. 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.

A 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, or hatred, or 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 show no moral courage and simply enjoy the income from printing commercials.

If we really care for 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). 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 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 have been the actions committed by President Bush even though the mainstream media tend to indulge people with nonsensical things. The most destructive contribution of capitalism and consumerism 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 "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. But if His Majesty wishes to work in the service of the masses and to promote truth, then the nightmare can be avoided.

Sulak Sivaraksa
Presented at a seminar held at the Faculty of Economics, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 2 May 2008.

Relationship with the Gentle State from a Buddhist Perspective

I will begin my talk by quoting HRH the Prince of Wales who said

"I have gradually come to realize that my entire life so far has been motivated by a desire to heal–to heal the dismembered landscape and the poisoned soil; the cruelly shattered townscape, where harmony has been replaced by cacophony; to heal the divisions between intuitive and rational thought, between mind, body and soul, so that the temple of our humanity can once gain be lit by a sacred flame; to level the monstrous artificial barrier erected between Tradition and Modernity and, above all, to heal the mortally wounded soul that, alone, can give us warning of the folly of playing God and of believing that knowledge on its own is a substitute for wisdom."

Anyone who reflects on human behaviour is immediately struck by the fact that there is a serious imbalance between what we can conveniently term man's intelligence and his wisdom. Much of the turmoil and strife characteristic of human behaviour is due to a serious imbalance in the human brain.

The essence of religion is the striving to live correctly, that is in harmony with the reality of the world in which we find ourselves and indeed all creation and to understand who and what we really are in relation to everything else. Living with the imbalance in our brain makes this task far more difficult than it should or need be. The significance of Buddhism in this connection is that through deep meditation and mindfulness, Buddhist practice provides man with an extremely powerful tool to correct this imbalance.

Buddhism has always been essentially something to do rather than something to believe in. Faith in the Absolute could be a great help, but it has also created serious problems for many individuals because it frequently places them in the impossible position of being told they must believe something that they are unsure about or that in all honesty they do not accept.

In a great many cases is that the individual simply suppresses his doubts and uncertainties and pretends he is a believer, either because he thinks this is the only way that God will reward him and/or because he fears that non-acceptance will lead to banishment in hell after death. This attitude will almost certainly give rise to a dual-level personality who is in conflict with himself.

On the surface, he is a model of conventional behaviour and attitudes but internally he is a troubled personality who is actually living a lie. Sadly most people in this situation are unaware of what is wrong.

For atheists and agnostics, divinity is irreverent, but they tend to lack spiritual dept. Life depends too much on materialism. Transcendental wisdom and mystery of life are beyond them. They often have split personality.

Buddhism seeks to produce a single-level personality, someone who truly reflects what he is. There is a particularly striking difference between Buddhism and the monotheistic religions: the Buddha never demanded that his followers accept what he told them by asserting that he was the mouthpiece of some divine authority. He merely pointed out that he had found certain practices and a certain response to life to be helpful in understanding the truth of life, and he therefore recommended these practices to others.

Furthermore, the Buddha also compared religious belief and practice to a raft — very useful if one is on the bank of a river and needs to get to the other side but no longer of use when one has crossed the river successfully because it has served its purpose. One does not put it on one's back to continue the journey.

I contend that mankind has now reached a crossroads in its existence as a species. The expansion of our knowledge and the lack of balance between our emotions and rational behaviour literally threatens our survival. Of all the religious systems available to man, Buddhism, I suggest, is the one which offers the clearest and most obvious solution to this problem because it is a proven practical method of rectifying the imbalance in man's brain.

The key to Buddhist ethics and practice is the primacy of the individual's mind. Ultimately this has profound importance with numerous ramifications in terms of recognizing the causes and solutions of environmental problems. From a Buddhist perspective, although certainly important, the usual sources — science, technology, education, government, law, politics, business, and industry — are neither the cause nor the solution of the ongoing and worsening global environment crisis. Instead, the cause *and* the solution are found in *the collective, cumulative, and synergetic consequences of the behavior of the individuals who compose humanity*, albeit some individuals and groups may be more responsible (or irresponsible) than others. Environmental health is then not so much a matter of the scientific, technological, and bureaucratic management of resources, waste, and pollution, as it is the spiritual management of ourselves. People must be motivated as well as informed to limit their own reproduction, consumption, waste, and pollution in order to minimize harm to other beings and things.

If it is understood that the first negative precept (nonviolence) and the first positive precept (compassion and loving — kindness) apply to all beings and things, not just to humanity or some sector thereof, then the environmental implications are immediately obvious and undeniable. Indeed, there is an ecologic here; it is possible to detect elements reminiscent of ecology in Buddhism, and conversely, elements reminiscent of Buddhism in ecology, even if these are only a coincidence. Both Buddhism and ecology (1) pursue a monistic rather than dualistic world view, instead of dichotomizing either organism and environment or human and nature; (2) consider all life, including that of humans, to be subject to natural laws; (3) adopt holistic and systems approaches regarding the unity, interrelatedness, and interdependence of the components of nature; and (4) teach respect and even reverence for nature, including the intrinsic as well as extrinsic values of other beings. Although most of these similar elements may be merely parallels rather than identities, surely they are complementary and can even be mutually reinforcing in both theory and practice for contemporary Buddhists.

Ultimately the problems and limitations regarding the relevance of Buddhism to nature and the environment appear to revolve around two types of related but separate discrepancies — ideal vs. actual behavior and academic vs. practical interpretations. The ideals of Buddhism seem to be environmentally friendly, whereas the actual behavior of many Buddhists is far too often not so. This paradox is evidenced in the widespread natural resource depletion and environmental degradation in most countries that are predominantly Buddhist, although it appears that Bhutan and Ladakh are lingering exceptions to this pattern for the most part. Nevertheless, this discrepancy does not invalidate the idea that in principle Buddhism can be environmentally friendly. One must be careful to avoid confusing Buddhism and Buddhists. There are internal contradictions and dis-

crepancies in every religion as well as in other social institutions like government, science, and education. The deficiency is not in Buddhism, but in Buddhists, who, after all, are merely human. An important part of the solution is to educate people about the negative consequences of their actions so that they are more willing to alter their behavior to eliminate or at least minimize such consequences. Also Buddhists need to adhere more closely to the Noble Path of truth and nonviolence as it applies to ecology and environmentalism.

If more Buddhists and other people were aware of the negative environmental consequences that are the collective and cumulative results of their individual behavior, then many might change for the better and thereby significantly relieve environmental problems. When reason and morality follow adequate knowledge and understanding of the continuing and even worsening environmental crisis, then this may lead to wisdom and action in improving how humans interact with nature. The difference Buddhism makes is that, instead of grounding environmental conservation in self — interest of the individual (egocentrism), society (sociocentrism), or human species (anthropocentrism) as most Western schemes advocate, it is based on respect for other beings and things as having intrinsic value (ecocentrism).

It is noteworthy that in Bhutan, Ladakh, Siam, and elsewhere, clear symptoms are surfacing of a growing disillusionment with the uncritical and wholesale pursuit of "modernization" and associated phenomena like materialism and consumerism. Revitalization movements arise in many societies in response to the problems, stresses, and dissatisfactions with rapid and profound sociocultural change. Buddhist — motivated community development and environmental conservation initiatives are becoming significant forces in this revitalization within Buddhist societies.

Undoubtedly, the primary concern of the Buddha was suffering, its causes and alleviation. The Buddha repeatedly stated that ultimately he taught only two things, about the cause and the end of suffering. Certainly the world is bound to suffer even more than ever before during the twenty — first century as a result of accelerating human population and economic growth. With the inevitability of the increased suffering of humans and other beings in coming decades, Buddhism may well prove even more relevant than ever before. Buddhists must apply critical and radical thought in examining contemporary problems and issues, something needed in our time as much as in that of the Buddha and probably far more so. Now this must include genuine interfaith dialog so that everyone may learn from each other's religions by comparison and contrast in order to cultivate a more sustainable, green, just, and peaceful world.

For the future, the main task for Buddhists, as well as for those non—Buddhists who simply have an intellectual interest in Buddhism, and those who care for spirituality is to explore deeper and wider into the relevance of this religion for nature and environment. Those who are practicing Buddhists also need to strive to apply the teaching as faithfully as possible in their interactions with their local environment and nature in general. Buddhists owe no less to the Buddha, and other beings as well as to themselves. It is a matter of survival for Buddhism as well as for nature and humanity. This would indeed be a gentle state for all.

A public lecture at the Summer Festival, Gaunts House, Dorset, England, 10th August 2008.

"The Heart of Peace"
Art Project for the Three Southernmost Provinces

On 15-16 August 2008, 9am-21pm, the Puey Forum, which is under the auspices of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, in conjunction with the Network of Youths for Nation and Peace, held "The Heart of Peace" art project for the three southernmost provinces of Siam at the Institute of Community Organizations Development, Bangkok. The objective of this project was to seek to understand the violence in the deep South and to explore the possibility of cultivating tolerance and pluralism from an historical perspective. "The Heart of Peace" project employed contemporary art and music in developing the process of social participation and in fostering a good understanding of the violence in these provinces, hoping to challenge or transform dominant perceptions and representations of Muslims in Thai society and amelio-

rate the critical situation in the deep South. "The Heart of Peace" project exhibited the drawings and works by the participants of the Youth Art Camp for Nation and Peace as well as by numerous artists. The exhibition featured the views of leading Thai thinkers on peace, worldwide proposals and resolutions against violence, music and theatrical performances, poetry recitals, a lecture by Sulak Sivaraksa, discussion panels on "Media Representations of Peace: A Case Study of the Three Southernmost Provinces" and on "The Science and Art of Reconciliation," and much more.

Exhibition of Works by Four Contemporary Thai Artists in Sri Lanka

During 1-31 August 2008, the Sewalanka Foundation hosted a training course in order to facilitate the sharing of contemporary artistic knowledge between Siam and Sri Lanka. This program was jointly initiated by the Sewalanka Foundation and the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. Both foundations recognized the importance of contemporary art as a medium for cultivating understanding between communities and for expressing thoughts and capturing pluralism. As such, the Sewalanka Foundation invited Thai artists to Sri Lanka to deliver lectures and share experiences for the benefit of the contemporary art community there. This program focused on how to make art socially relevant and how to contemporarize traditional art forms.

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation selected the following Thai artists to join the program: Panuwat Jittiwuttika, Hongjorn Saneh-ngarmcharoen, Somyot Khumsaeng, and Wiwat Thanapanyaworakun.

Ecovillage Design Education, Training for Trainers
5 January-6 February 2009

Ecovillages offer a comprehensive solution to the major challenges of our time by addressing the acceleration of climate change, environmental destruction, social and community fragmentation as well as the challenges of economic globalization. We can learn much from sustainable communities that exist around the world.

Drawing on the wisdom of traditional communities in Asia as well as an emerging alternative paradigm in the West, this course will focus on a worldview relevant to Asia and beyond.

Grassroots leaders, community and social activists, sustainability educators, students and youths are invited to participate in this course.

The course will weave in pratical ecovillage design projects, as well as hands-on participatory work. There will be regular meditation and practice of mindfulness. The course is highly collaborative in nature; there will be opportunities for participants to co-design sessions to meet their own needs fully, using emerging design. Participants will serve as resources for each other and the group.

This course will be facilitated by a team from the Spirit in Education Movement with talks and workshops by guest speakers. The main facilitators are Pracha Hutanuwatr and Ariane Burgess. Guest speakers include Greg Knibbs, Sulak Sivaraksa, and Helena Norberg Hodge.

For further information contact Ecovillage Design Education: tel (+66) (0) 37 333 183; fax (+66) (0) 37 333 184; and email: ede@semsikkha.org

Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche

The Central Tibetan Administration mourns the demise of Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche, the head of the Nyingma tradition of Tibetan Buddhism who breathed his last at Mindrolling monastery Saturday, 9 February at the age of 78.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, in a condolence message, said: 'The Members of the Tibetan parliament are deeply saddened by the demise of Kyabje Trichen Gyurme Kunzang Wangyal, the ornament of Nyingma tradition, who has greatly excelled in the learning, understanding and practice of Buddhist teachings.'



'The greatest accomplishment of Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche has been his efforts in the propagation of Nyingma tradition at the seat of its learning, Mindrolling monastery, which has become the centre of faith for all beings of the world,' the message noted.

'As the head of Nyingma tradition, Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche has shown an unwavering faith in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which is a matter of great honour.'

The message further noted: 'The demise of Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche is a huge loss to the lineage of Nyingma in general and all Buddhist devotees of the world in particular.'

Sakya Gongma Rinpoche, the head of the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, presided over the three-day funeral ritual and led the kha-cho drubcho or the Vajrayogini sadhana.

Kyabje Minling Trichen Rinpoche is revered and respected throughout the Buddhist world as a great mahasiddha and one of the great accomplished masters of the past century.

from *The Middle Way*, May 2008

IN MEMORY OF A RARE PEACE BIRD
Nirmal Deshpande

A peace bird from the Indian subcontinent had flown away from us on 1st May 2008. Nirmala Deshpande, Didi (sister) as she was known, dedicated her life for the cause of poor and downtrodden people in India. She was a disciple of Acharya Vinoba Bhave, a well-known Gandhian in the post-independence India. Vinoba Bhave was known as the spiritual heir of Mahatma Gandhi. She joined the Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan Yatra in 1952. She walked several thousand miles during the Bhoodan Movement, propagating non-violence. She combined her quest for social justice and communal harmony in India with the issues of peace, democracy and freedom in South Asia. Nirmala Deshpande was an advocate for the cause of Free Tibet and the democracy movement in Burma (Myanmar). She was best known for her peace building initiatives based on people to people contacts between India and Pakistan. She represented the common peoples' quest and longing for peace in the Indian subcontinent. She was associated with the grassroots movement in India for several decades and never left her roots with the Gandhian social activism for emancipation of the poor and marginalized people in the country. She lived true to her ideals and values until her last breath.....



Ramu Manivannan
Associate Professor,
University of Madras

Dear Sulak,

The German TV brought a summer series about still functioning royal families. One evening was dedicated to the Thai Royal Family. Very impressive and even interesting pictures! Most lively, of course, your sharp comments! Haven't you come into trouble from the side of the Thai authorities?

My Memoir in Dialogue, Vol.III, should come out this month. It will be printed in Korea and published – as the Vol.II was – by CCA, which is now located in Chiangmai.

Wolfgang Schmidt
Germany

Dear Sulak,

You would have been much more prompt in a situation like this, but it has taken me until now to get around to thanking all who contributed to the Festschrift my colleagues prepared for me last November. Admittedly we've been to Australia in the meantime to visit our daughter in Melbourne, and we're just back from two months in Salzburg, where I gave a Buddhism course for their new Centre for Intercultural Theology and Studies in Religion. The leader of the local Buddhist centre, Kurt Krammer, who is quite prominent in Austrian and European Buddhist circles, attended the whole course, which was a great asset.

One of the students did a seminar paper on the German version of your *'Seeds of Peace'*, and I think the ideas you so masterfully summarise in your contribution to the Festschrift were among those that impressed the students most; they were entirely new to almost all of them. Your reflections match very well those of David Loy, which is no surprise, and I'm privileged to have them in the book.Many thanks for going to the trouble to formulate them so strongly. I hope I'll have the chance to explore them further in 'retirement', which has been pretty active so far.

Warm regards from Margret and myself and all best wishes,

John
Professor John May
Irish School of Ecumenics
Trinity College Dublin
Milltown Park, Dublin 6, Ireland

Dear Sulak Sivaraksa,

I remember the short encounter we had during the Barcelona Parliament of Religion a few years ago.

It was a pleasure to translate for our French speaking readers your contribution to the book "Ecumenics from the Rim" in honour of John d' Arcy May. John o'Grady told me you would be happy to see it translated. You'll find the texts on pages 2 to 12 of ***Voies de Orient*** No.108, Juillet-Août-Septembre 2008.

With our thanks and friendly greetings.

John Borremans
Belgium

Dear Achan Sulak,

I send to you only few words, just to say that the students at Webster University wrote some Research Papers on Human Rights and Buddhism, as final examination, and I understood from their words that your Lecture has been extremely important for them. Everybody quoted your words, and everybody has been touched by your ideas. As me. I think you put a fruitful seed in their souls.

I would like to meet you next week, if you are available. I should go to teach at Mahidol and then I can reach you: but, since I do not know yet the dates, I will let you know exactly in which day I will be in Bangkok, hoping that you can find some minutes free.

Thank you again,
Yours,
Claudio
Dr Claudio Cicuzza
Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale".
Dipartimento di studi asiatici
Piazza San Domenico Maggiore, 12
80134 Napoli, Italy

Dear Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa,

On behalf of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, and its local partner, the Parliament of the World's Religions – Melbourne 2009, we are extending this invitation to you to be a major speaker at the upcoming Parliament of the World's Religions, to be held in Melbourne, Australia, December 3-9, 2009.

You are very familiar with the Parliament and its long history of convening interreligious colleagues and communities. I clearly remember our contacts and conversations leading up to the Barcelona Parliament exploring the possibility of a second Bandung Conference.

The theme of the 2009 Parliament is *"Make a World of Difference: Healing each other, Healing the earth."* This theme reflects a strong emphasis of this Parliament gathering on the need to promote inter-religious dialogue and initiatives addressing global issues such as the environmental crisis and reconciliation with the indigenous peoples.

Your life-long commitment to intereligious activism makes you one of the international religious leaders that many expect to see and hear at the next Parliament event.

The Council has chosen Melbourne as the host for the 2009 Parliament, in part, because of the systematic way Australian society seeks to foster social cohesion in a multi-cultural and multireligious society. More than 8,000 people of faith, spirit and good will are expected to attend this gathering, at which issues of "local relevance and global significance," such as the environment, the plight of indigenous peoples, poverty, armed conflict and terrorism, as well as social cohesion, will be prominent.

As a major speaker, you will be asked to bring your wisdom and insight to the task of fostering dialogue, harmony and cooperation between diverse religious and spiritual communities, and to the urgent need for their engagement with other guiding institutions in seeking a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.

In addition to being a major speaker, you may also wish to lead a workshop, or participate in a 'fishbowl' dialogue – we are exploring multiple formats to engage speakers and Parliament participants. We will be happy to discuss the topic and format of your presentation at a later date closer to the event.

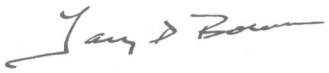
To date, a number of other eminent world figures comprise our growing list of major speakers, including the former President of Ireland Mary Robinson, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dr. A.T. Ariayaratne, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, and many more. Tony Blair has expressed his interest in joining us, as has Eboo Patel.

We are grateful for your consideration of this invitation.

In peace,



Reverend Dirk Ficca
Executive Director,
The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago



Professor, the Reverend Gary D. Bouma
Chair, Board of Management,
Parliament of the World's Religions, Melbourne, 2009
UNESCO Chair of Interreligious and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific
Monash University

UNIVERSITY OF WALES
L A M P E T E R
Vice-Chancellor

1·8·2·2

PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
LLANBEDR PONT STEFFAN
Yr Is-Ganghellor

Mr Sulak Sivaraksa
666 Charoen Nakhon Road
Klongsan
BANKOK
10600
THAILAND

10th April 2008

Dear Sulak,

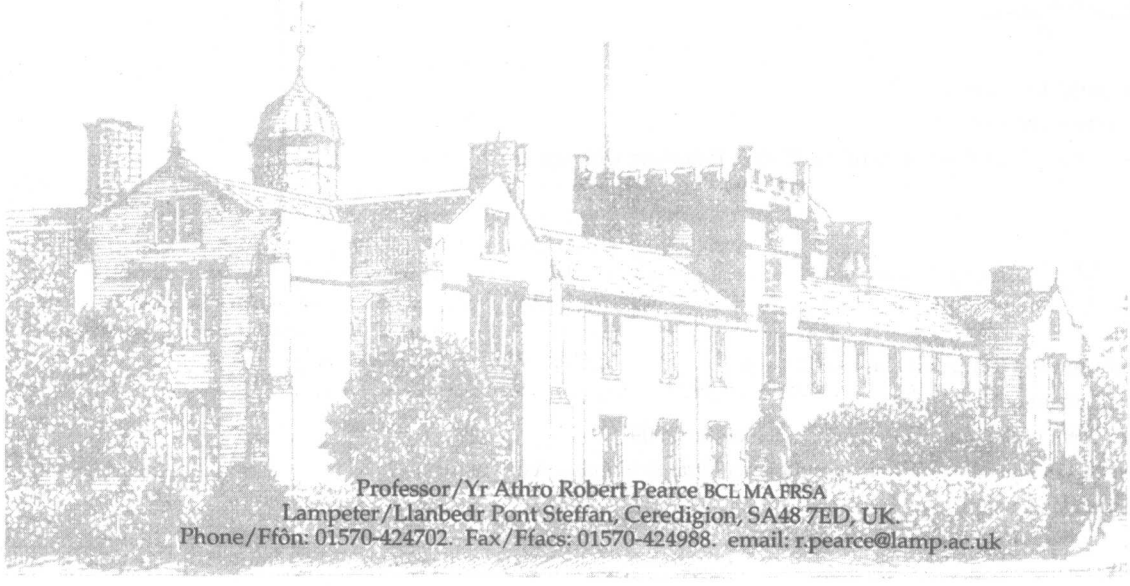
It gave me great pleasure to learn that you recently received an honorary D Litt degree from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies at Sarnath, Varanasi. It is always good to receive news about the successes of our alumni, and particularly about someone held with such esteem in our hearts.

Congratulations.

Yours sincerely,

Robert

Professor R.A. Pearce
Vice-Chancellor



Professor/Yr Athro Robert Pearce BCL MA FRSA
Lampeter/Llanbedr Pont Steffan, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED, UK.
Phone/Ffôn: 01570-424702. Fax/Ffacs: 01570-424988. email: r.pearce@lamp.ac.uk

A BIOGRAPHY OF LILIAN AND GEORGE WILLOUGHBY: Twentieth-Century Quaker Peace Activists
by Gregory A. Barnes
The Edwin Mellon Press, New York and Lampeter, Wales, 2007, Hard cover (321 pages)

George and Lilian Willoughby have a large following of friends in Asia. The Willoughbys used to visit Asia almost every year since the 1960s. When Lillian started to find long journeys painful because of her arthritis George would come alone. However, lately we have missed their visits.

Many of us in India, Siam, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and China are blessed to know them. I used the word "blessed" because they have that rare quality of being good persons. Engaging them is an uplifting experience because they exude goodness and we leave them with the sense of having been improved by their presence.

We shall always remember them. They inspire a deep yearning inside our selves to improve human nature, to be better persons and to help others find themselves. We shall never forget the Willoughbys because they touch us.

I feel very gratified to discover through Sulak Sivaraksa, who has become a lifelong friend of George and Lilian, that their biography has recently been published. The book is titled, ***A Biography of Lilian and George Willioughby:Twentieth Century Quaker Peace Activists***, by Gregory A. Barnes.

Close friends of George and Lilian, who miss them, will relish reading the book, which is beautifully written, for providing more minute details of the couples' family life, character, personal habits, religious life, as well as, their immersion in the peoples' movement. Some friends, who were also compatriots of George and Lilian, will not only find the latter in the pages but also themselves, in the events, meetings, marches, demonstrations, train journeys and training sessions which mark the couples' wandering odyssey across Asia and Southeast Asia. Gregory Barnes has not only made George and Lillian come alive in the pages but also many of the formers' Asian friends especially, the inimitable, aggressive Thai Buddhist advocate of peaceful nonviolence Sulak Sivaraksa.

The book is a rich narrative of Lilian and George's lives. The Willoughby story is also a chapter in a, centuries long, narrative of Quaker tradition. The Willoughbys' story stands as a mirror reflecting Quaker beliefs and practices. The introductory chapter "A Family Council" provides a window on a Quaker style meeting, with its ritual observance of silence before the gathering settles down to discuss the business of the meeting.

The Willoughbys' sought to embody their Quaker beliefs by developing The Life Centre — a network of small households that aimed to create, teach and export techniques for non-violent conflict resolution. They put in a great deal of time and effort into the project. But they were never isolated. They always remained concerned with world events and kept in touch with friends around the world.

Even during the heady period of creating and sustaining the Life Centre community the Willoughbys maintained their peace making outreach. In a sense the Life Centre grew out of their experiences in India and neighbouring Asian countries leading non-violence workshops and maintaining their own understanding of the Ghandian movement.

Their lives reflect an attempt to inform politics with spirituality and vice versa. George in particular is deeply religious and spiritual yet rarely utters the word "God". Friends remark that he was dismissive of the word "God" and prefers to speak of peace instead.

Both Lilian and George deplore the arrogance and sectarianism of organized religion and prefer to bond with people of all religions through human spirituality. Being Quakers they believe there is an aspect of the Divine in each person. All persons irrespective of religion, creed, colour and politics are sacred. Therefore, to wage war, to murder another human being is wrong.

The Willoughbys' story will touch many readers. It is a story that invites us all to examine our lives.

Jeffery Sng
12 August 2008

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
By Edy Korthals Altes

Those who may be led to think by the title and the name of the author that this is a book by a young self-proclaimed western guru will be surprised to see that it is a volume in the series of the Titus Brandsma Institute, a Roman Catholic think-tank, written by a seasoned protestant Dutch ex-diplomat of high caliber. Titus Brandsma was a Roman Catholic monk who died in the Dachau concentration camp in 1942. He was a humble teacher of European mysticism and warned in an early stage against the rise of national-socialism in Germany. He became the rector of Nijmegen University but that did not protect him from the power of the Nazis.

That this volume in the series *Studies in Spirituality* was written by a protestant Christian may already be remarkable in the context of Roman Catholic tradition. But Edy Korthals Altes not only reaches out over the fence to the members of the divided Christian family in his efforts to rekindle the spirit of Europe, he includes Muslim views in his passionate discourse. And he makes a remarkable link with the work of engaged Buddhist Sulak Sivaraksa and the Japanese Rissho Koseikai movement.

His mission is to awaken Christian spirituality in order to counter materialism and political opportunism which resulted in mistrust of citizens in 'Project Europe'. For a growing number of citizens Europe has no soul. Altes abides by the dictum that religious diversity, though problematic when religions turn to extremism, is a major driving force towards peace and justice. Religious diversity is far more supportive to the progress of humanity than the denial of spirituality in a reductionist world view.

Edy Korthals Altes was Head of the Foreign Office in the Netherlands and Ambassador in Warsaw and

Madrid. "The author grew up in a time marked by fascism, communism and the Second World War. He entered his professional life as a career diplomat when an impressive effort was being made to unite the world through the founding of the United Nations, the Declaration on Human Rights and the end of colonialism." According to the foreword by former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Ruud Lubbers. "At the same time, however" the foreword continues "there was the grim perspective of the Cold War. Europeans, striving to prevent a third world war, starting from Europe, embarked on a process of integration leading to the European Union. Democracy based on the Enlightenment and the Trias Politica—the separation of power between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary — seemed to be the ultimate objective. The Atlantic Alliance was the instrument to defend and promote those values. Diplomats, like the author, were oriented along these lines since the end of the Second World War. With the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, success seemed assured. But in this personal saga of Edy Korthals Altes, we can read how, at that time of apparent success, he became aware of the shortcomings of the Enlightenment, and how the withering of the spiritual dimension was leading to a disoriented man, stumbling in a dark world."

Through a deeply religious dream during his tenure as Ambassador in Madrid, Altes came to the point where he, against the policy of his government, openly resisted Ronald Reagan's SDI initiative ("Star Wars") and eventually resigned from his position.

This was not just an incident, but the start of a spiritual journey and a life dedicated to peace building and inter-religious dialogue. This journey includes the promotion of a new approach to economics, security policies and a vision on the genuine mission of the European Union.

As a graduate of the Rotterdam School of Economics Altes now formulates — based on dialogue with likeminded economists — the following definition of economics: *The purpose of economics is the responsible use of the limited means at man's disposal in order to promote the common and individual well-being of present and future generations. Production, distribution and consumption of goods must be oriented towards a just and sustainable society in which the limits of nature are strictly respected.*

As the book combines personal reflections with political commentary and new ideas, *Spiritual Renewal* is an inspiring 'lesson learned' for citizens in Asia who are more and more being drawn into a process of economic and political integration. The book by Edy Korthals Altes, with Europa as its focus, may warn policy makers not to omit to place culture, spirituality, religious diversity in the center of the evolution of the integration of Asia.

Spiritual Awakening. The Hidden Key to Peace and Security, Just and Sustainable Economics, A Responsible European Union by Edy Korthals Altes. Peeters, Leuven-Paris-Dudley, MA, 2008.

Hans van Willenswaard

VENERABLE AJAAN KHAO ANALAYO

by Ajaan Maha Boow Nanasampanno, translated from the Thai by Ajaan Pannavaddho, A Forest Dhamma Production 2006 edn, ISBN 974 94962 2 1, pp.212. For free distribution only; copies may be obtained from Alexander Tsang, 231 Kingston Road, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KTI 9BN, tel:0208 393 4367.

The translation of this biography was completed by Ajaan Pannavaddho just before he died in 2004, and a great deal of care has gone into its production to make it a fitting memorial to a most exemplary monk. The print is good and there are some charming line drawings as well as photographs.

Ajaan Khao's story gives hope to those of us who discovered Buddhism late in life, for he must have been in his thirties when he was driven to ordain by his wife's infidelities. Admittedly, he then pursued th path of Enlightenment with a singleminded purpose that only a few seem able to emulate nowadays.

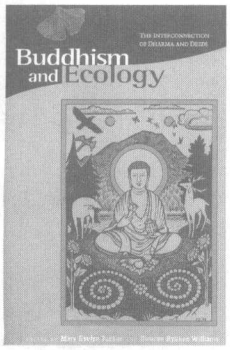
It was years before the great meditation master Ajaan Mun (1870-1949) accepted Ajaan Khao as one of his closest disciples. Meanwhile he practised to the best of his ability, living in the forest and encountering wild animals with whom, like St Francis of Assisi, he seemed to be able to communicate. One can't help wondering what has become of them now that there is so little forest left in Thailand. While he was residing in Phon Phisai district, he listed the following: 'wild fowl, pheasant, all sorts of birds such as hornbill and peacock as well as animals such as the palm civet, barking deer, wild boar, ordinary deer, monkeys of various kinds, gibbon apes, wild dogs, tigers, leopards, elephants, wild oxen and red bulls'.

There is plenty of good teaching in this book, based on the Thai Forest Tradition. The emphasis is on purifying the heart by removing mental defilements so that the Dhamma, which is the ground of our being, can display the gentle love and compassion that is its nature. Ajaan Khao was a particularly kind and sweet-natured man, as can be seen by the photographs, and much loved by all who knew him. And because of that he was able to dissolve that hard knot of opinionatedness which so often makes a barrier to progress on the Path.

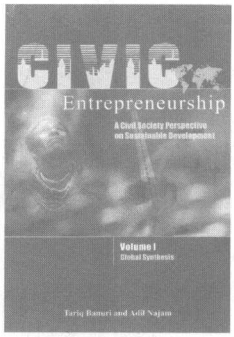
After his breakthrough to Enlightenment, which is described in some detail, Ajaan Khao continued to live alone, being prepared for his destiny as a Teacher by Ajaan Mun, who visited him in his deep meditation. This phase of his life might be called the 'Second Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma', so necessary for those who are destined to pass on the Buddhadhamma.

The last 25 years of Ajaan Khao's life were spent in his monastery at Thum Klong Pain (Cave of the Midday Drum). In his late sixties, he had a serious illness lasting several months during which, in spite of his physical weakness, he was able to give one of his most powerful, inspiring Dhamma talks. Having shunned conventional medicine all his life despite frequent bouts of malaria, he had eventually to go into hospital, where he was cured. He retruned to his monastery and continued teaching for a further 16 years, dying at the age of 94 in 1983.

Jane Browne
from ***The Middle Way***, August 2008



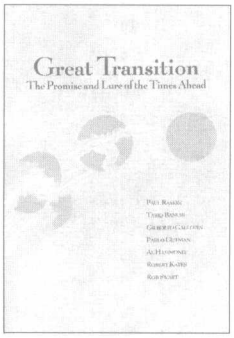
Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconncetion of Dharma and Deeds
Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryken Williams
Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religion, 1997



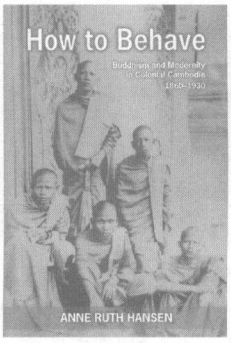
Civic: Entrepreneurship
A Civil Society Perspective on Sustainable Development
Volume I, Global Synthesis
By Tariq Banuri and Adil Najam
First published 2002
Gandhara Academy Press



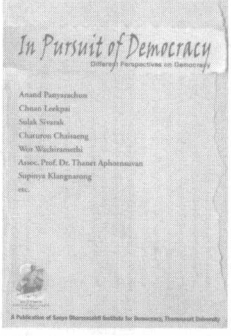
Claus Riemann
By Alter Köonig and Neuer König
Claus Riemann, 2007



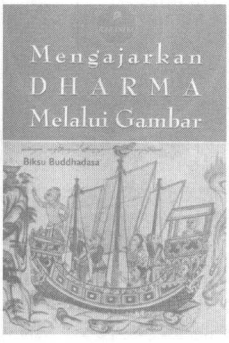
Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead
By Paul Raskin, Tariq Banuri, Gilberto Gallopin, Pablo Gutman, Al Hammond, Robert Kates, Rob Swart
Stockholm Environment Institute, 2002



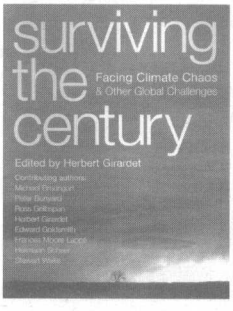
How to Behave: Buddhism and Modernity in Colonial Cambodia 1860-1930
By Anne Ruth Hansen
First revised edition, 2007
University of Hawi'i Press & Silkworm Press



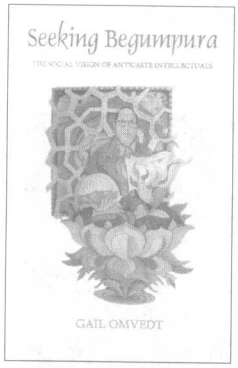
In Pursuit of Democracy:
Different Perspective on Democracy
By Anand Panyarachun, Chuan Leekpai, Sulak Sivaraksa, Chaturon Chaisaeng, Wor Wachiramethi, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thanet Aphornsuvan, Supinya Klangnarong etc.
First publishing April 2008
Printed by Printing House of Thammasat University



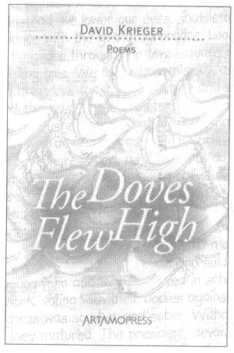
Mengajarkan Dharma Melalui Gambar
By Biksu Buddhadasa
First published in April 2008
Yayasan Penerbit Karaniya



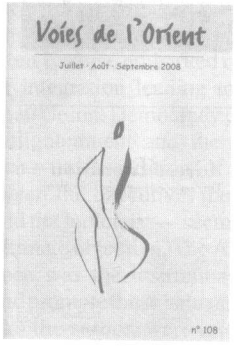
Surviving the Century:
Facing Climate Chaos & Other Global Challenges
Edited by Herbert Girardet
First published
by Earthscan in the UK and USA in 2007



Seeking Begumpura:
The Social vision of Anticaste Intellectuals
By Gail Omvedt
Published in 2008, Navayana Publishing



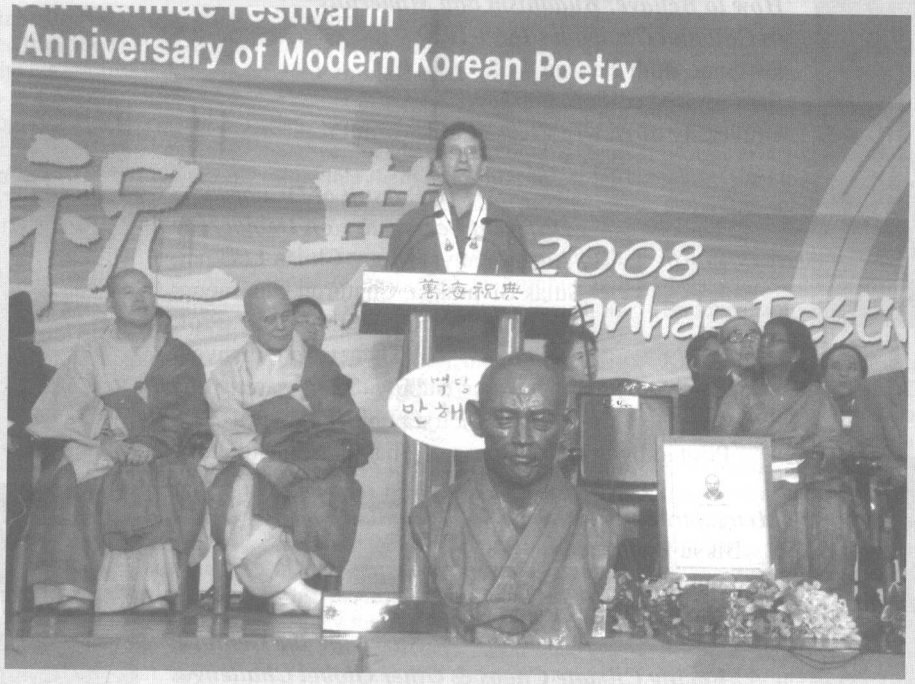
The Doves Flew High
By David Krieger
First edition 2007,
Artamo Press



Voies de l'orient
No.108, Juillet - Août - Septembre 2008



(For Thai book)
Mme Phoonsukh Banomyong passed away on 11th May (her husband's birthday) at the age of 75 years 4 months and 9 days. She said she did not want any honour what so ever. Hence the title of the Thai book recommended here. She offered her body to the hospital so that medical students could make use of it. Once the studies were over, the hospital returned the body to her family, which will have it cremated at Wat Phra Srimahadhatu in Bangkhen on 14th December 2008. Ashes of members of the Promoters who helped put an end to absolute monarchy on 24th June 1932 are interned at the main stupa of the monastery.



Lokamitra received the Manhae Peace Prize 2008.