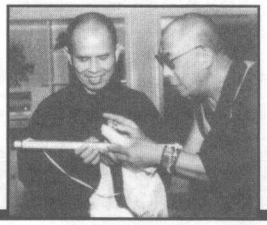
SEEDS OF PEACE

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Faith and Spirituality in Dark Times



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* Two spiritual leaders of socially engaged buddhists

PEACE

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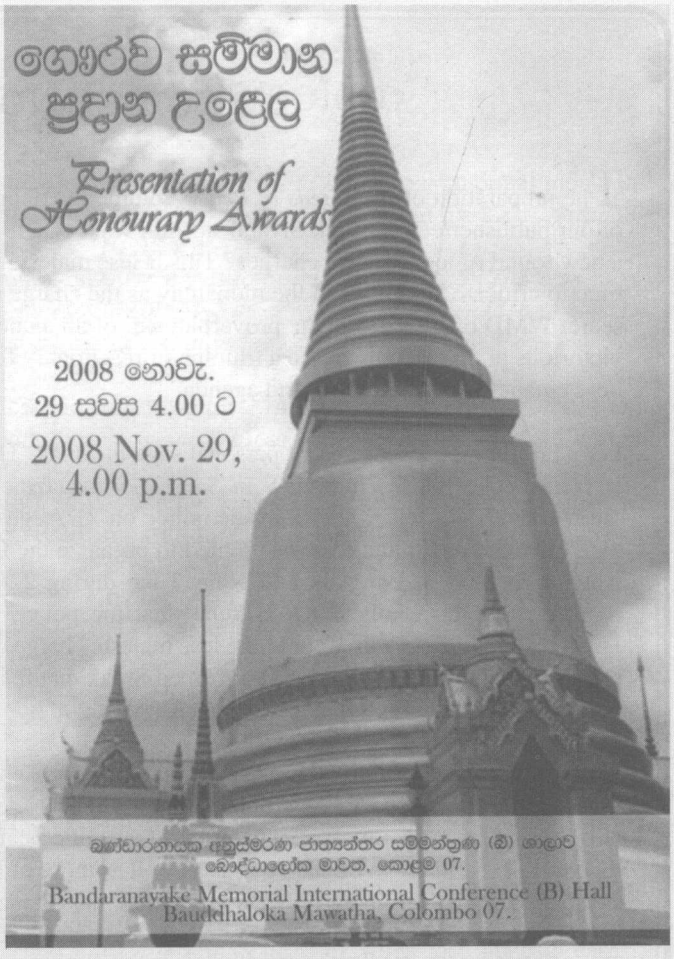
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The goals of INEB are to:

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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Sri Lanka Amarapura Maha Sangha Sabha
has decided to confer honourary awards to

Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa, (Thailand)
&
Prof. Dharmachari Lokamithra, (India)

for their outstanding and exclusive services
rendered to nurture Buddha Sasana Worldwide
as
"Engaged Buddhists"
at
Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference (B) Hall
on
29th November 2008 at 4.00 p.m.

Editorial Notes

The preparation of this *Seeds of Peace* volume overlapped with the 76th birthday anniversary of our publisher/editor Sulak Sivaraksa. And what can be a better birthday present for him than a new round of lese majeste charges? This is lese majeste season in Siam. It is not an auspicious time to criticize the king and the monarchy as the charge of lese majeste is being deployed as a secret WMD by all sides in the proverbial war of all against all—no matter which side emerges victorious in this war, it will be a triumph of reactionary forces as none of the belligerent parties hold emancipatory potentials and agenda.

Let's briefly recount the recent personal saga of Sulak. The first lese majeste charge that Sulak is facing concerns his interview in *Same Sky* magazine (Vol. 3, No. 4, Oct-Dec 2005). He 'surrendered' himself to the Bangsue police on 21 August 2006, and was released on bail. He then travelled to Bhutan and was invited to organize the Gross National Happiness conference, which was held in Bangkok and Nong Khai during 22-24 November 2007. The then prime minister Surayud Chulanont told Sulak that the police were oppressing the people and that Sulak had nothing to worry about the lese majeste charge. Subsequently, the new national police chief (appointed by PM Surayud) informed Sulak that the Royal Secretariat Office had told the police to put a hold on Sulak's case, since 4 May 2007.

At roughly the same time, the Chanasongkram police charged *Seeds of Peace* magazine with lese majeste for publishing an article on the mysterious death of King Rama VIII in its Vol. 21, No. 1, Jan-Apr. 2005. Sulak went to testify at the police state on 10 April 2007, and the police said they were satisfied with Sulak's words as well as those of the other witnesses. The case was thus suspended. However, in early November 2008, the Chanasongkram police informed Sulak that his case was resumed. Sulak however cited a new law pertaining to the trying of a criminal case. Therefore the police investigators gave his case a postponement. On 6 November Sulak received an arrest warrant in the evening and was taken to Khon Khaen province. He was accused of threatening the monarchy in his speech of 11 December 2007. He was released on bail in the wee hours of 7 November.

Sulak then flew to England to attend a conference at Schumacher College. Upon his return to Bangkok, he was bound to travel to Sri Lanka to receive an award but the PAD protestors took control of the airport, forcing it to suspend all flights. Earlier he received an honorary doctorate of arts from the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Saranath, India.

As for the lese majeste cases there are many appeals from all around the world to the Royal Secretariat and the Government to have the cases dropped and the current prime minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, told one of his colleagues in the Cabinet that he would stop the charges at the police level. But nothing has happened thus far. Hower the P.M. had to face severed political crises especially in April.

It was a time of pride as well as troubles for Sulak. He confronted both of them with equanimity. He said many others have fared worse than him. He pointed to the case of Tibet for instance which has been ruthlessly oppressed by the Chinese goverment for 50 years. Sulak said he had been inspired and encouraged by many virtuous friends, including good police officers and politicians. He also feels grateful to his enemies (some who also happen to be close friends). They enable him to practice forbearance and the sublime states of mind.

Siam:
The Law Is the Problem

Thanong Khanthong, in his "Overdrive" column in *The Nation* of March 6, argues that "there is nothing wrong with the lese majeste law." The problem, he says, has more to do with enforcement: the law "has been abused by politicians, police and public prosecutors for their own political advantage."

Thanong's argument is very much in line with the views expressed about the law by the prime minister and other top politicians in the past few months. There are six points of contention expressed by Thanong and others that should be challenged.

Contention 1: *There is nothing wrong with the lese majeste law.*

Thanong has gotten it backwards. He says the law is fine, but problems happen with enforcement and abuse. However, in truth it is the law itself that makes its enforcement and abuse so terrible. **There are no limits on the law. Anyone can make the charge.** Everything can be construed as lese majeste. This is the reason that the law so easily becomes a political tool.

Contention 2: *The lese majeste law is similar to libel laws that protect average citizens.*

The lese majeste law is emphatically *not* like normal libel laws. **All libel laws have exceptions or exclusions**, which can include the expression of an honest opinion, fair comment on issues before the public, of speaking for the public good. Most importantly, truth can be entered as evidence. **With lese majeste, there are no exclusions whatsoever.**

Contention 3: *There needs to be a lese majeste law or else those covered by the law cannot protect their own reputations.*

This is misleading. In Thailand, those covered by lese majeste law (king, queen, heir-apparent) do not use the law to protect their reputations. **Instead, it is the police or any number of citizens who use the law** ostensibly to protect the reputation of the king, queen, and heir-apparent. However, in Norway it can be said that the king uses the law to protect his reputation, for cases can be pursued only with the consent of the king.

Contention 4: *All constitutional monarchies have a lese majeste law. The Thai lese majeste law is normal.*

True, most constitutional monarchies have a lese majeste law. But there are some important differences that make the Thai lese majeste law unique. Thanong mentions the Netherlands, but fails to point out what the penalty for lese majeste is there. In a recent case, the penalty for someone who had made inappropriate sexual comments about the queen was a 400 euro fine. In Thailand, the penalty is 3 to 15 yearsû imprisonment, almost twice as high as anywhere in the past few centuries. If the penalty were increased to 25 years as the Democrat Party suggests, **Thailand's lese majeste law becomes absolutely incomparable.** Judging from other constitutional monarchies, it is not in the least "normal."

Contention 5: *The lese majeste law is designed to protect the truth.*

Thanong says "without any evidence," "some anti-monarchists have tried to defame" the king concerning Sept. 2006 coup. This implies that were there evidence, then the case could be made. But lese majeste cases do not allow "evidence" about what was said enter into the proceedings. The truth (or falsity) of what was said has never been considered. The only evidence as such concerns the intentions of the accused. To make matters worse, no differentiation is made between "insult" and "defamation" in the law, when charges are drawn up, or when lese majeste cases are tried in court. **Lese majeste is like blasphemy or heresy**: when prosecuted, the actual contents of what was expressed are examined only to show the malicious intention; it is not intended to determine truth.

Contention 6: *Citizens can criticize the monarchy in a "constructive or academic way. Normal criticism is acceptable.*

Not true. **There is no provision in the law, as with regular defamation, that stipulates the monarchy can be criticized, normally or otherwise.** In fact, many Thais understand the constitution to say that no reference should be made about the monarchy. Who is to determine what is "constructive" or "academic"?

Thanong says that one has "to differentiate between criticism of the monarchy in an objective manner and vandalism, libel or defamation against the monarchy with ill intent." Ok. So what are some examples where "criticism of the monarchy in an objective manner" was allowed?

Article 301 of Turkey's penal code, a lese majeste-like provision, prohibits denigration of Turkishness and Turkish public institutions. But investigations or prosecutions for Article 301 must be first vetted by the court. The law also clearly stipulates that only denigration is prohibited, and not criticism, which receives an exclusion. In Norway, no prosecutions are possible without the approval of the king. Other lese majeste laws provide various exclusions, and some stipulate only defamation and not insult. Even when these various limits fail, the punishment is not so severe.

For those lese majeste laws in other constitutional monarchies that in letter are similar to Thailandûs, there is little doubt that the law would be changed were the law used as vigorously as it is in Thailand.

In short, everything is wrong with the lese majeste law in Thailand. It does not protect the institution, but instead suppresses social critics.

Thanong should be congratulated for bringing up the issue of the law to readers. The prime minister, too, has said that reform of the lese majeste law will be discussed by the cabinet this week. These are encouraging.

But debate over the law should have some base in reality. The contentions above disregard easily available information from within Thailand and other lands. Thanong and various politicians in the government have put forward the view that enforcement is the problem. Accordingly, the law should not be touched at all: no revision, no abolishment. But this simplistic response should be seriously re-considered. The enforcement will never get better until something is done with the law itself.

For Thanong, the "core of the issue" is addressed by extolling the virtues of the monarchy, which in part explains why he feels the law is not the problem. The real core of this debate, though, is not the character of the monarchy, nor the ill intentions of those perceived as critical of the institution. What is really at question here is that the very nature of this law makes it prone to abuse, and as such, affects freedom of expression in a democratic Thailand.

David Streckfuss,
13 March 2009

Note: ***The Nation*** *refused to publish this rebuttal.*

Siam:
The King and Them and Thaksin

I refer to the lead article "The King and Them" which appeared in *The Economist* of December 4. A crude take-off from the famous musical, the article merely shows a lot of hate towards the Thai institution with somebody providing misinformation and, at best, half truths to the author.

No institution in this world is perfect of course, but we in this country do not go around trying to smear or dismantle institutions that are revered or respected in other countries, especially the United Kingdom. And I must say that *The Economist*, besides *The (Manchester) Guardian*, which I used to carry around with me proudly at university back in the 60s as a symbol of liberalism, has lately become so unbelievably slanted. For example, a passage in the said article says that the yellow shirts are royalist thugs. There are bound to be thugs in any big gathering except that, viewed from the Bangkok end, the red shirt thugs are actually more violent and deadly. However, I do agree with many others, including The Economist, that the yellow shirts' occupation of the airports was really the last straw. As for the repeal of the lese majeste law, a point made in the article's last paragraph, I would simply say that its application should be "frozen" and the old legislation, like the anti-communist law, should be left to peter out naturally.

The interesting thing about lese majeste is that **Thaksin** used it to have the authorities arrest social critic Sulak. It is, as fate would have it, the same charge on which he and cohort, former PM's Office minister Chakrapob Penkair, have been

indicted. Sulak's case was based on an obscure lecture he gave in a distant province over a year ago, which lecture was an attack on the former PM. While Sulak's case is going forward, those of the latter and Chakrapob appear to be stalling. Sulak may sound like a republican, but deep down he is a reformist monarchist, which makes him dangerous to both staunch royalists and republicans.

As for Chakrapob, his case stemmed from a talk he gave at the FCCT chaired by the BBC country correspondent. His language was rude, crude and so ungrammatical that I felt compelled to write to this column saying he should be prosecuted for his bad English and not for lese majeste. Sulak scolded me at the time for my uppity attitude towards the English language! But a few days ago Chakrapob was mysteriously interviewed by the BBC on his views of Thailand! (Who is Chakrapob? Why not interview the former PM Anand Panyarachun?) Chakrapob's script was professional and, this time, his language was civilised and faultless. Talking about hiring international PRs and lobbyists, this must have been it, although they failed **Thaksin** with the revocation of his British visa, an issue which The Economist failed to take up with the UK government.

Seriously though, I don't think Thaksin, who I think is brilliant, is a republican. I think he wants to see the Thai monarchy follow the Spanish or Scandinavian model. It sounds similar to what other academics, especially Sulak, have in mind. The problem is that in Thaksin's model everything is money-based - that everyone and every institution can be bought.

I wrote an open letter to **Thaksin** while he was in office that there was nothing wrong in being previously a top businessman and subsequently the Kingdom's wealthiest person if everything was above board. King Rama III had been such a person in the early nineteenth century through trading with China. But all the gold he accumulated he considered as belonging to the State, and he gave very little to his children. He also came down hard on corruption. If only I could see Khun Thaksin, I would urge him to explore the moral side of money, that he might set up a trust with a modest sum for his children and give the rest to charity. For example, his remaining wealth can fund the national health programme, which is one of his pet and best projects. Then he should stop hiring the international PR and lobbyist firms who are not doing him a service. Then he should come home, sort out his legal problems (which might even be resolved prior to his return) and go into a monastery as a monk. This is the Thai way to forgiveness and he would go down in history in positive terms. More importantly, he would make merit.

Sumet Jumsai
The Nation December 11. 2008

Siam:
International Scholars Call for Reform of Thailand's Lese Majeste Law

His Excellency Abhisit Vejjajiva
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Royal Government of Thailand
Bangkok, Thailand Facsimile:
011-662-629-8213

Honorable Prime Minister Abhisit,

As scholars and sympathetic observers of Thailand, we are extremely concerned about the recent legal actions taken against Thai and foreign citizens under the lese majeste law. It is unfortunate that the political crisis in Thailand has led to the deterioration of basic civil liberties.

The frequent abuse of the lese majeste law against political opponents undermines democratic processes. Bringing charges against journalists, academics and other citizens for their views and actions simply because of allegations that they are offensive to the royal family prevents open discussion of important public issues. They illustrate the pitfall of the imprudent claims of loyalty to the monarchy. Instead of protecting reputations, these lese majeste cases generate heightened criticism of the monarchy and Thailand itself, both inside and outside the country.

Several suggestions have been made for reforms to the lese majeste law. His Majesty him-

self has said that criticism of the monarchy should be permissible. We are concerned lest, instead of listening to these constructive opinions, your government continue to use the law to suppress civil liberties and freedom of expression. Some members of your government are even calling for harsher punishments under the lese majeste law. All of these are done in the name of protecting the monarchy.

The experiences of many countries have proven that only truth, transparency, civic discussion, and democratic process can turn conflict of ideas into innovative and peaceful change. Suppression of ideas does not solve anything, but such is likely to do more harm than good to the monarchy.

With the greatest respect, we would like to urge you and your government to consider the following.

1. Please stop seeking more suppressive measures against individuals, web sites, and the peaceful expressions of ideas.
2. Please consider suggestions to reform the lese majeste law to prevent further abuses and to prevent the possibility of further damage to the international reputation of Thailand and the monarch.
3. Please consider taking action to withdraw the current lese majeste charges, and working to secure the release of those already convicted under the lese majeste law. They are charged for expressing their ideas. This should not be a crime.

Sincerely yours,

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Siam:
Migrant Wokers Are Human Too!
Compensation for Relatives of 54 Death Truck Case

Imagine more than 100 people packed tight in a container truck struggling to breathe, clawing at the walls and screaming unheard in an effort to get out. This was the plight of more than 100 migrant workers from Burma caught in the 'Death Truck' on 9 April 2008. 54 children, women and men died from suffocation

The incident took place near Ranong, a town close to the Thai-Burma border, where the victims were being traffiked between Burma and Phuket. In this part of Thailand it is common practice for businesses to put in orders with agents for cheap labour from Burma. They are recruited for dirty, difficult and dangerous jobs in industries like construction, fishing and rubber plantations An SNF project promoting Peacebuilding and Human Rights in the area took a lead role in the NGO response to the tragic incident by organising a *54 Case Working Group*. The group included NGOs, Law Society & Police representatives working together to investigate the happening and support the survivors and the relatives of the dead. Initially the group coordinated practical and therapeutic support for survivors and the families of the victims. Then it was established that the driver had been negligent as the air conditioning in the truck was not working. After his conviction the Working Group, spearheaded by NGOs and Law Society HR lawyers, took on a huge challenge ***to get the victims treated the same as Thai people with regard to compensation***. This was a vast amount of sensitive work and negotiation with many officials in both Thailand and Burma.

As part of this process SNF President Khun Surasee chaired a seminar on 25 August 2008 with 26 participants representing senior personnel from government departments, police, immigration, NGOs and the law society concerned with the 54 Death Truck case. The agenda was *'Strengthening Cooperation Against Human Trafficking: Discrimination against Human Dignity'* drawing lessons learned from the 54 case. The aim was to gain common understanding of how to prevent future tragedy and set up mechanisms for HR and Workers Rights for Migrant Workers. Some of the learnings were:

- Much confusion over roles and responsibilities resulting in duplication, delay, lack of communication and confusion over protocol
- Major common concern over the clear differences of understanding of terms e.g. trafficking, victims, criminals & how to address this.
- General common understanding evolved that victims are **treated as victims first** and looked after in shelters before being put in prison **even if it is unclear if they are victims** (easier to apply for women & children)
- ***Anti Human Trafficking Act*** provides clearer definitions and protocols but still misunderstandings – (meeting provided opportunity for relevant agencies to work together on this)
- GOs saw major role for NGOs to help facilitate process for officials to gain common understanding on trafficking.
- Monthly meeting between agencies involved to update each other recommended
- More effort needed for effective communication with Myanmar (Burma) officials

In February 2009 a first compensation payment of 35,000 baht was paid to the relatives of 37 of the dead. Whilst there is some speculation that some of this money may be taken back by authorities in Burma there is no denying it sends an important message around the world that migrant workers have human rights. This landmark case has set a legal precedent and been a mamouth acheivement in influencing opinion, challenging perceptions of migrant workers and raising awareness of their plight and the unfairness of how they are treated. It has been a great example to both migrant workers and Thai people that migrant workers DO have rights. It has also facilitated active and cooperative working at a very high level between senior police, NGOs, government departments and the law society. This type of cooperation is putting migrant worker rights on the national

agenda. It is a momentuous step in a long process of changing attitudes and practices of officials as well as addressing inherent racism in the Thai general public. Currently there is a huge gap between legislation which is relatively fair to migrant workers and the gross injustices that actually happen to them. To address this the project has created media that explains the ***Anti Human Trafficking Act (Aug 08)*** and the ***Migrant Workers Act (Sept 08)*** in simple terms to pave the way for more understanding and enforcement of existing laws. An additional peace making initiative to complement these efforts is the publication of positive stories of migrant workers in Thai popular media to challenge the racist perceptions of the majority of Thai people.

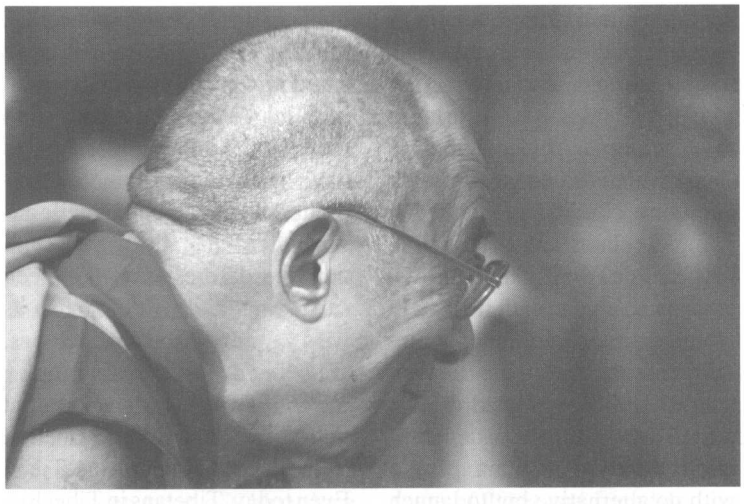
These significant steps towards improving the lot of migrant workers in Southern Thailand have been accomplished in the first 12 months of a 3-year project. It is a major achievement that the project team and various networks have already raised the profile of migrant worker rights and advocated change in the current discriminating and biased practices of Thai employers and authorities. Future planned activities include training for police and immigration officials, a book on peace building portraying positive profiles of migrant workers from Burma and joint activities and HR training for Thai and migrant worker women. Paralegal work will continue as needed and the team and associated networks are currently considering how to respond to the appalling Rohingya atrocities happening along the Southern Thailand coast.

Jane Huta

This SNF project is supported by the UK Big Lottery Fund and Ecologia Youth Trust, a UK based Charity.

Tibet:
Statement on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day

Today is the fiftieth anniversary of the Tibetan people's peaceful uprising against Communist China's repression in Tibet. Since last March widespread peaceful protests have erupted across the whole of Tibet. Most of the participants were youths born and brought up after 1959, who have not seen or experienced a free Tibet. However, the fact that they were driven by a firm conviction to serve the cause of Tibet that has continued from generation to generation is indeed a matter of pride. It will serve as a source of inspiration for those in the international community who take keen interest in the issue of Tibet. We pay tribute and offer our prayers for all those who died, were tortured and suffered tremendous hardships, including



during the crisis last year, for the cause of Tibet since our struggle began.

Around 1949, Communist forces began to enter north-eastern and eastern Tibet (Kham and Amdo) and by 1950, more than 5000 Tibetan soldiers had been killed. Taking the prevailing situation into account, the Chinese government chose a policy of peaceful liberation, which in 1951 led to the signing of the 17-point Agreement and its annexure.

Since then, Tibet has come under the control of the People's Republic of China. However, the Agreement clearly mentions that Tibet's distinct religion, culture and traditional values would be protected.

Between 1954 and 1955, I met with most of the senior Chinese leaders in the Communist Party, government and military, led by Chairman Mao Zedong, in Beijing. When we discussed ways of achieving the social and economic development of Tibet, as well as maintaining Tibet's religious and cultural heritage, Mao Zedong and all the other leaders agreed to establish a preparatory committee to pave the way for the implementation of the autonomous region, as stipulated in the Agreement, rather than establishing a military administrative commission. From about 1956 onwards, however, the situation took a turn for the worse with the imposition of ultra-leftist policies in Tibet. Consequently, the assurances given by higher authorities were not implemented on the ground. The forceful implementation of the so-called 'democratic' reforms in the Kham and Amdo regions of Tibet, which did not accord with prevailing conditions, resulted in immense chaos and destruction. In Central Tibet, Chinese officials forcibly and deliberately violated the terms of the 17-point Agreement, and their heavy-handed tactics increased day by day. These desperate developments left the Tibetan people with no alternative but to launch a peaceful uprising on 10 March 1959. The Chinese authorities responded with unprecedented force that led to the killing, arrests and imprisonment of tens of thousands of Tibetans in the following months. Consequently, accompanied by a small party of Tibetan government officials including some Kalons (Cabinet Ministers), I escaped into exile in India. Thereafter, nearly a hundred thousand Tibetans fled into exile in India, Nepal and Bhutan. During the escape and the months that followed they faced unimaginable hardship, which is still fresh in Tibetan memory.

Having occupied Tibet, the Chinese Communist government carried out a series of repressive and violent campaigns that have included 'democratic' reform, class struggle, communes, the Cultural Revolution, the imposition of martial law, and more recently the patriotic re-education and the strike hard campaigns. These thrust Tibetans into such depths of suffering and hardship that they literally experienced hell on earth. The immediate result of these campaigns was the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans. The lineage of the Buddha Dharma was severed. Thousands of religious and cultural centres such as monasteries, nunneries and temples were razed to the ground. Historical buildings and monuments were demolished. Natural resources have been indiscriminately exploited. Today, Tibet's fragile environment has been polluted, massive deforestation has been carried out and wildlife, such as wild yaks and Tibetan antelopes, are being driven to extinction.

These 50 years have brought untold suffering and destruction to the land and people of Tibet. Even today, Tibetans in Tibet live in constant fear and the Chinese authorities remain constantly suspicious of them. Today, the religion, culture, language and identity, which successive generations of Tibetans have considered more precious than their lives, are nearing extinction; in short, the Tibetan people are regarded like criminals deserving to be put to death. The Tibetan people's tragedy was set out in the late Panchen Rinpoche's 70,000-character petition to the Chinese government in 1962. He raised it again in his speech in Shigatse in 1989 shortly before he died, when he said that what we have lost under Chinese communist rule far outweighs what we have gained. Many concerned and unbiased Tibetans have also spoken out about the hardships faced by the Tibetan people. Even Hu Yaobang, the Communist Party Secretary, when he arrived in Lhasa in 1980, clearly acknowledged these mistakes and asked the Tibetans for their forgiveness. Many infrastructural developments such as roads, airports, railways, and so forth, which seem to have brought progress to Tibetan areas, were really done with the political objective of sinicising Tibet at the huge cost of devastating the Tibetan environment and way of life.

As for the Tibetan refugees, although we initially faced many problems such as great differences of climate and language and difficulties earning our livelihood, we have been successful in re-establishing ourselves in exile. Due to the great generosity of our host countries, especially India, Tibetans have been able to live in freedom without fear. We have been able to earn a livelihood and uphold our religion and culture. We have been able to provide our children with both traditional and modern education, as well as engaging in efforts to resolve the Tibet issue. There have been other positive results too. Greater understanding of Tibetan Buddhism with its emphasis on compassion has made

a positive contribution in many parts of the world.

Immediately after our arrival in exile we began to work on the promotion of democracy in the Tibetan community with the establishment of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile in 1960. Since then, we have taken gradual steps on the path to democracy and today our exile administration has evolved into a fully functioning democracy with a written charter of its own and a legislative body. This is indeed something we can all be proud of.

Since 2001, we have instituted a system by which the political leadership of Tibetan exiles is directly elected through procedures similar to those in other democratic systems. Currently, the directly-elected Kalon Tripa's (Cabinet Chairperson) second term is underway. Consequently, my daily administrative responsibilities have reduced and today I am in a state of semi-retirement. However, to work for the just cause of Tibet is the responsibility of every Tibetan, and I will uphold this responsibility.

As a human being my main commitment is in the promotion of human values; this is what I consider the key factor for a happy life at the individual level, family level and community level. As a religious practitioner, my second commitment is the promotion of inter-religious harmony. My third commitment is of course the issue of Tibet due to my being a Tibetan with the name of the 'Dalai Lama', but more importantly it is due to the trust that Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet have placed in me. These are the three important commitments, which I always keep in mind.

In addition to looking after the well being of the exiled Tibetan community, which they have done quite well, the principal task of the Central Tibetan Administration has been to work towards the resolution of the issue of Tibet. Having laid out the mutually beneficial Middle-Way policy in 1974, we were ready to respond to Deng Xiaoping when he proposed talks in 1979. Many talks were conducted and fact-finding delegations dispatched. These, however, did not bear any concrete results and formal contacts eventually broke off in 1993. Subsequently, in 1996-97, we conducted an opinion poll of the Tibetans in exile, and collected suggestions from Tibet wherever possible, on a proposed referendum, by which the Tibetan people were to determine the future course of our freedom struggle to their full satisfaction. Based on the outcome of the poll and the suggestions from Tibet, we decided to continue the policy of the Middle-Way.

Since the re-establishment of contacts in 2002, we have followed a policy of one official channel and one agenda and have held eight rounds of talks with the Chinese authorities. As a consequence, we presented a Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People, explaining how the conditions for national regional autonomy as set forth in the Chinese constitution would be met by the full implementation of its laws on autonomy. The Chinese insistence that we accept Tibet as having been a part of China since ancient times is not only inaccurate but also unreasonable. We cannot change the past no matter whether it was good or bad. Distorting history for political purposes is incorrect.

We need to look to the future and work for our mutual benefit. We Tibetans are looking for a legitimate and meaningful autonomy, an arrangement that would enable Tibetans to live within the framework of the People's Republic of China. Fulfilling the aspirations of the Tibetan people will enable China to achieve stability and unity. From our side, we are not making any demands based on history. Looking back at history, there is no country in the world today, including China, whose territorial status has remained forever unchanged, nor can it remain unchanged.

Our aspiration that all Tibetans be brought under a single autonomous administration is in keeping with the very objective of the principle of national regional autonomy. It also fulfils the fundamental requirements of the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. The Chinese constitution and other related laws and regulations do not pose any obstacle to this and many leaders of the Chinese Central Government have accepted this genuine aspiration. When signing the 17-point Agreement, Premier Zhou Enlai acknowledged it as a reasonable demand. In 1956, when establishing the Preparatory Committee for the 'Tibet Autonomous Region', Vice-Premier Chen Yi pointing at a map said, if Lhasa could be made the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which included the Tibetan areas within the other provinces, it would contribute to the development of Tibet and friendship between the Tibetan and Chinese nationalities, a view shared by the late Panchen Rinpoche and many educated Tibetans, cadres among them. If Chinese leaders had any objections to our proposals, they could have provided

reasons for them and suggested alternatives for our consideration, but they did not. I am disappointed that the Chinese authorities have not responded appropriately to our sincere efforts to implement the principle of meaningful national regional autonomy for all Tibetans, as set forth in the constitution of the People's Republic of China. Quite apart from the current process of Sino-Tibetan dialogue having achieved no concrete results, there has been a brutal crackdown on the Tibetan protests that have shaken the whole of Tibet since March last year. Therefore, in order to solicit public opinion as to what future course of action we should take, the Special Meeting of Tibetan exiles was convened in November 2008. Efforts were made to collect suggestions, as far as possible, from the Tibetans in Tibet as well. The outcome of this whole process was that a majority of Tibetans strongly supported the continuation of the Middle-Way policy. Therefore, we are now pursuing this policy with greater confidence and will continue our efforts towards achieving a meaningful national regional autonomy for all Tibetans.

From time immemorial, the Tibetan and Chinese peoples have been neighbours. In future too, we will have to live together. Therefore, it is most important for us to co-exist in friendship with each other.

Since the occupation of Tibet, Communist China has been publishing distorted propaganda about Tibet and its people. Consequently, there are, among the Chinese populace, not many who have a true understanding about Tibet. It is, in fact, very difficult for them to find the truth. There are also ultra-leftist Chinese leaders who have, since last March, been undertaking a huge propaganda effort with the intention of setting the Tibetan and Chinese peoples apart and creating animosity between them. Sadly, as a result, a negative impression of Tibetans has arisen in the minds of some of our Chinese brothers and sisters. Therefore, as I have repeatedly appealed before, I would like once again to urge our Chinese brothers and sisters not to be swayed by such propaganda, but, instead, to try to discover the facts about Tibet impartially, so as to prevent divisions among us. Tibetans should also continue to work for friendship with the Chinese people.

Looking back on 50 years in exile, we have witnessed many ups and downs. However, the fact that the Tibet issue is alive and the international community is taking growing interest in it is indeed an achievement. Seen from this perspective, I have no doubt that the justice of Tibet's cause will prevail, if we continue to tread the path of truth and non-violence.

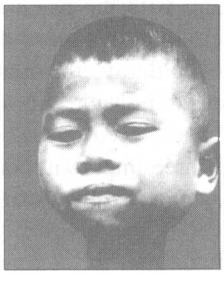
As we commemorate 50 years in exile, it is most important that we express our deep gratitude to the governments and peoples of the various host countries in which we live. Not only do we abide by the laws of these host countries, but we also conduct ourselves in a way that we become an asset to these countries. Similarly, in our efforts to realise the cause of Tibet and uphold its religion and culture, we should craft our future vision and strategy by learning from our past experience.

I always say that we should hope for the best, and prepare for the worst. Whether we look at it from the global perspective or in the context of events in China, there are reasons for us to hope for a quick resolution of the issue of Tibet. However, we must also prepare ourselves well in case the Tibetan struggle goes on for a long time. For this, we must focus primarily on the education of our children and the nurturing of professionals in various fields. We should also raise awareness about the environment and health, and improve understanding and practice of non-violent methods among the general Tibetan population.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to the leaders and people of India, as well as its Central and State Governments, who despite whatever problems and obstacles they face, have provided invaluable support and assistance over the past 50 years to Tibetans in exile. Their kindness and generosity are immeasurable. I would also like to express my gratitude to the leaders, governments and peoples of the international community, as well as the various Tibet Support Groups, for their unstinting support.

May all sentient beings live in peace and happiness!

The Dalai Lama
March 10, 2009



Tibetan Struggle Can Teach Thais about Self-awareness and Compassion for Others

Social critic Sulak Sivaraksa said on Tuesday that, "on a less altruistic note", Thais who support the cause for a free Tibet, or at least genuine autonomy for Tibet within China, can benefit from doing so because they themselves will be made aware that the suffering of the Tibetan people is much more severe than whatever we Thais face.

"This in turn, reduces our own suffering," he told a gathering of Thais and foreigners who attended a symposium at Thammasat University to mark the 50th anniversary of the failed uprising in Tibet.

"If we pay attention to those who suffer more than us, then our own suffering is somewhat alleviated."

The number of Thais supporting the Tibetan cause may be small, but they are committed and full of appreciation of the Tibetan way of life and religion. Photographer Bhanuwat Jittiwuthikarn embarked on a trip to Saranath, India in January to observe and photograph exiled Tibetan people who came to listen to His Holiness the Dalai Lama giving his annual sermon. His photographs showed how happy many elderly people were after having the once-in-a-lifetime chance of an audience with their supreme spiritual leader.

Bhikuni Dhammanandha, Thailand's leading female monk, observed that this was possible only due to the strength of the people's faith in the Buddhist religion and the Dalai Lama. She added that, in comparison, she couldn't recall any Cambodians who went through the brutal rule of the Khmer Rouge who managed such radiant, blissful smiles as shown in Bhanuwat's photographs.

Bhanuwat said he wished he could support more elderly Tibetans in exile in having a chance to meet His Holiness. He said that it costs about Bt10,000 for one person to arrange a trip like his so he decided to print and sell his photographs and donate all the proceeds to that purpose.

But even Bhanuwat isn't full of optimism. He noted that during his visit, he met younger Tibetans in exile who are full of anger and who want to take a violent and more drastic approach towards freeing Tibet.

With the Dalai Lama ageing and the Western media paying paramount attention to this one man, nobody knows what will happen to the Tibetan cause when he passes away.

Chulalongkorn University's China expert, Vorasak Mahatnobon, spoke at the Thammasat symposium — which was organised by the Santi Prachadhamma Institute and the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation amongst others—saying he sees no solution to the Tibetan issue in the foreseeable future. He added that the fact that communist China has become a godless society makes it even more difficult for the Han Chinese to understand the deeply rooted religious way of life of the Tibetan people.

Vorasak's fear is that the issue has now developed into one of ethnic hatred between the Han Chinese colonists and the Tibetan people.

"I see no way that the Chinese will relent, and as it is, the issue will linger."

As one of the speakers at the symposium, this writer thinks that—Sulak's "less altruistic" incentive to support the Tibetan cause aside—Thais who support the Tibetan people can also learn to become more sympathetic to the plight of Thai-Malay Muslims in the deep South of Thailand, and the various ethnic minorities in Burma.

For Thais, much of the news about Tibet is transmitted through the local media from international or Western news agencies, and much of whatever is written by the local media about China is about economic and political ties, and hardly ever about Tibet.

Most Thais also buy into the pitfall of only thinking through a state-to-state, or nation-to-nation, paradigm and fail to see that, often, when someone writes about what is good for Thailand, what they actually mean is what is good for the ruling elite in Thailand.

The view towards China shouldn't just be about economic ties and opportunities. Issues like human rights violations in Tibet can help ground us to a less rosy view about the reality of China as an emerging economic and strategic superpower.

As much as people demand that America should behave responsibly, China should be subjected to an international call to end political oppression and cultural genocide in Tibet.

That is unless, in the not-too-distant future, we want an even uglier new world order under China to replace that of Pax Americana.

Pravit Rojanaphruk
The Nation, March 13, 2009

Tibet:
Diaspora Smile, 50th Anniversary of Tibetan in Exile



March 10, 2009 marks the 50th anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day, a day in 1959 when the Tibetan people rose up to defend their country and their leader against the military aggression of the People's Republic of China. A week after this historic uprising, the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of the six million Tibetans, escaped into exile where he has remained ever since.

From 5-18 January 2009, I traveled to Saranarth, India to document the life of 45 elderly Tibetan refugees age between 60-80, whom for the first time in their lives will have a chance to receive a private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This project is organized and sponsored by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. This project actually began from an idea of Mr. Tenzin Losel, a Tibetan social worker, who has strong intention to bring these old Tibetans from refugee camps in many parts of India to the Dalai Lama's teaching in Sarnath.

I've always believed that photography at its best has the capacity to transform the way people think and create social change—it can bring advocacy by perform its role as an evidence of injustice or inequity and be an alternative voice. I also believe that simple but powerful images can empower a community and strengthen their identity to be able to express who they are, which I regard as important and crucial for cultural survival in a globalized world. So my intention from the beginning is to document the Tibetan culture for the purpose of better understanding between the Thai and Tibetan people. Many serious works on Tibet often portray it as Shangri-La on the verge of extinction; a semi-colony with its unique culture being destroyed by the Chinese and the process of modernization. In such pessimistic scenarios, what is ignored is the creative potentials of Tibetan people themselves to adjust and survive in a changing world. Most western professional photographers working on Tibet an issue concentrate on victims, or the unfortunate. But without compassionate purpose such a project often results in a dissociated point of view with an unsentimental empathy with the photograph's subjects. However it is also arguable that it is not only Westerners who have exoticised Tibet and the Tibetans; the Tibetan diasporas too have invested heavily in such neo-orientalist representation strategies for their own tactical purposes: To successfuls foster and maintain a distinctive national identity among disparate groups inside exile community; and to ensure that their way of life is not swallowed by the fast changing world.

So I tried to avoid any kind of sentimental voyeurism of the Western practice. In fact from the beginning I never had the idea that these people are miserable; in contrast I feel that they have such a rich experience and that I should learn from them. I wanted

to show Tibetan dignity in their willingness to leave their homeland to another country, to show their courage and their spirit and, not least, to demonstrate how that can enrich our lives. So we lived together as friends with a simple smile to one another as it seems impossible to use verbal communication, as I cannot speak Tibetan. However with I tried to listen to their stories and tried to understand their lives, as there is meaning that should not be forgotten. I waited until I felt that they trusted me, then I asked for permission to photograph them. Surprisingly many of them were so excited and just stood before my camera and smiled as they always did when they met me.

Back in Bangkok while I was editing the work, I realized that here I had a group of powerful portraits; in front of my camera, I had very old people who had experienced lives of great intensity. These seemingly simple and straightforward portraits depict with force their pain and their dignity. However full of faith they are able to show us that the people who have less materials can be blissful in their beliefs and their lives. Receiving private blessing from His Holiness the Dalai Lama is their last request in life. Many of them have already renounced the world and are prepared for the hereafter.

I wish people who view this series of images will look at Tibetan refugees in a new way, not as miserable political victims nor as alien exotic beings, but with new respect as friends who teach us that self-abnegation is the secret of our survival in a harsh world today. Here, I have a true sample of the men and women of Tibet, on whom humankind must learn from their attitude of life. So I hope this work is an invitation to discover the potentials of simple images to create social change. For the next stage of this project I plan to exhibit their photographs online. Those who are interested in sponsoring this project can purchase these photographs and all the money will be used to continue this project. A large portrait 20x30 inch costs 10,000 baht. A small portrait 12x18inch costs 3000 baht each.



You can view these images at www.sulak-sivaraksa.org or contact ashram@semsikkha.org Tel: 0066-37 333184

Bhanuwat Jittivuthikarn

Siam-Sri Lanka Culture and Arts Exchange

"An artist is a dreamer who makes his dream become alive. The world is his canvas. Believing is the brush that converts his dreams into a masterpiece of reality. Once his dream becomes visible, it is for the other to see and to share the dream."
Professor Ramu Maniwannan speaking on the Siam-Sri Lanka Art Exchange



Sri Lanka and Thailand have a long history of exchange. On multiple occasions, the people of these two countries have turned to each other to revive their religious and cultural traditions. This relationship is being continued through a joint program developed by Sewalanka Foundation in Sri Lanka and the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation in Thailand. The Siam-Sri Lanka exchange program emerged from discussions about the impact of 450 years of colonization on Sri Lanka's artistic and cultural traditions. As traditional social systems were disrupted, the arts were abandoned and were no longer passed to the younger generations.

The first Siam-Sri Lanka partnership focused on the visual arts. Rural artists in Sri Lanka have few opportunities to develop their skills, learn new techniques or explore artistic traditions. These opportunities are restricted to a small group of wealthier urban artists. In August 2008, with support from the Poh Chang College of Arts and Crafts and the Office of Contemporary Art and Culture, three professional Thai artists, Somyod Kumsang, Hongjorn Sanaengamjaroen and Bhanuwat Jittivuthikarn, traveled to Sri Lanka. The Thai team spent one month living and working with rural Sri Lankan artists at the Islander Center in Anuradhapura. More than 100 talented artists from all over the country applied for the program. 24 participants were selected with the support of art lecturers from the University of Peradeniya.

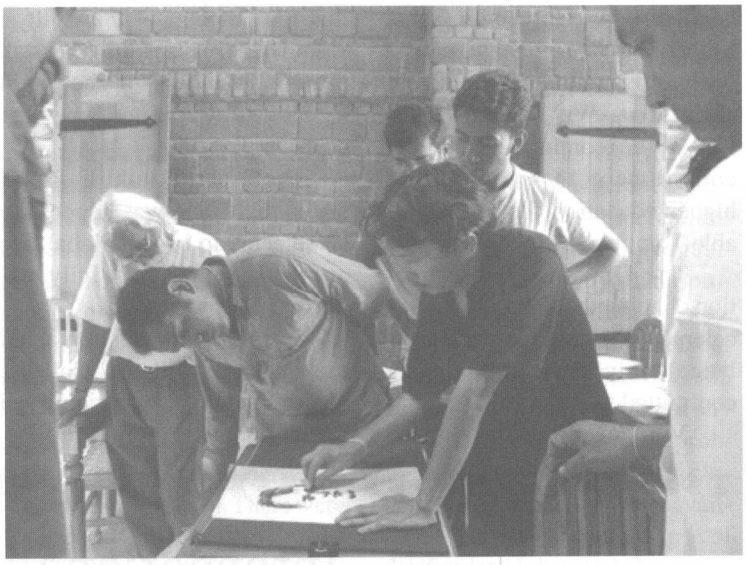
The art workshop included discussions on Asian art, the impact of globalization on art and the role of art in social change. The program also included activities to increase the participants' technical skills and help the rural artists prepare for exhibitions, photographically document their artwork and apply for grants and scholarships. At the end of the program the students collaborated and created pieces of art based on local issues. A recurring theme during the program was the importance of visual self-expression, the role of socially engaged art in addressing challenges like violent conflict and globalization and the ability of art to build understanding and transcend language barriers.

After the Thai artists returned home, the Sri Lankan group met again to continue the dialogue that began at the Islander Center. They decided to begin a 'Forum of Socially Engaged Artists,' and they worked together to organize an exhibition of their work at the Colombo National Art Gallery in December 2008. The theme was *Dream in Divergence* and the paintings were a reflection of social values, beliefs, cultures and connections to the artists' homeland. Bhanuwat Jittivuthikarn returned to Sri Lanka to help plan and open the exhibition.

The art exchange program continued in January 2009 when eight of the Sri Lankan artists were invited to participate in a special training program with art professors at the Poh Chang College of Arts and Crafts, Rajamangala University of Technology in Bangkok. During this 2-

month program, the group had an opportunity to meet with Thai National Artists and the privilege of participating in the 5th International Art Festival and Workshop in Chiang Rai. The work of the Thai lecturers and Sri Lankan artists was displayed in a special exhibition in the Poh Chang Gallery from March 6-10, 2009. Artists from both countries look forward to continuing this exchange in 2009.

The Siam-Sri Lanka exchange extended to traditional Thai massage. In 2008, Wiwat Thanapanyaworakhun, a Thai trainer, instructed more than 50 Sri Lankans in the art of Thai massage. One of the training programs was held in the northern region of Vavuniya for social workers and local villagers. The participants in these areas hope to use their new skills to assist people who have been affected by the conflict. During the program, the Thai trainer also had the opportunity to learn about traditional Sri Lankan ayurvedic practices.



Finally, Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundations and Sewalanka organized an exchange program for traditional puppeteers. Sri Lanka's puppet tradition is nearly lost, and most of the hand-crafted puppets are in European museums. In Thailand however, some groups have adapted traditional puppetry to a modern context. They incorporate modern technologies and modern issues while continuing to share traditional folk stories. From December 6-13, 2008, Sri Lankan university lecturers and puppeteers from the Saranga Puppet Society participated in an exchange workshop with the Sema Puppet Troupe in Thailand. The visit finished with a collaborative performance between the Sri Lankan and Thai puppet groups. The Sema Puppet Troupe plans to visit Sri Lanka in 2009 to support the development of new puppets and new productions.

Ven. Balangoda Manjusri

Malaysia: Global "Alternative Nobel Prize" Hub and Incubator Established in Malaysia

Malaysia's leading University, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), has been selected to host the Right Livelihood College (RLC). The RLC's primary goal will be to harness and spread the knowledge and experience of the outstanding personalities, organisations and unique best practices of the Right Livelihood Award Laureates.

Jakob von Uexkull, Founder and Chairman of the Right Livelihood Award Foundation, and Professor Dzulkifli Razak, Vice Chancellor of USM, will sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the Right Livelihood College between the Right Livelihood Award Foundation and Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang on Thursday morning, January 8, at 10 am local time.

"There are now 133 Right Livelihood Award Laureates from 57 countries—133 experts and leaders whose pioneering knowledge can help change the world for the better. This educational initiative will offer programmes that will support our Laureates in passing their knowledge and skills to a new generation", Jakob von Uexkull announced.

Von Uexkuell thanked

heartedly the University Sains Malaysia, for "kindly and generously offering to host the global secretariat. We resonate with USM", he continued, "and its commitment to transforming higher education for a Sustainable Tomorrow."

The USM has the distinction of being the first APEX (Accelerated Programme for Excellence) university in Malaysia committed to this aim.

Von Uexkull also announced that the Director of the College would be Professor Anwar Fazal, a 1982 Recipient of the Right Livelihood Award and a member of its Jury.

Professor Dzulkifli Razak stated that USM was honored to be selected to be the global hub and that USM would be fully supportive of this venture.

For more information about the Right Livelihood College, please see http://www.rightlivelihood.org/college.html

Notes:

Further information on the Universiti Sains Malaysia can be found on www.usm.my.

Contact Professor Anwar Fazal (email: anwarfazal2004 @ yahoo.com), Director, Right Livelihood College, at 604-6533389.

For further information on the Right Livelihood Award Foundation, please contact Birgit Jaeckel, Press Officer, press@rightlivelihood.org.

International: The Crisis and the Consolidation of Class Power

Is This Really the End of Neoliberalism?

Does this crisis signal the end of neo-liberalism? My answer is that it depends what you mean by neo-liberalism. My interpretation is that it's a class project, masked by a lot of neoliberal rhetoric about individual freedom, liberty, personal responsibility, privatization and the free market. These were means, however, towards the restoration and consolidation of class power, and that neo-liberal project has been fairly successful.

One of the basic principles that was set up in the 1970s was that state power should protect financial institutions at all costs. This is the principle that was worked out in New York City crisis in the mid-1970s, and was first defined internationally when Mexico threatened to go bankrupt in 1982. This would have destroyed the New York investment banks, so the US Treasury and the IMF combined to bail Mexico out. But in so doing they mandated austerity for the Mexican population. In other words they protected the banks and destroyed the people, and this has been the standard practice in the IMF ever since. The current bailout is the same old story, one more time, except bigger.

What happened in the US was that 8 men gave us a 3 page document which pointed a gun at everybody and said 'give us $700 billion or else'. This to me was like a financial coup, against the government and the population of the US. Which means you're not going to come out of this crisis with a crisis of the capitalist class; you're going to come out of this with a far greater consolidation of the capitalist class than there has been in the past. We're going to end up with four or five major banking institutions in the United States and nothing else. Many on Wall Street are thriving right now. Lazard's, because it specializes in mergers and acquisitions, is making megabucks. Some people are going to be burned, but overall it's a massive consolidation of financial power. There's a great line from Andrew Mellon (US banker, Secretary of the Treasury 1921-32), who said that in a crisis, assets return to their rightful owners. A financial crisis is a way of rationalizing what is irrational — for example the immense crash in Asia in 1997-8 resulted in a new model of capitalist development. Disruptions lead to a reconfiguration, a new form of class power. It could go wrong, politically. The bank bailout has been fought over in the US Senate and elsewhere, so the political class may not easily go along — they can put up roadblocks but so far they have caved in and not nationalized the banks.

But this can lead to a deeper political struggle: there is a strong sense of questioning why are we empowering all the people who got us into this mess. Questions are being asked about Obama's

choice of economic advisers - for example Larry Summers who was Secretary of the Treasury at the key moment when a lot of things started to go really wrong, at the end of the Clinton administration. Why would you now bring in so many of the characters who are pro-Wall Street, pro-finance capital, who did the bidding of finance capital back then? Which is not to say that they aren't going to redesign the financial architecture because I think they know it's got to be redesigned, but who are they going to redesign it for? People are really discontented about Obama's economic team, even in the mainstream press.

A new state financial architecture is required. I don't think that all existing institutions like the Bank of International Settlements and even the IMF should be abolished; I think we will need them but they have to be revolutionarily transformed. The big question is who will control them and what their architecture will be. We will need people, experts with some sort of understanding of how those institutions do work and can work. And this is very dangerous because, as we can see right now, when the state looks to see who can understand what is going on in Wall Street, they think only insiders can.

Disempowerment of labor: enough is enough

Whether we can get out of this crisis in a different way depends very much upon the balance of class forces. It depends upon the degree to which the entire population says 'enough is enough, let's change this system'. Right now, when you look at what' s been happening to workers over the last 50 years, they have got almost nothing out of this system. But they haven't risen up in revolt. In the US over the last 7 or 8 years, the condition of the working classes in general has deteriorated, and there has been no mass movement against this. Finance capitalism can survive the crisis, but it depends entirely upon the degree in which there is going to be popular revolt against what is happening, and a real push to try and reconfigure how the economy works.

One of the major barriers to continuous capital accumulation back in the 1960s and early 70s was the labor question. There were scarcities of labor both in Europe and the US and labor was well organized, with political clout. So one of the big barriers to capital accumulation during that period was; how can capital get access to cheaper and more docile labor supplies? There were a number of answers. One was to encourage more immigration. In the United States there was a major revision of the immigration laws in 1965 that in effect allowed the US access to the global surplus population (before that only Europeans and Caucasians were privileged). In the late 1960s the French government was subsidizing the import of Maghrebian labor, the Germans were bringing in the Turks, the Swedes were bringing in the Yugoslavs, the British were drawing upon their empire. So a pro-immigration policy emerged which was one attempt to deal with the labor problem.

The second thing you go for is rapid technological change which throws people out of work and if that failed then there were people like Reagan, Thatcher and Pinochet to crush organized labor. And finally capital goes to where the surplus labor is by offshoring, and this was facilitated by two things. Firstly technical reorganization of the transport systems: one of the biggest revolutions that happened during this period is containerization which allowed you to make auto parts in Brazil and ship them for very low cost to Detroit or wherever. Secondly the new communications systems allowed the tight organization of commodity chain production across the global space.

All of these solved the labor problem for capital, so by 1985 capital has no labor problem any more. It may have specific problems in particular areas but globally it has plenty of labor available to it; the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of much of China added something like 2 billion people to the global proletariat in 20 years. So labor availability is no problem now and the result of that is that labor has been disempowered for the last 30 years. But when labor is disempowered it gets low wages, and if you engage in wage repression this limits markets. So capital was beginning to face problems with its market, and there were two things which happened.

The first was the gap between what labor was earning and what it was spending was covered by the rise of the credit card industry and increasing indebtedness of households. So in the US in 1980 you would find that the average household would owe around $40,000 in debts now it's about $130,000 for every household, including mortgages. So household debt sky-rockets and that brings you to financialization, and that was about getting the financial institutions to support the household debts of working class people whose earnings are not increasing. And you start with the respectable working class, but by the time you get to the year 2000 you start to find these sub-prime

mortgages circulating. You are looking to create a market. And so finance starts to support the debt-financing of people who have almost no income. But if you hadn't done that what would have happened to the property developers who are building the houses? So you try and stabilize the market by funding that indebtedness.

Crises of asset values

The second thing which happened was that from the 1980s onwards the rich are getting far richer because of that wage repression. The story we are told is that they will invest in new activity but they don't; most of them start to invest in assets, i.e. they put money in the stock market, the stock market goes up so they think it is a good investment so they put more money in the stock market, so you get these stock market bubbles. It is a ponzi-like system without the Madoff's organizing it. The rich bid up asset values, including stocks, property, and leisure property as well as the art market. These investments involve financialization. But as you bid up asset values this carries over to the whole economy, so to live in Manhattan became all but impossible unless you went incredibly into debt, and everyone is caught in this inflation of asset values, including the working classes whose incomes are not rising. And now we've got a collapse of asset values; the housing market is down, the stock market is down.

There has always been the problem of the relationship between representation and reality. Debt is about the assumed future value of goods and services, so it assumes the economy is going to continue to grow over the next 20 or 30 years. It always involves a guess, which is then set by the interest rate, discounting into the future. This growth of the financial area after the 1970s has a lot to do with what I think is another key problem: what I would call the capitalist surplus absorption problem. As surplus theory tells us, capitalists produce a surplus, which they then have to take a part of, recapitalize it, and reinvest it in expansion. Which means they always have to find somewhere else to expand into. In an article I wrote for the *New Left Review* called 'Right to the City' I pointed out that in the last 30 years an immense amount of the capital surplus has been absorbed into urbanization: urban restructuring, expansion and speculation. Every city I go to is a huge building site for capitalist surplus absorption. Now, of course, many of these projects stand unfinished.

This way of absorbing capital surpluses has got more and more problematic over time. In 1750 the value of the total output of goods and services was around $135 billion, in constant values. By 1950, it's $4 trillion. By 2000, it's $40 trillion. It's now around $50 trillion. And if Gordon Brown is right it's going to double over the next 20 years, to $100 trillion by 2030.

Throughout the history of capitalism, the general rate of growth has been close to 2.5% per annum, compound basis. That would mean that in 2030 you'd need to find profitable outlets for $2.5 trillion dollars. That's a very tall order. I think there has been a serious problem, particularly since 1970, about how to absorb greater and greater amounts of surplus in real production. Less and less of it is going into real production, and more and more into speculation on asset values, which accounts for the increasing frequency and depth of the financial crises we've been having since 1975 or so; they are all crises of asset value.

My argument would be that if we come out of this crisis right now, and there's going to be capital accumulation at 3% rate of growth, we've got a hell of a lot of problems on our hands. Capitalism is running into serious environmental constraints, as well as market constraints, profitability constraints. The recent turn to financialization is a turn of necessity, as a way of dealing with the surplus absorption problem; but one that cannot possibly work without periodic devaluations. That's what's happening now, with the losses of several trillion dollars of asset value.

The term 'national bailout' is therefore inaccurate, because they're not bailing out the whole of the existing financial system - they're bailing out the banks, the capitalist class, forgiving them their debts, their transgressions, and only theirs. The money goes to the banks but not to the homeowners who've been foreclosed on, which is beginning to create anger. And the banks are using the money not to lend to anybody but to buy other banks. They are consolidating their class power.

The collapse of credit

The collapse of credit for the working class spells the end of financialization as the solution for the crisis of the market. As a consequence of this we will see a major crisis of unemployment and the collapse of many industries unless there is effective action to change that. Now this is where you get the current discussion about returning to a Keynesian economic model, and Obama's

plan is to invest in a vast public works and investment in green technologies, in a sense going back to a New Deal type of solution. I am skeptical of his ability to do this.

To understand the current situation we need to go beyond what goes on in the labor process and production to the complex of relationships around the state and finance. We need to understand how the national debt and credit system have from the beginning been major vehicles for primitive accumulation, or what I now call accumulation by dispossession - as you can see from the building industry. In my 'Right to the City' article I looked at how capitalism was revived in second empire Paris because the state along with the bankers put together a new nexus of state-finance capital, to rebuild Paris. That provided full employment and the boulevards, the water systems and sewage systems, new transport systems, and it was through those types of mechanisms that the Suez Canal was built. A lot of this was debt financed. Now that state-finance nexus has undergone a massive transformation since the 1970s; it's become far more international, it's opened itself to all types of financial innovations including derivative markets and speculative markets, etc. A new financial architecture has been designed.

What I think is happening at the moment is that they are now looking for a new financial set-up which can solve the problem not for working people but for the capitalist class. I think they are going to find a solution for the capitalist class and if the rest of us get screwed, too bad. The only thing they would care about is if we rose up in revolt. And until we rise up in revolt they are going to redesign the system according to their own class interests. I don't know what this new financial architecture will look like. If we look closely at what happened during the New York fiscal crisis I don't think the bankers or the financiers knew what to do at all, now what they did was bit by bit arrive at a 'bricolage'; they pieced it together in a new way and eventually they come up with a new construction. But whatever solution they may arrive at, it will suit them unless we get in there and start saying that we want something that is suitable for us. There's a crucial role for people like us to raise the questions and challenge the legitimacy of the decisions being made at present, and to have very clear analyses of what the nature of the problem has been, and what the possible exits are.

Alternatives

We need in fact to begin to exercise our right to the city. We have to ask the question which is more important, the value of the banks or the value of humanity. The banking system should serve the people, not live off the people. And the only way in which we are really going to be able to exert the right to the city is to take command of the capitalist surplus absorption problem. We have to socialize the capital surplus, and to get out of the problem of 3% accumulation forever. We are now at a point where 3% growth rate forever is going to exert such tremendous environmental costs, and such tremendous pressure on social situations that we are going to go from one financial crisis to another.

The core problem is how you are going to absorb capitalist surpluses in a productive and profitable way. My view is that social movement must coalesce around the idea that they want more control over the surplus product. And while I don't support a return to the Keynesian model of the sort we had in the 1960s, I do think there was much greater social and political control over the production, utilization and distribution of the surplus then. The circulating surplus was put into building schools, hospitals and infrastructure. This was what upset the capitalist class and caused a counter movement toward the end of the 1960s - that they were not getting enough control over the surplus. However, if you look at the data the proportion of the surplus which is being absorbed by the state has not shifted very much since 1970, so what the capitalist class did was to stop the further socialization of the surplus. They also managed to transform the word government into the word 'governance', making governmental and corporate activities porous, which enables the situation we have in Iraq where private contractors milked the possibilities ruthlessly for easy profit.

I think we are headed into a legitimating crisis. Over the past thirty years we have been told, to quote Margaret Thatcher, "there is no alternative" to a neo-liberal free market, privatised world, and that if we didn't succeed in that world it's our own fault. I think it's very difficult to say that when faced with a foreclosure crisis you support the banks but not the people who are being foreclosed upon. You can accuse the people being foreclosed upon of irresponsibility, and in the US there is a strong racist element in this argument. When the first wave of foreclosures hit places like Cleveland and Ohio they were devastating to the black communities there but some peoples' response was 'well what do you expect, black

people are irresponsible. We are seeing right-wing explanations of the crisis which explain it in terms of personal greed, both in Wall Street and those who borrowed money to buy houses. So they attempt to blame the crisis on the victims. One of our tasks must be to say 'no, you absolutely cannot do that' and to try and create a consolidated explanation of this crisis as a class event in which a certain structure of exploitation broke down and is about to be displaced by an even deeper structure of exploitation. It's very important this alternative explanation of the crisis is discussed and conveyed publicly.

One of the big ideological configurations we are going to have is what is going to be the role of home ownership in the future once we start saying things like you've got to socialize much more of the housing stock, as since the 1930s we have had huge pressures towards individualized home ownership as in a way of securing people's rights and position.. We've got to socialize and recapitalize public education and health care long with housing provision. These sectors of the economy have to be socialized along with the banks.

Radical politics beyond class divides

There is another point we have to consider, which is that labor, and particularly organized labor, is only one small piece of this whole problem, and it's only going to have a partial role in what is going on. And this is for a very simple reason, which goes back to Marx's shortcomings in how he set up the problem. If you say to that the formation of the state-finance complex is absolutely crucial to the dynamics of capitalism (which it obviously is), and you ask yourself what social forces are at work in contesting or setting it up these institutional arrangements, labor has never been at the forefront of that struggle. Labor has been at the forefront in the labor market and over the labor process and these are vital moments in the circulation process, but most of the struggles which have gone on over the state-finance nexus are populist struggles in which labor has only been partially present.

For example in the US in the 1930s there were a lot of populists who supported the Bonnie and Clyde bank robbers. And currently many of the struggles going on in Latin America are more populist than labor led. Labor always has a very important role to play but I don't think we are in a position right now where the conventional view of the proletariat being the vanguard of the struggle is very helpful when it is the architecture of the state-finance nexus (the central nervous system of capital accumulation) that is the fundamental issue. There may be times and places where proletarian movements may be highly significant, for example in China where I envisage them playing a critical part which I do not see them having in this country. What is interesting is that the car workers and automobile companies are in alliance right now in relation to the state-finance nexus, so in a way the grand dividing line of class struggle which has always been there in Detroit isn't there anymore or at least not in the same way. We have a completely different kind of class politics going on and some of the conventional Marxist ways of viewing these things get in the way of a real radical politics.

There is also a big problem on the left that many think the capturing of state power has no role to play in political transformations and I think they're crazy. Incredible power is located there and you can't walk away from it as though it doesn't matter. I am profoundly skeptical of the belief that NGOs and civil society organizations are going to change the world, not because NGOs can't do anything at all, but it takes a different kind of political movement and conception if we are going to do anything about the main crisis which is going on. In the United States the political instinct is very anarchist, and while I am very sympathetic to a lot of anarchist views their perpetual complaints about and refusal to command the state also gets in the way.

I don't think we are in a position to define who the agents of change will be in the present conjuncture and it plainly will vary from one part of the world to another. In the United States right now there are signs that elements of the managerial class, which has lived off the earnings of finance capital all these years, is getting annoyed and may turn a bit radical. A lot of people have been laid off in the financial services, in some instances they have even had their mortgages foreclosed. Cultural producers are waking up to the nature of the problems we face and in the same way that the 1960s art schools were centers of political radicalism, you might find something like that re-emerging. We may see the rise of cross-border organizations as the reductions in remittances spread the crisis to places like rural Mexico or Kerala.

Social movements have to define what strategies and policies they want to adopt. We academics should never view our-

selves as having some missionary role in relation to social movements; what we should do is get into conversation and talk about how we see the nature of the problem.

Having said that I would want us to propose ideas. An interesting idea in the US right now is to get municipal governments to pass anti-eviction ordinances. I think there are a couple of places in France which have done that. Then we could set up a municipal housing corporation which would assume the mortgages, pay off the bank at so much on the dollar because the banks have been given a lot of money to supposedly deal with this, but they're not.

Another key question is that of citizenship and rights. I think that rights to the city should be guaranteed by residency no matter what your citizenship is. Currently people are denied any political rights to the city unless they happen to be citizens. So if you're an immigrant you don't have any rights. I think there are struggles to be launched around the rights to the city. In the Brazilian constitution they have a 'rights to the city' clause which is about the right to consultation, participation and budgetary procedures. Again I think there is a politics which can come out of that.

A reconfiguration of urbanization

In the US there is the capacity to act at a local level, with a lot going on about environmental questions, and over the past fifteen to twenty years municipal governments have often been more progressive than the federal government. There's a crisis in municipal finance right now and there is likely to be significant agitation and pressure upon Obama to recapitalize a lot of municipal government (which is proposed in the stimulus package). He has said this is one of the things he is concerned about, especially since a lot of the issues which are happening are local ones, for instance the sub-prime mortgage crisis. As I have been arguing the foreclosure stuff must be understood as an urban crisis not just a financial crisis; it is a financial crisis of urbanization.

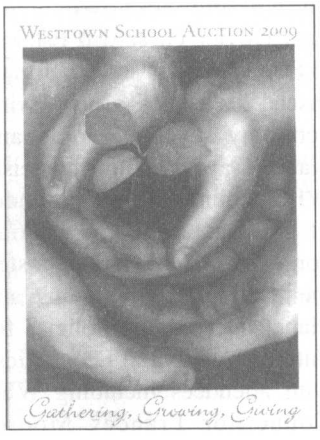
Another important question is to think strategically about how the social economy in some alliance with labor and the municipal-based movements such as Right to the City could also be a component in a strategy. This relates to the question of technological development - for example I see no reason why you couldn't have a municipal-based support system for the development of productive systems such as solar power, to create more decentralized employment apparatuses and possibilities.

If I could develop an idealized system now I would say in the US we should create a national redevelopment bank and take $500 billion out of that $700 billion they voted and the bank should work with municipalities to deal with neighborhoods which have been hit by the foreclosure wave, because the foreclosure wave has been like a financial Katrina in many ways; it has wiped out whole communities, usually poor black or Hispanic communities. You go into those neighborhoods and bring back the people who used to live in those communities and rehouse them on a different basis of tenure, residency rights, and with a different kind of financing. And green those neighborhoods, creating local employment opportunities in those fields.

So I could imagine a reconfiguration of urbanization. To do anything on global warming we need to totally reconfigure how American cities work; to think about a completely new pattern of urbanization, with new patterns of living and working. There are a lot of possibilities the left should be paying attention to - this is a real opportunity. But it is where I have a problem with some Marxists who seem to think, 'yes! It's a crisis; the contradictions of capitalism will now be solved somehow!' This is not a moment for triumphalism, this is a moment for problematizing. First of all I think there are problems with the way Marx set up those problems. Marxists are not very good at understanding the state financial complex or urbanization - they are terrific at understanding some other things. But now we have to rethink our theoretical posture and political possibilities.

So there is a lot of theoretical re-thinking that is needed as well as practical action.

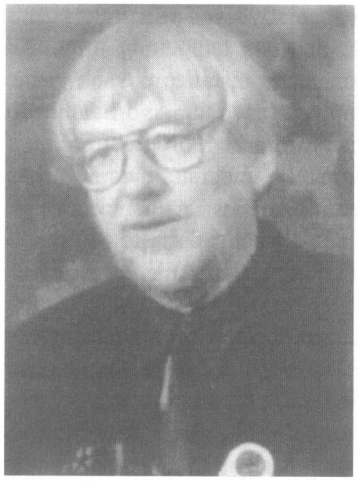
Transcribed by *Kate Ferguson*.
Edited by Mary Livingstone.
David Harvey, 15 March 2009,
available at CounterPunch.



International: World Future Council

The World Future Council promotes a radical shift in national and international economics far beyond the proposals to be expected from the G20 meetings currently being held in London. As part of this effort, the WFC will prepare parliamentary hearings for new corporate charter legislation in cooperation with key business, labour and civil society organisations. The new legislation would force corporations to take responsibility for the environmental and social damage they cause. In addition, it will increase accountability of the board and limit the compensation range between the highest and lowest paid employees to a ratio of 25:1. "No company's success depends on the CEO alone", said WFC founder Jakob von Uexküll at the close of a meeting of the organisation's Councillors and high level international economics experts on March 27th – 31st in Egypt.

"Even though major agreements do exist in the protection of labels and patents, in the WTO and the International Labor Organization, there is no such thing as a business right globally known and acknowledged", says Olivier Giscard d'Estaing, WFC Councillor and Chairman. Insead "We need a new living economy serving people and planet", says Ibrahim Abouleish, WFC Councillor and founder of the sustainable Egyptian company SEKEM. He hosted the meeting "Saving People and Planet: Developing Policies for Future Finance and Economics" with attendees including WFC Councillor Frances Moore-Lappé, author and founder of the *Small Planet Institute* and the German monetary architect Professor Margrit Kennedy, member of the WFC's Board of Advisors.



Jakob von Uexküll

The current financial crisis is, according to the WFC, also a unique opportunity for an ambitious green shift towards a world economy that combats poverty and climate change, and creates millions of new jobs. Money created by central banks should be used to foster this change rather than being pumped into troubled banks. Instead of taxing labour the focus should shift to taxing the depletion of natural resources. This would create new jobs and mitigate climate change at the same time. State guarantees for companies, especially in the automotive industry, should be conditional on these firms developing sustainable technologies. Bailed out banks should be mandated to finance viable green projects, says von Uexküll. "New organizations set up to supervise the financial sector and manage assets taken over by taxpayers must have a majority representation from civil society, business and parliaments." To revive economies from the bottom up, the use of local and regional currencies should be encouraged and the operations of co-operative and employee-owned enterprises should be facilitated.

To curb excessive financial speculation, contractual obligations based on speculative financial products not approved by the regulatory authorities should no longer be legally enforceable. This principle of negative legal enforcement tends to be more effective than regulation and shifts the burden of proof, says von Uexküll. "In addition, smaller, less profit-oriented banks should be freed from regulatory overload", says Stefan Biskamp, WFC financial expert. "In turn these banks should be mandated towards complete transparency of their lending business and refinancing."

Councillors, members of the Board of Advisors and experts from the WFC will contribute these proposals to the G20 process in the following weeks.

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World Future Council - A global forum working to protect the rights of future generations.

Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

In January, some INEB Executive Committee members came to Bangkok to a meeting to discuss about the preparation of INEB Conference and the strengthening of INEB's profile. We selected Mr. Harsha K. Navaratne, an Executive Committee member from Sewalanka Foundation, Sri Lanka, as our new President. We also outline some ideas to improve INEB's efficiency. I am sure that in the near future INEB will be able to service our members better.

At the same time, the secretariat office is busy with the preparation of INEB's "20th Anniversary: Festival of Peace and Social Transformation." We are now calling for participation from engaged Buddhists worldwide. You can participate in the INEB Anniversary in many ways. We have space for workshops that you can host an issue of your interest, exhibit your work, set up your campaign booth, or sponsor some participants from poorer countries. The early bird registration will open in mid-April through our website.

The very critical help that we need from you is your appeal to the Thai government to allow the visit of the Dalai Lama. It is unbelievable that Siam, a self-proclaimed Buddhist country, is denying the visit of an internationally renowned Buddhist monk like him only because it fears negative impacts on Sino-Thai relationship, which involves a lot of business interests. It is obvious that the government prioritizes profit over Dhamma.

In February, INEB secretariat staff participated in the ASEAN People's Forum in Bangkok. We met some old friends who work for peace, democracy and human rights for Burma. They are still working hard to advocate the cause in ASEAN countries. However it is obvious that the resolution will not come from those countries although ASEAN tried to set up a mechanism to protect human rights. It would finally depend on the people to pressure to our governments and businesses to understand that, in order to achieve sustainable peace and security in ASEAN and beyond, they cannot deny responsibility to support genuine democratization in Burma.

March 2009 marks the 50th anniversary of the first Tibetan uprising against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. It's long been obvious that China rules Tibet with an iron fist, suppressing the slightest form of dissent, leading to violence against and arrests of local inhabitants, monks and nuns included. The Tibetan leadership has made it clear for a long time that, it hopes for the meaningful autonomy for Tibet within the state of China. It hopes that the Tibetan people can preserve their religion and culture, have the right to decide for themselves the use of natural resources and the course of development, and to live in peace and in harmony with nature. Isn't this the common hope for all humanity? Doesn't it go along with decentralization, human rights, community rights and the rights protecting ethnic minority? There are many ethnic conflicts worldwide, but the Tibetans are among the few who decide to struggle nonviolently.

Also in March, INEB participated in a meeting aiming to establish an inter-religious cooperation body within the United Nations. It is a creative idea to demonstrate to the UN the significance of inter-religious cooperation in peace-building and of religious-based organizations as one of key civil movements in a country. INEB will continue our support and engagement with this effort and hope to see its establishment in the near future.

In April, we say goodbye to our participants in the INEB Youth Exchange Program. They have already finished their 10-month posting in five countries, Siam, India, Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos PDR. We hope that they would return home with new ideas and skills—and a new worldview.

In the following months, INEB will continue to prepare for our festival in November. Your support in launching this big event is critical, especially in sponsoring the participation of monks, nuns and youths from poorer countries.

Yours in the Dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
INEB Executive Secretary

20th Anniversary Conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists

A Festival of Peace and Social Transformation

Twenty years ago in 1989 when INEB was formed by a small network of Dhamma practitioners and activists, the Dalai Lama was about to enter the world stage by winning the Nobel Peace Prize. A few years later, Aung San Suu Kyi with her Buddhist background and practice would also win the Nobel Prize. At this time, socially engaged Buddhism was still a very little known or understood idea that elicited jokes about married Buddhists or condemnation by both Buddhist and political authorities who saw it as heretical, subversive, and dangerous.

Twenty years later socially engaged Buddhism although still controversial and somewhat misunderstood is becoming an increasingly appealing form of Buddhist identity in a world plagued with religious fundamentalism and violence, moral bankruptcy and economic collapse, and human alienation. Through the influence of the Dalai Lama, Suu Kyi, Thich Nhat Hanh, A.T. Ariyaratne, Sulak Sivaraksa, and many other leaders, millions of Buddhists as well as agnostics are turning to the socially engaged Buddhist vision for a progressive identity in these trouble times. This identity is one of tolerance and ecumenism towards others faiths and systems of thinking, inner cultivation of the mind/heart and spirit through meditation and contemplation, and progressive social action to not only relieve the suffering of others in the world but also to uproot the structures of injustice imbedded in our economic, political, and cultural systems. In sum, socially engaged Buddhism is a path that seeks to join with all other sentient beings in the creation of sustainable global civilization for the 21st century.

At the 20th Anniversary INEB Conference, we will reflect on, critique, and celebrate the work of the last 20 years, work to articulate a vision for the next 20, and strategize affirmative action for today. We invite you to come join us in a weeklong series of socially engaged Buddhist seminars, workshops on social and spiritual issues, an inter-religious conference, a cultural bazaar, a half-day peace walk, and a series of network meetings. Come learn about the past, celebrate the present, and create the future!!

INEB 20th Anniversary – A Festival of Peace and Social Transformation
Call for Workshop Presentation

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists will hold its 20th anniversary celebration from November 15-21, 2009 in Chiangmai, Thailand. Public symposia, workshops and seminars will be held for any interested persons or groups during the first three days of the Festival. This announcement is a call for submission of workshop presentations.

Key information about the workshops:

- Workshops are scheduled for November 15, 16, and 17, 2009, between 1:30 and 5:30 p.m. Each workshop can be from 45 minutes to 4 hours long.
- The workshops are to be interactive, experiential or skill-building and NOT a lecture or a reading of paper.
- The topic of the workshop should fall under one (or more) of the following INEB areas of concern and engagement: Peace and Reconciliation, Environment, Gender, Alternative Education, Human Rights and Social Justice, Alternative Development and Economics, Community Development, Reform and Revival of Buddhist Institutions, Youth and Spiritual Leadership Development.
- Proposals for workshops with themes that fall outside of the above areas are welcome and will be considered by the committee for their relevance and appropriateness.
- The submission deadline is May 31, 2009. The review committee will inform those who submitted the proposals of the selection outcome by the end of June 2009.

Any interested persons are invited to send a 1-2 page outline of the workshop along with the application form to Ms. Anchalee Kurutach at akurutach@gmail.com. A copy can also be sent to INEB secretariat Ms. Anne Lapapan at inebconference2009@yahoo.com. If e-mailing is not possible, the application can be mailed or faxed to INEB office at 666 Charoen Nakorn Rd., Banglmphu Lang, Klongsan, Bangkok 10600, THAILAND Tel: 662 860 2194, Fax 662 860 1277

Worlds Come Together at the World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference



In November of last year (2008), the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) held their 24th General Conference with the theme of "Buddhist Contributions to Resolving Social Problems". The event marked a remarkable coming together of diverse worlds. Firstly, the WFB itself has been viewed over the years as a rather conservative organization of academics, high-level monks, and well-to-do businessmen. While they are certainly devout and sincere in their Buddhist faith, outsiders have wondered what WFB's real contribution to society is. The other major international Buddhist organization is the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), which in many ways offers a mirror image. It is known for its dynamic network of activists doing meaningful work at the grassroots in many countries. However, its lack of resources, organizational strength, and the marginal status of many of its members has prevented it from making a stronger impact, especially on the Buddhist world.

At this particular conference, these two worlds came together through the organizational vision of the local WFB chapter and host, the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF), and specifically through its two foreign deputies Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu and Rev. Shojun Okano. Rev. Tomatsu as well as Hsiang-chou Yo of Taiwan, who both sit on the WFB Executive Committee, have straddled the WFB and INEB worlds for a number of years. Along with Rev. Okano, they encouraged the JBF and the WFB to take stronger stance on social engagement, and in an encouraging sign, both groups readily accepted the agenda for this conference.

This agenda meant setting aside an entire day of the three day conference for symposia on seven different key social issues as well as an advance screening of Helena Norberg-Hodge's film *The Economics of Happiness*. Norberg-Hodge describes the film as pointing "the way to a more satisfying and sustainable future through economic localization", and "how this is a necessary antidote to globalization, which is dismantling communities worldwide." But, as she notes, "this is not a gloom-and-doom film ... Inspiring examples of grassroots initiatives, from a rural regeneration program in China to community-building projects in Detroit, show the enormous benefits—environmental, social, even spiritual—of bringing the economy closer to home." After the 45 minute screening, Norberg-Hodge was joined on stage by two visionaries from the engaged Buddhist movement, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, the founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, and deep-ecologist Joanna Macy from the United States. Reiko Yukawa, a Japanese entertainer who has become involved in social issues, also joined them, and all three offered their comments on the film.

This morning program effectively set the stage for the afternoon symposia, which were able to look more in depth at the many social issues and problems that Norberg-Hodge's film brought up. The seven chosen themes were: 1) peace and coexistence, 2) economics and development, 3) caring for the dying and bereaved, 4) gender, 5) suicide, 6) environment, and 7) youth. In the same spirit of Norberg-Hodge's film of offering inspiring examples of grassroots initiatives, the 35 panelists and coordinators on these seven panels focused on real practices

to overcome the many problems we face. Indeed, these panelists were chosen not for their academic backgrounds or intellectual acumen but for their actual engagement in the issues. And this is where the WFB and INEB worlds came together since a large proportion of the panelists came directly from the INEB network. Space does not provide an in depth discussion of these panels, but I will offer below a brief synopsis of each and an introduction of the panelists and the coordinators who are doing such meaningful work.

1) Peace and Coexistence

The panelists spoke directly about the activities they have been engaged in within the context of their own national conflicts (i.e. the conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the struggle for democracy in Burma, the ethnic war in Sri Lanka, and the preservation of anti-militarism in Japan). They used the Four Noble Truths (problem, cause, vision, action) as the basic structure for their discussion. They also sought to make clear the difference between a dharmic way of peace building without violence and the way of using force. Coordinator: Rev. Hitoshi Jin (Japan), Director of the Japan Buddhist Council on Youth and Child Education (Zenseikyo Foundation) and a Senior Research Fellow at the Rinbutsuken Institute for Engaged Buddhism in Tokyo. Panelists: Ven. Pomnyun Sunim (South Korea), founder of the Jungto (Pure Land) Society seeking to apply Buddhist teachings to the full range of modern ills from conflict and poverty to environmental degradation; A.T. Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka), the founder and President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, the world's largest spiritually-based people's development movement; Ashin Nayaka (Burma), Secretary of the International Burmese Monks Organization (IBMO), which advocates for peace and freedom in Burma. Rev. Shokyo Odake (Japan), Director of the Association for Nenbutsu Followers for Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

2) Social Development by Buddhists: What Can We Do?

Poverty, environment, human rights, and peace—even in the 21st century, these global issues caused by "development" are becoming more serious. When we look at the present global society, the richest 20 percent of the world's people possess 84 percent of the world's wealth, and 80 percent of the world's people live in the developing world while 20 percent of those people live on less than one dollar a day. In Japan, the economic difference between urban cities and rural areas is continually widening and the people have lost sight of a healthy and prosperous life. In this panel, the panelists shared and discussed everyday activities, both spiritual and social, and investigated the way to proper social development towards a better future. Coordinator: Tatsuya Hata (Japan), former Executive Secretary and senior board member, and present Director of SVA – the Soto [Zen] Volunteer Association (now the Shanti Volunteer Association). Panelists: Karma Ura (Bhutan), the President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, a non-aligned, objective, multi-disciplinary and autonomous social science research center focused on Gross National Happiness (GNH) and related indicators; Ven. Maha Boonchuay Sirindharo (Thailand), Vice Rector of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in Chiang Mai and General Secretary of the Buddhist Monk Network in Northern Thailand; Rev. Alan Hozan Senauke (USA), former Director and present Senior Advisor of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and founder of the Clear View Project. Rev. Shunei Hakamata (Japan), co-founder of the Soto [Zen] chapter of the Vihara movement for terminal care and founder of the Thinking about Our Hearts and Lives Association, a suicide prevention group in Akita.

3) Buddhist Wisdom in Caring for the Dying and Bereaved

Confronting mortality poses challenges for terminal patients, their caretakers, and their survivors. Yet a wide range of spiritual needs are well-addressed by traditional Buddhism, and the efficacy of these practices is being increasingly documented by medical and social research– such as that meditation can reduce angst and depression among dying patients and caretakers; teachings can provide a rich vision assuaging concerns about the afterlife; and rituals can reduce and heal psychological traumas after bereavement. The panelists in this session gave concrete examples of these practices, and afterward had a rich discussion on the potential for using Buddhism in spiritual care for the dying. Coordinator: Carl Becker (USA/Japan), Professor at the Kyoto University Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies and co-founder of the International Association for Near-Death Studies. Panelists: Rev. Joan Halifax (USA), founder of the Upaya Zen Center and Institute and the Project on Being

with Dying; Dr./Rev. Kangen Shibata (Japan), medical doctor at Noshiro Hospital in Akita and head of the Nichiren Vihara Project for the dying; Dr. Chien-an Yao (Taiwan), Director of the Palliative Care Unit at the National University of Taiwan Hospital and member of the Clinical Buddhist Research Association; Ven. Phaisan Visalo (Thailand), Buddhika Network for Buddhism and Society which is developing a network of religious and medical professionals working for more integrated spiritual and physical care for the dying.

4) In Search of Gender Equality in Buddhism

The gender issue should be recognized as not only one important social issue, but also as an important issue within Buddhism itself. For example, there are problems of women's ordination and after ordination especially in Theravada countries, and there is the unique problem of priests' wives and family members living in the same temple in Japan. If the situation remains the same, Buddhism will not be able to live up to the needs and demands of women living in today's world, who could benefit from Buddhism's liberative teachings and practices. In this session, the panelists shared the voices of Buddhist women, which have been largely ignored by most Buddhists all over the world. In this way, they hoped to take one step towards creating a society in which women inhabit Buddhism without any barriers. Coordinator: Mika Edaki (Japan), former staff of SHARE Thailand, a non-governmental organization promoting HIV and AIDS awareness, and present coordinator of AYUS, a Buddhist based Japanese NGO for international cooperation. Panelists: Ven. Chao-hwei Shih (Taiwan), Dean of Hong-Shih Buddhist College, and the founder and Director of the Research Centre for Applied Ethics at Hsuan-Chuang University; Ven. Tsering Palmo (Ladakh, India), founder and President of the Ladakh Nuns Association, and the first Ladakh nun trained as a Tibetan medical doctor. Noriko Kawahashi (Japan), Professor of Religion at the Nagoya Institute of Technology and a member of the Tokai-Kanto Network for Women and Buddhism; Ouyporn Khuankaew (Thailand), founder and director of the International Women's Partnership for Peace and Justice (IWP).

5) What Can Buddhists Do about Suicide as a Social Problem?

The number of people who commit suicide has increased in contemporary society, especially Japanese society which has averaged over 30,000 suicides per year for the last ten years. The recognition is now spreading that the act of ending one's own life is a major, structural social problem as well as a personal matter. The panelists discussed the practical activities of Buddhists who are actually engaged in this problem, the motivations that led to engaging in these activities, and also what can be learned from these opportunities of getting involved. Coordinator: Rev. Katsumi Fujisawa (Japan), co-founder of the Priests Tackling Suicide Problems. Panelists: Rev. Eichi Shinohara (Japan), consultant for the Soto [Zen] Human Rights and Education Bureau, and President of the suicide prevention network Kaze; Rev. Jotetsu Nemoto (Japan), founder of an internet community board offering a platform to exchange information on treatment and mutual support; David Brazier (UK), head of the Order of Amida Buddha who has also worked as a psychotherapist, psychodramatist, and psychiatric social worker. Udomsil Srisangnam (Thailand), Professor of Psychiatry and Deputy Dean in the Faculty of Medicine at Mahidol University, and Vice Chairman of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation.

6) Youth in Buddhism

From India in Asia to the Western world, Buddhism has become the source of mental strength in the lifestyles of many people. The teachings of the Buddha on wisdom and compassion have a great influence in laying a foundation during the adolescent development process. Furthermore, the teachings also influence the future of the world. As we study the spread of Buddhism and its impact in the world, we should now explore the various ways Buddhism has contributed to human development and its roles in the realization of a peaceful and happy society. Coordinator: Anurut Vongvanij (Thailand), President of the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth (WFBY) and Deputy Director of the World Buddhist University. Panelists: Ong See Yew (Malaysia), President of the Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM) and course director and trainer for several Buddhist youth leadership development programs; Tempel Smith (USA), teaches Buddhist spirituality and meditation to teenagers and adults through the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Spirit Rock Meditation Center, and Insight

Meditation Society; Mangesh Dahiwale (India), staff of the Nagarjuna Institute and Nagaloka Training Center in Nagpur, which trains young Dalit Buddhists from all over India in Buddha Dhamma and community organizing skills; Rev. Daito Noda (Japan), founder of the Kappa Dojo Foundation, located in his temple where he runs a school for youth with behavioral disabilities and a program for young, mostly male, shut-ins.

7) A Buddhist Approach to Practical Solutions to the Environmental Crisis

Buddhists are often quick to point out the environmentally friendly nature of our teachings, but are slower to take concrete actions to confront the imminent environmental crisis. The participants on this panel all agree that the crisis is real and that time is running out. The time for mere theory is over, and now is the time for practical solutions. The panelists spoke passionately, based on their extensive experience, and offered practical solutions to our environmental crisis. Coordinator: Kenneth Tanaka (USA/Japan), Professor at Musashino University and President of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies. Panelists: Helena Norberg-Hodge (Sweden/UK), Director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC); Rev. Hideto Okochi (Japan), co-founder of the Edogawa Citizen Network Concerned with Global Warming and the Mirai (Future) Bank. Joanna Macy (USA), Buddhist teacher, writer, and activist engaged in issues of environmental and social justice. Sorrayut Ratanapojnard (Thailand), faculty in the Department of Biology at Mahidol University and founding member and Manager of the New Consciousness Group.

A second coming together of worlds at this conference was the intersection of three domains in Japan: conservative Japanese Buddhist society, the emerging socially engaged Buddhist community, and the NGO and civil society communities of Japan. Buddhist countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka have very conservative monastic sanghas like Japan. However, through the pioneering work of progressive Buddhists in these countries, an important link has been made with progressive civil society and NGO organizations. This link has been slow to form in Japan where not only are the civil society and NGO sectors still quite immature, but Buddhism is almost always seen as a remnant of Japan's feudal and militaristic past rather than as a resource for post-industrial social development.

At the seven symposia listed above, the coordinators and panelists from Japan represented a very important and new kind of civil society leader. They are either priests with a great knowledge of social issues who have become active in social development, or they are NGO workers who have taken a particular interest in the potentials of Buddhism to promote a new kind of holistic "dharmic" social development—a concept that is being promoted now in Japan as *kaihotsu*. These individuals created a crucial bridge at the WFB meeting, because they were able to draw in Japanese who would normally stay away from such Buddhists meetings. At the same time, their Buddhist background and credentials created an opening to expose more conservative members of the Japanese monastic Sangha to how Buddhists can meaningfully engage in contemporary society. This is an agenda gaining increasing interest from denominational headquarters that are troubled by their declining memberships and dwindling social relevance.

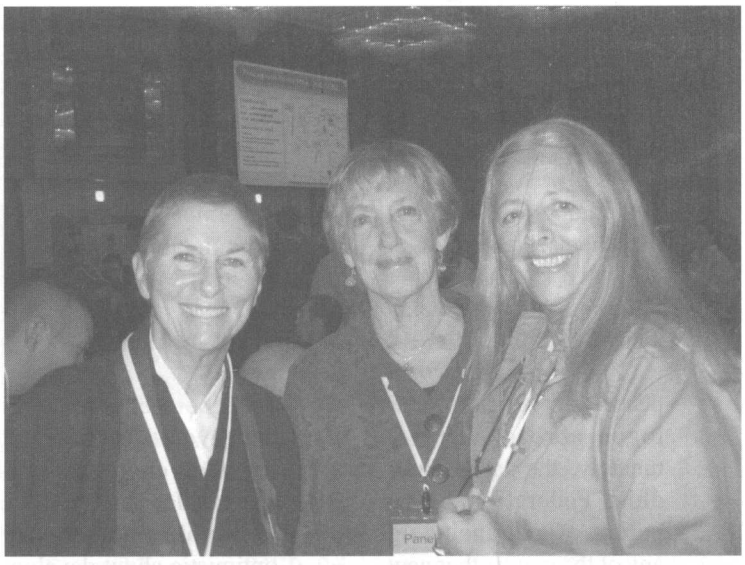
Finally, the meeting of these three Japanese groups with the other panelists, who are leading activists in the international engaged Buddhist world, had what is hoped to be a transformative effect on Japan. Japan is a society rife with social ills, such as a moribund economy that is leading to increased abuses of human labor that in turn has led to high level of alienation, desperation, and suicide. It is a society that has lost its spiritual and ethical bearings. The public realm is secularized to the point that religion and religious institutions can play no meaningful role in it; and the privatized religious realm, especially Buddhism, is rife with an outdated and parasitic form of ritualized ancestor worship – a sort of contemporary Brahmanism. In this way, the connections made at the WFB meeting will hopefully: 1) offer marginalized Japanese engaged Buddhists a wider sangha of connections and relationship overseas that can help support both their inner and outer work; and 2) expose the highly secularized Japanese NGO community and the conservative Buddhist establishment to the potentials of spiritually engaged social development.

In this way, some of the best work and results of the conference were in the days leading up to and following the conference. The WFB only allotted one day for interaction with this incredible group of 35 coordi-

nators and panelists. However, the Japanese coordinators tapped into their local networks and set up a wide variety of activities with the panelists in the days surrounding the meeting. For example, Ven. Tsering Palmo led a three day workshop on Tibetan medicine and healing at the temple of the leading WFB and JBF host, Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu. Mika Edaki set up a series of workshops for Ouyporn Khuankaew with groups like the Development Education Association and Resource Center (DEAR) as well as the Tokai-Kanto Network for Women and Buddhism. Hitoshi Jin assisted Dr. Ariyaratne in setting up a public event which led to the formation of Sarvodaya Japan.

Rev. Jin also organized from his Rinbutsu-ken Institute for Engaged Buddhism a symposium at Tokyo University the day after the end of the WFB meeting on the theme "Interbeing: Environment, Peace, and Socio-Spiritual Development." This was a major public event specifically aimed at the more secular academic and NGO Japanese communities. Dr. Ariyaratne, Helena Norberg-Hodge, Joanna Macy and Ven. Phaisan Visalo (also a renowned development monk) were the main speakers. While all four of them are perhaps better known amongst academic and NGO groups than among Buddhist groups in Japan, it was an unprecedented coming together of leading engaged Buddhist visionaries to speak on these issues.

Finally, there was also a three-day workshop by Joanna Macy on her despair and empowerment work called Coming Back to Life. This was organized by the Engaged Buddhism Research Group, AYUS, the Zenseikyo Foundation, DEAR, and the Web of Life. This workshop provided a particularly intense and meaningful interaction for Japanese engaged Buddhists and other NGO and civil society groups. Not only did some of the Japanese coordinators and panelists from the WFB meeting participate but so did some of the international panelists as well. Through this latter group and through the inspiring instruction of Macy, both Japanese Buddhists and non-Buddhists could gain a clear insight into how Buddhism can be an integral part of building a post-industrial society; one that is imbued with an accessible and egalitarian form of dharma rather than an elitist, nationalistic, and patriarchal form of Buddhism.



It is still too early to fully evaluate the results of this conference. Indeed, there are very few conferences that actually create any kind of shift in people's attitudes and practices. The questions that existed coming into the conference still remain, though I would like to offer here a few early answers to them.

- Will the WFB actually use its incredible material and financial resources to do something meaningful in society while spending less money on their own meetings? There are some encouraging signs as WFB has presently begun to develop a social action and service component to their federation.
- Will INEB ever amount to anything more than a motley association of very small engaged Buddhist groups and individuals? There are encouraging signs here as well with the reconstruction of the INEB's Executive and Advisory Committees, which we may be able to evaluate at their large 20th annual conference next November in Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- Will Japanese society be able to overcome the private religious/public secular split which is deeply debilitating to both sides? The one major reservation to the accomplishments of the WFB conference was the

exclusion of the large and important new Buddhist denominations in Japan, like Soka Gakkai and Rishho Koseikai and others. The Soka Gakkai is a unique case, because they themselves explicitly do not work with any other religious groups in Japan (while hypocritically campaigning for world peace and religious dialogue abroad). Unfortunately, the Japan Buddhist Federation has a policy of not including any of the many other new Buddhist organizations, some of which are important partners with the socially engaged Buddhist groups mentioned above and with various NGO and civil society groups. The JBF policy is largely a superficial one in that in practice there is significant cooperative work among all Buddhist denominations in Japan, with the exception of Soka Gakkai. However, the fact that these new Buddhist denominations could not participate in the WFB meeting was a significant loss and missed opportunity for building stronger ties.

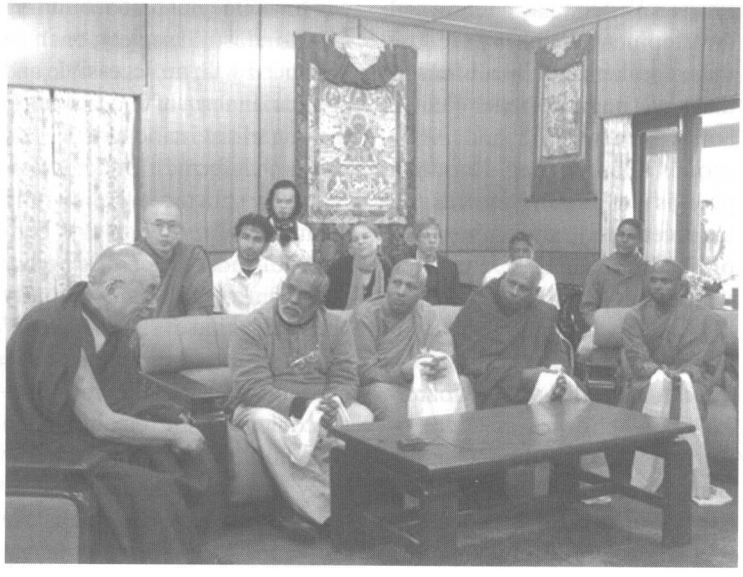
As someone who has endeavored to network together engaged Buddhists in Japan since 1993, I have often not felt very optimistic about developments here. However, in just the least few years, there are new and very encouraging signs that we could be headed in the right direction. The very fact that the WFB meeting could be held in Japan, create and realize the agenda of the seven symposia and the film, and on top of this, that numerous major and minor activities were created outside of the confines of the conference by interested individuals from both sides of the religious/secular split shows that Japan might indeed be moving in the right direction.

Jonathan Watts is a Research Fellow at the International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC) in Yokohama (under Rev. Shojun Okano) and at the Jodo Shu Research Institute in Tokyo (under Rev. Yoshiharu Tomatsu). He assisted both of them in arranging the seven symposia and the film at the WFB conference. He also serves on the Executive Committee of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB).

Jonathan Watts

INEB Sri Lanka and INEB South Asia: Expanding and Strengthening the Network

Twenty years ago, in February 1989, representatives from the Dhammavedi Institute in Sri Lanka joined the first International Network of Engaged Buddhists meeting in Thailand. In the early years of INEB, there was an active conflict resolution program in Sri Lanka, but as time went on, Sri Lanka's participation in the network was limited to attending the international INEB conferences.



In September 2008, INEB-Sri Lanka was revived through a two-day residential workshop. Original INEB-Sri Lanka representatives were joined by 11

clergy and 17 lay leaders including university professors, journalists, artists, environmentalists and ordained Bhikkhunis. The participants set priorities for 2009 and agreed on the guiding principles for INEB-Sri Lanka with a particular emphasis on inclusiveness and interreligious dialogue to address the ongoing conflict in the country.

A follow-up meeting was held later in the month with more participants. During this program, the action plan and draft constitution for a revived INEB-Sri Lanka were approved and targets were set for the development of the INEB website, quarterly magazine and academic journal. INEB-Sri Lanka also made plans to collect biographies of socially engaged monks from Sri Lanka for publication and TV documentaries and to develop a Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni training program.

On November 29, 2009, the Sri Lanka Amarapura Maha Sangha Sabha conferred honorary awards to Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa and Dhammachari Lokamitra for their outstanding service to nurture Buddhism worldwide. The ceremony drew more than 200 people including senior Buddhist monks, ambassadors, Sri Lankan government officials, Hindu priests, Christian fathers and Muslim moulavi. Due to the Bangkok airport protests, Sulak Sivaraksa was unable to attend the event; a representative from the Thai Embassy received the award on his behalf.

INEB-Sri Lanka organized a morning workshop with the two INEB leaders and provided logistical support for the afternoon event. This special day also marked the launch of the INEB-Sri Lanka website (www.inebsrilanka.org), the INEB quarterly magazine and a Sinhala translation of Sulak Sivaraksa's latest book, *Conflict, Culture, Change.*



Since this event, INEB Sri Lanka has continued moving towards its targets and has started participating in an interreligious steering committee meeting for socially engaged clergy. On January 28, 2009, INEB-Sri Lanka hosted a visit from Sulak Sivaraksa and a team from Thailand, and during March 18-29, 2009, a planning workshop was organized with senior INEB member Jonathan Watts.

The revival of INEB-Sri Lanka has contributed to increased interaction between engaged Buddhists in Sri Lanka and India. An INEB-South Asia regional workshop is planned for 2009. The conversation began with Dhammachari Lokamitra's visit to Sri Lanka in November 2008 where he spoke about the resurgence of Buddhism in India and requested the support of engaged Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

In late December 2008 and early January 2009, Sewalanka Foundation organized a pilgrimage and workshop retreat in India for an interreligious group of socially engaged clergy including representatives from INEB-Sri Lanka. INEB members at the Deer Park Institute in Bir, Prashant Varma and Jennifer Yo, provided enormous support. They helped plan the trip, hosted the 3-day retreat, shared their experiences with the group and arranged an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. The team also had an opportunity to visit the work of Korean INEB member, JTS, in Bihar, and two INEB-Sri Lanka representatives traveled to see Dhammachari Lokamitra's work at the Nagarjuna Institute in Nagpur.

Finally, from March 12-15, 2009, four representatives from INEB-Sri Lanka participated in a retreat with new Buddhists and Ambedkarites in southern India. The Sri Lankan representatives spoke with participants from Tamil Nadu to clear up misperceptions about the conflict in Sri Lanka. They explained that the majority of Buddhist clergy and lay people in the country do not support violence and individuals and groups are trying to extend humanitarian assistance to war-affected people in the north.

The program was organized by the Nagarjuna Institute, and during the retreat, there were many discussions on the future INEB links between Sri Lanka and India. A group of Sri Lanka clergy and lay people plan to travel to India in May to provide support and strengthen this relationship.

Amada Kiessel

Adopt A Monk: Political Prisoner in Burma

A vital new program from Clear View Project for sanghas, Buddhist centers, and compassionate friends

Adopt a Monk from the Saffron Revolution

Clear View Project's new program invites you to "Adopt a Monk," to bring attention to the illegal imprisonment of the monks and nuns in Burma.

Buddhism itself is being eroded in Burma. There are also hundreds of other monks in exile or hiding who cannot return until their safety and ability to practice the dhamma is restored.

Currently there are approximately 220 monks and 8 nuns imprisoned in Burma, almost all arrested after the 2007 Saffron Revolution. Their only possessions were their robe, begging bowl and their vows. In jail, they are stripped of robes and bowls, and are not allowed openly to follow their monastic vows.

Many monks have received lengthy sentences - up to 68 years. In prison all monks and nuns are forcibly disrobed, most are tortured. They face deprivation, humiliation, inadequate nourishment, and almost no medical care.

To survive in prison, monks and nuns depend on families to bring food, medicine, money, and love. But many are sent to remote prisons or labor camps far from families and friends.

Adopt a Monk - How it works

Contact Clear View Project at margaret@clearviewproject.org or 707-360-8452 for start-up packet. Or see our website www.clearviewproject.org for detailed info and downloadable posters for your center.

- Contact Clear View Project to choose a monk or nun.
- Send regular letters on his/her behalf to the United Nations, Burmese Generals, & the US government. (Sample letters are available on our website.)
- Help provide food & medicine for the monks.
- Hold monthly meditations at your center or public vigils in honor of the monk or all imprisoned monastics.
- Send loving kindness to monks & nuns, their families, and the Burmese generals.

Why focus on monks and nuns in prison?

Living under one of the world's most repressive regimes, monks and nuns brave injury and death to call attention to the suffering of their people. Chanting the sutra of loving kindness, they walked, one hundred thousand strong, through cities across Burma. The brutal crackdown that followed left untold numbers dead and thousands imprisoned.

- The international community is united in their call for Burma's junta to release all political prisoners. We join this call with our focus on monks & nuns in prison.
- Burma's *sangha* is a shadow of what it was. Monks continue to be harassed and arrested. They are under surveillance, unable to freely practice their monastic vows to alleviate suffering. Monasteries are closely watched, often infiltrated by "bogus" monks sent by the junta. The moral fabric of Burmese society is slowly being eroded by these arrests of the highest religious leaders in the country.
- Burma's democracy movement is quiet but determined, though many of its leaders are in prison, hiding, or in exile. We can support the call of the monks by supporting their freedom. We hope that the "Adopt a Monk" Program will help lead to the release of not only the monastics, but all political prisoners.

"The Saffron Revolution was and is essentially not a struggle for political power. It is a revolution of the spirit that aims at changing Burma from the inside out. With loving-kindness, we intend to change the hearts & minds of Burma's generals, returning them to their inborn buddhanature."
- International Burmese Monks Organization

Our campaign for imprisoned monastics is a sister campaign to one launched by Assistance Association for Political Prisoners in Burma (AAPPB) to free all political prisoners. Please sign their petition at www.fbppn.net

Sponsored by Clear View Project & International Burmese Monks Organization www.clearviewproject.org, www.burmesemonks.org

Clear View Project is an affiliate of Buddhist Peace Fellowship, under the fiscal sponsorship of Inochi www.inochi.us, a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

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alan@clearviewproject.org

Alan Senauke

Are We Still in the Mood for Gross National Happiness?

'New Politics', 'Buddhist Economics' and 'Cultural Integrity'

In November 2007 then Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont welcomed his colleague from Bhutan, accompanied by a high level delegation, to the Third International Conference on Gross National Happiness held at Wat Hin Mak Peng, a remote temple in the forest tradition, Nongkhai province, and at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.

In his welcome speech at this "GNH3" conference in Bangkok Prime Minister Surayud said: "An enormous challenge is to develop new ways to measure appropriately the success or failure of innovative policies. Using old standards for new policies will not help. I do hope that this conference can help to advance our search for new approaches and indicators that will enhance contributions to sustainability. A cooperative framework for research should not only include Thailand and Bhutan, but also our colleagues within ASEAN and indeed from all regions of the world."

Gross National Happiness is more than a new index challenging GDP, the present dominant yardstick for measuring progress of societies. 'GNH' is Bhutan's *national philosophy* and beyond that a global impulse for re-thinking development. Is Gross National Happiness of any relevance to the debate on 'New Politics' in Thailand – presently overshadowed by the economic crisis and red shirt UDD activists shamelessly copying the 2008 strategy of the PAD yellow shirts (two rivaling groups of activists claiming promotion of democracy in Thailand), causing complete paralysis of creativity?

As a follow-up to the GNH3 conference a small development grant was provided by the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) to explore opportunities for social transformation inspired by Gross National Happiness (GNH). Can GNH initiate a new development paradigm? Six small-scale dialogues over a period of one year are being organized at various locations in Bangkok. The aim is to shape a synthesis of new policy concepts interrelated with Gross National Happiness. This synthesis should sharpen the scope of emerging multi-stakeholder cooperation towards sustainable development in Thailand, in the context of Asian integration and global reform.

The first forum in this *GNH Movement series* was held on 26 August 2008 at SASIN Business School, hosted by Kittirat na-Ranong, and was titled *Today's Crisis. Opportunities for Change*. By coincidence it was the day that Government House was invaded by the PAD. Speakers presented their views from various stakeholders' perspectives: Sulak Sivaraksa standing for engaged spirituality, Jon Unghpakorn for NGO and media, Prida Tiasuwan, business sector and senator Rosana Tositrakul, politics. The dialogue was moderated by Surat Horachaikul, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University.

Prida Tiasuwan said: "How can we make a paradigm for change happen? We can't put our hope on politicians that only think 4 years ahead. These problems need long term planning and vision from NGO's".

By now it is clear that the political crisis in Thailand does not stand alone. Wall Street is shaking on its foundations. Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Prize recipient and former World Bank chief economist, stated: "The fall of Wall Street is for market fundamentalism what the fall of the Berlin Wall was for communism".

GNH is more than an alternative to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) alone. Gross National Happiness was introduced by the previous King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, in 1972 when he ascended the throne at the age of 17 years. It was a historic response to external pressure to open the isolated country towards modernization orchestrated by development agencies. The initiation of GNH coincided with E.F. Schumacher's book *Small is Beautiful* and the *Limits to Growth* project of the Club of Rome. Bhutan decided to open up only gradually and to carve out its own development path. It was not before 1998 that the present, and first elected, Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley spelled out the principles of GNH to the international community. These principles are referred to as 'the Four Pillars' of GNH and include: 1. Cultural Promotion 2. Good Governance 3. Equitable Economic Development and 4. Environmental Protection. Together the 'Four Pillars' constitute conditions for a 'happy society'.

In our research-development project we are now exploring how the Four Pillars of GNH resonate with principles embedded in concepts like Buddhist Economics, Human Security, Quality of Life, and – more indirectly – with 'New Politics'. Common ground to be discovered, and increased transparency on fundamental choices to be made, would strengthen urgently needed realization of social transformation.

A first assumption that arises from exploratory dialogue and analysis is that the pillars of GNH may not just be an at random list, they may point at distinct ordering principles in society. Since the *coup d'état* of 2006 we are in a process of re-discovering the importance of the separation of legislature, judiciary and executive powers, the *trias politica* doctrine formulated by French statesman Montesquieu, in order to shape healthy political dynamics.

One step from there: we may equally need three properly distinguished spheres of influence to steer society as a whole beyond politics in its narrow sense. This would imply – an important argument in the current debate on democracy – that democracy, resonating with the Good Governance pillar of GNH, is only one of the mechanisms needed to effectively determine the direction of society.

From this tentative perspective it will be evident that democracy may indeed be the appropriate mechanism to rule the state, but genuine progress of society requires more than that. Any particular democratic system should be understood within this broader multi-polar context.

In addition to Good Governance, and thus democracy, we need a second GNH pillar: Cultural Promotion. Here the democratic state can be a facilitator and protector, but 'culture' is a sphere of influence that should be independent from state intervention.

We may discover that the Cultural Promotion pillar refers to the heart of an autonomous mechanism called civil society, or the NGO sector, including our religions. In the sphere of culture, democracy and majority rule are not the guiding principles, but freedom of expression and conscience. Ethics, morality, spirituality are nursed from this sphere.

And if Equitable Economic Development, the third GNH pillar, would be the guiding principle of the business sector and economics, its autonomous influence through 'mindful markets' would complete a threefold mechanism to steer society towards genuine progress and sustainable development. The term 'mindful markets' was coined by David Korten in his book *The Post-corporate World* and points at an economy guided by responsibility, including mindful consumers, and community spirit, over 'maximizing profit'. Close to a contemporary understanding of Buddhist Economics.

Whereas democracy defines citizens as equal for the law, in contrast, in civil society unique diversity of individual persons and the ways they socialize – so: inequality – is the ruling principle. And, a responsible business sector driven by equity, fairness and community spirit would imply that we recognize differences (persons have different needs and capacities) and attribute accordingly a fair share of duties and rewards to all.

It will be clear that today's reality is far different from this ideal "threefold" picture. Big business is driven by narrow self interest and penetrates the government sector (even in the USA, 'the mother of democracy' government has been ruled by a powerful business lobby). As well as civil society: media depend on advertisements that pollute the mind of independent citizens, including children. 'In return', the business sector borrowed' the principle of freedom from civil society and wrongfully applies it to its free market fundamentalism. While the democratic state is based on majority rule that structurally treats minorities as unequal citizens: majority rule discriminates. In order to appease its citizens, the state has made the education system its own whereas in principle – based on the "threefold" analytical framework – education belongs to the civil society sector of free parents and children who want to build a sustainable future together through life-long learning. Religion patronized by the state or fundamentalism degrades to not much more than ritual or authoritarian power.

Sulak Sivaraksa, who received the Right Livelihood Award for his tireless promotion of cultural integrity, in his groundbreaking speech *Turning this crisis into an opportunity* at the Royal Plaza, Bangkok, urges the initiators of the 'New Politics' to look beyond shaping a mere new national power-share.

"Their (the PAD) mission should be to expose corrupt practices of the elitists and mainstream media and education, which have made us all succumb to the 'new imperialism' of the USA and China."

Often the question is raised whether democracy is an imported notion that does not fit well in Thai culture. The same question may refer to the above

drafted concept of a "threefold" society. It is true, it is not difficult to recognize the three principles of the French Revolution of freedom, equality and brotherhood in the above triad. What is new is to discover an emerging 'tri-sector' structure of society related to these values, and especially the utmost importance of an autonomous civil society to balance out with the state and the business sector, as Nicanor Perlas, thinker and activist from the Philippines, did in his book *Shaping Globalization. Civil Society, Cultural Power and Threefolding*. As long as civil society is underdeveloped in comparison to the state and the business sector, extreme actions as of the PAD and its copycat UDD will occur to claim balance. We may have to look beyond the French Revolution to anticipate the 'great transformation' that waits to be realized so urgently today. Dr. Ambedkar, architect of the constitution of India, the biggest democracy of the world, considered Buddhism to have its own revolutionary potential: equal or stronger than the French Revolution, as it is based on non-violence. In the light of this revolutionary understanding of the Buddha's teachings, the question can be formulated whether the Three Jewels in Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha correspond with an emerging value-driven tri-sector development of our society. The Buddha principle, after all, stands for liberation, realization of genuine freedom; the Dhamma for the law of nature to whom all sentient beings are equal; and the Sangha for the community spirit which underpins the synergy between the lay community responsible for economic livelihood – *Buddhist Economics* – and its role to care for the material wellbeing of the monastic community that teaches us.

"The point is that we have to really dig deep into our traditions – into our local wisdom and fundamental beliefs – and question ourselves to arrive at a genuine understanding of what happiness is and how we can achieve it, collectively and individually" said Prime Minister Surayud.

A 'happy society', and sustainable development as its prerequisite, can not be simply engineered. The Scandinavian welfare state, as promoted by former senator and Magsaysay awardee Jon Ungpakorn, can not be simply copied. We have to bring to the light the spiritual undercurrents of Thailand's cultural history in the context of Asia, facing the current overwhelming globalization.

This leads us to the last layer of our analysis regarding the challenges posed by the 'New Politics', 'New Economics' and 'Cultural Integrity' debate.

As obviously is the case with the separation of the legislature, judiciary and executive powers, ultimately an overarching mechanism is needed to coordinate the separate powers into a well-balanced interactive whole. Similarly, a dimension of decision making is needed to bring together politics, business sector and civil society to remind these three stakeholder categories of their distinct missions and to define together the course of our common progress.

The three domains of influence have in common that they all bear, from their specific angle, responsibility for a natural environment that will constitute the foundation of life and prosperity for future generations. This strikingly corresponds to the fourth GNH pillar: Environmental Conservation.

Rosana Tositrakul emphasized that we can not solve a world crisis by fragmented thinking. We have to look beyond the technological and even commercial mindset with which 'climate change' is inadequately being approached. In order to arrive at a new ecological awareness that searches for modes of decision-making and leadership that are equally based on the scientific and the spiritual realization of universal interdependence (*paticca-samuppada*).

New pathways to consensus building beyond democracy will emerge from 'tri-sector' multi-stakeholder dialogue – and engaged debate with integrity – on our common future. Here there is no need to look to the West, Asia has its own rich traditions of consensus building.

Prime Minister Surayud stated at the GNH3 conference: "(..) I am moved to see so many young people among you. We certainly need not only to look back to traditional wisdom; we have to invest our trust in a forward-looking and creative new generation which dares to face up to the challenges of our time".

In this framework the search for new indicators will make sense. A new National Progress Index initiative is being prepared in Thailand, inspired by Gross National Happiness. This is not about another 'new' cocktail of existing statistical data applied to the same conventions. Vision translates into policies. Policies need social structures, leadership, public participation. The results have to be monitored by appropriate indicators.

Occasions to discuss some of the issues tentatively formulated in this article will be:

Buddhist Economics Conference – 9-11 April 2009 in Ubon Ratchathani

National Roundtable on

Measuring Progress of Societies – 20 July 2009 in Bangkok

Buddhist Economics and GNH workshop – during 20 Years INEB conference, 15-18 November 2009, Chiangmai

Wallapa and Hans van Willenswaard are social entrepreneurs and founded Suan Nguen Mee Ma publishers. They can be contacted via hans@suan-spirit.com

SEM, Ramkhamhaeng

In the past 14 years, SEM (Spirit in Education Movement) has been actively promoting holistic and participatory learning processes in Siam to a wide spectrum of audiences from both the private and the public sectors. It aims to help participants explore all aspects of their lives situating them in a friendly and comfortable learning atmosphere where the loving kindness shared between facilitators and the participants help all to learn to merge the head with the heart. It should help participants to experience deep appreciation, holistic thinking and imaginative creation. The experiential learning enables participants to learn from what they do and give them lessons that help them to find inner peace and security in life. Without concentrating on material and artificial successes, we can devote ourselves to nurturing wisdom, mental capacity, resourcefulness, etc.

SEM's learning process can be divided into six major components, i.e. understanding and changing life, strengthening relationships, beauty appreciation, understanding society, understanding nature and acquisition of knowledge.

All these subjects are open to the general public. People from all walks of life have joined us in various courses that aim to stimulate imaginative interaction, strengthen relationships and minimize the gap among the participants from various backgrounds. It helps to bridge the gap between the urban middle class and the grassroots community, transforming and creating a new relationship that is mutually beneficial to them.

Special requests have been made to us to organize learning workshops on particular issues. The courses are provided either as an individual session or a long-term course. Together with our friends, SEM has developed long-term courses to help enhance human resources in organizations. The training of trainers course helps the organizations' personnel to be able to conduct the courses for their own staff. It helps their staff to stay abreast with the changing needs in society.

Until now, a number of leading organizations in the business and the government sectors, independent organizations and individuals have joined us in our learning process to attain their inner changes. They come from increasingly diverse backgrounds. And the participatory learning process aiming to facilitate inner changes has inspired many in society. It helps people to realize that an alternative learning process exists to help them to attain joy, good deeds, and beauty in life.

Alongside our friends, we have helped employees from different organizations to draw out lessons useful for their personal and professional lives. The knowledge has been multiplied and spread far and wide by participants in our courses. We have together created a community of friends to continue nurturing each other in the long run as well as circles of friends such as the contemplative education facilitator group, the facilitator group of Somdej Phra Yupparaj Hospital, etc. They have conducted their own learning process for their own staff and the general public.

In 2009, SEM will continue offering courses for organizations working on education and public health, including the Royal Irrigation Department, Pra Barom Chanok Institute, the network of Somdej Phra Yupparaj Hospital, the contemplative education facilitator group of Mahidol University, etc.

With formal academic institutions like the Contemplative Education Center, Mahidol University, we have developed a diploma course based on the six core subjects. The first course will be launched in the 2010 academic year.

Various new issues have been developed into courses to serve the emerging needs of the general public. We hope to answer better to the needs of the people in modern society. We hope to invite them to explore a different lifestyle closer to nature and away from excessive consumerism. Through the process, we hope that the people will learn to appreciate a simple life and realize the importance of mindfulness which is the very foundation of life.

Truth Is Indispensable for Human Society

For Buddhists, upholding the Five Precepts constitutes the normalization of the self. The First Precept points to the value of life. The Second Precept shows the importance of material possessions that are vital to human livability; the Third to the importance of sex; and the Fourth to truth-telling (this is apparently the only precept dealing with verbal action). Humans are more violent than animals also because they possess language. If one is trained to speak and write the truth, then it may be highly beneficial. At the dawn of a new religion, the Buddha thus declared The Four Noble Truths…

Supot Dantrakul was one of the important personalities in contemporary Thai society, which is filled with untruthfulness and moral cowardice. He had the courage to expose Thai society to the truths. As for the case of the mysterious death of King Rama VIII, it had been used as a political tool to mobilize the masses and to destroy many innocent and just politicians, starting from Pridi Banomyong who put Siam on the path of democratization in the form of constitutional monarchy. To this day, the truths surrounding this case have not been fully and clearly expressed and circulated. There's a reigning silence on this matter in official channels, mainstream education circles, and the mass media. Supot Dantrakul's work is still highly relevant (enlightening even) to anyone who is interested in the death of King Rama VIII. In particular I am referring to the book series *๕๐ ปี พระทูลกระหม่อมแก้วจากพสกนิกรไปแล้ว ๙ มิถุนายน ๒๔๘๙*, which won the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Award in 1996. It was later expanded into *๖๐ ปี พระทูลกระหม่อมแก้วจากพสกนิกรไปแล้ว ๙ มิถุนายน ๒๔๘๙* and subsequently revised and published under the title *ข้อเท็จจริง กรณีสวรรคต ร. ๘* in 2008.

Supot Dantrakul's work debunks the vicious lies that implicated Pridi Banomyong and his cohort in the murder of the young king. Previous authors such as Sanjai Saengwichien and Wimolpan Pittathawatchai relied primarily on the force of their prejudice in retracing the mysterious death of the king. Of course, far worse and more virulent than these two authors are Kukrit Pramoj & Co. and Khaimook Xuto. The court was of the opinion that the testimonies of these individuals are unreliable and misleading. But the Thai bureaucracy found nothing wrong with Kukrit Pramoj and nominated his name to UNESCO as one of the world's leading personalities. Put bluntly, truth-telling and truthfulness are not valorized in Thai society.

The most miraculous thing is that Supot Dantrakul had never been charged with lese majeste. Not once! Of course, he was violated and imprisoned by the Thai military dictatorship—but that was for other reasons. It is possible that successive Thai governments perceived that the readers of his work constitute a very narrow circle, and thus they did not want to inadvertently trigger widespread interest in it by charging him with lese majeste. Or perhaps they were heeding the king's lament in one of his royal addresses that any lese majeste lawsuit often does more harm to him and the monarchy than good.

The recent spate of lese majeste charges was in large part triggered by the Thaksin Shinawatra government and continued by his puppet administrations and big police officers who remain loyal to him. The objective was to challenge and aggravate the present monarch and perhaps even to bring down the monarchy. The English books by Giles Ungphakorn and Harry Nicolaides sold far fewer copies than those by Supot. The police could have kept quiet, and the majority in the public wouldn't have started to garner interest in the contents of these two books. The police action has also attracted international concern. These have adverse effects on the monarchy, including the fostering of centrifugal forces.

Those who are responsible for the lese majeste charges and arrests seem to have ulterior motives—unless they are irremediably stupid. When they say they are loyal, to whom are they actually loyal? To the monarchy or to their master? Apropos of my arrest, at a Senate commission meeting on law enforcement for the protection of the monarchy, in which Police General Patcharawat Wongsuwan as the national police chief is a member but was absent on that day, Lt-Gen Nuntadet Meksawat, deputy chairperson of the commission, proposed to the participants that the arrest of anyone accused of undermining the monarchy must be done with great care and nuance. He said the good and the bad of criticism must be distin-

guished. Some criticize the monarchy out of loyalty. He referred to me as a case in point, and further stated that someone like me shouldn't be arrested at all. There was no reaction from the Metropolitan Police Chief who was at the meeting however. On the following Senate commission meeting, Lt-Gen Nuntadet reiterated these points and insisted that the police were using S. Sivaraksa as a pawn. The Chief of the Bureau of Investigation was present at this meeting, but remained silent. It seems as if once set in motion a lese majeste case cannot be put to rest. No one with power has the moral courage to rupture with the inherited practice or tradition. Has the present prime minister got what it takes to work for the truth? Or will he turn out to be just another ordinary politician?

In other words, speaking the truth to power is meaningless even when it's practiced by the deputy chairperson of a Senate commission. The Thai police are still acting like a state within a state—awaiting a capable government with moral courage to put them in their proper place as a protector of peace. When he was serving as prime minister Surayud Chulanon declared that it was his mission to tame the Thai police—but to no avail.

The Thai police began to take a turn for the worse since the time of Phao Sriyanon. Phao relied on his minions and henchmen to destroy his opponents, including innocent and honorable individuals. For instance, the police at the time showed no mercy to a highly respectable lady like Thanpuying Poonsukh Banomyong. Is it possible to say that Thaksin Shinawatra & Co. merely stole a leaf from Phao's book?

In *Nation Weekly Magazine* (27 February 2009), there's an interesting interview: "The monarchy as a cultural inheritance that needs to be explained." The interviewee was Winai Pongsripian, professor at the Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University; senior researcher of the Thailand Research Fund; and deputy chair of the national committee on the revision and analysis of Thai history. In the interview, Winai states,

> Whether it is right or wrong depends on the law enforcers. Intellectuals will know from the content and the rhetoric the intention [of the statement]. It is illegitimate when a person who makes a constructive criticism is seen as driven by malicious intention and has to face deathly consequences. The case of S. Sivaraksa is interesting because I believe that he is a loyal *ammart* [i.e., courtier, government advisor, official, etc.] who has no ill will. Can't we see from the intention? Let's refer to the principles of Buddhism.
>
> The problem is not with the law but its correct deployment. The wielder of the sword enjoys saber-rattling.

The letters from numerous international figures to the Royal Secretariat and the Foreign Minister all affirmed my loyalty to the monarchy, and so did the witnesses I brought to testify to the police. Let me remind you that when the court acquitted me from the lese majeste lawsuit filed by Suchinda Kraprayoon, it states

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

Recently, Thongchai Winichakul from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Andrew Walker from the Australian National University galvanized over 50 prominent international scholars to call for reform of the kingdom's lese majeste law. The prime minister has accepted to consider this appeal on principle. This is a good sign. If the ruling elites are willing to truly listen to this appeal with an open-heart and moral courage, it may help things to turn for the better.

As stated above, truth-telling and truthfulness are of utmost importance for being human. Take away truthfulness and one will not be able to be fully human—or even become worse than animals. Why? Because we have the power of language to lie, delude, violate symbolically, etc.

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The Buddha spread the truth of the Dhamma everywhere he went. His disciples and followers greatly expanded its geographical reach, enabling Buddhism to have a strong foothold in the Indian subcontinent. When Buddhists distanced themselves from the truth of the Dhamma, mixed Buddhism with superstri-

tions and magic, and became attached to self-aggrandizements, Buddhism gradually vanished from the subcontinent. This trend is also conspicuous in Siam.

Mahatma Gandhi also relied on the power of truth at the personal and the political levels to mobilize the people from virtually all castes to confront and eventually overcome the British empire through nonviolence. He called it "satyagraha." It means everyone must be honest to himself or herself and to all others—including all sentient beings. One must maintain a non-exploitative relationship with one another. Even when we are fighting our enemies or oppressors, we must rely on *ahimsa* and compassion as core values.

Unfortunately, Gandhi's movement no longer exists in contemporary India, which has kowtowed to capitalism, consumerism, and militarism under the American empire. A parallel case can be witnessed in Siam. The ruling elites in India still call Gandhi the father of the country but practice otherwise. Similarly, the Thai elites only pay lip service to the Five Precepts and the Three Refuges or uphold their form but not their substance.

Interestingly, the influence of satyagraha can now be felt in the US. Philip Glass—a Buddhist—composed an opera of the same name, which was played in New York City's biggest opera house in April last year. Tens of thousands went to see the opera. Every show was packed. A Buddhist institute in New York also invited spiritual leaders and influential figures in the alternative education and politics scene to go meditate together in an upstate retreat center. Some of these guests were later invited to address a crowd of thousands at the largest Anglican Cathedral in NYC on the relevance of Gandhi's satyagraha to contemporary society. The grandson of Mahatma Gandhi was one of the speakers on that day.

It seems that more and more people in the US and the West are resorting to the power of truth along nonviolent ways because the ruling and mainstream elites in these countries are beginning to clearly see that truthfulness and *ahimsa* provide an answer to contemporary societies. Economy, politics, education, and culture must be restructured and put on the track leading toward Right Understanding, Right Thoughts, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration—that is, the Noble Eightfold Path.

These words are widely used in Thai society along with the Four Noble Truths and the Five Precepts. But they have no value in substance and in practice for our ruling elites. The ruling elites in many other countries however are increasingly paying attention to these truths. Even Fidel Castro who is still a good old communist despite the fact that his counterparts in China and Vietnam have long sold out argues that ideas/thoughts are more important than weapons, and those that concern nonviolence and truth are most important. He also pointed out that a younger generation of Americans increasingly despises capitalism, consumerism, and militarism.

....

In neighboring countries like Indonesia former president Wahid clearly declared that he is a follower of Gandhi even though he's a Muslim. He explains that the truth of Islam is peace, and that Buddhism and Brahmanism were once prevalent in Indonesia and therefore the country should adopt important facets from these two religions, adapting them to contemporary conditions.

As for East Timor the present president (Jose Ramos Horta) has not only publicly endorsed *satyagraha* but has also personally practiced *ahimsa*. He is now trying to direct the national policies along the lines of nonviolence and forgiveness. We should therefore carefully take heed of what he has to say on economic, political, and cultural matters.

Although the Indian ruling elites only pay lip service to Gandhi's teachings, many important figures still steadfastly adhere to *satyagraha* and have coalesced with leading Tibetans in exile who have been in India for half a century. They will organize a campaign to raise global conscience during 19-22 November 2009 to enliven the spirit of Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* on the centennial anniversary of its publication.

This book is the substance distilled from Gandhi's adaptation of truth in his life. It points toward self-reliance and liberation and is still of relevance to the contemporary world.

Do the ruling elites in Siam realize that the American and the Chinese empires are dominating us? And that both empires are so far away from the truth? In conjunction with TNCs, they are using capitalism to intoxicate us. We say that most Thais are Buddhist. But we lack the courage to allow the Dalai Lama to enter our kingdom. Don't we know that he's an internationally recognized Buddhist monk? Are

we aware that on 10 March the Dalai Lama will have been living in exile for exactly 5 decades due to the Chinese invasion and brutal occupation?

If we don't know this truth, how can we ably confront the truth of social suffering? Social suffering is a global feature, connecting all countries and peoples.

Apropos of Siam, Pridi Banomyong is still not widely accepted by the ruling elites because they don't have the courage to gaze at the power of truth. In *The Republic* Plato states that the cave dwellers necessarily fear the brightness of the day because their eyes are easily blinded by the sun.

Supot Dantrakul spoke fearlessly and truthfully to banish lies and deceits and make the truths apparent to all—not only concerning the death of King Rama VIII but also the virtues of Pridi Banomyong and the People's Party. Supot reminded his readers that Pridi helped democratize Siam by insisting that the people are the actual owners of the country. The ordinary people are not dust and dirt, deserving only to be servants and slaves to the masters. Although Pridi did not achieve the objective of economic equality, he paved the foundation for national independence, freedom, and education for the masses.

After the 1947 coup, truth was on the losing side. Democracy appeared only in form—and only intermittently. The forces of absolutism gradually reclaimed power, and they couldn't care less about truth and justice.

If we share Supot's determination to honor Pridi, then we shouldn't focus on his heroism. Pridi had flaws and weaknesses like all mortals.

Rather we should focus on what can be seen as his politics of truth; that is, how he tried to enable the people to see themselves as subjects of truth, as bearers of truth. Pridi envisioned a meaningful democracy that takes refuge in and draws sustenance from Thai culture and in particular Buddhism. His conversation with Buddhadasa Bhikkhu at the Ta Chang Residence toward the end of the last Reign must be analyzed in this context.

Should the class division tied to the feudal system be rejected altogether? A constitutional monarchy still has a relatively deeply rooted class system. But the power of the master class is often progressively on the retreat. This is especially perceptible in England. In other European countries, the class system is virtually unimportant. In the case of Japan, the American occupiers preserved the imperial system but eradicated the class system from society in the wake of WWII.

In our country, few dare to touch on this matter. In reality, class has material impacts but is largely a figment of our imagination/fantasy. In many respects, the master is master as long as we imagine him to be so and treat him thusly. If each class in a system conducts virtuous actions, does not exploit the other classes that are inferior in birth, merit, number, and opportunity, and assists the underprivileged as much as possible, then the class system may not obstruct democratization. Alone the law is insufficient to foster benevolence. Culture and religion also constitute indispensable components. Democracy does not simply mean that power is in the hands of (the majority of) the people. But that power must progressively shed its self-centeredness or exclusivism, moving toward universality and ultimately Dhammic rule (Dhamma-cracy).

To have the courage to think, speak, and enact these things we must cultivate a new subjectivity that fights for the truth. This is something we can learn from Supot Dantrakul. And if some of us succeed in breaking free from the mainstream, which is dominated by prejudices and half-truths, we will be the inheritor of the sequence of truth that Supot Dantrakul initiated with the case of King Rama VIII's death in order to properly honor Pridi Banomyong who brought democracy to the country by declaring all citizens equal and fit to govern. We will continue this sequence by honoring Pridi through our deeds; that is, to make democracy 'edible', to enable the people to take the power to change their world, economically, politically, and culturally, according to the logic of egalitarianism.

Sulak Sivaraksa,
speech in memoriam
of Supot Dantrakul at the
Pridi Banomyong Foundation,
6 March 2009.

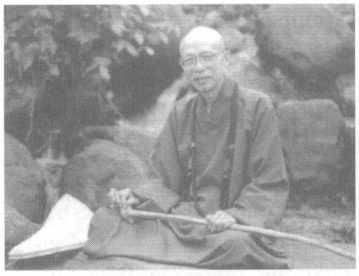


Master Sheng Yen

Master Sheng Yen, the founder of Dharma Drum Mountain, passed away at 4:00pm of the afternoon of 3 February, 2009. He was 80 years old and widely recognised as one of the world's foremost teachers of Chan Buddhism.

Master Sheng Yen was a lineage holder in both the Linji (Japanese Rinzai) and Caodong (Japanese Soto) schools. He was a 72nd generation descendant of Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chan Buddhism, and a 67th generation descendant of Hui-Neng (638-713), the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism.

Master Sheng Yen was born in Shanghai, China in 1931 and became a monk at the age of 13. In 1949 he escaped to Taiwan with the Nationalist Army. He returned to the monkhood in 1959



and then went on a six year retreat in the south of Taiwan. In 1971 he went to Japan where he completed Master's and Doctor's degrees in Buddhist Literature at Rissho University.

After completing his studies in Japan the Master began teaching in the USA and Taiwan. He taught and had followers in many countries around the world. In 1998 he engaged in a dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New York.

After the 921 earthquake struck Taiwan in 1999 Master Sheng Yen led volunteers from Dharma Drum Mountain in helping the survivors and rebuilding schools in the affected areas. In 2000 he was one of the keynote speakers in the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders held in the United Nations. The Dharma Drum Mountain Monastery on Taiwan's north coast officially opened in 2005.

In 2004, aware of his poor health, the Master left a will. He said that after his there should be a solemn Buddhist ritual rather than a traditional funeral. He always followed his vow, "The universe may one day perish, yet my vows are eternal."

David Reid

Lillian Willoughby

29 January 1915 – 15 January 2009

Lillian Willoughby passed away on 15 January 2008 at the age of 93. She and her husband (George) have been good friends with me and my family for a long time.

Both of them are Quakers whose organization is officially called the "Religious Society of Friends", a splinter from Christianity. The members believe that God is in every human being and thus killing a person is tantamount to killing God. Thus they hold steadfastly on nonviolence and value friendships based on criticisms made to each other out of good faith. Everyone can access God without having to go



through the priests or ordained persons. Both the religious ceremonies and elaborate monasteries are not the essential part for them. Any residence can be used as a place for people to pray together. Every Sunday, they would pray at the Friends Meeting House. During the time, they would sit still, and anyone is allowed to speak whatever one has to say, any word inspired by

God within oneself. Some Quakers believe that their God does not have to be Jesus. Some even consider themselves Buddhists as well.

Starting in England, the movement of Quakerism has expanded to America. Their American flagship organization is called American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) which also has chapters overseas. Their mission had nothing to do with evangelism, but to work with local people in each country to instill seeds of peace and create peacefulness through educational activities, seminars, etc.

I got to know the folk at AFSC when they had their Southeast Asia office in Singapore. Together with them, I organized a seminar to protest against the planned construction of Phamong Dam on the Thai-Lao PDR border in 1976. As a result of the seminar, *Thongpan*, a well known film was later made portraying the story of people to be affected by the dam.

Meanwhile, George and Lillian Willoughby were leading a peace walk from Delhi to Beijing to call for peace and reconciliation in the aftermath of border skirmishes between China and India. They led people from a number of countries and reached the India-China border, but were not allowed to enter China. Thus, the Willoughbies came to visit their American Quaker friends in Singapore and me in Bangkok later. Thus, we have been friends for more than three decades.

Both have helped us in our nonviolence trainings in Siam and even got us in touch with some of their friends. They helped many Thai and non Thai in this country, including Buddhist monks and Christian activists in nonviolence trainings. I was often hosted in their house when visiting the USA. They lived in an alternative community where members attempted to live a life beyond consumerism.

As I had to live in exile because of persecution from the repressive regime in 1977, both proposed to their religious organization to pay for the trip to bring my wife and children to visit me there. In their movement, they neither have church nor funds for any ceremony. All donations made to them are kept for charitable purposes. But when my son went to study in the USA, with Lillian's help, he was put into one of the best Quaker schools in Pennsylvania of which she was an alumnus, and was able to study free of charge.

During the sixth cycle of my age, I was invited to deliver a keynote speech in New York City and both the Willoughbies kindly drove from their home in New Jersey to feed me at a Burmese restaurant in NYC.

Apart from their warm personal friendships, she and her husband had spearheaded efforts to campaign against the USA's wars and been supporting the Gandhian movements in India and the USA. When the war against Iraq broke out lately, when she was 89, Lillian decided to gradually shave her head shedding her precious hair. She made intrusion into the Federal Building in Philadelphia and was arrested and then sentenced to either imprisonment or fine. She said she was willing to pay the fine as long as she was ensured that the money was used to address the needs of military or civilian persons who got injured during the war, but not for the purchase of weapons or supporting warfare. As the Court failed to guarantee her, she decided to stay in jail for one week.

They have done much more for the cause of peace and Lillian's contribution had been at times recognized. I just want to mention about my visit to NYC last April. I was there to see the "*Satayagraha*" opera by Philip Glass; both George and Lillian had their daughter drive them to meet me in the city though by then Lillian was unable to walk by herself, but was on wheels. It was the last meeting between us when she was already 92.

They also gave me a signed copy of *A Biography of Lillian and George Willoughby: Twentieth-Century Quaker Peace Activists* by Gregory A. Barnes, The Edwin Mellen Press, New York and Lampeter, Wales 2007, which was reviewed by Jeffrey Sng in *Seeds of Peace* Vol. 24 No. 3 September – December 2008.

When Lillian celebrated Christmas with her family and children in December 2008, she knew her time was up. She did not want any artificial support to prolong her breath. She stopped taking both medicine and food, but water and kept praying with mindfulness. She simply did not want to be a burden to anyone. Gradually, she said goodbye to all her friends and relatives until her last breath on 15 January 2009.

She set an exemplary life for anyone to explore, even those who did not get to know her. For an immediate friend like me, I had been inspired by her hilarious manner and her simple life and how she had held up given the ups and downs in life. She had kept herself mindful and stayed ahead of the predicaments in life all the time and such a life always commanded my true respect.

S.S.

DAMNERN GARDEN

Birth: November 3, 1928
Demise: January 19, 2009

Damnern Garden is a Thai name, rendered from American Robert Golden. He was an American from New York, a person of high intellect with a law degree from Harvard Law School to his name.

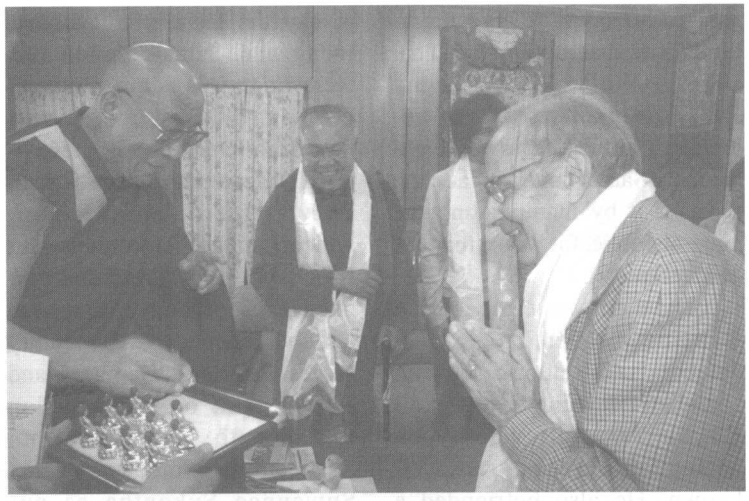
When he arrived in Siam in 1952, Mr Golden chose not to pursue a career in law, but instead joined a local English-language newspaper, the *Bangkok Tribune*. It was understood that either Field Marshal Pibulsonggram, the prime minister at the time who increasingly opted to back American policies in the region, purportedly held the bulk of the shares in this company, or there was a certain majority shareholder under his dictatorial control.

The most important issue then was the war in Vietnam, in which the French thus far had acted as the prime perpetrator. At the time when the United States began providing growing support to the French, Ho Chi Minh had already declared the independence of North Vietnam.

France, on the other hand, shored up Emperor Boa Dai as the head of the country in Hue, even though he was no more than a puppet.

As for the Thai government, its initial reaction was to act neutral, recognising neither the government of Ho Chi Minh nor that of Emperor Boa Dai.

The *Bangkok Tribune* backed the Thai government's policy in not siding with France, which the Thais still deemed as their enemy from the unfortunate Ror Sor 112 Incident—1893 (when the French sent gunboats up the Chao Phya River after the dispute over the common claim to the land on the left side of the Mekong River).



Subsequently, Field Marshal Pibulsonggram, possibly swayed by the swelling American aid, decided to recognise Boa Dai's government. This turn-around led to the resignation of Pote Sarasin from the cabinet (he later returned to serve under Field Marshal Pibulsonggram, and in due course under Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat).

Because of the change in national policy, the *Bangkok Tribune* hit back at the government, provoking a protest from the American ambassador to Field Marshal Pibulsonggram. The latter ordered an investigation into the newspaper's editorial board.

A young, inconspicuous American by the name of Bob Golden was found to be the chief offender, he being allowed by the board the full liberty to air anti-government views. It resulted in his being fired from his post.

Since Garden was living in Siam but was too preoccupied in his work to take up the Thai language seriously or learn about its culture, he bought a bicycle and rode out of the city (Bangkok was not yet oversized and the roads were still free from traffic jams) where he came upon a Buddhist temple.

He asked permission from the monks to stay in the temple and became one of the temple's "errand boys". In due course, he became proficient in the Thai language and well-versed in its culture. He later studied Thai law and became a barrister-at-law, which made him a leading authority on Thai patent law and registration.

It was probably his ability to see through the errors of the newly emerging American imperialism in the subcontinent, far before the others did, that made him affronted to be American. He asked for a change of nationality to Thai, an act the embassy considered most outrageous for the reason that most people would rather have Ameri-

can nationality, even if it entailed throwing away their own birthright.

Once proficient in the Thai language and absorbed in the culture, it appeared Damnern refused to concede to cultural feudalism that dominated Thai society. While Field Marshal Phibulsonggram used it to enhance his autocratic power, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat made the most of it by manipulating the general public, far worse than his predecessor.

Damnern was close to Thai literaries who were progressive-democratic in outlook but with socialistic leanings, above all Kularb Saipradit whose pen name, Sri Burapha, was well known. He also befriended a young writer, Kamsingh Srinok, an admirer and student of Sri Burapha, who followed his short-story style of writing. Kamsingh took on the name "Lao Kam Hom" as his pseudonym.

When Kularb and his wife, Juliet, went into exile in China, it was Damnern and Kamsingh who looked after their house in Bangkok. Together, they set up Kwienthong Publishing House to turn out literary works that challenged the feudalistic system in Thai society. The book *Fah Bor Kan*, written by Lao Kam Hom, was deemed to have flouted the traditional belief in the royal institution. Even though no lese majeste charges were brought against the company, it later shut down its operations.

When Cornell University began conducting anthropological and sociological research in Siam, Herbert Phillips took on Kamsingh as his assistant. The latter saved enough money to buy a farm in Pak Chong, an investment he undertook jointly with Damnern. The Friendship Highway, then, was just being built from Saraburi to Korat.

I came to know these two men through Herb Phillips, who was conducting his new research work in Siam prior to 1967. Not to say the least, Nidhi Eoseewong and Samak Sundaravej were among his fellow researchers.

Both Damnern and Kamsingh were acquainted with *The Social Science Review* which I edited before then. Our friendship grew from the few exchanges of conversation, to last over four decades. If memory serves me right, Damnern and I even went on an excursion together to Had Siew and Sukhothai with the late novelist Suwannee Sukontha as our guide, accompanied by poet Angkarn Kalayapongse.

Not long after, I had an opportunity to visit Kamsingh at his farm in Pak Chong. It was there that I came across his now celebrated work, *Fah Bor Kan*, which I undertook to have Suksit Siam Publishing House, the company that I helped set up in 1967, publish. Thepsiri Suksopha drew the beautiful illustrations.

When Oxford University Press in Kuala Lumpur asked me to be its editor in Siam, the rationale was to locate Thai literary works for translation and publication in English. I submitted a proposal to have *Fah Bor Kan* translated into English by Damnern.

The translated work *(The Politicians and Other Short Stories)* was a huge success, and led to further translations in several more languages.

Damnern had a lingering desire to compile a new and different kind of Thai-English dictionary that would break away from Sor Sethabut's tradition. He later collaborated with Satheinpongse Vannapok to publish what is today known as Damnern Sathienpongse Thai-English Dictionary to great acclaim, although not as flawless as he would have liked it.

Damnern was not interested in involving himself in mainstream organisations, preferring not to take part in the routine administration. Nonetheless, he gladly joined the Siam Society, an organisation under Royal Patronage.

As a life-long member, he was a great help to me in turning its administration away from foreign dominance, or fellow Thais who nurtured the propensity for Western thinking.

Unfortunately, we could only claim a small degree of success. Most Thai elites have an inclination for Western ways to the extreme, even though it is a rarity to find a Thai with a true and well-rounded understanding of Western civilisation both in its negative and positive aspects.

Damnern was married to Khun Raruen (Tee) Netrayon. They have one daughter and one son, Saensaeng (Neuy) and Bo.

At the beginning of 2008, Damnern, together with Tee, Nuey and I made a pilgrimage to Dharamsala to pay our respects to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, that was followed by a visit to the Kamapa, and later a lively Dharmic and politically related conversation with H.E. Samdong Rinpoche, the prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

Damnern saw the worth of being Tibetan. He donated 100,000 baht for me to spend as I pleased to support Tibetan cultural causes. I set aside a portion of the money to start a fund to promote Tibetan culture.

I also asked other Thais to

join me in sponsoring Tibetans who have been living in India for nearly five decades the opportunity to travel and pay their respects to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, their spiritual and national leader. Fifty Tibetans were provided with transportation to travel from various localities around India to visit His Holiness in Sarnath where the Lord Buddha preached His First Sermon. On the very same day that these 50 Tibetans called on His Holiness on Jan 19, 2009, Damnern departed this world for the next.

As to the remainder of his donation, Damnern wanted me to use it in my defence against the three outstanding lese majeste charges brought against me by the government.

Before then, Damnern had helped edit my latest English work, *Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective*, which probably will come out on my birthday on March 27, 2009.

The most important feature of Damnern Garden was his courage to stand up to American imperialism long before others did in Siam. He dared stand alongside progressive-thinking Thai writers such as Sri Burapha, at times when most people would be in dread of authoritarian power. On these two issues alone, we have to bow our heads to him in admiration.

S.S.

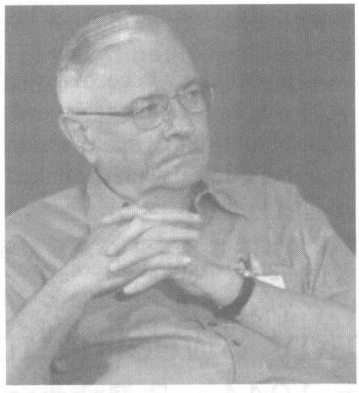
Bangkok Post,
11 February 2009

Michael Wright
(12 April 1940 - 7 January 2009)

I first met Michael Wright at the Buddhist Vihara for Sri Lankan monks, located at 10 Ovington Gardens, Knightsbridge, London. At that time the Venerable Saddhatissa was the abbot, and there wasn't any other Buddhist chapter in England.

Farangs who were broadly interested in Buddhism necessarily went to the Buddhist Society located at 58 Eccleston Square. Christmas Humphreys was its founder and president. The Buddhist Society was primarily dominated by lay people, and it was open to members of all Buddhist sects, giving particular emphasis on Zen meditation practice.

Farangs who were interested in Theravada Buddhism, which employs the Pali language as the main currency, went to the Buddhist Vihara. It was the place to go for alms-giving and for listening to Buddhist sermons in English. Occasionally, lay persons would be invited to address the gathering on Sundays. Lersan



Thampicha and I were among the Thais who regularly gave talks there.

Farangs who went to the Buddhist Vihara to practice moral training and listen to Buddhist sermons were few in number. Some of them had been ordained in Siam. As for Michael Wright, he was not interested in leading a life of celibacy. Rather he was interested in Buddhist culture. Subsequently, he learned the Thai language in Siam and soon mastered it. He was interested in Sri Lankan culture, which has links with southern India. He was thus greatly familiar with Sri Lankan and Indian cultures.

Michael was born in Southampton on 12 April 1940. He completed high school there before coming to Thailand in 1961. He worked for Bangkok Bank, serving as 'foreign secretary' for Boonchu Rojanastien. He was interested in learning the Thai language and about Thai culture and archeology. To this end, he read the works of Phya Anuman Rajadhon and M.R. Kukrit Pramoj as well as the book *Sarn Somdej* (The Princes' Letters).

He served as editor for the English journal published by Bangkok Bank. He even came to interview me and published it in that journal. During the political crisis on 6 October 1976, he fled to England—and so did I. We met each other again in England. He initially planned to pursue university education at the School of Oriental and African Studies, but later changed his

mind. When the political turmoil in Siam subsided, he returned to the kingdom, seeing it as the place to live and die.

He helped me revise and publish *Angkarn Kalayanapong: A Contemporary Siamese Poet.* He was almost the only farang capable of writing proficiently in Thai. He spoke Thai fluently. He was at his best (read bombastic) when speaking colloquially (also read rudely). His Thai pen name is Mek Maneewaja. "Mek" is probably a perversion of Mike while Maneewaja means flowery or beautiful language, which seems far from the kind of language he was best known for.

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation had recognized him for his continuous support for Thai studies. And the Ministry of Culture once honored him for being a brilliant user of the Thai language.

Michael Wright was a close friend of Sujit Wongthes and Kanchai Boonpan. Small wonder that he regularly contributed to publications owned by the latter such as *Silpa Wattanadham* (Art and Culture). His articles were later collected and published in several volumes.

Like Thai people in general Michael Wright practiced a Buddhism that was mixed with Hinduism and the supernatural. He failed to grasp the core of Buddhism. He even believed that the Buddha's Dhamma was irrelevant to the modern world.

I feel that many Thais, especially the elites, also felt like him, but they are not as explicit as he was.

Michael said that when his mother passed away in England, she left him a sizeable heirloom, enabling him to survive quite comfortably for the rest of his life.

He could now be his own employer and do things according to his desire. His main passion was Thai studies, which he linked with Sri Lankan and Indian studies.

He frequently travelled to Sri Lanka and South India in order to do field research at temples and historical sites.

He had few friends. Although he was an extrovert and went along well with other people like Thais in general do, deep down he was shy like an Englishman. A certain degree of farang arrogance was also deeply rooted in him despite his attempts to eradicate it.

Lung cancer took his life away. He smoked too excessively—and drank too heavily. His Thai best friend quitted smoking and drinking before it's too late.

Michael Wright passed away on 7 January 2009. The cremation was performed on 13 January at Wat Samiannaree. From now on, it will be difficult to find a farang who can write Thai fluently.

S.S.

Judy Sweetbaum

21 March 1944 – 5 February 2009

With the passing of Judy Sweetbaum on February 5, 2009, we have lost a dear friend and a gentle spirit. We remember Judy for her soft spoken demeanor and her compassionate presence, and for her unwavering interest in her family and friends. Judy was a physician who brought her caring for others into all of her relationships. She was a natural Buddhist who taught without teaching, but rather by her example. We extend our sympathy to her husband, Don, and to her children, Chana and Ari. She is missed by all who knew her.

Michael Zucker



Professor Emeritus Kosuke Koyama
Intercultural Theologian

The Rev. Dr. Kosuke Koyama, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Professor Emeritus of Ecumenical Studies, died on March 25, 2009, at BayState Hospital in Springfield, Massachusetts, after a long battle with esophageal cancer. He was 79. The immediate cause of death was pneumonia, said his son, Mark.

During the 16 years he taught at Union Theological Seminary, Koyama made a name for himself as an important figure in the development of global Christianity.

He was an early proponent of multiculturalism and religious pluralism, long before those terms came into common parlance. He taught courses in Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism – and showed students how these faiths could inform Christian commitment.

"I feel a mission to teach about different religious traditions," Koyama said. "I think it's the Christian thing to do."

Chris Herlinger, a 1993 Union MA graduate whose work with the humanitarian agency Church World Service has taken him to numerous predominately Muslim countries, said Professor Koyama was "way ahead of the curve in having students look beyond the limits of our own faith borders."

"A full decade before 9/11 and its aftermath, Professor Koyama was almost alone at Union in alerting us to the realities of religious pluralism in the world. I'm not sure everybody fully understood or appreciated that at the time, but I think we do now."

Kosuke Koyama, known as "Ko" to his friends, was born in Tokyo on December 10, 1929, at a time when Japan was already active against Manchuria and China. He survived the bombings, violence, and destruction of the war years, and later wrote that he was baptized "not so much from an awareness of my personal sinfulness as from the immediate experience of the destruction of my country by war."

"The minister who baptized me told me that the God of the Bible is concerned about the wellbeing of all nations, even including Japan and America," he wrote. "To hear this at the same time that we were being bombed by America was quite startling. This was my first ecumenical lesson."

Koyama graduated from Tokyo Union Theological Seminary in 1952. He then chose to pursue his theological studies in the United States. At Drew Theological School he earned the Bachelor of Divinity degree *cum laude* in 1954, and at Princeton Theological Seminary he completed the Th.M. and Th.D. in 1959. (He would later refer to his nascent thinking at Drew and Princeton as his "New Jersey theology.")

Upon graduating from Princeton with a dissertation on Luther's interpretation of the Psalms, Koyama was sent by the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) as a missionary to the Church of Christ in Thailand. As Dale T. Irvin wrote in his introduction to *The Agitated Mind of God: The Theology of Kosuke Koyama* (a festschrift presented to Koyama on the occasion of his retirement from Union), in Thailand Koyama "found himself exploring a theology that began not with Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, or Karl Barth, but with the needs of farmers among whom he worked. Out of this commitment to being a neighbor to the northern Thai farmers was born the 'waterbuffalo theology' that would permanently enter the name of Koyama in the register of twentieth century contextual theologies."

In 1968 Koyama moved to Singapore to take up the position of dean of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology (SEAGST), which had come into being two years earlier, an outcome of a historic theological education consultation held in Bangkok in 1956. At this conference, Koyama later wrote, "We consciously began the process of decolonization of theology. The selfhood of the Asian church became a subject of serious discussion."

At SEAGST, "All of the professors were people of two cultures ('fork and chopsticks'). We explored together the nature and limits of cultural accommodation of the Gospel not from the North Atlantic theological perspective but from the contexts of diverse local cultures in Asia."

In 1974 Koyama was appointed Senior Lecturer in Phenomenology of Religion at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand. It was there that he received a phone call from the Rev. Dr. Donald W. Shriver, Jr., then Union's president, inviting him to become Professor of Ecumenics and World Christianity. The first Asian appointed to the faculty at the Seminary, Koyama began teaching there in February 1980. He was later installed as the first incumbent of the newly established John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Chair in Ecumenics and World Christianity.

At Union Koyama had a profound effect on both his students and colleagues. "To say that Kosuke Koyama made his imprint on ecumenical church meetings, in unnumbered intercultural theological dialogues, and in intense classroom discussions at Union and around the world, is to forge an understatement," Dr. Shriver wrote about Koyama's years at the Seminary. "In his quiet, persistent way of speaking and writing, humor which cloaked his seriousness, fidelity to Gospel teaching, and readiness to listen long before he crafted another of his eloquent metaphors, he was an exemplary educator and Christian witness to all who knew him."

And New York had a profound effect on Koyama. There he encountered Jews and African Americans for the first time, an experience that forced him to respond theologically to "the fact of enormous violence suffered by these two peoples." He sensed, he said, "that my identity would be directly threatened if I did not come to terms with the twofold encounter... The experience of blacks and Jews challenged the heart of the Christian faith as I understood it at that time."

Throughout his life Koyama went from encounter to encounter, hammering each into a contextual theological endeavor. He beat swords into plowshares, evoking King Zedekiah – "his eyes torn out, and taken into exile." He wrote about a theology of the cross "in which love, becoming completely vulnerable to violence, conquers violence." He carried on a deep theological dialogue with Buddhism, studied Judaism and Islam, and again and again returned to reflect upon the encounter between East and West.

When he stepped down as Professor Emeritus in 1996, he said he didn't like the word "retire" and preferred, instead, to think of himself as "reappearing" through "new empowerment from the Holy Ghost." He continued his encountering and endeavoring to the end.

In a final tribute to Koyama, his former student Dale Irvin, now President of New York Theological Seminary, offered this remembrance:

"Koyama once remarked to me that one reason he enjoyed reading a particular work by Thomas Merton was that he could pick it up and begin reading anywhere, in any direction, and the book still made sense to him. Koyama found in Merton's work a profound circularity in which beginning and end met in a cosmological rather than eschatological way.

"The logic was not linear and progressive, but circular and unfolding. Perhaps the same can be said of the life of Kosuke Koyama. It remains an unfolding event, circulating from the global to the local and back to the global dimensions, dancing between the cosmological and the eschatological dimensions of religious life, yet doing so with a certain agitation as he seeks to follow the God who spoke from the Mountain.

"Koyama is with that God now, and with the Christ he so passionately followed in his life," Irvin concluded. "I am sure they are dancing together."

Kosuke Koyama is survived by his wife of 50 years, Lois Koyama, and his children: James, who lives in Honolulu; Elizabeth, who lives in Moscow; and Mark, who lives in Western Massachusetts. He is also survived by his five grandchildren: Matthew, Isabel, Sophie, Amos and Silas.

Read President Emeritus Donald W. Shriver's tribute to Prof. Koyama.

Freddy De Alwis

13th December 2008

Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa:

I hope this letter finds you well. Thank you for including us in your publication, *Seeds of Peace, Vol. 24, No. 3*. Above all, we are truly grateful for remembering us.

For most people, 2008 has been quite a challenge as we experienced the pangs of global change. We are hearing news of economic slow down, high food and oil prices, and political unrest. We all seem to be impacted by these global events.

More importantly, this year has been particularly difficult for Thailand. As a Thai, it saddens me to see our country in such turmoil. Moreover, our renowned reputation as a peaceful and stable kingdom has been unbearably tarnished. We cannot tolerate this kind of setback. This is the time for Thai people to renew their faith, remain positive, vigilant and united more than ever. I hope that many young Thais will see your writing a valuable resource for knowledge and unbiased advice. Perhaps the end of 2008 will prove to be a turning point and offer hope for a brighter outlook in 2009.

From all of us, we would like to wish you and yours the very best in the New Year. Together, we will pray for the future of our country.

Yours Truly,

Vatchrawee Vivacharawongse

9th February 2009

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

Congratulation on the latest *Seeds of Peace*. It illuminated many subjects of great interest which were still unclear to many of us.

I was very happy to see that you were able to overcome the problem of the photograph In 'Space Probes'. It was an honour to have included the poem.

I hope our petition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs will be successful. I have sent a copy of mine to the INEB office.

With all good wishes in a positive outcome.

In the Dhamma,
Venetia Walkey

7th March 2009

Dear Sulak,

Thank you for responding, we are truly inspired by your lifework and commitment to upholding humanity! Sorry to hear you are unable to attend.

We are building an ongoing initiative for change and would love to have you participate if our values; bringing compassion and ethics into the primary social arenas of our civilization, are in line with your own. Please let us know if you are interested in our continuing endeavors.

Sincerely,

On Behalf of Sara Bronfman

Monday, October 27, 2008

Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa,

I'm writing to you because of the power of your moral voice. Dr. Kathleen Moore and I are asking one hundred of the world's moral leaders to contribute a piece of writing to an anthology, *For All Time*. The collected writings will make the case – in stories, poems, essays, articles, letters, proclamations, and other genres – that we have a moral obligation to leave to the future a world at least as rich in possibilities as the world that was left to us. Our goal is to demonstrate a global moral consensus about our obligation to the future, gathering witness from a wide variety of worldviews and ethical positions to support action against climate change and other environmental harms.

As we watch environmental recklessness do its terrible work, we are aware of the wide gap between scientists' warning of imminent danger from climate change and public action to prevent it. We believe that a deep sense of moral responsibility is the one thing that can bridge that gap – and that this appeal to compassion and justice is what has been missing, disastrously, from the public discourse. This book is intended to help fill that need. Details about the book follow this message.

As much as anyone we know, we believe that you are able to translate your moral imagination into persuasive and articulate words. I hope you will contribute a piece of writing representative of your own moral commitments as a religious leader.

Best, Michael

12th December 2008

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

Some time ago our mutual friend Norbert Klein told me that he had visited you. He reported that you were in good health and in good spirits! In the meantime I had to read in the German newspaper that you were again arrested (?) under the accusation of lese majesty. And time and again, Mr.Chaulony and others, play their games, and I wonder: is this not so much change? As your student I have learnt: that is only change!

I also hope you, and your family are well, in all this never ending change!

I would love to be back to your country, and see for myself. But my last visit was the participation in Walter Skrobanek's cremation. We are missing Walter's sharp analysis and comments in the publications of Asia Foundation in Essen. I have served as chairperson of the board of Asia Foundation/ Asia House in Essen for six years, and I have completed my turn of office in November.

I have completed another voluntary commitment with the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies. I used to be the organizer and treasurer of the study conferences.

This little package comes to you as a symbol of my deep gratitude to you. Without you, and your friends among monks and lay, I would never have encountered that kind of ecumenical Buddhism which you have taught me! I am so grateful to have met Pracha, Pipob, Supaporn and so many others who were students of Ajarn Buddhadasa themselves. Few days ago, I was part of the programme of the first delegation of the Church of Christ of Thailand to the German Churches (after Dr. Boonratna's visit in the early eighties). They presented to us the dissertation of Rev. Bantoon Boon-Itt. He also mentioned you as a great help to enter into this field of friendship: Kalayanamit! And I have learnt from you to rather speak of Kalayanamit, than of dialogue.

I thank you for the encounters, and ideas, and sharp questions, and sharp comments. My deceased wife Girela (I buried her 11 years ago!) was also deeply thankful. After my two years with Dr. Pinit, I was so enriched by the friends, and ideas and actions of INEB, that I could start the European Network of Buddhist-Christian Studies in 1996. It is still going strong. It is one of your traces which you have imprinted on your European friends!
And that is why you should have the last two volumes.

In case you have to sit in prison some time, you have something to read?

With warmest regards, and every best wishes for you, and your family as always,

Gerhard Koberlin

P.S. Some – many – years ago, around these days, you came back from Michael Baumann to our place! What a good friend he was.

26th March 2009

Dear Sulak,

The 76th year of your life will be completed in a few hours. What a year of suffering and joy, depression and happiness, tears of luck and pain. You are still strong enough to travel, to meet people, to teach, to write, to share, to live a life of never ending peace and compassion.

These days in which so many people are loosing hope and confidence may remind us on the small invisible entities of the universe. There is nothing in past and future which will get lost.

I wish you that the 77th year of life will provide in fullness to you the fruits of your efforts for true humanity and all embracing love. I want to thank you for being brother and friend to me.

With all my good wishes, hoping that you will be able to celebrate the day of your mother's birthgiving, looking foreword to meet you again, I greet you — also from Inge.

Yours,
Wolfgang Schmidt

Gustav-Struve-Weg 20, D-79737 Herrischried
Tel. (+49) 07764-344, Fax 07764-9335893

26th March 2009

Esteemed Upasaka Sulakji,

We all at Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore, send you very hearty greetings on the occassion of your birthday. Your life has been a blessing for so many people in need. We remember you always because of your magnanimous donation of beautiful Buddha Statue. By the blessings of the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, may you enjoy good health, peace of mind and progress on the path of enlightenment! May you be happy and well!

With lots of metta,

Ananda Bhante

27th March 2009

Dear Ajarn Sulak!

I believe, today is your birthday.
So I send my best wishes and greetings to you!
May you always have good health, and may everything you wish be fullfilled!
Again, here in Germany we don't have proper information about Siam via the local media.
It is too bad. In order to know what is going on, I have to read Asian online newspapers.
Anyway, if everything goes well here, I can return to your homeland this year.
So I hope to see you again soon!
Best from my heart to you! Please give my greetings to your wife!

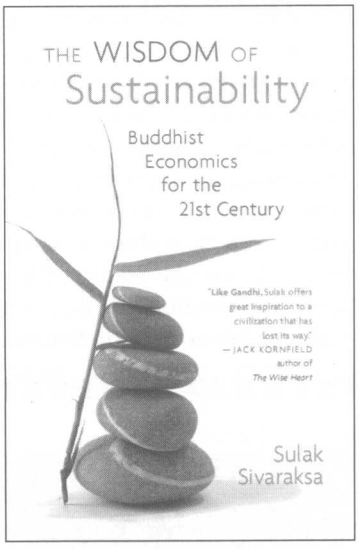
Bernd Sandner

The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century

The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century is the latest book from social activist, critic, and spiritual visionary Sulak Sivaraksa. The title suggests this volume is intended as a conversation partner to E.F. Schumacher's "Buddhist Economics," first published in 1966 and reprinted in 1973 in the influential volume *Small is Beautiful*. In fact the work of English economist Schumacher is one of Sulak's primary referents and serves as one of the integrating threads to this new volume.

The richness of the lectures and essays collected in *The Wisdom of Sustainability*, however, lies in the breadth and depth of Sulak's moral referents. It is not only Schumacher's economic vision but also Gandhian nonviolence that helps concretize Sulak's vision of a peaceful world. It is not only the thought-provoking critiques of global capitalism's commonsense values that Sulak brings together here but also his confidence in indigenous (Thai, for example) aesthetics, the democracy of the early Buddhist sangha, holistic educational forms, and a variety of other traditions that make this book appealing.

Sulak's grounding in the mundane work of creating activist organizations, building cooperative networks, and exploring forms of spiritual practice brings in another kind of referent—that of direct experience and engagement. The referents of spiritual and activist practice often give his words a directness and punch that would be lacking in a more



speculative kind of writing. For me this then is the main joy of reading this book—to be in the presence of a particularly vivid and dramatic but also well-grounded moral imagination.

It is this quality that never fails to inspire the young adults I take to meet with Sulak in his home or at lecture venues, whether Sulak is at his best or only so-so. It is this quality of genuine and imperfect engagement with the multiplicity of experience that makes Sulak a good model of how to be one of those mirrors in Indra's net that he and so many contemporary Buddhist thinkers have written about. It is this quality, I think, to which readers cannot fail to respond at some level as they read this volume.

The Wisdom of Sustainability is divided into eight chapters that address various dimensions of social and ecological sustainability—including creating cultures of peace, re-envisioning education, and cultivating genuine security. Many of these chapters begin with a vivid and memorable outline of the issues to be taken up.

The first chapter, for example, begins with the Buddha's retrospective insight that his encounters with an old man, a sick man, and a corpse were "heavenly messengers" sent to prompt him on to the quest to end suffering. Sulak moves directly to his conversation in 1998 with World Bank President James Wolfensohn, who asked Sulak about the recent Asian economic collapse: "I told him I thought it had been a heavenly messenger to encourage us to seek alternatives to economic globalization" (p. 9). The fact that the world is now awash in such heavenly messages testifies to the pressing relevance of Sulak's thought on these matters.

The first chapter goes on to explore the assumptions behind neo-liberal globalization as well as the bases for creating sustainable alternatives. In this chapter Sulak does a particularly good job of defining his terms—structural adjustment, structural violence, and others—so that a reader new to these concepts would be able to follow his train of thought. Many of the chapters are dense with inspiring quotes and turns of phrase that include Gandhi on the undreamt of possibilities we will likely see in the field of nonviolence (p. 20), Thomas Berry on universities as "the most dangerous institutions in the world" (p. 42) and Sulak on the World Bank: "The World Bank sees structural adjustment as the freeing up of markets. Local people experience it as cultural clear-cutting" (p. 34).

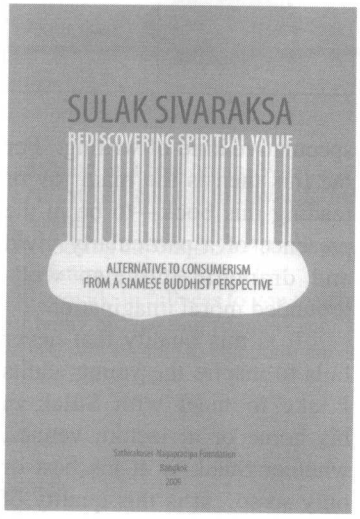
Nicholas Bennett's introduction provides delightful detail on his relationship to Sulak in the context of 1970s activism, and on the whole Bennett and Arnold Kotler have done a very good job of editing. My one suggestion is

that it would have been very helpful to have references for the many quotes and statistics that Sulak brings in to his argument. This would have been a big job indeed, but I think it would have given the volume a stronger grounding in factual sources as well as concrete contexts. For example, when Sulak says that 60% of children in rural Thailand suffer from malnutrition I want to know where this statistic comes from and what malnutrition means exactly here. It would have made his arguments stronger. Similarly, a brief description of the first appearance or intended audience of each chapter would have provided the reader with a fuller appreciation of the style and content of each individual chapter.

In sum the breadth and drama of Sulak's moral vision, the ring of truth to many of his arguments, and the thoughtful editing combine to make this a book well worth reading.

Ted Mayer
Hua Hin, Thailand

Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective
By Sulak Sivaraksa
Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation(2009)



The Politics of Spirituality

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation(SNF) has published a series of books in honour of its former founder President Sulak Sivaraksa. *Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective,"* is the latest volume published in honour of Sulak Sivaraksa on the occasion of his 76th birthday on 2nd April 2009. Previous books published by SNF in honour of Sulak include "*Socially Engaged Spirituality*," edited by David Chappel(2003) and "*When Loyalty Demands Dissent: Sulak Sivaraksa and the charge of Lese Majeste in Siam, 1991-1993 (1993).*

As revealed by its title "*Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective,"* deals mostly with Buddhist activism. The author reflects on Siamese Buddhism, famous Thai personalities and Siamese political institutions, including the dangerous subject of the Thai monarchy. The new coalition government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, which was ushered in through the back door following the ouster of the last popularly elected government, has closed down over 3,000 websites deemed disrespectful of the monarchy.

Many Thai intellectuals have fallen victim to Thailand's ferociously enforced Lese Majeste law including Chulalongkorn University academic Giles Ji Ungpakorn and Sulak Sivaraksa. Sulak has been charged with Lese Majeste four times since 2008. Readers interested in the subject will be rewarded by a chapter on the institution of the monarchy in the context of Thailand's political system.

Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective, belongs to the political genre of the late 20th century. It reflects the revival of religious based political movements which began to pack momentum during the 90s. The former President of Indonesia Abdurrachman Wahid observed that "the new millennium saw a surprising trend of religious based political parties defeating secular political parties at the polls all over the world." The failure and retreat of secular parties reflects a growing disenchantment with an important foundation of modernity, namely secularism.

Secular governments have failed to deliver substantive economic and social justice to its constituents. The rule of law, resulting from the principle of the separation of Church and State which came into vogue after the Middle Ages in Europe, could only deliver formal legalistic justice. Disadvantaged communities who are often victims of systemic violence found the legal justice system, of modern secular governments, unresponsive to their plight.

Under secular liberal democratic polities, capitalism, consumerism and globalization have been allowed to develop without restraint leading to the dehumanization of society. The attempt to keep religion out of politics, embodied in the principle of the separation of Church and State has resulted in the spiritual deprivation of modern secular societies. "In their haste to keep religion out of politics the advocates of secularism have thrown out the baby with the bathwater," said Abdurrachman Wahid. "A global counter movement prescribing religious participation in politics emerged in the post modern period," he added.

Religious based mass movements targeted authoritarian governments, as well as, democratically elected ones. The Mujaheedin resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan(1979-1989), the electoral victories of Islamist political parties over secular parties throughout most of the Middle-East at the beginning of the new millennium, the monks' revolt in Myanmar(2007) and the participation of engaged Buddhists in the occupation of the seat of government and Bangkok's international airport(2008) embody the global trend towards the politicization of religion.

The spiritual revival movement encompasses a diversity of regions as well as religions. It is a diverse global movement. Its fundamental concepts and practices are rooted in different religious traditions. Nevertheless, the movement, despite its diversity, tends to share a common opponent, namely secular governments. In mainland Southeast Asia the movement is inevitably bound up with the dominant religion Buddhism. *Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective* is about the core values, beliefs and practices which inform the spiritual revival movement in Southeast Asia's Buddhist region. Readers seeking to understand Thailand's crisis of democracy and recent developments in Myanmar would gain much from reading the book.

Secular governments often fail to comprehend the spiritual revival movement. Hence they tend to treat the movement rather dismissively. Such governmental arrogance is a mistake. Often secular governments ignore the spiritual revival movement to their peril as the recent collapse of electoral democracy in Thailand has shown.

Religious based political organizations brandishing the ideology of spiritual revival have become an important countervailing power to secular governments. The spiritual revival movement's critique of secular governments, have a lot of merit but it falls short of workable prescriptive policies which could be implemented by governments.

The movement's dilemma is that it can either, remain on the political sidelines and continue criticizing the government or it can try to enter the formal political arena to replace the government. If it stays on the sidelines it remains impotent but it can preserve its credibility. If it crosses the line to replace the government, as in the case of the Peoples' Alliance for Democracy (PAD) in Thailand, it risks becoming co-opted.

During Thailand's political crisis the PAD mounted a sustained street campaign against the corruption within the democratically elected government. In order to oust the "corrupt, populist" democratically elected government the PAD had to abandon its professed creed of non-violence and align itself with the military and forces to the right of the Thai political spectrum. The PAD ended up calling for a "New Politics" consisting in the suspension of electoral democracy and the replacement of an elected government with a largely appointed "reconciliation" government.

The PAD's "New Politics" is a direct contradiction of the Engaged Buddhist Movement's position on Myanmar. In the latter case Engaged Buddhists have consistently supported Aung San Suu Kyi as the embodiment of embattled democratic values following the suspension of electoral democracy in Burma by the military junta.

Meanwhile, the political crisis in Thailand remains unresolved. Public institutions are compromised by double standards. The government has adopted similar "populist" policies as the last elected government, which was decried as "disguised vote buying". Widespread corruption among politicians of all parties and state enterprises remain untouched. Mobs donning red shirts, instead of yellow, continue to hold street rallies questioning the political legitimacy of the current government.

Jeffery Sng
26 March2009

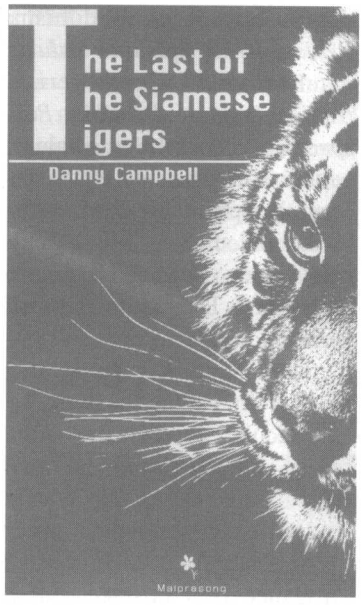
The book ***"The Last of the Siamese Tigers"*** tells the story of a Thai village community close to the northern city of Chiang Mai that lives in fear of a wild tiger which is threatening its people.

Campbell starts by introducing a boy named 'Krung' and his family to the reader. Krung's father 'Patti-Taezwe' is a well respected member of the community and a role model for his son. They belong to a tribe referred to as 'the Pgakenzaw'.

One day the story-teller 'Pawluang' comes to the village and tells the story of 'Suah' the tiger and how he was attacked by the tiger when he was a boy. According to Pawluang 'Suah' still lived in the jungle surrounding the village.

As the story unfolds Pawluang's story becomes reality when 'Suah' comes to the village and steals a pig. This event alarms the whole village but an immediate hunting-expedition into the jungle turns out to be unsuccessful. But in the night of a big marriage ceremony in the village the tiger returns and kills the daughter of the village elder 'Patti-Mussu'. This shock results in another expedition that sets into the jungle in order to find and kill the tiger.

The author Danny Campbell shows a lot of insight into the



life of a rural Thai community and names the problems of the people living in the mountainous countryside. Campbell uses actual Thai words to name animals and everyday life items and explains several aspects of Thai traditions and beliefs to introduce the reader to the cultural background of northern Thai tribes. In a very simple way the narrator leads the reader throughout the story. This makes the novel even suitable for younger readers.

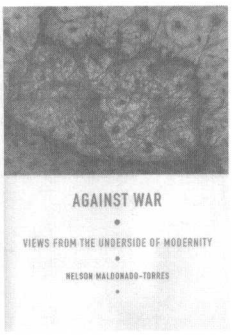
In the course of the story the narrator follows both the perspective of the humans living in the village as well as the perspective of the tiger which needs to come to the village to find food to survive. A personal narrator follows the tiger's perspective so that the reader is well aware of his motivations and his decreasing habitat. The conflict between the village people and the tiger is described as not accidental but as unavoidable—the narrator sets the conflict as a logical event. The narrator points out the situation of vanishing forests and a decreasing natural habitats. By doing so the relationship between man and animal becomes one of competition and struggle to survive. Once again it is important to mention that the narrator does not favor or blame either side. He describes the events from a neutral point of view.

Campbell's novel of 75 pages tells a story of natural existence and the struggle to survive. He does not brag with various protagonists and side stories but follows a clear, red line to a dramatic climax. I read the story with great interest due to Campbell's authentic descriptions of tribe culture and a conflict between two worlds — the world of man and the world of nature. These worlds are real and coexist not only in this story, as Campbell cleverly remarks in the introduction. For this effort this book is worth while reading.

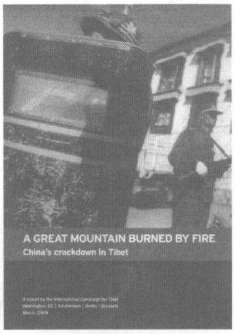
Jan Matthias Trapp

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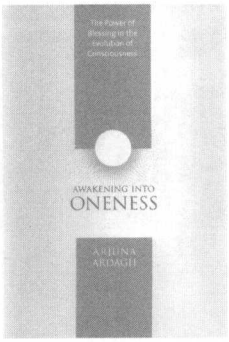
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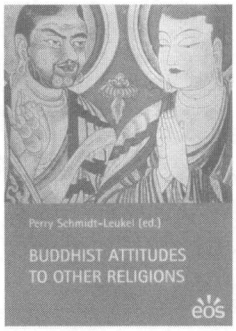
Against War: Views from The Underside of Modernity
By Nelson Maldonado-Torres
Published by Duke University Press, 2008



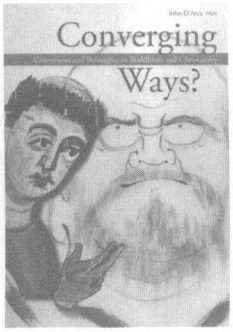
A Great Mountain Burned By Fire: China's Crackdown in Tibet
A report by the International Campaign for Tibet
Published by The International Campaign For Tibet, March 2009



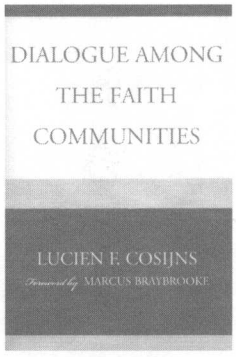
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By Arjuna Ardagh
Published by Sound True, Inc., 2007



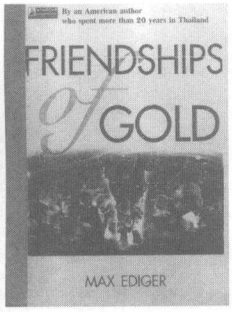
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Published by EOS Editions of St. Ottilien, 2008



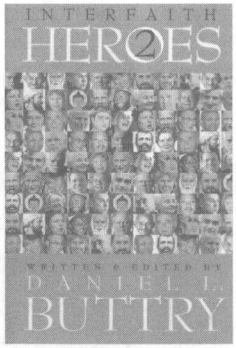
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Edited by John D'Arcy May
Published by EOS Klosterverlag Sankt Ottilien, 2007



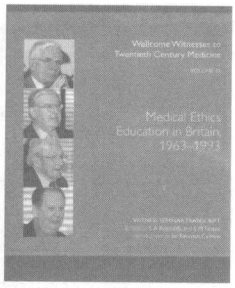
Dialogue Among the Faith Communities
By Lucien F. Cosijns
Foreword by Marcus Braybrooke
Published by Hamilton Books, 2008



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Published by Nanmeebooks Publications Co., Ltd., 2001



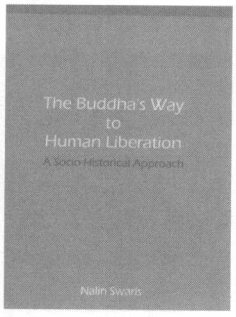
Interfaith Heroes
Written and Edited by Daniel L. Buttry
Published by Read the Spirit Books, 2009



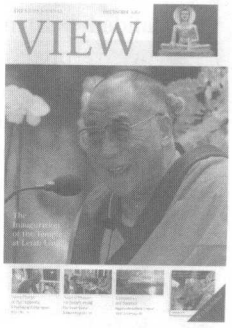
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Edited by L A Reynold and E M Tansey
Introduction by Sir Kenneth Calman
First published by the Wellcome Trust Centre, 2007



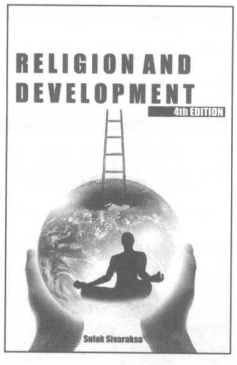
Never Die Alone: Death as Birth in Pure Land Buddhism
Edited by Jonathan Watts and Yoshiharu Tomatsu
First Edition, July 2008
Published by Jodo Shu Press



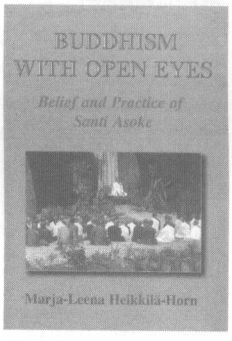
The Buddha's Way to Human Liberation: A Socio-Historical Approach
By Nalin Swaris
Revised Abbreviated Version 2008
Published by Sarasavi Publisher (Pvt) Ltd.



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The Rigpa Journal, December 2008
Edited by Andy Fraser, Pattrick Gaffney, Janet Savin
Published by Mundschenk Druck+Medien



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By Sulak Sivaraksa
Edited by Grant A. Olson
4th edition, SNF 2009
Published by Maiprasong Printing House



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By Marja-Leena Heikkilä-Horn
First printing July 1997
Published by Fah Apai Co., Ltd.

Announcements

1) **Buddhist Autonomy in Asia**
   27 May - 4 June at Wongsanit Ashram
2) **Public Hearing on Migrant Workers**
   22 - 24 June, Bangkok
3) **Future World Council Meeting**
   1-4 October, Hamburg
4) **INEB's 20th Anniversary**
   15-21 November, Chiangmai
5) **Hind Swaraj Centenary Commemoration (1909-2009)**
   19-22 November, New Delhi