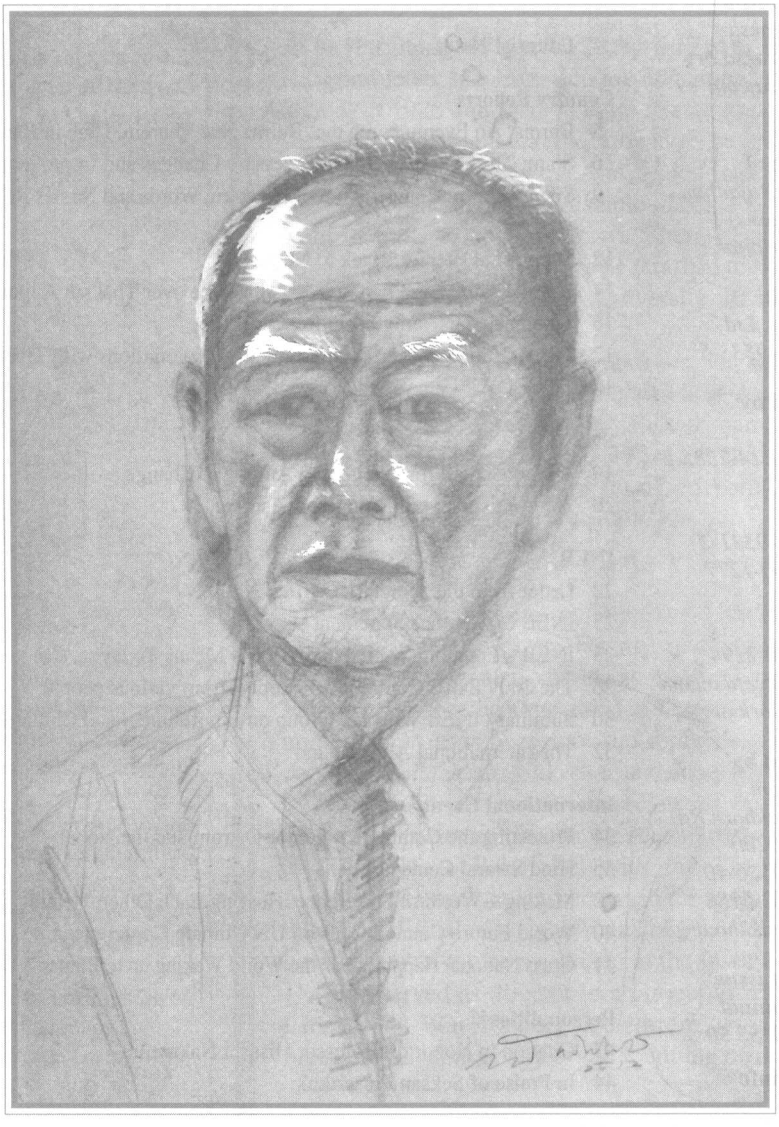
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To Uphold the World
with Truth, Beauty and Non-violence



SEEDS OF

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PEACE

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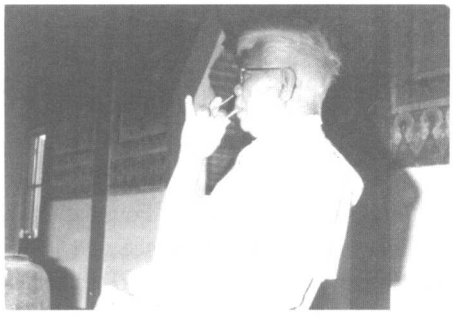
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The goals of INEB are to:

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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Fua Haripitak

Fua Haripitak was born on 22 April 1910 in Thonburi province. He completed his high school education at Wat Rajbhopit School in 1926 and then went on to study art at the Poh Chang School of Arts and Crafts. However he eventually went to study at the School of Fine Arts, which later became Silpakorn University, and became a disciple of Silpa Bhirasri. In 1940 he went to India to study at Visva Bharati University. When he completed his education there he returned to Bangkok to teach at the newly opened Silpakorn University. In 1954 he received a scholarship to study in Italy.

Fua was famous for his portraits. He was thrice awarded gold medal at the National Exhibition of Art. By 1957 he was widely recognized as a master. He was named National Artist in the inaugural year of the award in 1985. He received an honorary doctorate in fine arts from Silpakorn University in 1980 and won the Magsaysay Award in 1983.

Work (1947-1969)

Fua taught painting at Silpakorn University and became assistant professor in the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Art. He also served as head of the Department of Painting. He became a specialist in Thai arts. He was involved in numerous projects to restore and replicate ancient paintings in Ayutthaya, Petchburi, Sukothai, and many northern provinces. In 1979 he was on a committee to select art work to display at the contemporary art exhibition for Asian artists in Japan.

Fua also collaborated with the Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, in the research project entitled "Study and Analysis of the Value of Thai Mural Paintings." He later became a senior researcher at the Institute.

Fua served as director in a project to restore the Tripitaka Library at Wat Rakang Kositaram to commemorate the bicentennial anniversary of the founding of Bangkok.

Life

Fua was married to MR Thanomsakdi Kritakara. They had one child together: Thamnu Haripitak. He later married Somtawin Haripitak.

Fua Haripitak passed away on 19 October 1993. He was a patient under royal patronage while being hospitalized at Siriraj Hospital. His funeral ceremony was also under royal patronage.

Editorial Notes

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation is very proud that for the past 40 years, we have worked modestly to promote peace and justice as well as supporting artists and intellectuals who could exist with dignity — not to be commercialized or kowtowed to the status quo. We have also suggested to the government to recognize worthy citizens in the field of education, science and culture so that the government could propose their names to UNESCO so that their names would be admired internationally.

The first name our Foundation proposed and was recognized by UNESCO was Phya Anumarn Rajadhon (Yong Sathirakoses). That was in 1988. In fact, it was due to him that our Foundation came into existence.

The second name our Foundation proposed and was recognized by UNESCO in 2000 was Pridi Banomyong, Father of Thai Democracy and Liberator of the country during the Second World War. Unfortunately, Pridi had many enemies in the dictatorial and feudal regime of Siam, despite the fact that the country was declared to be democratic. His name was pushed out at UNESCO in Paris. However, the demonic forces failed and we had a big celebration for his centenary, nationally—in many localities and universities — as well as internationally.

The third name we proposed to the government and was recognized by UNESCO in 2004 was Buddhadasa Bhikkhu — the most outstanding Buddhist monk in the kingdom. His books have been translated into several languages. There are more commentaries on his life and work than on any other Thais.

The fourth name we proposed to the government and was recognized by UNESCO in 2005 was Kularb Saipradit, well known for his pen name of Sri Burapa. Had we proposed the name of Direk Jayanama, he would have been accepted by UNESCO too. But Thammasat University proposed his name without real understanding of his uniqueness in serving the country or of his moral courage and skilful means in diplomacy. UNESCO asked the Thai government to submit his name again but the government failed or could not care less.

This year we will celebrate Fua Haripitak's centenary on 22nd April 2010. However, our Foundation thinks that to be recognized internationally by UNESCO through the Thai government is no longer a real honor, as M.R. Kukrit Pramote has already been recognized by UNESCO this year. Kukrit was an opportunist and a very well known writer without depth; and he only cared to maintain the political and social structure which was unjust. He always sided with the privileged, admiring divine rights at the expense of the majority who have been opposed mercilessly. Many of his writings are in the category of plagiarism, which is the worst crime in the entire literary world. Besides quite a number of second rate personalities and humbugs have been proposed by the government to UNESCO. We feel worthy citizens in our opinion should no longer link with UNESCO's honor through the Thai government.

We shall celebrate Fua Haripitak in our very modest way, as we are now similarly honoring Karuna Kusalasaya, his junior contemporary in the like manner. Besides, we also honor worthy people at the grassroots in this country and in the region throughout the 40 years of our existence. They need not be well known internationally, but they are really worthy people, with honesty and moral courage, and who work tirelessly for social justice and environmental balance. These people really contribute their lives and activities to transform the world through truth, beauty, and goodness.

Burma:
An Evening with the "Burma Nay Thurein" Club in Hamburg/ Germany

On the 28th of November 2009 I attended a public lecture organised by the "Burma Nay Thurein" in Hamburg, Germany. "Burma Nay Thurein" is a club founded by a small group of Burmese people who migrated to Germany around 25 years ago and are now living in exile in the northern German city of Hamburg. The local community in and around Hamburg consists of approximately 50 people.

The main aim of "Burma Nay Thurein" which means "Sunlight of Burma" is to preserve the community's local Burmese traditions away from their homeland. In order to achieve this, the club organises regular meetings of its members and tries to maintain local traditions like annual celebrations such as "Union Day" or similar national festivities of their native country. Another target of the group is to teach the Burmese language to the young generation who have never been to Burma because they were born and raised in Germany. Through home schooling the children are supposed to get back in touch with their native language. Since most of their parents have to attend their daily jobs to make a living, it is hard to find either time as well as appropriate teaching materials for the classes. For this reason the organisation is looking for support and finally got the status of registered club from the local authorities in Hamburg.

The aim of the event was to present the club as well as their homeland of Burma. For this evening they invited a guest speaker who had been working in Burma for a year in the tourism sector and had also lived in Indonesia for 30 years. After a short introduction by the club founders, Mr. Bernd Eberlein was introduced and welcomed by the audience of approximately 40 people, either members of the club as well as interested visitors. Mr. Eberlein started his presentation about Burma with photos which he took during his yearlong stay in the country. The audience listened closely to Mr. Eberlein's speech and looked at the photos that were projected to the wall in front of them. He started introducing the geographical boundaries of Burma with a map and during the course of his presentation he showed pictures of the scenes that he faced when he was traveling through the country.

Apart from photos of the beautiful Burmese countryside, its peoples and its temples and historic sites, the presentation also included the downside of Burma. There were photos of young boys working in a harbour, carrying big buckets of stones uphill where they were used for building purposes. Mr. Eberlein focused on the existence of child labour in Burma and showed extensive photographic footage as a proof. In other photos the audience could see how the government uses forced labour to develop infrastructural projects. He explained the common practice that each household usually had to offer the labour of one family member when a village was called for labour. Without any pay or even supplied food they would have to work with shovels or their bare hands in order to expand roads, a work which is done by heavy machinery in other parts of the world. Other photos also featured the infamous prison of "Insein" and political prisoners.

After Mr. Eberlein's presentation came to a close some of the club members played local music followed by a young couple that performed a traditional Burmese dance in local costumes. Throughout the evening all visitors were invited to drink tea and to try a bowl of Burmese soup. Long after the official program had ended, many visitors as well as organisers and members of the club were still socialising and chatting about the evening. I had a chance to talk to Mr. Eberlein about his experiences and work in Burma. At around eleven o'clock the guests finally left and the evening ended.

Looking back on the event I think that all visitors who came that day got to see images of life in Burma and its people from a very personal perspective and heard stories of someone who could tell from his personal experience in the country. In this respect the evening was a first step for the newly founded "Burma Nay Thurein" in Hamburg to make their cause public, further develop a social structure and continue the club's work in their exile home of Germany.

Jan Matthias Trapp

Siam:
The Thai Monarchy: Necessary Changes and Improvements

1) Apropos of the lese majeste law, the King explicitly stated on several occasions that any charges filed would be akin to injuring him and the monarchy. But nothing further has been done to address this matter. An editorial in *The Economist* writes that the King should cautiously exercise his royal prerogative within the bounds of the constitution to make necessary amendments to the lese majeste law before things get out of hand or spiral out of control, imperiling the whole monarchy.

1.1) Leading intellectuals from the West such as Noam Chomsky and Lord Avebury (Chairman of Human Rights Commission, the House of Lords) have petitioned the Thai prime minister, urging that the lese majeste law be amended. But nothing has materialized thus far. If the King uses this petition as a launching pad to carefully intervene in this situation the impending crisis may be averted, and it will be a boon to the monarchy.

1.2) As for the case of Sulak Sivaraksa, many people worldwide and nationwide know that he is a loyal subject who has been maligned by Thaksin Shinawatra and Co. Many individuals have appealed to the King via His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary to restore justice to this alleged offender. Not only have their efforts been in vain, but there has also been no response from the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary. It is doubtful whether or not the King knows about these efforts. The credibility of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary is also increasingly suspected given that he is also a major figure in the corporate world.

1.3) If the case of Sulak Sivaraksa is deftly brought to an end, it will help shore up the monarch's prestige and greatness. Other similar cases should also be halted. A clear and judicious procedure should be established to ascertain who should or shouldn't be charged with lese majeste. The present system enables anyone to file the charge of lese majeste and the police have full authority to carry it out. The problem is that the police constitute a state within a state and have long been plagued by corruption.

2) Deliberately or otherwise, the Crown Property Bureau has increasingly tormented its leaseholders. For instance, it has oppressed Sahachai Supamitkrisana for over two decades. Sahachai had petitioned the King in person for ten times—each time with great struggle and difficulty. Each time, he was promised justice. Finally, the Crown Property Bureau took action. But it was unjust. It disclosed that it would pay Sahachai 760,000 baht as compensation (for a sizeable building in the center of the city) with little interest. This sum is simply outrageous.

The negative consequences of the Bureau's 'development' projects are increasingly being felt throughout society. It prizes material rewards over people. The Bureau lacks moral conscience and disavows the structural violence in society. It has thus worked in the service of cutthroat capitalism. As such it has become a dead weight in the monarchy's arms.

2.1) To tackle this problem, the very structure and organization of the Bureau must be called into question. At the very least, the Bureau must be transparent and accountable. It should allow external individuals who are well respected by the people to be on its administrative board. The greater the distance between the monarch and the Bureau in terms of both power and money the greater the boon to the monarchy.

2.2) Worse, temples are beginning to emulate the Crown Property Bureau by evicting tenants living in houses (some of historical value) around the temple compound to pave way for 'land development' projects. Several temples ended up destroying the very fabric of their surrounding communities. Take the case of Yanawa Temple as an example. The director of the Bureau and an individual close to the mo-

narchy are serving as committee members involved in the temple's land development. Their involvement is not only detrimental to the monarchy but also to religion.

3) Likewise, the numerous royal projects should be made transparent and accountable. Donations received by the monarchy should also be accountable and transparent —e.g., showing how the money is being used to truly benefit society at large, etc. As for the concept of the self-sufficiency economy, it should also be critically interrogated. One of its leading advocates is Sumet Tantivejkul. In the latest volume of *Same Sky* magazine (April-June 2009) it is revealed that in 2008 Sumet earned a total of 6,194,000 baht (including a bonus of over 4 million baht) in his various positions in the Siam Cement Group. And this man is a spokes-person for self-sufficiency economy!

4) The daily royal news at 8 pm on television should also be less propagandistic. Shouldn't it be possible to inquire to what extent has each royal trip overseas been beneficial to the people, productive, cost effective, etc.? The people should be able to openly discuss this matter. Members of the royal family should be open to criticisms. They should not be single-mindedly portrayed as larger than life figures. Rather they should also be treated as ordinary people.

4.1) The monarch as well as other leading members of the royal family should also allow ordinary people to have a private audience with them —not merely the rich and the powerful like the owners of CP and Chang Beer. These two companies have negatively impacted Thai society. However, members of the ruling class are often impervious or indifferent to this fact. Members of the royal family should be able to freely meet the poor, the excluded, the underprivileged, etc. This does not mean that they are not doing this these days. They are, but these meetings are often staged, carefully regulated, etc. The monarch should be able to confront the truth; the poor tell the truth about our society. The members of the royal family should be able to connect the sufferings of poor individuals with social sufferings, and they should play a role in the cessation of these sufferings.

4.2) Is there a way of enabling the leaders of the yellow and the red shirts to meet confidentially with the King? A third party respected by both sides should also be present. The objective may not be to resolve anything. Listening to the problems earnestly first may serve as a right step forward toward conflict resolution.

4.3) If possible, activists who are fighting for the survival of their respective communities should each be granted an audience with the King. They include for instance:

a) Mrs.Chintana Kaewkao and Mrs. Korn-uma Pongnoi from Prachuapkirikan province

b) Mr. Banchong Nasae from Songkhla province

c) Mrs. Yasae Kaena from Narathiwat province

d) Mrs. Hai Kunchuntha from Ubonratchathani province

e) Mr. Watcharin Uprachong from Chiangmai province

f) Mr. Sriwarin Boonthup from Saraburi province

These individuals possess local wisdom and represent grassroots people who love their land and their water, cherish freedom, and are willing to sacrifice their lives to fight against all sorts of injustice. It is thus appropriate that they receive an audience with the King. The King will also be able to learn from them about numerous problems and issues not mentioned in official circles and the mainstream mass media.

5) Praising the King with-out moderation brings more harm than good.

5.1) The production of the numerous portraits and pictures of the King—big and small—that adorn roads, buildings, etc. throughout the kingdom is quite extravagant and a waste of tax payers' money. Their production has also involved corruption of various forms at all levels. It will be a true blessing if the King orders a cut or an end to their production.

Recently, the Queen of England announced that she does not want her Diamond Jubilee to be celebrated with pomp and fanfare due to the economic recession and high rate of unemployment in the country.

5.2) Each time a royal family member travels (in the city) there is a lot of traffic congestion. Police officers have to be positioned along the procession route to secure

protection and to pay respect. To what extent is this appropriate? Sometimes the return trip is delayed for hours and takes place late at night. To what extent has this caused unnecessary hardship to the police officers and other responsible officials?

This is not an insurmountable problem and can be solved if there is a will to understand the problem earnestly.

6) Most of the Privy Councilors are respectable men. But how many of them are actually models of moral courage for the citizens? How many of them have the moral courage to draw the line and stand with the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, or the excluded? How many of them are willing to stand against a royal order? At least in the past there were individuals such as Prince Dhani, Chao Phya Sridhammatibet and Mr Atthasit Sitthisundhorn who ably served as the hands of the monarch. It is doubtful whether or not we can find individuals such as these among the present Privy Councilors.
7) Perhaps it is also useful to learn from the experiences of other leading constitutional monarchies, especially how they have reformed and adapted to the changing times—some successfully, others less so. It seems that a monarchy that is unwilling to reform and adapt itself to contemporary conditions will not be able to survive.

7.1) When the Romanov dynasty fell King Rama VI asked one of his brothers who was studying in Russia about its causes. The prince responded that although the Tsar was a good person he lacked *kalyanamitta*. Thus the Tsar only listened to the advices of the conservatives and the reactionaries who were in favor of absolutism. He did not listen to the socialists or the democrats in his empire. This seems to be an important lesson.

7.2) The King of Spain opposed the coup d'etat by the military junta there. This is also something that should be closely studied.

7.3) Why is the Queen of Denmark considered to be the brightest and most progressive monarch in Europe?

7.4) The son of the Queen of the Netherlands travels world-wide by plane using the Economy Class—not even the Business Class. Whenever he's abroad, he also doesn't want to bother Dutch diplomats to serve him. This is a good example.

7.5) The Prince of Wales stated that if he ascended to the throne he would conduct himself like the President of Ireland. In a laudable manner, he has materialized self-sufficiency economy at Cornwall. He is also a pioneer in organic farming. He has sought after Truth (or Good or Beauty) beyond the confines of institutionalized religious practices, and has invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama to deliver a keynote address at Temenos Academy, which belongs to him. On the contrary, the Dalai Lama is forbidden from entering the Thai kingdom even though it is officially stated that the majority of its inhabitants are Buddhist. If the King of Siam would intervene in this matter to enable the Dalai Lama to enter the kingdom as he had done in 1993, it would be a magnanimous exercise of royal protection.

8) Royal ceremonies and practices have been hollowed out of substances that help mitigate defilements and cultivate moral conscience in terms of social justice. Sermons delivered at royal ceremonies all too often sound like a paean of praise and are thus devoid of Dhammic substance. Ecclesiastical appointments and promotions are also open to corruption on the part of Sangha officials—as bad as or worse than the corruption in lay communities. If necessary reforms and changes are not made soon, both the monarchy and the Sangha will end up in the museum.
9) King Rama VII long declared his intention to transform the absolutist kingdom into a constitutional monarchy. But he was paralyzed by indecisiveness and ultimately had to give in to the momentum of the situation, which culminated in a revolution on 24 June 1932.

The present king should be decisive and should not waver from taking the necessary action to democratize the monarchy in accordance with the changing times. At the present historical junction many citizens no longer hold the monarchy in great awe and no longer think that being highborn is a special qualification or entitlement to power. Therefore, it will be difficult for the monarchy to survive if it doesn't truly address its entitlement to power.

Siam:
A Short Compendium of Eccentric Words and Names Relating to Lese Majeste Law

1) DARANEE CHARNCO-ENGSILPAKUL (aka DA TORPEDO)/ PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Sentenced in August 2009 to 18 years in prison for 'insulting' the King.

Although Daranee is a prisoner of conscience the London-based Amnesty International has failed to classify her as such. Though AI issued a statement on June 25, 2009 calling for "a public trial" on the case which was ordered closed to the public by the Thai court, AI didn't even raise any objection to the lese majeste law or whether the law is producing prisoner of conscience or not. And one would have thought that AI's specialty was the issue of "prisoner of conscience". Perhaps not anymore.

At this stage, would it not be better for Thailand's crippled state of freedom of expression if AI would explicitly renounce its role in campaigning for prisoner of conscience? As long as AI keeps mum about the issue some people may be misled into believing that there indeed exist no prisoner of conscience in Thailand. So if you can't do the job, then at least let others know that you're no longer doing it.

AI can carry something like this on its website: "We do no longer keep track on any possible prisoner of conscience in Thailand. Thank you very much."

Back to Thailand, the question is: "Do they really need to put Daranee behind bars?"

Why?

To show/shout to the world how reasonable/agreeable and just lese majeste law truly is?

To announce/flaunt to the world that Thailand is indeed 'unique' and that the King is 'revered'/'benign'/'semi-divine'/ etc./etc.?

On the first day of her trial, none of the mainstream Thai media was there to cover/report about the trial. The media apparently didn't care/dare. Only Reuters, *Asahi Shimbun* and prachatai.com were present.

The mainstream Thai media seemed to already have made up their mind about how to treat people like Daranee. It's tough when the portrait of the person whom you ended up against in the lawsuit is being hung in every courtroom.

The judges decided to have the trial held in-camera which means that anybody not directly involved are barred from the hearing, including journalists. But does lese majeste law and the limiting of free speech really has nothing to do with the public?

As if being prisoner of conscience isn't bad and absurd enough, no political books were allowed for Daranee in jail. But what will they do with the political thoughts inside her brain? Try to remove it or find a way to delete it and replace it with new and more appropriate content?

2) JI (GILES) UNGPHARKORN and others.

Self-exiled political activist/ Marxist and another unintended high-profile product of lese majeste law.

Twenty other people, foreigners included, are facing pending lese majeste cases. Those currently still in jail are Boonyuen Prasertying and Suwicha Thakor. Those sentenced to jail and subsequently granted royal pardon include Australian Harry Nicolaides who merely wrote an 'offensive' English-language novel that sold less than 10 copies prior to his arrest. (For more information see thaipoliticalprisoners.wordpress.com).

3) *The Economist*

A highbrow London-based weekly news magazine known (at least in Thailand) for being critical of lese majeste law and the Thai monarchy institution. Not consistently available in Bangkok for some mysterious reasons. At least four editions were not available in Bangkok over the past 10 months or so.

BTW, Big Brother is also watching them and said these Brits don't really understand how Thai people think.

4) *The King Never Smiles*

Title of a banned book written by journalist Paul Handley on HM the King published by Yale University Press. Failed attempt was made to have the book project aborted.

Not available in Thailand's bookshops but available in Thai contraband version on-line and read among a circle of some Thais.

Big Brother warning: Read it at your own risk.

May be more dangerous to possess than that of having

cocaine under your bed.

5) (social) COERCION ?

'Please' stand up in 'respect' of the King/ the royal anthem at theatre before filming starts. (Google Chotisak Onsoong and see what happened to him after he refuses to stand up.)

'Please' wear yellow shirts to work in 'honour' of HM the King every Monday. It would also be 'good' to wear light blue shirt in 'honour' of HM the Queen.

Who will dare say I am not a royalist and do not 'revere' the King? Who will dare say 'I am a republican'?

Given the current 'political climate' and social coercion will anyone dare say 'I am not loyal *(mai jong rak phak dee)* to the throne?'

So all Thais revere the King as the mainstream media often repeated *ad infinitum* and yet lese majeste law is needed.

6) FEAR ?

Definition: an unpleasant feeling caused by the awareness of danger *(ibid)*

Who will dare tell the society — please do not OVER-revere the monarchy because it may not be good for Thailand/ democracy/stock market etc. etc. in the long run, or even now?

To be too dependent on one person, one institution, you know...

Who will send more defaming and lese majeste content online to a friend/contact when you may end up in jail? By the way, the latest arrested 'criminal's' name (October 2009) was Nat Sattayapornpisut, 27, who allegedly sent lese majeste content on the Internet to a British national in Spain through the Internet. Apparently thought police are now accessing some suspicious on-line users' private e-mail accounts like Nat's.

7) BIG BROTHER

Thought Police, ICT Min. (Internet-Control Technology Ministry), PAD (People Allergic to Democracy) etc, etc..

Is your family/neighbour/ colleague allergic too?

IGNORANCE IS BLISS... THREE AND THREE MAKE FIVE

LESE MAJESTE LAW IS JUST

ALL THAIS REVERE THE KING

ALL THAIS LOVE THE KING

LESE MAJESTE LAW IS NEEDED

TO PUT SOME THAIS IN JAIL

8) RAMA X

Public discussion on the topic anyone?

Guess there's no taker then.

9) VERIFIABILITY/BELIEVABILITY (the unintended consequence of lese majeste law/ censorship/self-censorship)

From *The Nation*'s editorial on October 16, 2009:

"False hearsay regarding the King could have been started for political, even financial gain. The stock market tumbled two days in a row on PLANTED RUMOURS [capitalized by this writer]. On Wednesday, the index shed 2 per cent as the Dow Jones breached the 10,000 mark. Yesterday the Thai index plunged more than 8 per cent amid concerns about the King's health. In afternoon trading, the benchmark index fell 8.3 per cent to 670.72 despite the Palace saying that 81-year-old King Bhumibol Adulyadej, receiving treatment at Siriraj Hospital since September 19, was recovering from a lung inflammation."

"The market later trimmed those losses to down 6.1 per cent. The UNFOUNDED RUMOURS [capitalized by the writer] about the health of His Majesty had circulated for more than three days. *The Nation*'s office received several phone calls on Wednesday. One call was from Hong Kong, where investors were trying to inquire about the monarch's health. Another call came from Singapore, again inquiring about the King's condition. The rumours were SO WIDESPREAD [capitalized by this writer] that the Palace was prompted late on Wednesday to issue a statement saying that the King's doctors asked him to stay in hospital... King Bhumibol is a constitutional monarch with no formal political role, but has repeatedly brought calm in times of turbulence and is widely revered as the country's moral authority and a unifying figure. Thousands of well-wishers have crowded daily outside Siriraj Hospital, and events have been organized around the country in honour of His Majesty...The 81-year-old King has gone to Siriraj to receive treatment for fever, fatigue and lack of appetite. He is now recovering at a pace that is natural for his age, and he CERTAINLY (capitalized by this writer) will be able to resume functions and his role sooner than later. THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO THIS FACT. (captitalized by this writer).

"The rumours were designed to create panic and SPECULATION (capitalized by this writer) on Thailand's politics. The political situation indeed remain divisive...Again, we condemn those who began the rumours and call on them to stop

playing tricks on public sentiment as the nation send its best wishes to the beloved monarch."

The key words here are: "PLANTED RUMOURS"; "UNFOUNDED RUMOURS"; "WI-DESPREAD [rumours]"; "NO-THING MORE TO THIS"; "FACT"; and "SPECULATION". The point is, how can any rational and ordinary Thai/foreigner be so sure as to know for certain?

How can people trust local news when they are well-aware that Thai media is famous/infamous for exercising widespread self-censorship/censorship regarding the monarchy institution, incessantly/untiringly and abundantly praise and report only GOOD NEWS about the institution?

And remember, there is also lese majeste law.

Should anyone be surprised that the latest annual report by Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Thailand at 130 out of 173 countries? We used to be at number 59 just five years ago but are now neck to neck with notoriously repressive societies like Singapore (ranked 133). That's quite an 'accomplishment'. As RSF noted in its latest annual report in October 2009: "Most of the Thai journalists voice the same reverence for King Bhumipol as the vast majority of the same population. The others are forced into self-censorship... The government has put in place a system of censorship and surveillance of the internet to prevent any criticism of the king. More than 50,000 web pages have been blocked, according to the information and communications ministry.

"Under Article 112 of the criminal code, "anyone defaming, insulting or threatening the king, the queen, the presumptive heir or the regent" is guilty of the crime of lese-majeste and can be sentenced to three to 15 years in prison. And the 2007 law on cyber-crime gives the authorities the power to check personal information of internet-users without legal control... The authorities, who faced international criticism for these free expression violations reacted by going even further...".

In a related development, on May 28, 2009, Prasong Lertrattanawisut, President of Thai Journalists Association (TJA) spoke at a media symposium organized by the Fredrich Ebert Foundation (FES) on why Thai mainstream media censored itself on news relating to lese majeste law. "Why we do not dare report about lese majeste cases? Because we have been taught [that way]. It's a deep-rooted culture."

(The quote in Prasong's own words in Thai: *Kadee min tham mai sue mai kla saner [phro] tuek sorn, pen wattanatham thee fang luek.*)

Now, moving on to the US, *The New York Times* reported on October 15, 2009, page A8 that: "The 81-year-old king... is regarded as semidivine by many Thais. His health is an extremely delicate topic. His son and presumed heir, Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, ... element of uncertainty to a polarizing four-year political crisis." (this writer elected to self-censored part of the article due to lese majeste law).

IGNORANCE IS BLISS

10) MINORITY RIGHTS = minority = no rights = wrong

11) PARANOIA

Definition: 1 a form of mental disorder characterized by delusions of grandeur, persecution, etc 2 intense, irrational fear or suspicion (*Chambers Mini English Dictionary*, 2006 edition)

The question is, which side is more paranoid?

The authorities/elites/royalists who ban books/magazines, and news mildly critical of the monarchy institution or those who are too afraid to talk 'freely' and critically at restaurant about the king or be quoted about their personal travail etc, etc.?

Are the authorities/elites/royalists/mainstream establishment media who support lese majeste law and thus making the law world famous/infamous more paranoid than those who believe that Big Brother is watching them due to their political belief/activities?

Are people who are afraid of keeping a banned foreign book about the Thai King more paranoid than the ICT Ministry and the thought police who monitor on-line and off-line discussion/debate about the monarchy institution?

Or is it vice versa?

Either way, Thailand must be full of truly paranoid people.

12) ANONYMOUS ON-LINE POSTERS

Do you guys really think you're so "anonymous"?

Check again with the Internet-Control Technology Ministry.

Or ask Nat (see # 6) and friends. (also, see the latest arrests of people like bbb)

13) LIBERTY

Something alien to Thais, or so Big Brother confirmed.

14) FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Another alien concept not fully developed in Thailand.

15) TRUTH/HONESTY
Please refer to # 14.

16) JUSTICE
But we already have lese majeste law plus Big Brother!

17) LML
Little-minded law?

18) DEMOCRACY
Are you 'crazy'?
Big Brother said democracy has nothing to do with this article.
'Please' repeat after Big Brother.
DEMOCRACY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH LESE MAJESTE LAW!

Go back to your trusted news outlets.
Resume your 'normal' life.
Forget that you have ever read this article.
Everything is normal.
Everything is fine.
Now go to bed.

Pravit Rojanaphruk

Siam:
Thai Politics: Back to Normal?

Normal doesn't necessarily mean democratic

Thailand's Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has recently jetted to Hong Kong and South Korea, assuring investors that Thailand's politics are back to normal.

But in Abhisit's Thailand, normality means a depressing slide back to the past political configurations that can be called Thai-style democracy. This is a system where politicians, parties and parliament are made weak and where real power resides with traditional, repressive and hierarchical institutions.

Abhisit's assurances follow several years of political turmoil that began in 2005 with a protest movement to oust then Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and was punctuated by the 2006 putsch that sent Thaksin packing, increasing street violence, the occupation of Bangkok's airports by the royalist People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the army's mid-April crackdown on anti-government protests in Bangkok.

These institutions have provided Thailand's "political stability" in the past: the monarchy, military and the bureaucracy. Each of these institutions came under pressure from a developing parliamentary system.

With Thaksin as premier, the concentration of political and economic power in his hands and his obvious appeal to the poorest and weakest classes challenged the conservative consensus that concentrated political power with the conservative elite.

There is now ample evidence that the conservatives who have long considered themselves the country's rightful rulers are now back in charge. Prime Minister Abhisit and his Democrat Party-led coalition are merely stage-managing this comeback for the conservatives.

The most recent confirmation is last Friday's clearing of all officials involved in the October 25, 2004 Tak Bai incident in the restive South. Ruling that the military and police had acted according to the law and had used sound judgment, the court has approved of the army's suppression of protestors that saw 85 die. Seventy-eight of the dead died in custody after they were piled into military trucks and driven away. This tragic event occurred during Thaksin's premiership, and he was roundly and rightfully criticized for it. But in the court's decision, what mattered was not Thaksin's role but the protection of the officials and military figures involved.

There are many similar cases. For example, the 2004 massacre at Pattani's Kru Se mosque has never been adequately investigated. The mistreatment of Rohingya refugees by officials, caught on film just a few weeks ago, has been forgotten, with Prime Minister Abhisit claiming misdeeds by security forces. The execution-style murder of two men found floating in the river following April's Bangkok uprising has also been neglected.

Getting back to normal means that the conservative establishment protects its own. Officials continue to operate outside the law, especially those who are part and parcel of the apparatus that protects the establishment and maintains its rule.

Letting the military operate with impunity is not just rewarding it for its service in shoring up the establishment's rule but reflects its burgeoning political power. When Abhisit's government was spawned in December 2008, it had three midwives: the People's Alliance for Democracy, palace-aligned conservatives, and the military.

The PAD street demonstrations destabilized two governments that owed allegiance to Thaksin. The palace-aligned conservatives managed legal cases against Thaksin and those parties. General Anupong Paojinda, the army commander and a member of the 2006 coup junta, allowed PAD demonstrators free reign, and directed or approved the Democrat's coalition that saw several pro-Thaksin politicians suddenly swapping loyalties.

The military now provides a protective shell for the conservative re-establishment and for Abhisit's government. The troops have intervened twice during the years of political turmoil. The first was in making the 2006 coup. The second was when General Anupong ordered troops to save the government by putting down April's uprising by red-shirted Thaksin supporters and other government opponents.

Getting back to normal in Thailand means a powerful and political military. It also means that parliament becomes a place of shifting loyalties. Coalition governments are the norm, so party support is tenuous and expensive. This government is less than six months old but the smaller parties are already destabilizing it. Smaller parties negotiate cabinet seats and other means that bolster their coffers and position them for expensive upcoming elections and the horse-trading that will follow.

For all the criticism of Thaksin's alleged vote-buying in the elections he won, it is the conservatives and their military guard who have again made money politics paramount. This is not as ironic as it might sound, for money politics keeps parliament weak and dependent. This means that true power continues to reside with the conservative elite.

Interestingly, PAD is also choosing the political party route. As they appeal to the same constituency, the PAD party is likely to take votes from the Democrats in the next election. That might seem an odd outcome, but for the conservatives, neutering PAD's ability to mobilize mass support is an important victory and becoming a political party will probably achieve this.

Like the conservative and military governments of the past, Abhisit's administration is increasingly reliant on the coercive state apparatus to keep people in their place. The critical agencies are the military, the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC), the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology. Each has been given the budget needed to find and suppress perceived subversion and reinvigorate nationalist and royalist propaganda.

The government easily controls the mainstream media as much of it is state-owned. It is doing much more to intimidate the so-called new media, attempting to ensure that self-censorship becomes the norm.

This is especially the case when it comes to the monarchy, which is a pivotal element in re-establishing ideological consensus and determining "loyalty." Several high-profile cases, using draconian lese majeste and computer crime laws, have targeted internet activity. These cases remind people that they are monitored and that transgressions are heavily punished.

Billboards, television and radio spots, and the prime minister exhort people to love and protect the monarchy. The security agencies are running seemingly endless campaigns that promote loyalty to the royal institution.

More insidious are the programs that exhort and train people as spies, asking them to inform on anyone they consider an enemy of the monarchy. Prime Minister Abhisit symbolically signed up as a volunteer spy. This is in addition to the hordes of government employed spies that trawl the media for acts of disloyalty.

The current government and the conservative agenda are bolstered by urban middle-class support. In the past it was thought that the middle class would be the force for democratization, but that's no longer the case. This support was sealed during the April uprising that convinced the middle class that the red shirts will burn their houses, shops and factories to the ground the next time they rise. Hence they will support the establishment and limited democracy, backstopped by the men with guns.

Conservatives like palace insider Sumet Tantivejkul caution the middle class that their salvation lies with the monarchy and its ideas advise that this institution is under threat. They also warn that the red shirts will rise again if there is a lack of loyalty and vigilance.

But getting back to this style of conservative normality is no easy task. The establishment and their supporters are not going to have it all their own way. The April uprising demonstrated that the poor and disenfranchised are angry about the reinvigorated conservative political agenda. They want to have their political voice heard. Keeping them quiet is not going to be easy.

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Siam:
Thai-Cambodian Tensions Escalate over Thaksin Appointment

A diplomatic row between Bangkok and Phnom Penh over Cambodia's appointment of former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra as economic adviser intensified last week. On Thursday, Thaksin flew to the Cambodian capital from Dubai, where he is living in exile, to deliver a lecture to 300 government officials and economists.

Asked by a reporter about the Thai government's portrayal of him as betraying Thailand, Thaksin snapped back: "Their domestic political compulsions force them to false patriotism." If the claims over rising popularity were true, Thaksin said, then Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva should call a general election and would at last have some legitimacy if he won.

A formal request by Thailand to extradite Thaksin over his 2008 corruption conviction was turned down by the Cambodian government. Prime Minister Hun Sen read out the rejection letter on state-run television, which declared that Thaksin's conviction was "logically the consequence of the military coup d'etat in September 2006" that removed him, even though he "was overwhelmingly and democratically elected by the Thai people."

The letter will only inflame tensions between the two countries, which have steadily worsened since border clashes over the disputed eleventh century Preah Vihear temple last year. Thaksin's opponents in Thailand have exploited the issue to brand him as unpatriotic. In July 2008, the Constitutional Court ruled that Thaksin, when prime minister, had violated the constitution by failing to consult parliament over a joint communiqué with Cambodia. Right-wing Thai nationalists claimed that the communiqué effectively endorsed a 1962 International Court ruling recognising Cambodian sovereignty over the temple.

Since being ousted in a military coup in 2006, Thaksin has spent most of the past three years in exile. The political instability in Thailand has only continued. After the military stepped aside and held fresh elections in late 2007, pro-Thaksin politicians won and formed two short-lived governments that were undermined by opposition protests and removed in partisan rulings by the Constitutional Court. Democratic Party leader Abhisit was installed as prime minister last December with the backing of the country's conservative elites—the military, the monarchy and state bureaucracy.

Tensions with Cambodia flared again at last month's summit of the Association of South East Asian (ASEAN) in Thailand. On arrival, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen declared that Thaksin would be welcome in Cambodia. "If Sam Rainsy can come to Thailand as he did recently to make statements against the Cambodian government, why can my good friend Thaksin not come to Cambodia?" he pointedly asked.

Cambodian opposition leader Rainsy spoke in Bangkok at the Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand in September, criticising the Hun Sen regime over its record on democratic rights and economic management. He insinuated that Hun Sen had provoked frictions with Thailand to divert attention from economic troubles. "Allowing Sam Rainsy to speak out in Bangkok against Hun Sen and not doing enough to rein in right-wing groups who demonstrated at Preah Vihear areas certainly irked Hun Sen and rubbed Cambodians the wrong way," Thai academic Thitinam Pongsudhirak told the *Asia Times* web site.

Following the ASEAN summit, Cambodian state television announced on November 5 that head of state King Norodom Sihamoni had formally approved the appointment of Thaksin as an adviser. The Abhisit government responded by recalling its ambassador in Phnom Penh and announcing it would "review all of the agreements" between the two countries, including a memorandum of understanding to enable oil exploration and development in disputed offshore areas. Cambodia recalled its ambassador from Bangkok.

Both governments are exploiting the dispute to divert attention from political troubles at home. Abhisit rests on an unstable six-party coalition that includes coalition partners and a former faction of the pro-Thaksin Puea Thai party, whose members were bribed and bullied to support the Democratic Party.

The divisions in Thai ruling circles reflect sharp differences over economic policy. Thaksin, a billionaire and right-wing populist, won the 2001 election by

promising to protect Thai businesses and carry out limited welfare measures for the rural and urban poor. He came into conflict with the country's conservative elites, which had initially backed him, when he continued to encourage foreign investors, undermining less competitive local businesses.

Abhisit has refused to call fresh elections—a major demand of large, continuing pro-Thaksin protests. He has launched a 700 billion baht ($US21 billion) stimulus package, hoping to stem popular discontent. The export-dependent economy shed one million jobs in the second half of 2008 and is expected to contract by 2.5 to 3.5 percent in 2009. His government has been plagued by corruption scandals over the misappropriation of funds.

The political crisis has been compounded by the ill health of King Bhumibol Adulydej, who is a lynch pin of bourgeois rule in Thailand. When the Thai stock market fell 8 percent on October 15, commentators attributed the drop to concerns about the king's health and fears that his demise would lead to intense political infighting.

The pro-Thaksin United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) held a major demonstration last month calling for a royal pardon for Thaksin and new elections. Thaksin also launched a Thai language book *Tackling Poverty (A Pity It Was Robbed)* defending in detail the policies of his 2001-2006 administration. He appointed former prime minister and ex-army commander General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to head the Puea Thai party, an indication that significant sections of the ruling elite back Thaksin's return.

Under political siege, Abhisit has exploited Thaksin's involvement with the Cambodian government to paint the former prime minister as unpatriotic. According to one poll, Abhisit's popularity jumped last week from 23.6 percent to 68.8 percent. He is also using the standoff with Cambodia to undermine the New Politics Party, recently formed by the anti-Thaksin People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which has been in the forefront of whipping up anti-Cambodian sentiment.

At the same time, the Cambodian regime is using the dispute for its own purposes. The economy has been badly affected by the global recession and slump in trade. A World Bank report this month predicted that Cambodia would experience a 2 percent contraction in 2009, down from its April forecast of negative 1 percent. It estimated that poverty levels could rise by between 1 and 4 percent. "Cambodia has been very hard hit," Ivailo Izvorski, the report's lead author, told the media.

By focussing on Thailand, Hun Sen is also distracting attention from Vietnam. The Vietnamese first installed Hun Sen as premier in 1985, following the 1979 invasion that toppled the Pol Pot regime. Opposition leader Sam Rainsy has been deliberately stoking border tensions with Vietnam and accusing Hun Sen of being subservient of Hanoi.

The tensions between Cambodia and Thailand may have broader ramifications.

The US has longstanding diplomatic and strategic ties with Thailand, particularly the military. Washington backed the Thai military dictatorships that ruled for much of the post-World War II period. Following the end of the Cold War and the economic rise of China, South East Asia has increasingly become an arena of rivalry between Washington and Beijing.

The previous Bush administration made only muted protests when Thaksin was ousted in September 2006 and may well have viewed him as moving toward China. In an article in August 2008, *Asia Times* correspondent Shawn Crispin noted that while Thaksin had fully backed Bush's "war on terror", "he had simultaneously moved to put Thailand's relations with the US and China on a more equal footing." The article pointed to "strategic overtures", including a joint naval exercise in 2005 and increased arms purchases from China.

Cambodia, on the other hand, has moved closer into China's orbit. Hun Sen has distanced his government from Vietnam through bilateral and ASEAN trade and aid deals with China, as well as Japan and South Korea. China recently announced loans and grants of $US853 million for infrastructure projects in Cambodia on top of $880 million in grants since 2006. The Chinese Embassy noted that Chinese investments up to 2009 totalled $4.5 billion. One of Thaksin's economic proposals for Cambodia is to develop the southern western province of Koh Kong as a port facility—a move that would mesh with a growing trade in resources with China.

While the tensions between Thailand and Cambodia are clearly being driven by domestic economic and political turmoil in both countries, the rivalry between the US and China for influence in the region threatens to exacerbate the conflict.

John Roberts,
16 November 2009,
available at www.wsws.org

Tibet:
Tibetan Nationalism Renewed

A Tibet scholar sees Chinese nationalism fueling Tibetan nationalist feeling as well.

DHARAMSALA—U.S. President Barack Obama has now left Beijing, where he reaffirmed U.S. support for China's view that Tibet is a part of China and then asked Chinese leaders to resume a dialogue with Tibet's government-in-exile.

In response, Beijing criticized the United States for allowing "separatists"—in this case referring to Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama —to touch down on U.S. soil.

Though Obama declined to meet with the Dalai Lama when the Tibetan leader visited Washington in September, China's leaders have since stepped up their attacks on him and curbs on the Tibetan people.

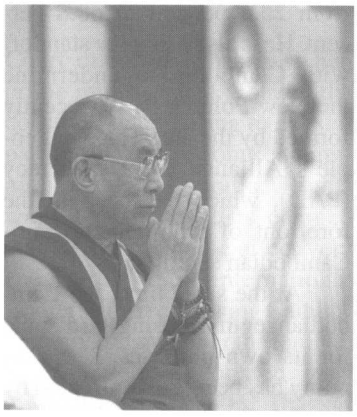
Gabriel Lafitte, an Australian Tibet expert, said here this week that China's growing nationalism is feeding what it most fears: nationalism in Tibet.

This follows a pattern frequently observed on the peripheries of empire, as excluded peoples assert their identity as a reaction to imperial arrogance, Lafitte said.

Living witnesses

In the 50 years since the Dalai Lama fled into exile in India, a steady stream of Tibetan refugees has arrived in this Indian hill station—living witnesses to Tibetan resistance to China's domination.

Ani Tsega, a Buddhist nun from the Kardze region of Kham, escaped from Tibet to Dharamsala in March 2009.



She brought with her the prison diary of Geshe Sonam Phuntsok, a Buddhist teacher who was born in Kardze in 1959, became a monk at 18, and traveled throughout Kham giving teachings.

"Geshe was very kind, and everyone loved him," Ani Tsega said.

"He was called 'the miracle' because of his knowledge. He worked so hard to keep our language and religion strong."

In 1996, Geshe Phuntsok went on pilgrimage to India where he met the Dalai Lama, and when he returned to Tibet he organized a large tenshuk, or long-life ritual, for the exiled spiritual leader.

On the morning of Oct. 25. 1999, a squad of Chinese armed police arrested Geshe Phuntsok at gunpoint.

When an estimated 5,000 Tibetans marched to the police station to demand Geshe Phuntsok's release, Chinese security forces fired into the crowd of protesters, killing several.

Geshe Phuntsok was later sentenced to five years in prison for inciting "splittist activities" among Tibetans.

On tinfoil from cigarette packets, Geshe Phuntsok wrote an account of the tortures he endured, which he secretly passed to Ani Tsega when she visited him in prison.

He had been deprived of sleep, food, and water during eight days of interrogation, whipped with electric cords, and received severe injuries to his spine.

"When I saw him in jail, he couldn't stand up or move his arm," Ani Tsega said.

"I could see bruises and cuts on his face and body."

No alternative seen

After Geshe Phuntsok's release from prison, Chinese authorities kept him under house arrest and refused him medical treatment for the abuse he had suffered in custody.

Geshe Phuntsok died on April 5, 2008.

"We wanted to have a large funeral, but the Chinese did not allow it. I knew I had to escape to India so that people will know how the Chinese punish Tibetans who want to honor the Dalai Lama," Ani Tsega said.

In his talks this week in Dharamsala, Lafitte said that Chinese Communist Party leaders know in their hearts that they can never win Tibetans over by coercion.

But they cannot imagine any alternative but to slog on, which Lafitte said he believes will only further unite Tibetans against them.

Maura Moynihan,
Saturday, November 21, 2009
http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=26042&t=1

Tibet: China's Sincerity Questioned in Negotiations with Tibetans

My attention has been drawn to an interview published in the Chinese media by Executive Vice Minister Zhu Weiqun of the Central United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party on December 8, 2009 concerning our dialogue process.

We are currently under discussion with the Chinese leadership on the next round of dialogue and so the timing and content of this interview are perplexing. It is my understanding that the Chinese leadership is as desirous as our side in continuing a discussion, which we hope will ultimately lead to a mutually satisfactory negotiated solution to the Tibetan issue.

During our fifth round of talks in February 2006, the Chinese side clearly expressed appreciation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's position not to seek Tibetan independence and of seeking a solution within the framework of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

The Tibetan transcript from the recording of that meeting shows the Chinese side terming His Holiness' position as a "Tamsangpo" (good or welcome news). It reads, "It is a welcome news that (the Dalai Lama) is showing a gesture by saying that he wanted to resolve the problem on the basis of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China." We looked at this as a small but important progress in our dialogue process with our counterparts. We felt that for the first time the Chinese side was registering and taking due note of His Holiness' position in finding a mutually acceptable solution. We have been highlighting the positive aspect in our dialogue process and this was one such development from the Chinese side in the five years that had passed since the re-establishment of our contact in 2002. It was this spirit that we conveyed to His Holiness the Dalai Lama upon our return to Dharamsala.

At the same time the Chinese side drew our attention to various issues that needed to be resolved. On our part we stated the willingness of H.H. the Dalai Lama to address all these concerns in a statement. We even suggested that both sides have consultations on the formulation of the statement in order to ensure that it will have the desired result in achieving a breakthrough. There was no response from the Chinese side to this initiative of ours.

Instead, from around May 2006 the authorities began intensification of campaigns in Tibet, including launching of patriotic re-education campaign. There was increased vilification of the person of H.H. the Dalai Lama and restrictions placed on peoples' religious activities.

Following the series of demonstrations in Tibetan areas in 2008, we had two rounds of talks and one informal session with the Chinese leadership. During the most recent 8th round held in November 2008 we in fact presented a Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People that clearly outlined the basic needs of the Tibetan people that can be fulfilled even under the present Constitutional provisions of the People's Republic of China.

The outright rejection of the Memorandum by the Chinese side, without even looking into many of the points raised therein, did not leave any scope for further contacts. However, His Holiness the Dalai Lama continued to be committed to the dialogue process and impressed upon us the need to take steps to reach out once again to the Chinese leadership.

So far, it has been all our initiatives that have been the basis of any perceptible positive side to the dialogue process. It was at our initiative that contact was re-established and continued since 2002. Every time it has been our initiative that has started the process for the rounds of discussions.

The February 2006 meeting was not the only occasion when the Chinese side showed some positive development on His Holiness' position. During the informal session in Shenzhen in May 2008, the Chinese side came out with "Three Stops" (stop separatist activities, stop violence and stop sabotaging the Beijing Olympic Games) directed at His Holiness. When we rejected these charges, the Chinese side came up (during the subsequent seventh round in July 2008) with "Four Not-to-Supports" (not supporting activities that would disturb the Beijing Olympic Games; not supporting plots

inciting violent criminal activities; not supporting and concretely curbing violent terrorist activities; not supporting activity seeking Tibetan independence.) as a replacement saying that this was being done positively because they considered our point that His Holiness was not indulging in the activities mentioned in "Three Stops" (one of which related to independence). Therefore, changing from "Three Stops" to "Four not-to-Supports" was an indication that the Chinese leadership acknowledged that His Holiness was not indulging in Tibetan independence activities.

The recent statements coming from Beijing, therefore, reminds me of an advice given to me by a Chinese Professor who was involved with the Tibetan issue for many years while serving the Chinese Government. He said that we should not expect the Chinese leadership to have the political courage to remove the hat of separatism from His Holiness the Dalai Lama even though they clearly are aware that he is not working in that direction. The professor told me that if the Chinese side were to remove such a hat from him, then they would not be able to justify to the Chinese people their current policies in Tibet or on the return of H.H. the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Time and again, the Chinese side has been the one that has been cautioning us from negotiating through the media. They contend that we should take things up directly and face to face. But we see it is the Chinese side that is increasingly coming up with obstacles presented through selective interviews to the media. During our seventh round held in July 2008, the Chinese side portrayed the "Four Not-to-Supports" positively in comparison to the "Three Stops." However, after our meeting and even before we had reached India to brief His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Chinese side went to the media and gave a totally negative message of their position.

We feel if the Chinese side is really serious in wanting to address the grievances of the Tibetan people and to provide them with the same rights that are provided for in the Chinese Constitution and the relevant statutes on minority rights, we should do that through our channel and across the dialogue table. His Holiness the Dalai Lama continues to be committed to the dialogue process and we are ever ready to continue the discussions.

Lodi Gyari,
Special Envoy of
His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Washington, D.C.
December 10, 2009

Tibet:
Dalai Lama Visits Taiwan

The Dalai Lama made his third visit to Taiwan from 31 August to 4 September. The main purpose of his visit was to pray for and comfort victims in the wake of the Typhoon Morakot disaster. The typhoon hit Taiwan on 8 August killing over 600 people and leaving thousands of people displaced and homeless.

It was the Dalai Lama's third visit to Taiwan following his visits in 1997 and 2001. The visit was not without controversy though. In December 2008 President Ma Ying-jeou rejected the possibility of a visit by the Dalai Lama saying the timing wasn't appropriate. This was despite the fact that Ma said he would welcome the Dalai Lama Taiwan shortly before he was elected president in March 2008.

The invitation to the Dalai Lama came from the chiefs of seven southern cities and counties which were seriously af-fected by the typhoon. They invited the Dalai Lama specifi-cally to provide comfort to the victims of the disaster. The seven local leaders were all members of the DPP, which is the major opposition party, and the invitation quickly became a political issue. President Ma approved of the visit amidst low public approval ratings for the government's poor response to the typhoon.

Politics further entered into the fray with substantial changes made to the Dalai Lama's schedule including the cancellation of a press conference and a public talk in Taoyuan. No clear explanation was given for the changes but some speculated that it was due to pressure from China.

The *Liberty Times* reported that Chow Mei-li, President of Taiwan Friends of Tibet, criti-

cised President Ma for his two-faced stand. On the one hand he respected public opinion by allowing the Dalai Lama to visit, but hand he also restricted the Dalai Lama's entire schedule in Taiwan. Chow said, "This is definitely a result of pressure from the Chinese Communist Party."

On the Dalai Lama's previous visits to Taiwan he met with Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian who were the incumbent presidents in 1997 and 2001 respectively. However, this time around there was no meeting between the Dalai Lama and President Ma or indeed any KMT politician.

Despite the politics surrounding his visit the Dalai Lama was warmly welcomed in Taiwan. He was able to rise above partisan politics by making comments about the importance of democracy and freedom of speech.

15,000 people attended prayers for the typhoon victims at a stadium in Kaohsiung. The Dalai Lama also had a public discussion with Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-hsi while in Kaohsiung.

After several days in Kaohsiung the Dalai Lama travelled to Taipei for the final part of his visit. While no public talk was scheduled he received hundreds of Tibetans and Taiwanese followers at his hotel.

David Reid

A New School for Well-being Aiming at Change

An international think-tank was launched in Bangkok last week to bring a new perspective to changing societies towards a better future.

"Our aim is to bring a much-needed shift towards a well-being-driven public policy," said Professor Surat Horachaikul, the academic coordinator of the School for Wellbeing Studies and Research, based at Chulalongkorn University.

"The hard work begins now," he said.

The new school is a collaboration of Bhutan's Centre for Bhutan Studies, the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation and Chulalongkorn University's Political Science Faculty

Attending the signing ceremony yesterday were academics and intellectuals from both Thailand and Bhutan, some of them serving as advisers to the organisation.

One of the key aspects of their work is the example of Bhutan's gross national happiness (GNH), the country's alternative to the more common gross domestic product as an indicator of the quality of life.

"Some of the variables we use to measure GNH can also be found in other countries," said Dasho Karma Ura, president of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, who was one of the signatories.

"It correlates with sufficiency. I think we can learn from the Thai way of self-sufficiency."

The signing ceremony was followed by a panel discussion on a much-needed change of direction in societies towards a self-sufficient and happy society.

Panellists included Dasho Karma Ura, Apichai Puntasen, professor of the Sufficiency Economy Programme, and Sulak Sivaraksa, founder of the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation.

"I want the school to have a political agenda," Sulak said.

"Otherwise it will be only an ineffective, goodie-goodie institute. We must challenge the mainstream viewpoints and economics of the West and teach them to learn from us."

Surat said that even though the opinions and underlying ideas are based in Buddhism, thus leading to problems applying the school's ideas to non-Buddhist societies, the organisation is "based in experience-learning".

"The school is not about Buddhism, rather common sense, sympathy and compassion, which can be found in all societies."

Eventually, the organisation wants to publish an "Annual Happiness Report" just ahead of the release of the yearly gross domestic product in order to "show an alternative view", he said.

The first activities of the new school include a lecture next month and an international summer course next summer, which includes a trip to Bhutan.

Saksith Saiyasombut
ASIA NEWS NETWORK
Published on August 24, 2009

25th Anniversary of Ashram Wongsanit



As a celebration of their 25th anniversary, Wongsanit Ashram, a community of socially engaged spiritual activists, organized a three-day conference to support global sustainability concerning the next generation of the global ecovillage movement.

This event had two aims: 1. to raise awareness among youth about the global ecological crisis and support the youth in accessing knowledge and wisdom for sustainable living; and 2. to raise awareness among the elders of the sustainability movement in Thailand regarding the importance of educating the next generation about sustainability.

The conference was held at Wongsanit Ashram from the 11th - 13th of December with around 150 participants including educators, activists, schools, alternative communities and youth involved in the sustainability movement in Thailand. During these 3 days, there were various events including seminars, workshops, exhibitions, discussions and opportunities for cultural exchange.

The event culminated with the following statement created collectively by participants as a path to heal the global ecological crisis.

Definition of "next generation":

The "next generation" are people who know themselves, have respect for elders and are committed to learning and inheriting the elders' wisdom, are connected with their local roots as well as aware of the global situation, are willing to rebel against the unjust society, and are creative and awake.

Role of the next generation:

The role of the next generation in the global sustainability movement starts with learning about oneself spiritually, culturally and socially. The next generation must learn to understand, appreciate and apply the values of our local culture and wisdom that encourage sustainability. We

must be able to integrate modern knowledge with the local wisdom in order to live sustainably in the present time and be able to deliver the knowledge and wisdom of sustainability to future generations.

For a strong movement, we shall expand the knowledge of sustainable living to the wider society and collaborate with others involved in the movement to support each other and take action together. We shall make strong connections and networks to create a powerful movement that can effect change in policy and politics to support local and global sustainability.



The next generation shall choose this path of change starting from ourselves, spreading to our families, our communities and our world.



Announcement

8th March 2010, Berlin
World Future Council Conference on Religions and the Human Future

Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

We would like to commemorate the success of the 20th anniversary of INEB. The celebrations were organized as "Engaged Buddhist Festival for Peace and Social Transformation" from 10-17 November 2009 in Chiang Mai, Siam.

About 200 participants from more than 20 countries participated in the retreat and conference at the meditation centre of the Buddhist University, 40 km outside the city, while many Thai participants joined in the alms round, the Peace Walk and other public activities in Chiang Mai. The participants represented a great diversity of Buddhist sects, ordained men and women, lay people from most continents, and people from a variety of professions, of all ages and many backgrounds.

INEB's 20th anniversary celebrations comprised of meditation and chanting in diverse traditions, presentations on subjects including environmental care and advocacy, gender, alternative development and economics, Buddhist identity under pressure, and lively discussions in country and regional groups; cultural celebrations, exposure visits, special lectures and exchanges on the past, present and future of engaged buddhism (with small b or capital B), traditional chanting for great peace and concluding in an impressive and moving peace walk. For a full report please visit our website www.inebnetwork.org

This extraordinary event could not have happened if we didn't have Ms. Anne Lappapan Supamanta, who served as the Executive Secretary for INEB for many years. She was thanked with a standing ovation at the end of the conference by the participants. I would like to use this opportunity to also thank her for her kindness and great effort. She will step down from her position by the end of 2009.

At the same time, on behalf of all, I also would like to thank the team of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF), who supported the INEB celebration with hard work, patience and loving-kindness.

Finally, I would like to introduce myself following my appointment to the position of new INEB Executive Secretary, starting from January 2010 onwards. I am still a little bit surprised but most happy to commit myself to this new venture for me: to serve INEB and the engaged Buddhist movement. I hope to be able to get to know you all soon in order to become, as was identified as the core mission of INEB, real *kalyanamitta* or spiritual friends with a critical mind. I hope that I will be able to collaborate with you all towards the open future of INEB.

The new INEB Executive Committee appointed a working group to shape the organization in order to meet appropriately the challenges ahead. We will have a meeting in February 2010 devoted to strategic planning for the coming years based on the outcome (Action Plan) of the conference. I will keep you all informed on INEB developments and count on your support.

I am looking forward to hearing from you and hope to meeting with you sometimes soon.

Yours in Dhamma,

Mr. Ratawit Ouaprachanon (Mo)
Executive Secretary

INEB CONFERENCE STATEMENT

This week in Chiang Mai the International Network of Engaged Buddhists celebrated its 20th anniversary with a successful conference dedicated to peace and social transformation. As *kalyanamitta*, more than two hundred socially engaged Buddhists from twenty-five countries — from Asia and the Pacific region, from North America and Europe — joined together for study, dialogue, and dharma practice, committing ourselves to work for peace.

We affirm our deep belief that the suffering of society – war, racism, poverty, gender oppression, destruction of the environment, and cultural degradation — can be transformed into liberation for all beings.

We affirm and have seen ourselves that peace can arise from even the fiercest of conflicts.

Together we confronted critical concerns that affect life on this precious and fragile planet:

• the intertwined disasters of consumerism and environmental destruction;

• the vital need to empower and educate young people;

• the pervasive oppression of women, and all gay-lesbian-bisexual- transgendered men & women;

• the denial of human rights and meaningful livelihood;

• the need to preserve Buddhism and all traditional culture and religion;

• and the obscenity of war, civil strife, and violence.

These concerns, wherever they arise in the world are our concerns. They are close to our hearts. In the Buddha's way and in the way of every great religion, we know that we must meet this suffering not with faith alone, but with all our efforts and action day by day.

— 17 November 2009

INEB's Founding Vision and What It Means Today

We are celebrating the 20th anniversary of INEB. Two decades are in fact a short period of time. However it is good to reflect on our past activities and to look forward to the future.

Of our founding patrons, Ajarn Buddhadasa and Somdej Maha Ghosananda have already passed away. Their deeds and their words are still inspiring us to walk mindfully on the Noble Eightfold Path.

Ajarn Buddhadasa reminds us that to be a Buddhist, one should understand the best in the teaching of the Buddha, because Buddhism also has many elements which may not be positive, such as superstition, nationalism, male chauvinism and feudalism—not to mention the modern Buddhist version of commercialism, consumerism and capitalism. To really follow the Buddha, those of us who may belong to any *yana*, should be skilful in transforming greed into generosity, violence or hatred into loving kindness, and delusion or ignorance into wisdom or real understanding. In short we should learn to be less selfish, in order to serve all sentient beings.

The late Ajarn also reminds us that we must not only tolerate friends of other religions, but we should respect other religions as our own. They may use different terminologies, coming from different backgrounds. But all the good religions teach people to be less selfish, and to serve others. Besides every religion cares for the mystery of life, cares for transcendence, beyond life and death, which cannot be explained by mainstream scientific knowledge, which tends to link too closely with materialism.

Lastly Ajarn Buddhadasa would like us, Buddhists, to collaborate with peoples of other faiths and ideologies, including Agnostics, Marxists and Atheists —for they are all spiritual beings, in order to overcome greed, hatred and delusion which manifest themselves clearly in (1) capitalism and consumerism (2) imperialism, militarism or distorted democracy and (3) mainstream education which cares only for the head and not the heart. Besides mainstream mass media which is also part and parcel of creating

delusion for violence and greed as well as lust.

From my own perspective and quite a number of us, our vision derived much from Ajarn Buddhadasa. We tried to build up a network of *Kalayanamitta*—good friends who would be our external voices of conscience. If we could be critical of each other, perhaps we could examine ourselves and our forms of Buddhist culture, which may be too nationalistic, too male chauvinistic, etc.

We should examine our Buddhist practice of *Dana*, *Sila* and *Bhavana* critically. Perhaps our *Dana* is not a genuine generosity, but only a show of our wealth for the poor. At least *Dana* is only a form of social welfare, which is good—but not good enough. *Sila* also should not be strict morality, to make us goody goody. *Sila* should really care for social change—at least it should help bridging the gap between the rich and the poor as well as trying to maintain ecological balance. We may not be different from the socialists or the Marxists at their best. However *Sila* guides us always to be nonviolent.

Bhavana should not only mean personal meditation for our calmness and inner peace, which are essential for all of us. However mindfulness must help us to be aware whether or not our lifestyle goes along too smoothly with the status quo, upholding social structure which is full of violence and exploitative to nature as well as to the majority of the poor and the deprived.

The Four Noble Truths do not concern only each individual but social as well as environmental. I feel this is the crux of INEB's founding vision.

Of all the founding fathers and mothers, the Venerable Rewattadhamma of Burma and the Reverend Suzuki Raowa of Japan have left us to the Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha. I am glad that David Arnott and Raja Dharmapala are with us today. Some have left INEB and others have joined us. But I believe they are all our *Kalayanamitta*. We need not always agree, but we should maintain good friendship and be critical of each other positively.

Although most of us are far away from each other, we use correspondences, emails, website and our own publication *Seeds of Peace*. Unfortunately only my name appears as both the editor and publisher, although we have many invisible hands who help with the editing and the publishing of the journal but they have to remain anonymous as the law of *lese majeste* in this kingdom is severe and the process of justice is prejudicial. We have to keep the invisible hands free from the police and the public prosecutor. Right now I have been accused of *lese majeste* on three counts, one of which links directly with *Seeds of Peace*. If the journal cannot speak the truth, it is worse than useless. Peace must contain truthfulness, beauty and goodness. At least these are the vision of INEB as I understand it.

II

I am so very happy that many friends have come to attend the 20th anniversary of INEB. I am very grateful indeed to a few friends who planned this conference carefully. Each panel will discuss INEB's founding vision and what it means today as well as trying to look forward to the future.

It is good to begin with looking at our successes and failures in building socially engaged Buddhist organizations and communities. Then we dig deeper with critical reflection on the engaged Buddhist Movement, plus a discussion on INEB's activism for peace and human rights on Cambodia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Bangladesh and India. These countries are selected as examples only. The kingdoms of Bhutan and Siam are not left out intentionally, nor the former kingdom of Nepal. Even so these are only confined to South and Southeast Asia.

After the above panel by concerned presenters, with some questions and answers, in the afternoon, there will be ample opportunities for group discussions on INEB's national and regional concerns—strategies and plans. The outcome of today should be good guidelines for INEB's activities in the near future.

Tomorrow, we will deal with the essential questions and main issues for INEB and engaged Buddhism, stressing on (1) economic justice (2) environmental justice (3) nationalism, ethnicity and religion (4) re-envisioning gender through re-envisioning Buddhism.

This will really be very crucial for all of us. I would also like to recommend that you all should see Helena Norberg-Hodge's *Economics of Happiness* which also deals with economic crisis, crisis of injustice and poverty, environmental crisis and crisis of human spirit.

As you know, crisis does not mean that we are in the ICU, as it also means how to use skillful means to transform crises into opportunities.

We Buddhists should open

the world outside the ego...what prospects there are for reverence for life or mindfulness, given that the globalizing world embodies the opposite—speed, acceleration, noise...This is true, yet at the same time, one cannot deny one very great and hopeful tendency—the ecological consciousness, ecology is basically a call for mindfulness.

The last day, we will deal with the future—vision of INEB and engaged Buddhism. We will be specific on

1) The future of the Sangha (lay & monastic) and Buddhist institute.

2) A culture of Awakening —authentic Dhamma for popular culture.

3) Coming home—the significance of Buddhist return to India.

4) Future Generation—Engaged Buddhist Youth.

I trust our three days conference will help us to have some clearer answers of the meaning of INEB and guidelines from now to the future.

I hope this will be most interesting and is really worth your while in being here.

III

My keynote address could have ended on the last paragraph above. But since I have been asked to speak again at the Mahachula Buddhist University on 15th November on the creation of the Culture of Peace and I have to speak in Thai since there will be many Thai participants there. So I might as well give you a gist of my Thai speech.

Indeed, INEB has been trying all along to create a culture of peace, as its publication is named *Seeds of Peace*. However, besides its name of international network, we are at the periphery. Mainstream Buddhists are rather suspicious of our engaged activities, yet by being sincere in our endeavor all through these two decades and with dedicated good friends around the world, we manage to have dialogues with mainstream Buddhists, even the World Fellowship of Buddhists has now opened its door slightly for us. INEB Japan was more or less dead with the demise of Suzuki Raowa. It appears that INEB Japan is being revived. *Dhamma World* of the Rissho Kosei-kai even invited me to write a leading article for its January issue of 2010.

After INEB's conference in South Korea and Taiwan, we are close to many leading Buddhists in both countries. We are also in dialogues with Christians and Muslims in creating a culture of peace.

We work closely with the royal government of Bhutan in promoting Gross National Happiness worldwide. If GNH could really replace Gross National Products, a culture of peace will really be possible.

I am happy to inform you that at Davos in Switzerland (where top economists meet annually to promote economic growth at the expenses of the poor and the environment) this year the organizers invited the Ven. Mathieu Ricard of the Vajrayana tradition to give the keynote address on Gross National Happiness. The venerable is a leading French scientist, who works closely under the presidency of H.H. the Dalai Lama, in the Mind of Life Institute, which meets with leading western scientists regularly and these scientists have now become more humble and are aware of their limitations. They used to rely solely on rationalism and logic. Now these scientists have become like poets; they realize that poetry is the opposite of the transaction, instrumental logic, and language that dominates our world. The poet's attitude constitutes a kind of reverence for life, a mindfulness of being... This mindfulness and reverence is found in the original spirit of Buddhism.

Straight after our INEB I will go to the international conference in New Delhi on Hind Swaraj organized by Samdhong Rinpoche and to be presided by H.H. the Dalai Lama. This year is the 100th anniversary of the great book by Mahatma Gandhi on self-reliance. If we follow the path of nonviolence, stressing on the power of the Truth, *Satyagraha* we shall really create a culture of peace. H.H. the Dalai Lama said there will not be world peace unless each of us cultivate peace within. He said this may be very difficult, but it is the only way.

Of our three founding patrons, we have already lost Ajarn Buddhadasa, we only have H.H. the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh. We must take their examples and their words seriously as well as critically to apply them skillfully for INEB's future.

INEB has also collaborated with other organizations under the umbrella of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. For instance, Spirit in Education Movement is very active in challenging mainstream education, stressing on contemplation as well as holistic approach for personal as well as social and environmental well-being. SEM operates in Siam, Laos, Burma, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Even well known universities like Mahidol and Chulalongkorn are now collaborating with SEM. The Faculty of Politi-

cal Science at the latter university has recently formed a pact with our Foundation and the Institute of Bhutan Studies in Thimphu to establish a School of Well-Being Studies and Research. I think this is very positive sign.

We have also collaborated closely with Social Venture Network—a group of leading entrepreneurs who are really concerned about social justice and environmental balance.

Our Buddhist friends have also produced alternative books to challenge the mainstream as well as providing different paths in education to be more nonviolent and spiritual. Although E.F. Schumacher's book became relevant before the existence of INEB, his Buddhist economics has now become more real and relevant, and it may eventually replace mainstream economic theory, i.e., economics as if human beings matter. The New Economic Foundation and the Schumacher College in England are our close collaborators. The same is true with the World Future Council which works closely with INEB and SNF.

Glenn Paige's *Political Science Without Killing* and David Loy's *Buddhist Approach to Social Sciences* are very important indeed—not to mention books produced by our friends in the Think Sangha.

It would not be modest, indeed it would even be boastful, if I mention my own books, but I must say my latest title published last April *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century* is now being translated to Sinhalese, French, Dutch and Spanish—with the possibility of German, Japanese and Indonesian editions. Some friends here may wish to have it appear in Hindi, Tamil and Tibetan. It certainly is not a great book, but it could contribute somewhat towards the creation of a culture of peace in our society.

Last but not least I should mention Bruce Rich's *To Uphold the World: The Message of Ashoka & Kautaliya for the 21st Century* which I find most inspiring.

I hope all these will contribute to a culture of peace as well as social justice and environmental balance.

Sulak Sivaraksa

The 2009 INEB Conference: Perspectives from Participants

This article is a compilation of reports and articles written by some participants in the 2009 INEB Conference: "Festival of Peace and Social Transformation" in Chiang Mai.



A BRIEF REPORT FROM THE 2009 INEB CONFERENCE

By Alan Senauke (Clear View Project)

[http://www.clearviewproject.org/]

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was created in 1989 by Thai social activist and writer Sulak Sivaraksa and a small circle of like-minded friends — *kalyanamitta* — in Asia and the West. I have been attending INEB conferences — first annually then bi-annually — for the last eighteen years, and this expanding circle of spiritual friends has been an essential source of support and education for me, and a venue for Buddhist action in Asia.

Our resources have always been limited — one more or less fulltime staff person and a small office — so INEB has, of necessity, functioned as a network. The conferences, beyond the presentations and plenaries, allow

people to meet and develop ideas for local, national, regional, and topical programs that operate independent of INEB's direct coordination. In the past this has led to training for women's empowerment, support for environmental action by Thai monks, collaboration with ex-untouchable Buddhists in India, witness delegations to Burma, Bangladesh, and Cambodia, and many more grassroots activities. INEB's Think Sangha (about which more later) evolved in the 1990s from a group looking at the need for Buddhist social analysis. While networks and projects may be ephemeral, the relationships among us endure.

This year's conference, INEB's 20th anniversary, was organized in and around Chiang Mai in the north of Thailand. Over the course of a week's activities — including a three-day meditation retreat led by Dharmachari Lokamitra from Friends of the Western Buddhist Order and Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (TBMSG) , the conference itself, talks and cultural evenings at Wat Suan Dok, an international alms round collecting money and medicine for Burmese refugees, a day-long festival of engaged Buddhism, and an evening peace walk through the crowded streets of Chiang Mai — more than two hundred people, lay and monastic, took part.

By my count there were representatives from Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Ladakh, Tibet, Europe, South Africa, Australia, and the U.S.

Aside from the heat — it was in the nineties for my first four or five days in Thailand — in the midst of great busyness some vivid points come to mind.

• The strong presence of youth and the promise of generational continuity. There were articulate and dedicated young people in almost every Asian delegation. Tempel Smith, with whom I worked at BPF, brought a group of eight youth from the U.S., at the start of a six-month Asian immersion Tempel has organized.

• Large and active participation from a number of countries — Burma, Sri Lanka, India, Japan, and more — which allowed for the creation of national and regional working groups following up from the conference.

• The leadership and visibility of women in virtually every aspect of planning and presentation. Looking back over my years in INEB, though patriarchy has not completely disappeared, this seems to me something we are getting right.

• The return of many old friends for this 20th anniversary, some of whom had been apart from the network for ten years or more.

I am grateful to the conference organizers for several opportunities I was given to present and share ideas. At the conference plenary, Ven. Dhammananda, the formidable Thai bhikkhuni, and I spoke about our experience and vision of engaged Buddhist community and organization. I helped my old friend Ouyporn Khuankaew explore issues of gender. On the last day I took part in an interfaith panel—Buddhist, Christian, Muslim — looking at spiritual practices that support our respective social action.

In the *Upaddha Sutta* the Buddha explains to Ananda that *kalyanamittata*, spiritual friendship, is the all of the holy life. This understanding is at the heart of INEB. Over all these years friendship is the mysterious force that draws me across the ocean again and again. Maybe it is not, at last, so mysterious. "Only connect" — this is the watchword of sentient beings. We yearn for connection on the deepest biological level, and then, laboring in delusion, we build walls of self, race, gender, nation, and so on to protect ourselves from the responsibilities that come with connection. If we remember "only connect" and cultivate connection as we strive to do at INEB, then the suffering and joy of our many lives becomes our common human treasure.

Buddhism and the Culture of Peace: A Brief Report from the 2009 INEB Conference

By Vidhyananda (Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia – BMSM)
[http://beyond-buddhism.blogspot.com/]

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) began in February 1989 in Siam (Thailand) at a conference of 36 concerned ordained and lay people from 11 countries organized by Sulak Sivaraksa and other thinkers and social activists Buddhists and non- Buddhists.

INEB is an organization that has firm confidence in compassion, non-violence and co-existence as revealed by The Buddha. Confrontation with suffering, analysis and actions to put out suffering, particularly in the modern world context is the core mission. The issues of interest revolve around integration of spirituality and social activities.

The network expanded throughout years and included

members—individuals and organizations—from more than 20 countries from Asia, Europe, America and Australia. Out of this diversity, an understanding of engaged Buddhism has emerged which integrates the practice of Buddhism with social action for a healthy, just and peaceful world. This commitment to global community based on the universal truths of wisdom and compassion guides all of our activities. INEB's areas of concern have centered on peace, human rights, gender issues, spirituality based development, diversity tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

From November 10 to 17, 2009, INEB celebrated its 20th anniversary with the Engaged Buddhist Festival of Peace and Social Transformation in Chaingmai, Siam (Thailand).

Meditation Retreat (Nov 10-12)

The Anniversary started off very aptly with a meditation retreat held at the International Meditation Center of the Mahachulalongkonrajavidyalaya University (IMC-MCU). It was a 3- day retreat lead by Dharmacari Lokamitra of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. It was somewhat a light retreat with focus on the grounding on the practice of meditation and the building and re-kindling of spiritual friendship. In the retreat, the participants discussed and reflected on the the following topics:

- The original context of the Sangha in contemporary multicultural context
- Kalyanamitta (Spiritual friendship)

There were all also group sharing sessions related to the above.

INEB Conference (Nov 13-15)

As soon the retreat was over, the Conference proper went on the way. The Conference was attended by over 200 participants from Buddhist organizations from different parts of the world. There were representatives from Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Ladakh, Tibet, Europe, South Africa, Australia, and the U.S. The theme of the conference was: **Engaged Buddhism: Past, Present and Future Towards a Turning Point in Buddhist Identity and Community**.

In the conference we listened to one of the key founders of INEB, Sulak Sivaraksa. He shared INEB's vision and strategic direction. Throughout the con-ference, participants heard very moving and inspiring accounts of how lives and have been transformed when Buddhism became truly engaged in our hearts, our communities and our societies. We also heard accounts of how lives continue to be mired in *dukkha* and how efforts continue to be provided. Some of the other topics covered in the conference by way of paper presentations and group discussions were:

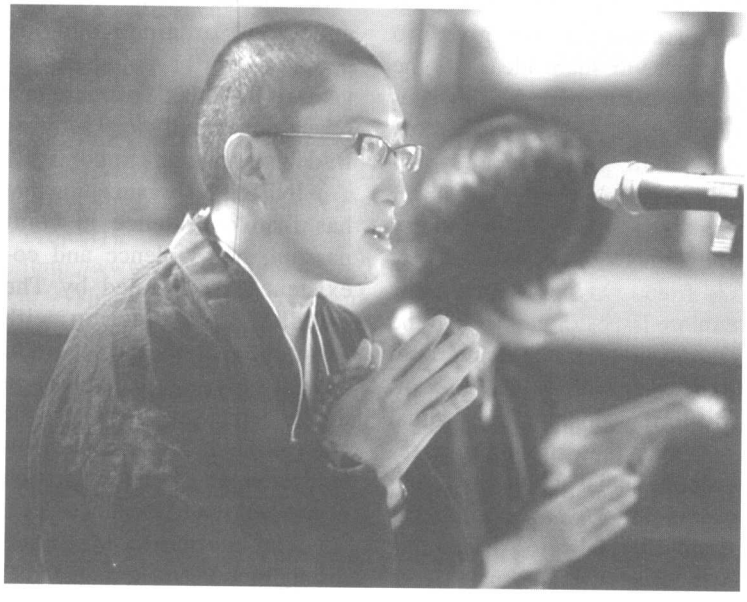
- Economics and development — the need to search for a Buddhist perspective of economics.
- Environment justice, what some members are doing and how that would affect our lives.
- The issues and challenges of gender biases and how revisioning is greatly needed.

There were also separate group that talked discussed about, among other things, Alternative Education, Gender and the Environment.

There were also specific country and regional discussions.

The conference ended on Nov 15 with a Buddhist Culture of Peace Festival held at Wat Suandok in the evening. It was a spiritual as well as cultural event aimed at articulating the value of peace—within and without.

Overall the conference was special as there was as much focus on individual, inward transformation as social transformation.



International Alms Round (Nov 16)

On the following day, monks, nuns, novices and ordained people from all traditions participated in an international alms round to collect medical supplies to be passed to refugees and those in need of such supplies and not able to access them. Over USD 1000 worth of medical supplies were collected and shall be distributed to refugees along the Thai-Burma border as well as other areas of need.

The rest of the day and the following morning say a series of public forum on "Buddhist Culture of Peace and Social Justice."

Peace Walk (Nov 17)

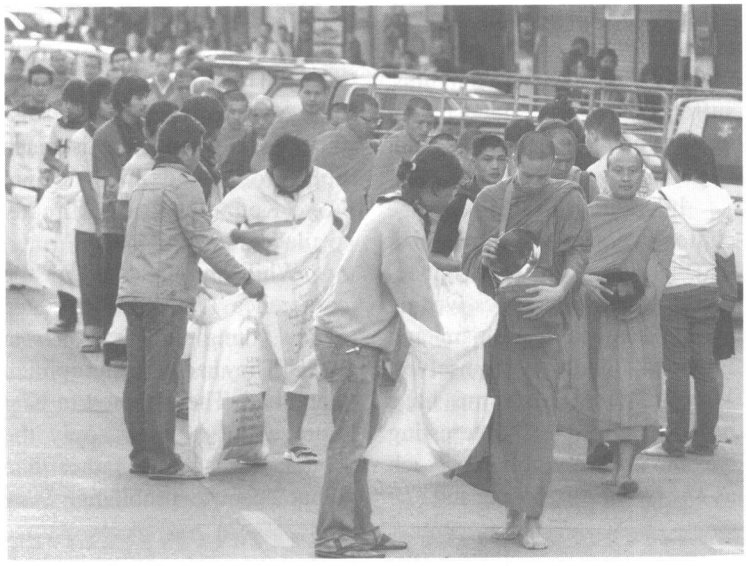
The last and final day of the festival saw the chanting of the Uppapata Santi Gatha by 200 monks and nuns of all traditions and peace walk that started from Buddhasathan to the Tha Phae Gate. Several hundred monks, nuns and lay people walked peacefully, which drew a lot of attention from the general public.

At the Tha Phae Gate the following conference statement was read out, a fitting conclusion to INEB's 20th anniversary conference and festival of peace.

INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists) Conference

By wanderingdhamma [http://wanderingdhamma.wordpress.com/2009/11/17/ineb-international-network-of-engaged-buddhists-conference/]

This past weekend, November 15-17, the International Network of Engaged Buddhism (INEB) held their "Festival of Peace and Social Transformation" in order to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the organization.



The mornings of Friday, Saturday, and Sunday were devoted to panels on key issues of Engaged Buddhism and the organization of INEB. On Friday there were a series of panels dealing with the history of INEB—their successes and failures. Saturday's panels consisted of key trends in Engaged Buddhism such as economic justice, environmental justice, nationalism and ethnicity, and gender issues. On Sunday panelists discussed the future of Engaged Buddhism and INEB—the vision for the future of the movement with a focus on new programs and youth involvement.

The panels were presented in the morning at the International Meditation Center connected with Mahachulalongkonrajavidyala Buddhist University (MCU) and Wat Suan Dok. The afternoon consisted of a series of group discussions surrounding the issues brought up in the morning panels. I was able to attend the Saturday and Sunday morning panels of the conference. The presenters were Engaged Buddhists themselves, all with particular issues they were working on and familiar with. Each presenter presented on issues dealing with the topic under discussion as well as with a view to the problem through the lens of their country and cultural background. Thus the presenters' ideas were based on their experiences working in the world.

What I noticed from this format was that much of the information presented was a reporting on the situation of the individuals' particular program or nation. There was much focus on the description of problems and how modern forces are working against a cure. It was all very interesting and saddening to hear about these global issues but it made me think that the focus should be more on solutions than problems. The mission of Engaged Buddhism is that it is Buddhism applied to solve the world's problems. I thought the format would have been more effective if the focus had been on the Buddha's teachings and how to apply them. Then in the discussions people could bring up their issues as case studies to test the application of a particular teaching of the Buddha. But starting from the specific problem didn't lead to much thought

of solutions. Some of the presenters mentioned some key terms such as The Four Noble Truths, suffering, interdependence, but this was not done as a major point of the talk.

In addition to this idea, the conference also made me think that there should be more connection between academics writing about Engaged Buddhism and Engaged Buddhists themselves. Many of these key terms have been thought-out in interesting ways in a variety of books (such as *The Great Awakening* and *The New Social Face of Buddhism*) but these ideas were not mentioned. The presenters were using their own experiences to discuss their issue when there is much help from academics (David Loy, Kenneth Kraft) already available.

While on a break outside the conference I talked with some of the young student monks at MCU. They had the exact opinion that I had. They wanted to hear more about how to apply the Buddha's teachings rather than about specific problems. They appreciated when a presenter did bring up a Buddhist concept but thought it should have been more rooted in these ideas.

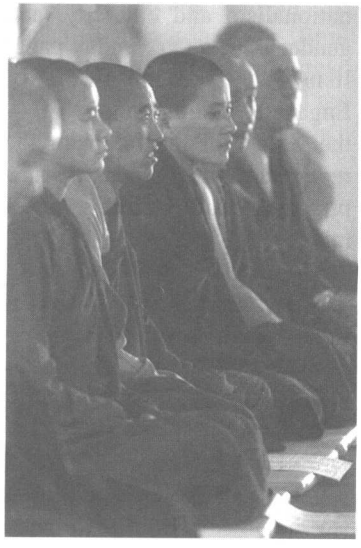
I hope the important movement of Engaged Buddhism and its most prominent organization, INEB, can move in this direction of incorporating scholarship and Buddhist concepts. Many Engaged Buddhists are doing very important work but perhaps this could be magnified further by more communication rooted in the teachings of the Buddha.

Summary INEB Working Group on Environment and Climate Change

International Meditation Centre of Maha-Chulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chiang Mai, Thailand 14 November 2009

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) held its 20th Anniversary Conference at the International Meditation Centre near Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 13–15 November 2009. Over 200 delegates attended the INEB Conference representing most South, South East and East Asian countries.

Reverend Hidehito Okochi of Japan and Dr Nigel Crawhall of South Africa gave presentations on Buddhist responses to global warming and climate instability. Following the presentations, a working group of 22 delegates from eleven countries was established to spend an afternoon reviewing current experiences, concerns and strategies for improving networking on response to climate and environmental vulnerability. This report



summarises the issues raised by the delegates and sets out recommendations for further cooperative action.

Okochi's presentation focused on the experience of Japanese Zen temples reducing their carbon emissions to zero and helping congregation mem-bers audit their carbon footprint and reduce their energy con-sumption or switch to sustainable energy, notably solar power.

Crawhall's presentation was based on his experience of working with indigenous peoples in Africa on climate advocacy and the application of traditional knowledge to the crisis, as well as the 2009 book, A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency (ISBN 0-86171-605-1), edited by John Stanley, David R. Loy and Gyurme Dorje. The presentation focused on three thematic areas:

1. A summary of the causes of global warming and the predictive science of the crisis, including examples from Africa

where the climate instability is already affecting communities with droughts, flooding and changes to rain cycles and intensity;

2. Reflections on Buddhist ethical responsibilities in the face of the crisis, emphasising the obligations set out by the Precepts, and core values of compassion and engagement to reduce suffering against sentient beings, both human and non-human;

3. Avenues for individual and collective action, particularly helping the vulnerable with adaptation and access to reliable weather prediction and disaster avoidance, and the need to take the local experience and use this for coordinated inter-Buddhist and inter-faith advocacy at national, regional and global levels.

The full paper will be published and circulated in 2010. The Working Group took up the major themes and added details from each local and national situation. Delegates in the Working Group included both clergy and lay people. Delegates participated from Bhutan, Burma / Myanmar, Indonesia, Japan, Ladakh, Laos, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United States of America, and Vietnam. It was significant that delegates came from different parts of Asian ecosystem, from the glacial territories of the Himalayas, down along the main rivers, into farm lands, deltas, islands and fishing communities. The experiences showed the effects of warming at high altitudes on those living thousands of kilometres away at low altitudes.

Main Issues

Climate change: Delegates reported the following climate related experiences, including droughts, melting glaciers, problems in farming, flooding, sea level rising and flooding of island coasts and river deltas, coastal erosion, vulnerability to cyclones, lack of advanced warning on extreme weather phenomena, and seasons out of order with impacts on biodiversity and food security; Japanese innovations in educating congregations about energy use and alternatives, including carbon neutral temples and reduced congregational emissions.

Ecology and biodiversity: Deforestation where traditional governance has broken down (the exception was Bhutan where governance and conservation are intact), problems of pollution and plastics; loss of valuable ecological practices and knowledge systems; loss of mangroves; loss of seed diversity; too much burning of rubbish; loss of fish stocks; declining support for sacred landscapes and monastic secured conservation of forests and biodiversity.

Farming and food security: Farmers are increasingly in debt from trying to switch from food crops to cash crops; high reliance on chemical fertilizers which pose problems to soil and water, including fishing areas; loss of food security and agro-biodiversity; the role of trees in micro-climates and mitigation; replacement of traditional crops with foreign or genetically modified seeds; some Sangha (clergy) are working to help rural villages return to organic farming and food security.

Ethics and economics: Delegates agreed that there have been major changes in community values, desires and use of natural resources. Sustainable, community-based practices related to ecosystems capacity have been de-valued in favour of commodification, cash-cropping, urban migration, cash gifts replacing community dna, debt and greed at the local level. This ideological / identity shift has been amplified or influenced by the global economy, particularly extractive industries, loss of rural land tenure by small scale farmers, undermining of indigenous subsistence economies and artisanal fishing, loss of food sovereignty, and the shift towards land aggregation by powerful industries or urban land owners. Climate change is fundamentally a problem of ethics, both in terms of our relationship with the natural world and the willingness of the minority to place the majority in situations of poverty and insecurity. The group noted that climate crisis also increases the opportunities for conflict, from family, to community to international insecurity.

The large group did a round-table identifying issues (shown below) and then divided into smaller working groups on the themes of:

i. Organic farming, food sovereignty and agro-biodiversity, community based energy alternatives and reducing vulnerability;

ii. Climate change, environmental education and outreach / promotion;

iii. Dhamma (Buddhist ethical framework) and ecology

Below is a summary of the issues and recommendations:

Recommendations to INEB and network members:

· INEB should continue to provide a platform for climate and environmental justice, including establishing a working group to organise a global Bud-

dhist conference on climate and environmental sustainability, tentatively set for 2012. Working group recommends the theme of 'Under the Bodhi Tree', looking at ethical and practical responses to climate change and justice issues. The conference should be built on local experiences, national networking strategies and global witnessing and advocacy;

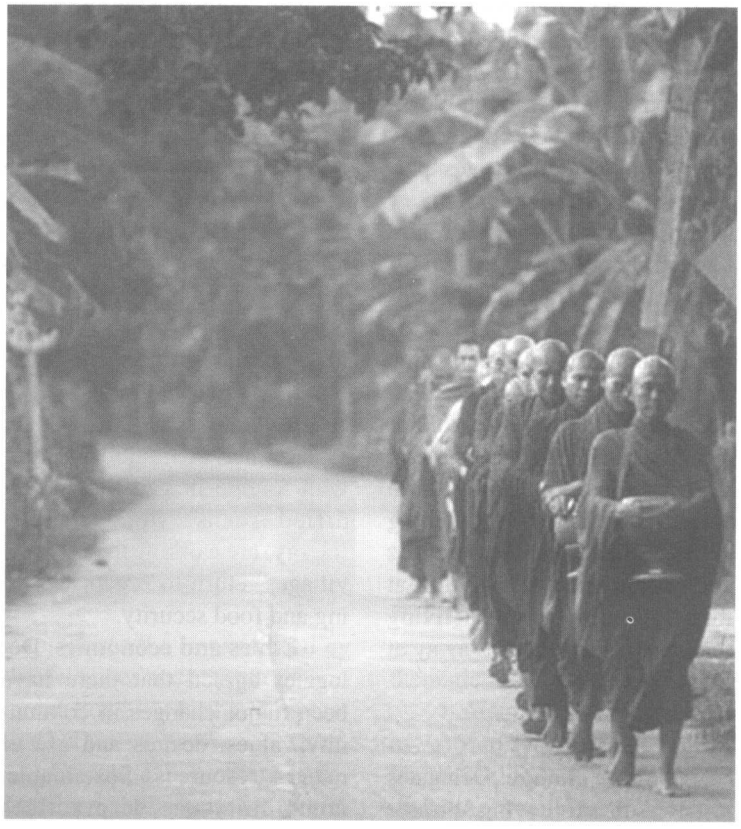
- Urgent attention should be given to informing the monastic Sangha on their role in coping with environmental changes, disasters and vulnerability of local communities. Monasteries will be affected by falling agricultural production and migration, but they can also play a key role in education and helping villagers improve ecosystem resilience and services, based on Dhamma and Vinaya;
- Buddhists can work with media, including INEB media, to publish and promote issues of agro-biodiversity, including promotion of organic farming, resistance to 'agricultural colonialism';
- Publish case studies of Buddhist experiences with alternative energy, emissions reduction, cleaning up polluted landscapes, promoting food sovereignty, improving ecosystem and community resilience, revitalising traditional natural resource governance, reforestation and water management;
- Publish an INEB Manual on mindful organic farming techniques for promotion through monasteries, NGOs and communities;
- Elaborate a Buddhist Declaration of Ecological Vinaya (environmental awareness rules for Buddhists to live by), including a set of precepts related to biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, the reduction of individual and communal emissions;
- Establish a fund to support exchanges between communities working on agro-biodiversity, organic farming, emissions audits and alternative energy use;

For further information contact Nigel Crawhall at Theravada.southafrica@gmail.com , website www.theravada.org.za.

The International Alms Round

The morning at 6 am of 16 November 2009 was a memorable time in Chiangmai. Around 200 ordained sangha from Siam, Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Japan and US walked in the street of Chiangmai for the alms round together. We saw both traditional bhikkhus, bhikkhinis, samaneras, samaneris and other kinds of ordained Buddhists such as the priests and the white-robed nuns from Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. They started the alms round from Suan Dok Temple, which was built over six centuries ago to be a center for Buddhism of the ancient Kingdom of Lanna.

The alms round is the morning routine for the ordained which is still practiced in Theravada Buddhist countries. The original intention is for the



ordained to receive food from followers to maintain their lives. But more often, as the temples are the community center, the collected alms also go to supporting the needy who depend on the temples, like the poor, young boys or even animals.

As part of the Engaged Buddhist Festival of Peace and Social Transformation, on the 20th Anniversary of INEB, the international alms round special. The significance of the alms round was not only that it was participated by the foreign ordained from major traditions, but it was also the first time in Chiangmai that the items that the ordained sangha was going to collect such as medicine, medical supplies and first aid were to be distributed to the Burmese refugees camps along Thai-Burma borders.

Chiangmai is a pleasant place. Being situated at Thai-Burma border makes this province the destination of people who escape the cruelty of the military regime in Burma. Surely the discrimination against the ethnic minorities which is already in place in this city is getting worse. Therefore we decided to use the international alms round to primarily cultivate compassion for the refugees from Burma whose access to medical treatment is difficult as well as the generosity to release their suffering.

The alms round was our effort to show that the Buddhist tradition, if skillfully used, could be a powerful approach to raise awareness among public of the current issues, in this case, the suffering of migrant workers and refugees from Burma. Secondly, the activity became an educational experience for the local monks especially the young ones on the social engagement dimension of Buddhism.

There is a wrong idea that the monks in the Theravada tradition are lacking a sense of social engagement. Instead they prioritize personal liberation. The reality is that the monks have played a double role of spiritual teachers and community leaders since the ancient time, even though this role is weakening in the modern time. With the monks taking the lead in collecting medicine in our alms round, we are hopeful that their role as the ones who provide spiritual leadership and bring hope to society facing crisis will be stronger.

The alms round ended at the Art and Culture Promotion Center of Chiangmai University. Although it is only half an hour walk, through market and residential area, the activity interested people along the way. At the Center, we offered breakfast for the monks and nuns, followed by a ceremony to give the alms and donated money to the Deputy Chief of Chiangmai Provincial Sangha. He then gave a short dhamma talk and handed the donated items to us.

As for the outcome, we found that the activity received good response, especially from the youth. It is not totally true that young people today are not interested in social services or Buddhism. Our experience is that, we have many students from the pharmacy faculty to help in properly sorting and packing the donated medicines. Members of Buddhist students' clubs in local universities helped organize the alms round and the ceremony. A group of monk students from Mahachulalongkorn University who joined the alms round planned a project to continue the activity. At the end, our ordained sangha was able to collect enough medicines and supplies to be distributed to three refugee camps in Wianghaeng, Chaiprakarn and Mae Sot districts—together with approximately US$1000 donation in cash. The donated items and money were afterward given to Friends of Burma Group.

[We would like to thank Chiangmai Provincial Sangha, Suan Dok Temple and many local in Chiangmai, Mahachulalongkorn Rajvidyalaya University Chiangmai Campus, Art and Culture Promotion Center of Chiangmai University, Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Friends of Burma, The Land Foundation, IWP, Faculty of Pharmacy Mahasarakham University, Buddha Silpa Club of Chiangmai University, Buddhist students' clubs of universities in Chiangmai, students from Faculties of Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing and Engineering of Chiangmai University, Maharaj Hospital, local Police, Chiangmai Municipality, and many other people who joined this merit making together]

Lapapan Supamanta



Protecting the Commons—Elinor Ostrom and the Nobel

Most of us do not pay overmuch attention to the Nobel Prize in Economics, but in the case of Elinor Ostrom we should. Her ground-breaking work proving that neither privatizing of the commons nor government intervention assures the safety of bio-regional resources is a must to know. Her conclusion: local, democratic, organization trumps all other alternatives. See the piece in the British Guardian below: guardian.co.uk,

The economics profession is in such disarray that one of the Nobel prizes in economics this year went to political scientist Elinor Ostrom, the first woman to be awarded the economics prize. This is an excellent choice (in any year) not only because of what Ostrom has contributed to social theory but also because of how she goes about her work.

In a nutshell, Ostrom won the Nobel prize for showing that privatising natural resources is not the route to halting environmental degradation.

In most economics classes the environment is usually taught as being the victim of the "tragedy of the commons". If one assumes, like many economists do, that individuals are ruthlessly selfish individuals, and you put those individuals onto a commonly owned resource, the resource will eventually be destroyed. The solution: privatise the commons. Everyone will have ownership of small parcels and treat that parcel better than when they shared it.

Many environmental experts also reject the tragedy of the commons argument and say the government should step in.

Ostrom says the government may not be the best allocator of public resources either. Often governments are seen as illegitimate, or their rules cannot be enforced. Indeed, Ostrom's life work looking at forests, lakes, groundwater basins and fisheries shows that the commons can be an opportunity for communities themselves to manage a resource. In her classic work Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, Ostrom shows that under certain conditions, when communities are given the right to self-organise they can democratically govern themselves to preserve the environment.

At the policy level, Ostrom's findings give credence to the many indigenous and peasant movements across the developing world where people are trying to govern the land they have managed for centuries but run into conflict with governments and global corporations.

Some economists on the frontier of their discipline have started to use Ostrom's insights in their work. In their recent book Reclaiming Nature: Environmental Justice and Ecological Restoration, James Boyce, Liz Stanton and Sunita Narain, show how communities in Brazil, India , West Africa and even in the United States have managed their resources in a sustainable manner when given their rightful access to their assets.

Indeed, Boyce and his collaborators find that communities should be paid for their services, since they can sometimes do a far better job than government or corporations at managing resources.

Indeed, "payment for environmental services" has become a buzzword in development circles. Now even the World Bank has a fund for PES schemes across the world.

In terms of methodology, Ostrom proves her findings three times over. As opposed to many economists who never leave the blackboard, Ostrom often conducts satellite analyses of resource depletion to measure amounts of degradation. Second, she actually goes out into the field and performs case studies of human and ecological behaviour all across the world. However, she doesn't stop there. When she gets back from her fieldwork she conducts behavioural experiments to see if random subjects replicate her findings in the field.

The Nobel committee should be applauded for recognising such rigorous theoretical and empirical work. Shining light on Ostrom is a call to economists to spend a lot more time analysing human behaviour, rather than assuming that we are all rational selfish individuals. It is also a call on economists to become more empirical and to find ways to validate their theories.

Adopting Ostrom's approach will not only help us forge a better relationship with the natural environment, but will help us become more realistic about the economy in general. It's time for a fresh approach to both.

13 October 2009,
guardian.co.uk, Guardian News
and Media Limited 2009

Hind Swaraj Centenary



Mahatma Gandhi wrote a pamphlet entitled *Hind Swaraj* in South Africa. He wrote it in Gujarati, his mother tongue. He completed it on 19 November 1909. It's a very important tract that espouses the notion of self-rule and autonomy *(swaraj)* for India. Gandhi used the ideas in this tract as a guideline to reclaim India's independence or home rule. From this starting point, which subsequently developed into a powerful nonviolent and aggressive movement for independence in India, Gandhi was ultimately given the titles "Mahatma" and Father of the Nation.

On the occasion of the book's centenary, an international conference convened in the suburb of New Delhi during 19-22 November 2009. The Swaraj Peeth Trust was the host and organizer of this event, which took place at Hotel Rajhans. Samdhong Rinpoche, prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile, served as the chairman of the Hind Swaraj Centenary Committee. And His Holiness the Dalai Lama presided over the closing ceremony.

I took part in the conference from the beginning to the end. Many prominent thinkers, internationally renowned leaders and leading Gandhians attended this conference, including Ashis Nandy, Suresh Sharma, Anthony Parel, and Douglas Allen.

On the first day, a lamp in front of Gandhi's portrait was lit to inaugurate the conference. Samdhong Rinpoche gave a broad overview of the conference's schedule. Parel delivered an address on "*Hind Swaraj* Today", which was followed by Nandy's "Untamed Language of Rebellion in Our Time." Former senator and now governor of Sikkhim Shri B.P. Singh was also there to give a warm welcome to the participants and audience.

The participants were then divided into four focus groups to discuss the issue of "Exploring Swaraj" in the morning and in the afternoon sessions. Each group then presented its reflections to one another and to the audience at large. At the end of the first day, Ralf Summy and I were invited to address the audience—with Vandana Shiva serving as chair.

In my speech I talked about freedom understood as *swaraj* or self-rule. I unpacked Gandhi's *swaraj*, dividing it into four dimensions: economic, political, intellectual and spiritual. I questioned to what extent self-rule at the individual and the collective levels is still possible



in the contemporary globalizing world.

We are not in a post-imperial age since the American and the Chinese empires are rivaling for (global) domination—often in collusion with transnational corporations, which own and/or control the mainstream mass media and education institutions. These forces are also promoting militarization through arms productions and sales, etc. Consumerism prevails and capitalism is considered the only game in town. Even nominally Communist states such as Vietnam and China are beating many capitalist countries in the very game of capitalism. India has abandoned its non-alignment—once a source of its pride—and caved in to American domination. To cite some random examples, the Thai kingdom as well as Pakistan, the Philippines, and Indonesia have long been subject to these forces and structures.

When a tree falls, there's a lot of noise. But no one hears a tree when it grows.

Likewise, we hear a lot about violent conflicts, ecological disasters, market exploitation, massive and growing income inequality, and so on. But we hardly hear about movements for self-rule and emancipation. They are growing confidently and quietly, often building on the legacy of *satyagraha* and nonviolence.

Once, the Gross Domestic Products was considered the standard and universal measurement of economic and social wellbeing. Now Gross National Happiness is increasingly gaining wider acceptance—with Bhutan, Ladakh and Kerala serving as paradigmatic examples.

Traditionally, economists saw their main task as largely about generating economic growth. They played (still do) an influential role in the World Bank, IMF, and WTO—and in almost every government. In recent years however there have been many high-profile defections from the camp of economic orthodoxy such as by Amartya Sen, Joseph Stiglitz, Jeffery Sachs, etc. They rightly feared that mainstream economics would drag the world and its inhabitants down the precipice of destruction. Likewise, this year the organizers of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, invited the Buddhist monk Matthieu Ricard to deliver a keynote address on Gross National Happiness.

In sum, the tree of alternative economics is growing gradually. It all began with E.F. Schumacher's Buddhist economics more than three decades ago. Perhaps, Buddhist economics is now strong enough to weather the storm of mainstream economics. A think tank at Schumacher College has joined hands with the New Economic Foundation in London propagating the idea that Buddhist economics be taught at the university level, especially in the economics faculties of universities.

Politically, the way forward requires refraining from seeing and deploying violence as a means to an end—as the US is now doing in Iraq and Afghanistan, China in Tibet and Xinjiang, the military dictatorship in Burma, etc. Like Aceh, the three southernmost provinces of the Thai kingdom must be granted a greater degree of self-rule. There's no other way aside from nonviolence.

Mahatma Gandhi employed the power/politics of truth in the form of *satyagraha* to struggle against and expose the lies of the British empire. China still resorts to falsity to deceive its people. But now there's a book like *Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang*. Although the Chinese government banned the selling of the book in the country, it is widely available. The book exposes the deviousness and mendacity of the Chinese Communist Party and the author supported the students' and people's movements for democracy. In China the number of websites and blogs revealing the truths and giving relevant facts and information are also proliferating despite government control. As such, the deceitfulness of the ruling class cannot last for long.

Fidel Castro argues that al-

though he came to power through arms struggle and revolutionary means, he condemns mindless violence and prefers nonviolence. Despite decades of American terroristic activities against Cuba, Castro still believes that the American people are friends of Cuba and sees young Americans' tilt towards nonviolence as a move in the right direction.

President Ramos Horta of Timor Leste also upholds the virtue of nonviolence and forgiveness. He is willing to forgive and even cooperate with Indonesia despite the latter's bloody invasion and occupation of his country. He relies on South Africa under Nelson Mandela, who was ready to forgive the crimes of apartheid, as an example. Former president of Indonesia Abdurrahman Wahid also declared that Gandhi was his political role model.

At first sight, the prime minister of Cambodia appears to be a malicious person who is trigger happy. But we tend to forget that the Dhammayatra movement also originated from Cambodia. It was founded by the late Maha Ghosananda (aka the Mahatma Gandhi of Cambodia) and is still a vital and influential force in the country. We can also refer to Buddhist monks during the so-called "saffron revolution" in Burma who struggled for democracy and responded to the military dictatorship's 'counter-revolutionary' brutality with deep meditation and prayers. Likewise, Tibetan monks have been nonviolently resisting Chinese occupation for many decades.

Parallel developments can be seen in the academic world. To give some random examples, there are many books following the trail blazed by Schumacher's Buddhist economics. Then there's Glenn Paige's *Political Science without Killing* and David Loy's *A Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack*—not to mention the works that have come out of the Mind and Life Institute under the guidance of the Dalai Lama.

Finally, self-rule is a form of personal practice and transformation—the creation of a new subject. It requires internal/spiritual changes that constitute and are constituted by the three external dimensions mentioned above. If one is able to transform greed into generosity, hatred into loving-kindness and delusion into wisdom, that is self-rule. Peace in the world requires the simultaneous cultivation of seeds of peace within. As the Dalai Lama pointed out, this is a terribly difficult process, but it is the only way toward peace.

Above is my modest attempt to take Gandhi beyond Gandhi, which is the only way to remain faithful to the ideas he penned 100 years ago.

Sulak Sivaraksa



Making a World of Difference: Hearing Each Other, Healing the Earth

The World Parliament of Religions gathered in Melbourne from 3-9 December, bringing together religious, spiritual and humanitarian leaders and communities

There was an extraordinary atmosphere at the Parliament—much goodwill, humour, passion and commitment ... from a wide range of cultural and faith groups of people taking up many significant issues. Some of the major themes included building peace in the pursuit of justice, overcoming poverty, concern for the environment, nuclear non-proliferation and breaking through patriarchy. The many conversations were a great gift to us all, with reminders for each of us to share the lessons learned and inspirations with our communities, and of the need for action. I appreciated the time for discussion and questions after the presentations and the often stimulating interactions, as well as the time for sharing with people of different faiths. Although there were over 600 presenters and eight thousand participants, due to the high price of tickets, lack of student concessions and difficulties to obtaining visas for people from some countries, this was an exclusive flock, with few people from Africa and Asia. I would like to share some brief glimpses from just a few sessions.

Socially Engaged Buddhism: a Pathway to Peace

The panel of speakers included Sulak Sivaraksa, Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo (President of Sakyadita), Tony Le-Nguyen (Executive Producer for Australian Vietnamese Youth Media) and myself. Ajarn Sulak reminded us of the need to transform our greed, hatred and delusion into love, generosity and wisdom. In this way, we would be less selfish and better able to serve all human beings, and would have respect for other religions as our own. In our giving, we should go beyond social welfare, and take a step beyond inter-faith dialogue, in our care and commitment for social change.

I shared on this panel some experiences of working for peace and justice through the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF). Although we acknowledge, 'there's no way to peace: peace is the way'... because of many obstacles and complexities in working with our human nature, we need a practice. Our Buddhist meditation practice reveals our inter-connectedness with each other, the Earth and all beings, and includes ethics and social justice. We try to stay present to the numerous problems and conflicts which confront us on many levels: from our inter-personal conflicts to man-made war and conflict, natural calamities and climate change, all driven or exacerbated by our greed, hatred and ignorance—the root causes of suffering. Staying present to this suffering gives us the opportunity to look into its causes—individual and institutional—and how I might be implicated—how I might take responsibility. This helps us touch our one humanity, with a respect for all of life. In touching our own vulnerabilities and opening our hearts, possibilities may present themselves, and we see the dance of turmoil and change, just taking the next step. This is about being fully alive. This is the practice of peace.

I spoke about peace building and conflict transformation training for people from Burma in Thailand and here in Melbourne. The training was based on sharing and listening to each others' stories. Using tools such as conflict mapping, we could look at our own needs and fears, and the needs and fears of others. Things shift as we look into our fears, seeing commonalities ... and finding that the face of 'the other' is no other than myself. In this process, we have found that looking fear in the face dissolves fear—fear of the other—which is often the basis of conflict.

In this panel discussion, I mentioned how, at the start of 'despair and empowerment' workshops based on the work of Joanna Macy, we each recall and share our gratitude for something in our lives. It may be the frogs in our pond croaking at night, or seeing my grandchild peacefully asleep. Holding on to these images can sustain us in the hard times ahead, and are opportunities for reflection. I am reminded of a recent story about an Australian woman who lost her legs in a terrorist attack in London a few years back. She had not been caught up in wanting revenge for the perpetrators but acknowledged instead the many kindnesses she had received from so many people. Gratitude can be a wonderful

compassion practice, finding gratitude also in the transformed dark places of our lives.

The practice of peace and justice as an ongoing process in life for us all was stressed by all the speakers in this panel. We need to wake up and become aware of the issues that confront us, and take responsibility, joining our hands, heads and hearts. It is imperative that we work and practice together, building and strengthening our communities; we don't know how much time is left. We must have a commitment to each other, to future generations and to all beings. We can start where we are and take the next step, not getting caught up in despair or the ideology of certainty, taking responsibility —having the ability to respond.

At the end of this session, a couple of young people expressed their interest in joining a BPF group, and one of them offered to organise a room at Melbourne University—so BPF may be revived next year in Melbourne after a lapse this last year.

Peace-building teams.

Dharma Master Hsin-Tao, whom INEB participants met at our INEB meeting in Taiwan in 2007, sponsored seven peace building teams from places such as Columbia, Burma, the Middle-East, Thailand and Afghanistan, each sharing their approaches to working with conflict and peace building in their respective countries. It was indeed a great surprise—and also very important —that two monks from Burma, from Phaung Daw Oo monastery in Mandalay, were given visas by their government to travel to Australia to participate. Ven.U Nayaka, the principal of Phaung Daw Oo was accompanied by another monk and an administrative person from the same monastery. Phaung Daw Oo monastic school, we heard, has 7,000 students many of whom are from different ethnic nationalities and different religions. For the students, living together at the school and developing understanding of their differences was a means to peace-building. This is further assisted by introducing critical thinking and a 'child-centred approach', and also through the Buddhist teachings on finding harmony and happiness and looking into the root causes of problems. The school is training teachers from other monasteries in their model of education, and they are exploring ways of becoming more sustainable.

Ven.U Nayaka spoke of the situation in his country. He felt that sanctions were unlikely to bring change and will only make people poorer, with rising rates of joblessness and prostitutes. Only when people are better educated said Ven.U Nayaka, will there be change. I was well aware of the challenges and sensitivities for people from Burma at such a public event, and probably the benefit will be from the opportunities they had to meet and hear from others in their approaches to peace-building and working with conflict.

Tibet and the environment.

Another session I attended was on Tibet and our global environment, with focus on the significance of its rivers which flow across Asia. With 88% of rivers in China being contaminated by industry, and increasing water shortages, it seems that the destiny of Tibet is to save China! However, there is also the potential of the Tibetan plateau to be a carbon sink if the vast grasslands were again to be managed and repaired by the Tibetan nomads, as well as a 'zone of peace', as articulated by the Dalai Lama back in 1989. Of the two million nomads, most have been removed from their lands, forced into camps, with loss of herds and livelihoods. But we also heard how there are some voices in China calling for change, and with Tibetan representatives travelling to Copenhagen, this is the first time the climate change debate is seeing representation by Tibetans. During discussion, a Chan Master from China commented that we all need sufficient patience for China to change. The activists present—including myself—are not always ready to hear this! He said there were also poor in China who were suffering like the Tibetans, and as he mentioned the spiritual dimension of Tiananmen Square —touching the pain of 4th June 1989—his expression of compassion was powerful and expansive. The next day, as I arrived at the convention centre, I recognized Samdong Rinpoche, the prime Minister of Tibet's Government-in –Exile, and coming towards him was the Chan Master. They bowed deeply towards each other. Very moving — so much said without words!

There were wonderful exhibitions of sacred art, beautiful performances of sacred dance and music, and many films and DVD were shown. One of the films showed how a group of women from Sierra Leone of different faiths, distraught at their children being forcibly recruited as child soldiers, boldly decided to confront the rebels in their mountain bases. After one of the rebel leaders saw a resemblance to his mother in one

of the women and some negotiations, the women were able to take back some of their children. Stories of courage, of change, of possibility...need to be shared more widely.

The Dalai Lama spoke at the closing ceremony, and asked, 'who is responsible for peace'? All living things have a right to exist, but war means destruction and suffering. World peace must be through cultivating inner peace, and peace depends on our own shoulders. 'We could start in our families', the Dalai Lama said, 'replacing force with dialogue and creating zones of peace with dialogue.'

Jill Jameson,
17 Dec. 09.

World Future Council Calls on UN Climate Conference

Copenhagen must signal for a Zero Carbon Economy

Hamburg, December 6th. The World Future Council today called upon the delegates of next week's UN climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, to surpass the pitifully poor promises to date and unleash the Zero Carbon Economy.

"This conference is not just about the destabilized climate. It's about a socially and ecologically just economic model for developing and industrialized countries that will foster material prosperity for all without surpassing the natural limits of the planet. The time for the Zero Carbon Economy has come", says Anders Wijkman, Vice President of the Club of Rome and Chair of the World Future Council's Climate and Energy Commission.

"Reduce energy waste by 25% and produce 75% renewable energy and you have a 100% solution. Halt deforestation along with that and you have the makings for a Zero Carbon Economy. This vision is good news for people and the planet."

The pivotal point is that the industrialized countries finally admit their responsibility of being the main cause of climate change including the wrong economic model. They have the duty to reduce their emissions while ensuring a sufficient transfer of financial and technological resources to developing countries to foster a green economy in these countries.

The World Future Council (WFC) stated that a binding agreement of reducing emissions by at least 80% by 2050 and by at least 40% by 2020 must be "the minimum outcome of this conference". The WFC also stated the need for a unifying vision that puts people to work as both part of the climate solution and the welfare of future generations. "A Zero Carbon Economy is the kind of thinking that must come out of Copenhagen."

Toward a Zero Carbon Economy the World Future Council suggests combining the existing Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) with the national deployment of proven renewable energy policies such as 'Feed-in tariffs' to trigger the deployment of solar and wind power in countries that have electricity grids. The World Future Council also challenges the attempts to include the technology of 'Carbon Capture and Storage' (CCS) into the flexible mechanisms of a Kyoto Plus agreement until they are proven to be effective and safe tools for climate mitigation. Instead the World Future Council suggests massively increasing earth soils' capacity to absorb CO2 from the atmosphere via rainforest protection, reforestation and organic farming.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen will bring together representatives of more than 180 countries, as well as thousands of participants from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The outcome of the conference will determine the follow-up agreement to the Kyoto protocol, which ends in 2012.

A World Future Council delegation will attend the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen. Among the present Council members are Maude Barlow, Vandana Shiva, Tim Flannery, Anders Wijkman, Ashok Khosla, Nick Dunlop, Marie-Clair Cordonier Segger, Tewolde Berhan Egziabher and Rolf Kreibich. Together they aim to demonstrate that renewable energy with its huge job and business creation potential can help turn the climate crisis into an opportunity.

The World Future Council

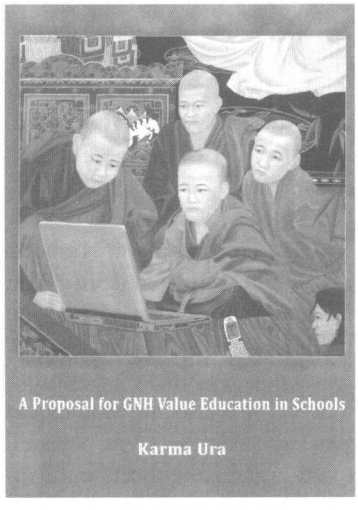
brings the interests of future generations to the centre of policy making. Its 50 eminent members from around the globe have already successfully promoted change. The Council addresses challenges to our common future and provides decision-makers with effective policy solutions. In-depth research underpins advocacy work for international agreements, regional policy frameworks and national law-making and thus produces practical and tangible results.

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Gross National Happiness: Is the World Waking up to Bhutan's Dream?

In November 2009 GPI Atlantic organized for the Ministry of Education of the Royal Government of Bhutan a high level workshop 'Educating for GNH'. GPI Atlantic's founder and president Dr. Ron Colman, Canada, an early student of Chogyam Trungpa and at present supporter of Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, plaid magic again and brought together an exceptional group of leading educators: Judith Simmer-Brown (Naropa University), Satish Kumar (Schumacher College), David W. Orr (Oberlin College), Sanjit Bunker Roy (Barefoot College) and around 20 more representatives of alternative education initiatives. From Siam: Sulak Sivaraksa (Spirit in Education Movement), Prapapat Niyom (Roong Aroon School) and Art-Ong Jumsai Na Ayudya (Sathya Sai School).

An equal number of Bhutanese educators, policy makers but as well a remarkable diversity of students were brought together in a space surrounded by four appropriately coloured pillars, symbolic for the Gross National Happiness philosophy.



Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley opened the workshop with a lucent speech in which he referred to his visit to Japan, and more recently Bhutan's delegation to Brazil for the 5th international conference on GNH. Above all he provided a quite tight terms of reference for the workshop expert-participants to produce concrete ideas for education reform in Bhutan that could instantly be implemented. He left no space for escape even for the some 50 observers around the inner circle.

In her opening speech, Vandana Shiva made a strong appeal to Bhutan to go organic in order to honour the traditions and cultural foundation of the country and as a path towards the future in a world plagued by 'climate chaos'. The profound wisdom inherent in organic agriculture indeed offers the basis for a type of vocational education that fitted children better than the present often one-sided 'brain stuff'.

Vandana Shiva's fiery speech kicked off a five day period of several consultation rounds per day in which all aspects of the education system were analysed — in particular with the help of the outspoken students—and provided with advice, lively illustrated with many examples of alternative education in a variety of contexts. Sulak Sivaraksa urged the participants not to only present their success stories but to equally analyse how lessons were learned from failure and how alternative education could respond to external as well as internal threats.

Very helpful was that from the side of Bhutan the booklet A *Proposal for GNH Value Educa-*

tion in Schools written by Dasho Karma Ura, president of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, offered a clear overview of a multitude of values grouped around the nine domains of the GNH Index.

Remarkable was that so much creative energy emanated from the interaction in the workshop that the education bureaucracy, in Bhutan like in most countries notable for its reluctance to take decisions, reacted with immediate commitment and arrangements on the spot for well-guided next steps, breaking through conventions and red tape towards genuine transformation.

All participants, foreigners and Bhutanese, realized that for education reform to be effective, a vivid civil society is needed, interacting as an equal partner—characterized by diversity—facing governments and the commercial sector. Although Bhutan has a rich culture of traditional volunteerism, community property and an independent monks' and nun's body, contemporary NGO's or independent citizen's initiatives are still scarce.

From this point of view, GNH through the eye of an independent citizen as a sensible subject of transition, the book *Within the Realm of Happiness* written by Kinley Dorji is a series stories



told that many cherish. It provides insight on Gross National Happiness from within. Dasho Kinley Dorji was for many years the Editor in Chief of Kuensel newspaper, Bhutan's daily, and at present the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communication and Information. The book has been published in Thai language by Garden of Fruition publishers, Suan Nguen Mee Ma.

The recently founded School for Wellbeing Studies and Research has the great pleasure to co-organize with the publishers a book-launching of *Within the Realm of Happiness* in Bangkok. Together with well known Bhutanese musician, singer and multi-instrumentalist Jigme Drukpa the book of Kinley Dorji will be presented in an ambience of celebration and reflection, Saturday 30 January, 2010 from 13.00-17.30 hours. English and Thai spoken.

The founding partners of the School for Wellbeing are the Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation, the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University and the Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu, Bhutan. Is the World Waking up to Bhutan's Dream?

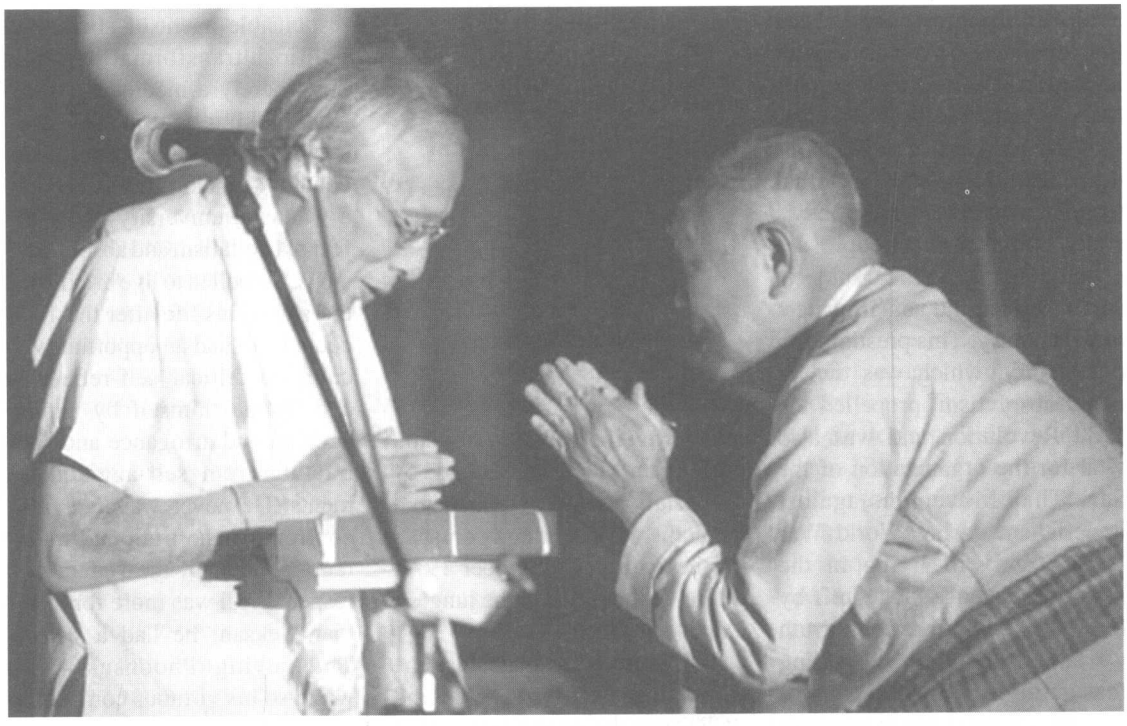
Please check the websites of the publishers www.suan-spirit.com and the School www.schoolforwellbeing.org for detailed information.

Hans van Willenswaard

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Citation in Honor of Professor Hisashi Nakamura



Professor Hisashi Nakamura spent many years teaching economics at one of Japan's leading Buddhist universities, but he has always been (in his own words) "an unorthodox economist." His unique perspective and unwavering commitment have extended his impact far beyond the classroom. Professor Nakamura has made significant contributions to peace and development in many parts of South and Southeast Asia. His native country, Japan, is the second largest economy in the world and the largest source of development assistance for many of its Asian neighbors. Over the years, Professor Nakamura has helped guide Japanese development assistance to be more socially and environmentally sensitive and more focused on sustainability and regional stability. His quiet diplomacy has directly supported conflict resolution in Sri Lanka and parts of India. After retiring from his academic career, Professor Nakamura has taken on new challenges. He presently heads a Buddhist development organization from the historic city of Kyoto.

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, and 40th anniversary of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation, we would like to celebrate Professor Nakamura's contribution to society and to the Buddhist world.

Since, your decades of service provide an example and guiding light to the next generation of young Buddhist leaders, may you have the strength to continue serving humanity for many years to come.

(Sulak Sivaraksa)
Founder
Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa
Foundation
and
International Network of
Engaged Buddhists

(Surasee Kosolnavin)
Chairperson
Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa
Foundation

(Harsha Kumara Navaratne)
Chairperson
International Network of
Engaged Buddhists

Chiang Mai,
15 November 2552 (2009)

In Praise of Seksan Prasertkul

The Pridi Banomyong Institute is a highly appropriate venue to hold this ceremony for Seksan Prasertkul. Ajarn Pridi was an important leader of the People's Party, which overthrew absolute monarchy. Ajarn Pridi unconditionally fought for an eternal truth: the fact that everyone is equal and that the people are equally capable political subjects since they are the actual owners of the country. This presumption of equality, which was denied under absolutism, propelled the 1932 Revolution and was also vital for the organization of the Seri Thai Movement against imperialism during World War II. We are still living in the political sequence kicked off by the 1932 Revolution whose truth we have to continue struggling for.

Pridi's good deeds however disintegrated in the wake of the 1947 coup d'etat, which obliterated the substance of peace, justice, and equality in Thai society. The people ultimately demanded for a new constitution, culminating in the event of 14 October 1973. For a while, it seemed that the people would be able to reclaim and revive democracy in the country. Seksan Prasertkul was arguably the most brilliant leader in this mass movement and uprising. Similar to Pridi, Seksan was soon abandoned by the mainstream and absolutist forces in society. But unlike the former Seksan was not demonized because he was far away from the mantle of power. In this precise sense, he was more fortunate than Pridi.

In any case, Seksan and other fellow travelers in the struggle for democracy and egalitarianism (against absolutism and militarism which were backed by imperialism and transnational capitalism) were brutally crushed in the event of 6 October 1976. Many of them fled to the jungles. And so too did Seksan.



It was unfortunate that the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was thoroughly dominated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The CPT had no room for (Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's) Dhammic Socialism or notions such as national dignity and independence from the clutch of Chinese imperialism (which was no better than American imperialism). At least Seksan detected the hypocrisy of the CCP early on and well before many of his fellow travelers did. In the end, he chose to 'reconcile' with the Thai state and became professor at his alma mater, Thammasat University. He was even elected as dean of his faculty. But eventually the university (and mainstream university in general) disillusioned Seksan—an independent and brilliant mind that he is. He could see through its charades. Pridi established Thammasat University more than seven decades ago with the hope that it would become a radical and responsible agent of social and political transformation. It is now merely a mediocre institution lacking vision and conscience for social justice and equality. In short, it has become a wannabe university under the feet of capitalism and absolutism.

Compelled to live in exile for the rest of his life after the 1947 coup, Pridi had an opportunity to cultivate critical self-reflection and 'refine' himself by taming egotism and arrogance and subtracting from self-aggrandizements. He never wavered from confronting the truth and maintaining fidelity to the truth. In one respect Pridi was more fortunate than Seksan: he had a wife—Thanpuying Phoonsuk—who was also his virtuous companion *(kalyanamitta)*.

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One should be truthful and sincere in one's speech and blessing. One should speak as a *kalyanamitta*, uttering things that the listener may rather not hear or want to disavow. A blessing devoid of truthfulness is a blessing without blessing for the truth is noblest.

For instance, it is a practice of the Thai royal court to invite a monk or preacher to deliver a sermon on the occasion of a king's birthday anniversary. The objective of this practice is to remind the monarch of the duties and virtues of a ruler and to (gently and indirectly) reproach him for any deviation. In other words, no one is beyond reproach—not even the ruler who seemingly stands above all others. After all the literal meaning of "king" *(raja)* is someone

who contributes to the well being and happiness of the people.

To cut a long story short, my intention is to tell Seksan that he lacks *kalyanamitta*. He doesn't really have anyone to admonish or criticize him. He has only subordinates and assistants—admittedly dwindling in numbers through the years. Books however serve as his real companion. Books serve as a much better companion than dogs. A good book can provoke and challenge our thoughts, enabling us to unplug from the reigning ideology, subvert structural violence, transform our subjectivity, etc.

A good sign is that Dhamma books increasingly occupy Seksan's archives. Above all, they are not the ordinary Dhamma books that people especially the elites like to read—books that are obsessed with fostering inner peace and inner distance from structural violence; that is, books that disavow the dimension of social antagonism and emancipation.

Seksan reads books that provide broad as well as an in-depth understanding of the Dhamma. He draws on the teachings of a variety of Buddhist denominations—Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. In a very admirable manner, he has firmly grasped the gist of the true Dhamma *(Saddhamma)*. Another way of putting this is that he has by and large achieved wisdom resulting from study. Being a product of Western education, Seksan may still be in need of wisdom resulting from mental development or meditative practice; that is, wisdom that develops when brain and heart or mind and body are harmonized. In any case, he has greatly reduced egotism and selfish attachment.

Seksan writes in prose more than in verse. But some of his works are truly poetic. What does this mean? One author puts it in rough paraphrase as follows. The language of a poet is opposite to that of an administrative command which is determined by cold logic. The latter is the language that is controlling the world. The attitude of the poet on the contrary is comprised of a dimension that respects life and is based on mindfulness. Mindfulness and humility constitute an important foundation of Buddhism. They open a new world for us, a world that is beyond preoccupations with the self. The contemporary phase of globalization stands diametrically opposed to Buddhism because it produces a world of haste, cacophony, competition, exploitation, and selfishness. At the same time however there is a ray of hope. An increasing number of people are gravitating toward the idea of natural harmony or equilibrium. The impending ecological crisis itself is a loud cry for a return to Right Concentration. And this is what wisdom achieved through practice is about. Or as Octavio Paz writes in his autobiography: "*We venerate the world around us, and at another level, that veneration spreads to all things and living beings, to stones, and trees and animals and humans. Fraternity is an aspect of participation and both are expression of veneration. Without veneration there can be no participation of fraternity*"

Octavio Paz, *Itinerary: An Intellectual Journey*, 1999, p. 26

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It is often stated that democracy is characterized by liberty, equality, and fraternity. It is however clear that really existing democracies worldwide are in dire need of fraternity. As Seksan officially enters old age and has let go of many attachments he should be in a good position to foster fraternity in Thai society —at the very least through his writings.

The successes of the early Pridi contributed to his failures as well as the numerous catastrophes that have been bedeviling Thai society to this day. Likewise, the successes of the early Seksan led to troubles in his middle years. The later Seksan may no longer desire worldly success. But now he is in a good position to tilt his wisdom resulting from study toward wisdom achieved through practice with wisdom earned from reflection serving as the linchpin. This will enable him to join hands with other contemporaries to foster fraternity in Thai society using the framework of Buddhism. A revived fraternity in turn will help drive equality, economically, politically, and culturally. Then the path of liberty beyond capitalism may even be opened up. (In their conversation which took place over four consecutive days, Pridi and Buddhadasa Bhikkhu had attempted to Dhammicize democracy in the Thai kingdom.) Buddhadasa Bhikkhu opened the utopian space of Dhammic Socialism. Pridi Banomyong tried hard to materialize it but ultimately failed. Seksan Prasertkul may serve as an important link in the revival and accomplishment of this dream: an old dream in a new context and situation is a new dream.

Sulak Sivaraksa

In Memory of Karuna Kusalasaya

Karuna Kusalasaya passed away peacefully due to old age on 13 August 2009 at his son's house in Thonburi province. He was 89 years old. As expected, people in the mainstream did not pay much attention to his death. They have (long) forgotten about him. Karuna however had benefited his country in numerous ways. His lifestyle was also worthy of emulation. People in the mainstream tend to worship or respect the high-born, the rich, the famous, the powers-that-be, etc. This is not to say that Karuna craved the limelight—that he wanted to see monuments erected on his behalf after his death, etc. The opposite seems to be the case. Karuna always preferred being at the backstage, quietly playing an indispensable supporting role. In actuality, he wanted his reputation to gradually fade away according to the principle of non-self. He was the least self-attached and was always ready to praise others. Karuna was honored in India more than in his birthplace. The latter not only betrayed him but also imprisoned him for many years—without ever proving his misdemeanors. Several institutions also took part in this tragedy, including the ones he had helped cultivate such as the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and the Thai-Bharat Ashram.



His autobiography *Life without a Choice* was written in a humble and pleasant tone. He also translated it into English to reach a wider audience. But if we read between the lines, we'll notice that he actually chose his life. He endeavored to overcome poverty and obstacles in life by heeding the path of a righteous person. He had always had *kalyanamitta* throughout his life. He always saw the goodness in people, while acknowledging their shortcomings. Thus he was always understanding, forgiving, tolerant and compassionate. Small wonder that he dropped the name "Kim Heng" and renamed himself "Karuna." And his last new name means wholesome or meritorious manners.

Karuna entered the monkhood as a novice at the age of 13. He soon followed Lokanat (an American monk of Italian descent) on a pilgrimage to India. This was no small feat—to say the least. Most of the other monks on this pilgrimage such as Panyanandha gave up halfway through the journey. The monks quarreled during the trip. They accused Lokanat of being biased. They lacked solidarity and tolerance. And so on. But Karuna had never boasted about reach-

ing India—even though during the journey a Burmese layperson requested him to disrobe and marry his daughter.

Karuna held a positive view of Lokanat. Throughout his life, he was full of respect for the latter. In general, Thai monks did not have high regard for Lokanat. Farang monks were often not deemed equal to Thai monks. It was only recently that farang monks who were disciples of Ajarn Cha came to be admired by the general public. But monks in this lineage focus almost exclusively on meditation and creating inner peace or distance —not on social critique, engagement, emancipation. Thus many among the elites are interested in the teachings of these monks. The elites want to live under structural violence with inner peace and good conscience. They don't want (radical) social change or emancipation. There's something terribly reactionary about this position.

As a novice in India, Karuna learned Hindi, Sanskrit, and English painstakingly and with great effort. No doubt he also possessed a brilliant mind. Ultimately, he won first place in the national examination for the Hindi language and was enrolled in Rabindranath Tagore's school at Shantineketan. Karuna was a contemporary of Fua Haripitak who was also studying in India. None of the Thai students who graduated from India after Karuna could match his understanding of the subcontinent.

Prior to WWII, Thai elites rarely visited India. However, there were two exceptions. They both went to India and met the novice Karuna there. They both held Karuna in high esteem. The Prince of Nakornsawan became Karuna's sponsor. And Prince Patriarch Wachirayanawong invited the novice Karuna to return to Wat Boworniwes. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu also corresponded with the novice Karuna. Subsequently, they became lifelong *kalyanamitta* to one another.

Karuna was forced to disrobe when "Thailand" declared war on England. Of course, India was a British colony and Karuna along with other Thais such as Fua Haripitak were rounded up and incarcerated in a camp since they were nationals of an enemy state. At the camp, Karuna met his first love, a Japanese lady (also a national of another enemy state). But the two were ultimately separated from one another. Likewise, Fua Haripitak was separated from his wife M.R. Thanomsak Kritakara and suffered a crisis of faith. He eventually came to worship the God Narai. (His last name means "protected by Vishnu.")

When WWII ended, the British dropped off the Thai nationals at Singapore since the Gulf of Siam was still infested with sea mines. Karuna travelled back to Bangkok by foot, following the railway tracks through Malaya. He said Muslim friends along the way treated him very well.

Karuna began his first work at the Indian embassy in Bangkok when the two countries forged diplomatic relations after India's independence. He was also involved in the teaching of Sanskrit and Hindi at the Thai-Bharat Ashram. It was through the teaching of the Hindi language that he met Ruang-Urai who became his future wife. They were a model couple. When she turned blind, he served her faithfully and devotedly. He sent her off and picked her up when she attended conferences at the Royal Institute. The two however refused to be members of the Royal Institute. They simply felt that it was very pretentious. The two often refrained from openly criticizing things in order not to create any uproar. Rather, they preferred to confide their true feelings to their *kalyanamitta*.

One of Karuna's *kalyanamitta* played an important role in the selection of the first abbot of Wat Cholprathan Rangsarit. In the end, he admitted that he had made a big mistake. Initially, he nominated Ajarn Kao, but the latter turned down the offer. Few people today know who Ajarn Kao was. Few also realized that Karuna was a confidant of Phra Vimaladhamma (Ard) since the time the latter was pioneering the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. Ajarn Kao was a meditation master at the Mahachulalongkorn. Phra Vimaladhamma (Ard) and Karuna were not only master and disciple but also one another's *kalyanamitta*. Karuna courageously warned his master about various issues. I had also relied on Karuna to convey messages (including strong criticisms) to Phra Vimaladhamma (Ard). Most high-ranking monks these days do not have *kalyanamitta*. How then could they successfully cultivate critical self-reflection? It is therefore not surprising that many of them are showing characteristics of immoral and fake monks.

Throughout his life, Karuna was a virtuous person with virtuous companions, e.g., Lokanat, Ruang-Urai, etc. He had two important colleagues who became his *kalyanamitta*: Sang Phathanothai and Ari Pirom. Both worked for the Government Publicity Department (which is now known as the Government Public Relations Department). Sang

was also close to Field Marshal P. Phibunsongkram, and his reputation was subsequently tarnished by this association. Out of honesty and loyalty, however, Sang successfully convinced the Field Marshal to pay interest to the labor movement. The Field Marshal also eventually used him as a middleman to create linkages with China. To carry out this task, Sang had to ask for assistance from Karuna and Ari, who also owned a Chinese language school and had connections with members of the Chinese Communist Party. Karuna and Ari soon became the first Thai 'ambassadors' to China, meeting both Zhou Enlai and Mao. However, as it turned out, Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat rewarded them for this feat by imprisoning them in Lardyao Prison for a long time. And when the kingdom officially opened diplomatic relations with China, MR Kukrit Pramoj—a first-rate opportunist—took all the credits. No one remembered the involvement of Karuna and Ari.

Apropos of Indian studies, Karuna and Ruang'Urai produced many works. They were always helpful to anyone who wanted to learn more about the subcontinent. I myself benefited a lot from their expertise.

Karuna was also my wife's relative. He and his wife had always supported our family. Further, Karuna aided the activities of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and the Komol Keemthong Foundation. Karuna and Ruang-Urai deeply admired Sathirakoses and Nagapradipa. It can be said that they continued and built on the legacy of Sathirakoses and Nagapradipa for another generation.

Karuna lived simply and practiced yoga daily. He suffered a mild senility toward the end of his life. He stayed briefly in a nursing home before moving in to live with his son till his last breath.

The death of Karuna leaves us with an important question: What should we do to ensure that there will be individuals like Karuna in contemporary Thai society and in the future? Here I am referring to individuals who are good, knowledgeable, and devoted to the public good while shunning the limelight. If we cannot find individuals who can serve as role models then the future of Thai society is bleak.

For this reason, many of us who respected Karuna and Ruang-Urai decided to create a fund bearing their names. It will be used to support the freedom and emancipation of our children and future generations. For further details on the "Karuna and Ruang-Urai Kusalasaya Fund" visit our websites: www.semsikkha.org and www.snf.or.th.

Sulak Sivaraksa

26th September 2009

Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa
666 Charoennakorn Rd.,
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600
Thailand

Dear Professor Sulak Sivaraksa,

I hope this letter finds you well. Thank you for sending me your recent publication, *Seeds of Peace*, as well as a copy of your book, *The Wisdom of Sustainability Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*, which I find very insightful. Congratulations on you latest work.

Today, television and the Internet bring world events into everyone's daily lives. The world is still going through a dramatic transformation. We can choose to let world leaders dictate the future or we can be vigilant in creating a better future for all, even if only within our communities or families. It is necessary that we not only contemplate our faith, but also put it into action. As Buddhists, we must be aware of our actions and breathe Buddha's wisdom into all aspects of our life, whether it is when we conduct business or within family life. Our faith with our actions; only then can we see a just and compassionate world.

This year proves to be another turbulent year for Thailand. We should not let our differences deter us from becoming a stronger unified kingdom. I hope that your new book will inspire many Thais to align their faith with their daily lives, and work toward the common good.

I thank you for remembering us and for your caring thoughts. I look forward to the day when we are called to return to serve our country. In the meantime, we continue to better ourselves in education and work should we be called to duty. At this instant, Thailand is at a critical turning point, and the monarchy should work harder than ever. Together we will pay for the future of our country.

Respectfully yours,

Vatchrawee Vivacharawongse

14th August 2009

Dear Mr. Sivaraksa,

I am pleased to invite you to visit Bhutan to advise us on how we can create a national educational system that truly reflects the principles of our unique developmental philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Indeed, our goal is not merely to teach about GNH, but to ensure that GNH values and understanding infuse and permeate the curriculum at all levels. I think this is the most suitable way for young Bhutanese to grow up as responsible citizens, caring for others, and with a deep and genuine commitment to environmental conservation and to their ancient culture. You profound knowledge and vast experience in the field of education will be invaluable to us in our endeavours to strive toward these goals.

To this end, I would like to invite you to spend a few days with us in Thimpu from December 7-12 this year to help us clearly delineate our vision and educational objectives and how we can achieve and implement them. My hope is that our discussions will be very practical so that we know just how to proceed, what our next steps will be, what partnerships and funding are needed, and what a realistic timeline, plan, and structure for implementation will be. I will ask the members of the Royal Education Council to also participate in the workshop along with other top Bhutanese educators, officials, and curriculum design specialists. The Education Minister and I, along with other elected representatives also intend to participate, with all of us listening attentively, asking questions, and learning from you.

I firmly believe that the principles of GNH are not relevant to Bhutan alone, but reflect universal aspirations to live in harmony with nature and with each other. If we succeed in transforming our educational system in Bhutan on a national scale towards these ends, it could have a very positive influence far beyond our own borders in helping to create a better world. If we don't start with the consciousness and minds of our children and youth, I don't think that anything else we do can succeed. This is why I asked GPI Atlantic to assemble some of the most knowledgeable and experienced educators worldwide who have the expertise to help us reach our shared aspirations. We could not wish for a more stellar group. I am enormously grateful that you will take the time from your very demanding schedules to come to Bhutan to work with us.

I very much look forward to welcoming you personally in December.

With warmest appreciation and best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(Jigmi Y. Thinley)
Prime Minister

October 2, 2009

Dear Khun Sulak,

Peace from over here!

And A Happy 140th Mahatma Gandhi birthday anniversary greeting to you! Our hero lives on in us now, no?

Thanks very much for your letter of early June. I'm glad the book on Maha Ghosananda found you. Likewise good to see it publicized in the most recent issue of *Seeds of Peace*. You move quick!

Last month I was asked to give a talk on Buddhist volunteers at a seminar on engaged Buddhism. It was sponsored by the Battam Bong branch of Buddhist university where Sek Sarom and I are teaching.

In my preparation I reread lots of the material in our library that we've collected from INEB over the years. It was a brief review of your 20 years! CPR formed in 1989 also.

I won't be able to join you in person next meeting in Chiang Mai but will certainly be there in spirit. Several of the Dhammayietra crew do hope to attend — Vonn Syvaw, the woman who coordinates the annual DMY Peace walks (it will be Dhammayietra XX next March); Sek Sarom who coordinates the peace makers program now. Plus a couple of our young folks who've been in leadership training at the Ashram over the years. Yes, the walk is theirs now too.

I'll keep this one brief as I'm getting sublimimal messages it is time to hit the road, but I read with interest the seemingly on going debate on what kind of origanization INEB ought to be. At twenty years, on going, living, search for the middle path, no?

Gandhi, the exact words elude me at the moment, has a nice quote on that, saying effectively organizations are meant only to be the *scaffolding* a group needs to achieve its goals.

Your emphasis on the need for friendship, relationship with, support of we and other seems right on. I read recently that Buddha praised friendship very much.

Apparently there is a dialogue in one of the Sutras where Ananda says to Buddha, "I think that good companionship is half the spiritual path". And the Buddha replied, "Don't say so, Ananda. Good companionship is the whole of the spiritual path". This is one walk that didn't meant to be alone, to put it in Dhammayietra language.

I'm hoping to cross over to Aranyaprathed next week so this ought to be in a Thai mail box in no time. As always I'll add a few enclosures. Feel free to use them if you see fit. Just keep us out of the Thai judicial system. We'll let you handle that part!

Remember they say the first 20 years or was it 75 years? Are always the toughest! Ought to be a piece of cake from here on out.

This has been quite a walk so far, Khun Sulak. Keep walking….until you arrive.

With love and respect
Bob Matt

December 17, 2009

Dear Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa,

Greetings from Jakarta,

I would like to inform you that last week, Husnul, Ima and Arief, my son who attended GNH Youth Forum 2007, met at my house and discussed the report from the Youth Forum of the Interfaith Consultation on the Climate Change.

I am pleased to inform you that last Iedul Adlha festival, 27 of November 2009, I was invited by the Indonesian Committee of the Islamic Holy days (PHBI) to deliver the sermon (khutbah) where I conveyed the message of Peace, Integrity and Human Security, after Iedul Adlha prayer at the Sultanate town square of Yogyakarta (like Sanamluang). The GNH values were also shared with the participants.

According to the organizer, the Iedul Adlha prayer at the town square and surrounding was attended by 45,000 people. The congregation was organized by the Indonesian Committee of the Islamic Holy days.

After the Iedul Adha prayer we have a courtesy meeting with the Ullama Council, the Sultan Family, the Executive and Legislative, and social organizations leaders at the Indonesian Hajj Association building.

Please kindly convey my kindest regards to all of INEB and GNH movement family.

Sincerely in peace

Drs. Habib Chirzin
President, Islamic Forum on Peace and Human Security
Jakarta, Indonesia
HP +62-8567651983
email : habibpeace@yahoo.com
Blog : www.habibch.wordpress.com

August 16, 2009

Dear Dr. Sivaraska,

The International Society for Ecology and Culture is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion of locally based alternatives to the global consumer culture. ISEC is currently spearheading the "Roots of Change" program—a program designed to encourage local action and discourse on economic, environmental, and political issues related to globalization. The Roots of Change program seeks to encourage free thinking about localization and development and cultivate awareness and action in communities worldwide. As a part of this program, ISEC provides a set of readings written by the world's leading ecological thinkers and activists to small local groups, who independently work through the curriculum.

ISEC has drawn from your work to inform its advocacy, and we would be honored to be able to use your work as a part of our Roots of Change curriculum. We would like to ask your permission to include pages 3-9, 35-54 from Seeds of Peace as part of this curriculum. We assure you that the curriculum is used solely for educational purposes, and the organization receives no financial gains from the use of these materials.

Thank you for your time. Helena sends her regards.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Cone

20th December 2009

Dhammasawasdee kha Ajahn,

I believe that you know about... Bhikkhuni ordination in Australia by Ajahn Brahm, Laung Por Chah's disciple, which Wat Nong Pah Pong asked him to leave from being the branch monastery.

There are many confusions and frustrations from many Buddhist practitioners.

I would like **to learn, read, study and investigate more information and know deeper** about ... **Thai Buddhism and Bhikkhuni.**

Hope to be able to help/ support/ explain so some Dhamma friends may understand the situations and feel better and happier.

Sister Mon

4 September, 2009

Dear Sulak,

Few days ago, I received the *Thinking Globally*. Thank you for the booklet in honor of David. I have started to read some of the articles. Unfortunately, I don't know all the writers personally. A short C.V. would have been helpful and a list of content as well. Personally, I found a lot of hints and assessments to "solidarity". In some of contributions I had wished a more prominent elaboration of what the recent meeting of the WCC Central Committee called "ecological justice" and "ecological-debt".

But "Theology and Ethics" is a large field, especially in an attempt to clarify Buddhist and Christian ways of life and intellectual assumptions. I feel very encouraged to continue reading ! By the way: is the booklet a re-print of an earlier publication of the Buddhist-Christian Studies, Hawai'i, 2006 ?

In Vol.25, Nr.2, p.54 I read my 26th March—letter to you. Thank you for printing ! Was that the letter which you mentioned in your letter accompanying the book ? This Nr.25 was the last copy of *Seeds of Peace* which I have received. Probably the Nr.26 is on its way to the Blackforests.

Inge and I send you our best wishes with thanks and love, yours,

Wolfgang Schmidt
Gustav-Struve-Weg 20, D-79737 Herrischried

December 14, 2009

Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa

I am deeply pleased by your presence in the First Conference of Himalayan Tibetan Traditional Monasteries on Environment Protection, held on November 23-24, 2009, I would like to convey our heartiest and sincere gratitude for acception our invitation and for enlightening the gathering with an educative speech.

The conference was successfully concluded with the formation of a special workgroup on environment comprising of representatives from India, Nepal and Bhutan. They also formulated several plans of environmental protection to be implemented in the institutional and with local people affiliated to the monasteries.

We are looking forward to an effective implementation of the plans that were laid out by the conference and also to organize such a gathering in coming years. Therefore, we would request you to maintain unfailing and constant support to us and to our iniatives in future also.

Many good wishes and prayers of good health.

Yours sincerely.

Tsering Phuntsok
Minister
Religion & Culture
Central Tibetan Administration,
Dharamsala.

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

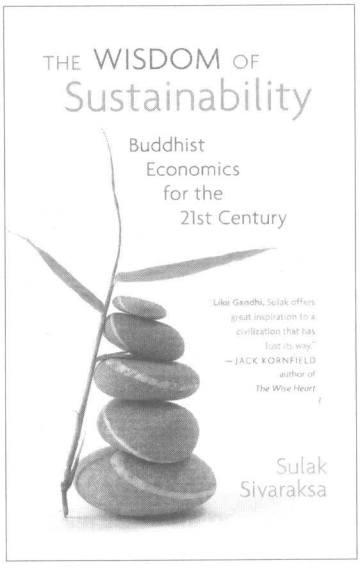
By Sulak Sivaraksa
Koa Books, 2009
101 pages, $12.50, paperback

Koa Books was founded in 2005 by Arnie Kotler, who previously founded and directed Parallax Press and was the creator of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship newsletter that later became *Turning Wheel magazine*. Koa Books, headquartered on Maui, publishes works on progressive politics, personal transformation, and native cultures.

Koa is the largest native Hawaiian forest tree, whose beautiful hardwood was traditionally used for making canoes and surfboards. Koa in Hawaiian means fearless, or warrior.

We present three fearless books of note:

Shuffling through the family home of Rev. Hozan Alan and Laurie Senauke, Sulak Sivaraksa is not concerned with a strangeroh, that would be mesitting at a table hoping to speak with him. Sulak takes his time to come over after changing his clothes. We are about to journey to UC Berkeley to hear His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The only hope I have that he will come over to me is that I am in the kitchen and he is very hungry. I have quickly toasted several bagels as the first course. He is not interested, but he finally sits down next to me. I have decided not to say a word but wait until he speaks. This way, if he is not feeling like having a conversation, at least I will not have forced it on him.



There is great silence when finally he says, "Where is your temple?" He is searching for my dharma home, wondering what training I might have had, maybe wondering whether my dharma home taught me anything about transforming suffering in the world. I'm thinking he is asking this because in Asia the temples and monasteries are geared toward cultivating the highest spiritual human potential. We end up having a polite conversation, at least until the brown rice and vegetables are on the table.

Although he was educated in England and Wales, is considered one of Thailands foremost intellectuals, and is a good friend of the Dalai Lama, he does not walk around as someone who thinks he is more important than another. He is ordinary; ordinary enough that one feels comfortable sitting in the kitchen with him to talk.

I speak of Ajahn Sulak's being because knowing him is to know what one might expect from his writings. Simple, ordinary, to the point, profound, and so obvious are the lessons on peace and engaged dharma that you wonder why you didn't think of them.

Ajahn Sulak has waged a long and enduring campaign to educate others about peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. He is an educator who espouses the objective of education as liberation from ignorance and not as a means of gaining knowledge, skills, or earning a living. In *The Wisdom of Sustainability* he covers the crisis of change concerning the world today. He is talking not about sustaining the path of meeting our individual needs but rather about finding our way back to simplicity.

Take this book and sit at your kitchen table with some brown rice and veggies. Let Sulak's voice speak to you.

Fearless Press: Koa Books
Reviewed by
Zenju Earthlyn Manuel
from *Turning Wheel*

The Politics of Spirituality

The attempt to keep religion out of politics has resulted in the spiritual deprivation of modern secular societies. Now a global countermovement has emerged in the postmodern period

How does politics drive spirituality? What happens when religion is kept out of politics? Is the separation of the church and the state always for the common good?

Thailand's Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) has published a series of books in honour of its former founding president Sulak Sivaraksa. *Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective*, is the latest volume published in honour of Sulak on the occasion of his 76th birthday this year.

The series include *Socially Engaged Spirituality* (2003) and *When Loyalty Demands Dissent: Sulak Sivaraksa and the charge of Lese Majeste in Siam* (1993).

As revealed by its title *Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective*, the book 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.

Rediscovering Spiritual Values 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.

Former Indonesian president Abdurrahman 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 globalisation have been allowed to develop without restraint leading to the dehumanisation 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 Abdurrahman Wahid, also known as Gus Dur. "A global counter movement prescribing religious participation in politics emerged in the post modern period."

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 Burma (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 politicisation 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 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 Burma would gain much from reading the book.

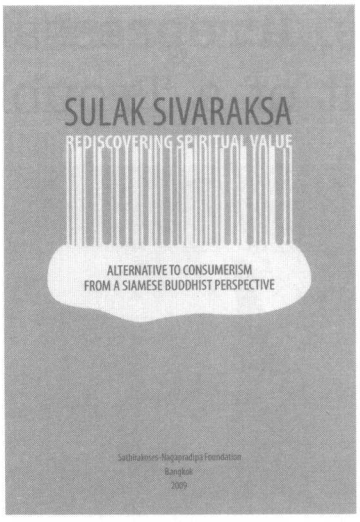
Secular governments often fail to comprehend the spiritual revival movement. Hence, they tend to treat the movement rather dismissively. Such governmental arrogance is a mistake. Often

secular governments ignore the spiritual revival movement to their peril as the recent collapse of electoral democracy in Thailand has shown. Religious based political organisations 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 criticising 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 Burma. 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
Asia News Network
Publication Date : 30-10-2009

Sulak Sivaraksa was arrested at his home in Bangkok in the evening of 6th November 2008 and was taken to the police station at Khon Kaen in the night. He was charged for *lese majeste* for the lecture he had given on 11th November 2007 at Khon Kaen University. The Dean of the Faculty of Law, Khon Kaen University, bailed him out at 3 a.m. of 7th November. He had to report to Khon Kaen many times, but so far nothing has happened. Yet Chanasongkram Police Station in Bangkok confiscated *Seeds of Peace* Vol. 21 No. 1 Jan.–Apr. 2005 and charged its editor, Sulak Sivaraksa, for one of the articles for *lese majeste*. The investigation took place for a very long time. And many appeals from distinguished names around the world to the Palace and the Prime Minister to drop the case. The P.M. said he would do so but nothing happened and finally the police wants to hand over the case to the public prosecutor on 22nd January 2010 to present the charges to the criminal court, which may take years before the verdict will be pronounced. If convicted, Sulak Sivaraksa may get 3 to 15 years for each charge.

While being prosecuted in his country, Sulak Sivaraksa is a member of the People's Tribunal on Sri Lanka (14-16 January 2010, Trinity College Dublin) conducted by People's Permanent Tribunal (Bertrand Russell Tribunal) Organised by the Irish Forum for Peace in Sri Lanka (IFPSL).

Previously Sulak Sivaraksa was a member of this tribunal at (1) the European Parliament in Salsburg, France against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, (2) the House of Lords in London against Union Carbide for the Bhopal tragedy in India, (3) in Delhi against the World Bank's misconduct in India.

Wise, Irrepresssible, and a Bit of a Troublemaker

SULAK Sivaraksa, who is in Melbourne for the Parliament of the World's Religions, says he is known by many labels in his home country of Thailand.

To some he is "the Siamese intellectual". "To the Thai Government," he says with some merriment, "I am the troublemaker."

Aged 77, Mr Sivaraksa faces three charges of defaming the Thai king, which carries a possible sentence of 45 years in prison. "I could spend my 120th birthday in jail," he says, again with some merriment.

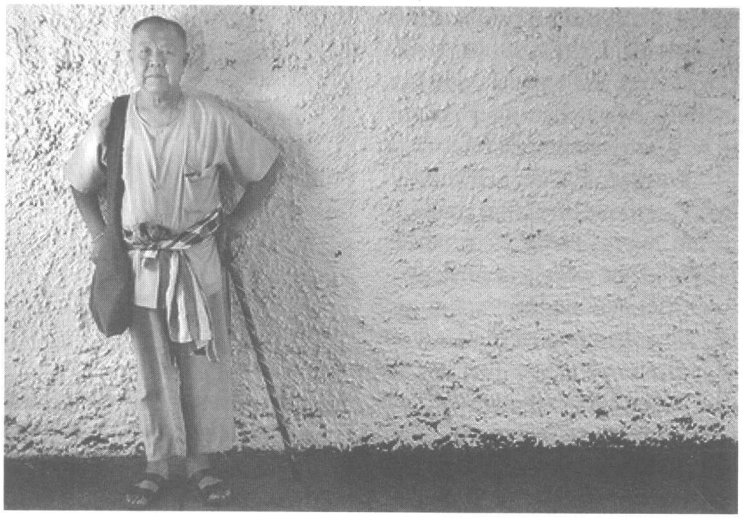
Scottish Buddhist Stephen Bachelor has described Mr Sivaraksa as "an irrepressible campaigner for a sane and just society". Among those who have voiced support for his work are the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the Burmese democracy movement.

According to Mr Bachelor, Mr Sivaraksa combines "the strength of a traditional Dharmic sensibility with the critical rigour of a Western-educated intellectual".

In 1953, Mr Sivaraksa went to London to study law and was admitted to the bar. "Have you ever practised law?" I asked. " Only to defend myself," he replied.

When he returned to Thailand, he lived for some time with "the poor". He was from a well-off family. If he wasn't well-off now, he says he would be in jail. He can afford to defend him self.

Mr Sivaraksa says "the poor" are made out to be stupid. The people he lived with had "great trust for one another and a knowledge of the natural world".



Sulak Sivaraksa is facing a 45-year prison sentence for defaming the Thai king.
Photo: John Woudstra

Around this time, Mr Sivaraksa said the king of Thailand was not a God-king. "How can he be?"

He is smiling again. "He is the one person in Thailand who must by law be a Buddhist. He is a man."

He says a lot of Westerners like Buddhism because there is no dogma and individuals can make their own inquiry. "They like it to meditate, to be calm, to be mindful. That is good—but not good enough." Beneath the mirth, Mr Sivaraksa has a hard edge to him.

To him, all questions of human behaviour start with the Buddha's first truth: Life is suffering. "It is not just personal suffering. There is social and environmental suffering.''

The Buddha's second truth is that suffering is caused by greed, hatred and illusions. "Greed manifests in capitalism and transnational corporations. Hatred comes from militarism and imperialism."

He agrees that one of the problems with global warming is that many people's view of nature now comes from computer screens and television—not from nature. "We have to think globally—about general humanity, about Mother Earth, about nature.''

In 1966, he wrote a book. No one would publish it, so he became a publisher. There was no one to sell the book, so he opened a bookshop. There was no one to distribute the book, so he became a book distributor. His 43-year-old company has now published "over 100" of his books.

Last year, at the Frankfurt Book Fair, there was interest in his new book from countries around the world. This is the source of his optimism.

Martin Flanagan
The Age, December 5, 2009

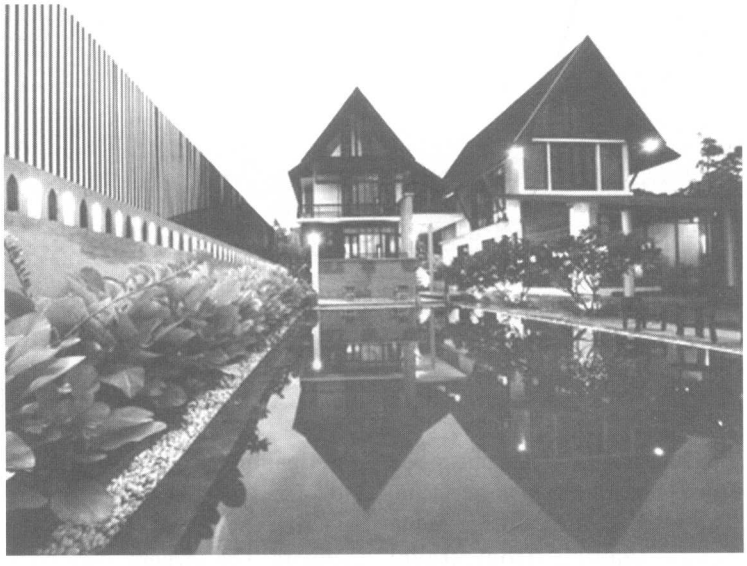
A Heritage Habitat

Finally, a hotel that lives up to the rich heritage of Siam's oldest kingdom

I have been to Ayutthaya several times. I have heard of its grandeur from travel magazines and stories of people who talked endlessly of Thailand's first capital. I went, only to get disappointed with a limited number of places to stay that give an authentic feel of what it was like to be in an historical place. During my first few trips there, I was expecting hotels that matched the heritage of Ayutthaya but they looked the same mundane hotels present in most tourist towns. Adding to my dismay, most of these hotels were located outside the island of Ayutthaya's heritage site. But during my last visit, staying overnight in Ayutthaya had a surprising twist.

There's a new kid on the block that gives visitors modern comforts while basking in the rich history of Siam (Thailand's old name). And the new hotel is just across the 715-acre Ayutthaya Heritage Park. It is probably the only hotel that has a perfect view of Wat Putthaisawan, on the south bank of the Chao Phraya River. The temple is said to have been built in the 14th century by King Ramathibodi I, the founder of Ayutthaya. It was the site where he lived before setting up the capital on the other side of the river

The boutique hotel called i~uDia (**www.iudia.com**) is tasteful with the perfect combination of the old and the new. It speaks so much of what is Thailand now—in touch with its heritage but modern in many ways.

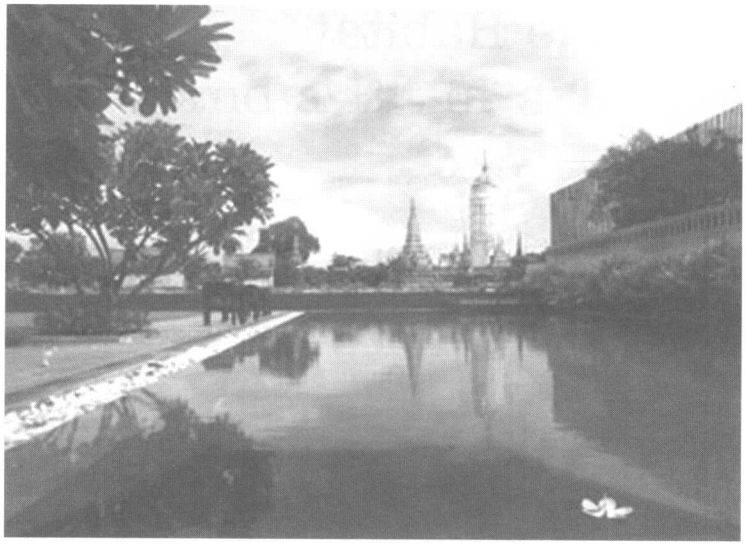


It looks impeccable and impressive, using local crafts to give a classic touch on its overall appearance. I ask the owners where they sourced the accents in the front desk, the hangers and the mirror in the room and the chandeliers in the cafe and they tell me these are just from Bangkok's Chatuchak weekend market. The market is famous for everything under the sun. What could be a simple find in Chatuchak could be transformed into something special. It is exactly what i~uDia's owners have done.

Every piece of the hotel represents history, its meaning and value. The name i~uDia, for example, is Ayutthaya's old spelling. The rooms are named after famous rulers of the kingdom. A short historical piece about the room where I stayed is written on the red keychain. It says: "Bayinnaung (Known in Portuguese as Braginoco) was the king of the Toungco dynasty in Burma. He was revered in the country, and is best known for unifying the kingdom and expanding his empire to incorporate the neighbouring Shan Stated, Siam and Laos."

Ayutthaya served as the Siamese royal capital from 1350-1767. The city was sacked by the Burmese in 1767 and put to the torch. After the fall of Ayutthaya, the newly declared King Taksin established a new capital in Bangkok, which is now known as Thonburi.

Not to be mistaken as a museum, i~uDia itself is a wealth of information about Thailand, its people, its government and its culture. The wall leading to the hotel's tall gate tells something about Ayutthaya's architectural wonder where the use of bricks is evident in many ruined sites. At the entrance, the set of Benjarong jars displayed in a horizontal glass casing not only shows the owners' personal interest in collecting antique decorative jars but reflects Siam's trading history especially with China. And each of the eight rooms in

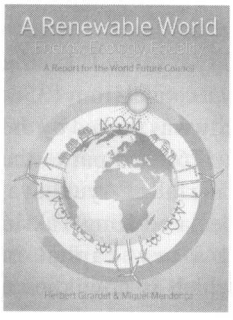


i~uDia has a set of jars unearthed from beneath the historical site. The cafe houses coffee table books ranging from travel destinations to historical designs to pieces of Thailand's history written by Thai and foreign authors. The owners' own book on Benjarong jars in Thailand will be on the shelves soon.

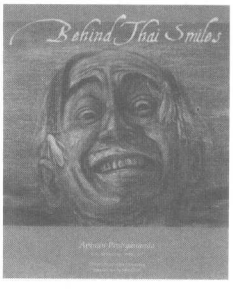
i~uDia occasionally hosts in-house cultural programmes to acquaint guests with the secrets of Buddhist meditation, Siamese history, antiques, yoga and traditional Siamese music. During my stay, I listened to Dr Edward Van Roy, an Ayutthaya history expert, who gave interesting insights on the city's grand palace and the old kingdom's rulers.

While resting by the poolside, I look at the beauty of the whitewashed classically styled prang of Wat Putthaisawna and think, why shouldn't other hotels be like this?

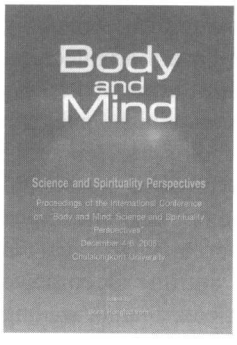
Jofelle P Tesorio
in Ayutthaya, *Asia News Network*
Publication Date : 14-08-2009



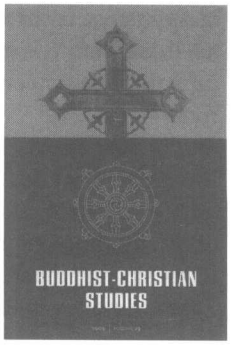
A Renewable World: Energy, Ecology Equality
A report for the World Future Council
By Herbert Girardet & Miguel Mendonça
First Published by Green Books Ltd, 2009



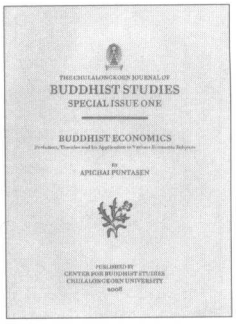
Behind Thai Smiles
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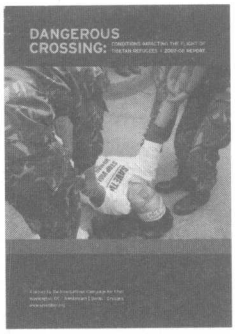
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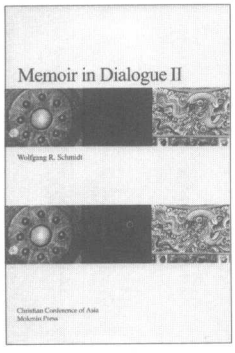
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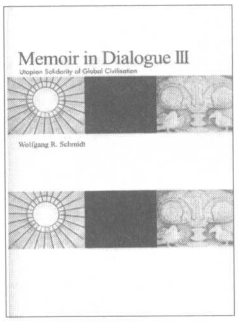
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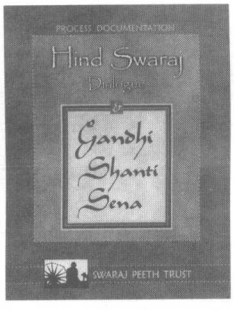
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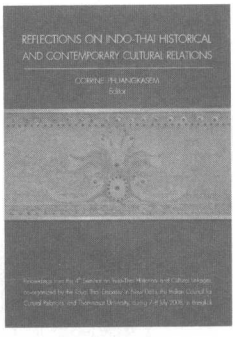
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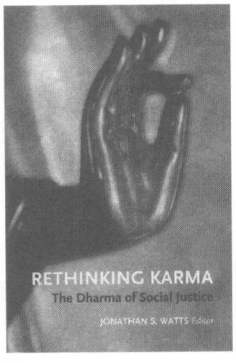
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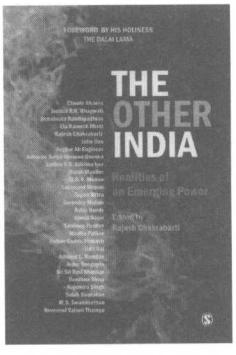
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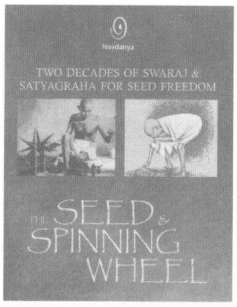
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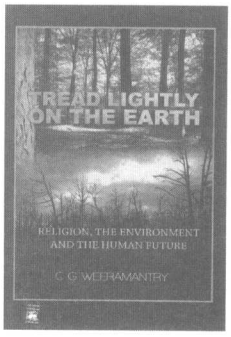
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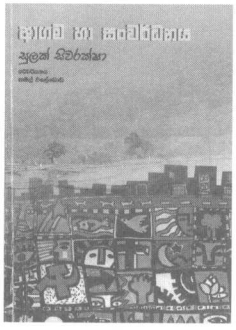
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The Library at Wat Rakang, the original home of King Rama I
restored by the initiative of Fua Haripitak