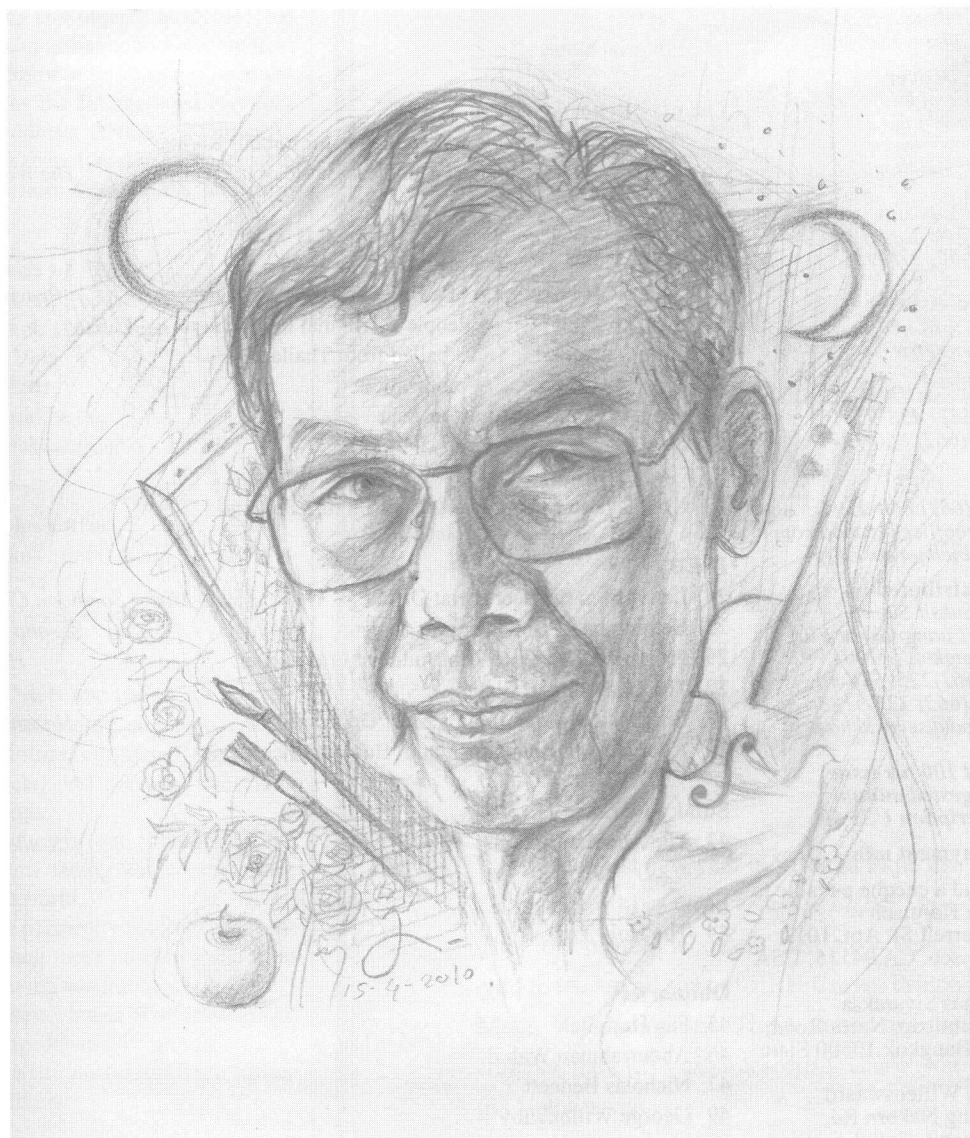


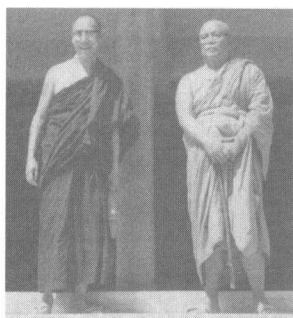
# SEEDS OF PEACE

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We need to be mindful,  
opening to the world outside the ego



# SEEDS OF

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\* Bhikkhu Buddhadasa and  
the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

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# PEACE

*Seeds of Peace* is published thrice annually in January, May and September, in order to promote the aims and objectives of the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD) and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) as well as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). In order to subscribe a \$50/year donation is suggested. Personal checks from the UK, US, and Euro are accepted.

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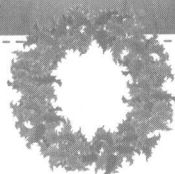
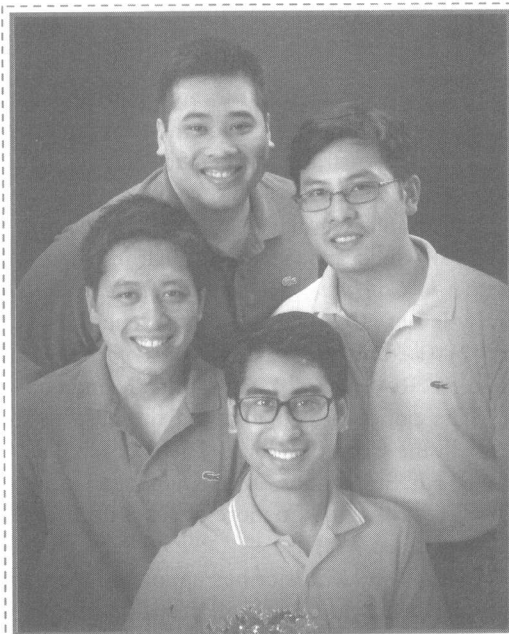
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1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate 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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*Happy Holidays*

Happy New Year

from

The Vivacharawongse Family

Our Buddhist new year is Visakha Puja, the full moon of May. This year it is on 28<sup>th</sup> May. The four princes who sent their New Year's card to us, are all sons of HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn. Their names are (1) Juthavachara (2) Vasharaesorn (3) Chakriwat (4) Vatchrawee

## Editorial Notes

Currently, quite a number of foreign journalists have been in touch with the editor/publisher, interviewing him for his opinion on the Thai Monarchy and the law of *lese majeste*. They are from Turkey, Sweden, Australia\* and Japan – mostly for television. The editor himself is being charged for *lese majeste* on the following:

1) His interview in *Fa Deaw Kan* (*Same Sky* magazine) Vol. 3 No. 4 October – December 2005 (2548) which appears in English in Sulak Sivaraksa's *Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective* pages 152-168. "Having a Monarchy Is Less Costly Than a Presidency".

2) As editor/publisher of *Seeds of Peace* Vol. 21 No. 1 January – April 2005 (2548) with an article on "Revenge of the Forgotten Monarch: The True Sequel to the King and the Land of Smile." The police have submitted the case to the public prosecutors to charge Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa at the Criminal Court. The date fixed at the court is 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

3) Mr. Sulak's lecture at Khonkaen University on human rights on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008. We have heard no more of cases no. 1 and no. 3. As to case no. 2, there is a rumor that it may be dropped.

The Prime Minister has appointed a commission headed by the permanent secretary, Ministry of Justice to review all cases on *lese majeste* to find out that the accused is indeed intended to harm the King, the Queen, the Crown Prince or the Regent as stipulated by the law. If he or she is being accused because of political motives by the power-that-be which could manipulate the police forces, such a person should be set free. Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa is known nationwide as well as internationally for his view in support of the constitutional monarchy. His loyalty to the throne however must be accompanied by his critical evaluation of the institution.

In this country, we live in uncertainty. It is good to be a practicing Buddhist – not to be affected by *Lakadhamma*. One should be mindful of happiness or unhappiness, praise or blame, fortune or misfortune, honor or dishonor. Yet one must teach oneself to have moral courage, to stand for the truth nonviolently and to work for social justice and environmental balance worldwide, as much as one can and with good friends networking together, perhaps one can do things meaningfully with patience as well as energy. Although Howard Zinn (1922-2010) might not be a Buddhist in the traditional sense, his life and works inspire many of us, especially his famous phrase "Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world".

Our small acts by members of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and INEB plus the wider circle of good friends may contribute significantly to uphold truth, beauty and goodness in the world.

The editor/publisher wishes to thank his good friends around the world for supporting him personally especially with the cases of *lese majeste*. They have also helped him with his other activities. To help him sustaining this journal, *Seeds of Peace*, is indeed a worthy cause. Please be generous in your financial contribution so that the journal will be one of the alternative voices to challenge the mainstream which promotes greed, hatred and delusion.



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\*ABC television program was banned from the Kingdom.



## Burma:

Support Workers' Demands for Labour Rights in Burma  
February 12<sup>th</sup> 2010

On February 8<sup>th</sup> 2010, 3,600 factory workers, mostly women, in the Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone in Rangoon, Burma, protested against the substandard working conditions they are forced to endure in the factories. Workers employed at the Opal 2 and Mya Fashion factories demanded a wage increase of 10US\$ a month. The next day, workers at the Taiyee shoe factory, and the Kya Lay garment factory also came out to demand the enforcement of public holidays, an increase in their daily wage, proper payment of overtime and other basic rights.

The Burmese military regime responded by bringing in hundreds of armed police and warned the workers that they would face a violent crackdown if they did not disperse peacefully. On February 10<sup>th</sup> the workers had little choice but to accept a compromised settlement of a monthly increase of US\$2-US\$5. But then the next day, February 11<sup>th</sup>, workers from Myanmar Sunny shoe factory from Industrial Zone No.(2) and from Miss

Style shoe factory from Industrial Zone No.(3) announced that they would also demand increased wages.

The industrial zone where these factories are located employs between 50,000 to 70,000 workers. The factories are owned by Korean, Thai and Burmese nationals, among others.

Burma continues to be ruled by a military dictatorship with a record of violent crack-downs against any form of protest or gatherings over 5 people. Trade unions are banned. Workers in Burma are thus denied their basic rights of assembly and collective bargaining. In addition, with a blackout on news coverage of any unrest, workers are completely isolated from international attention.



Asian Migrant Centre



The isolation of the workers, the presence of the military and the history of the regime is cause for grave concern for the safety and the rights of all workers in Burma and urgently for the workers in the Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone.

It is also important to note that there are no international agencies in Burma who can support the rights of workers and monitor the situation, due to the restrictive political environment inside Burma.

Asian Migrant Centre, MAP Foundation and the Workers and Farmers Solidarity League of Burma, applaud the brave action taken by the workers and stand in solidarity with all workers in Burma in their struggle for workers rights. We are deeply



Truckloads of riot police parked on a road leading to Hlaing Tharyar industrial zone.  
Photo: AP published in the Straits Times, 10 February 2010

Workers on strike.  
Source: [www.niknayman-niknayman.co.cc](http://www.niknayman-niknayman.co.cc),  
published in the Irrawaddy, 10 February 2010

disturbed by the threat of military force by the military junta in responding to these strikes by workers exercising their freedom of association.

The workers in Burma need your voices. They need your trade unions, civil society organizations and media to highlight their situation, to raise these violations of workers rights with your governments, especially those who are investing in Burma and your governments who are

trading with Burma. Please petition your governments urgently.

The workers in Burma need you to demand that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) expand its mandate in Burma to include all forms of exploitation, not only forced labour.

You can also write letters to Sen. Gen Than Shwe c/o Ministry of Defence, Naypyidaw, Myanmar, to express your outrage at the use of threats of violence to quell workers' call for a US\$5 a

month raise.

And finally please send a message of support to the brave workers in Burma at [solidarityburma@gmail.com](mailto:solidarityburma@gmail.com)

Unite with Workers in Burma!

For further information, please contact: Workers and Farmers Solidarity League of Burma at [Wfslb2009@gmail.com](mailto:Wfslb2009@gmail.com) or email: [solidarityburma@gmail.com](mailto:solidarityburma@gmail.com) or contact Reiko Harima Asian Migrant Centre Tel: +852 23120031 or contact Jackie Pollock MAP Tel: +66 860904118

## Siam:

# Stopping Thailand's Endless Battle of the Yellow and Red Shirts

The latest political crisis in Thailand is a particularly tragic instance of political blowback. Three times in the past four years, Thais opposed to the populist movement of Thaksin Shinawatra precipitated the downfall of democratically elected governments by creating chaos in the streets of Bangkok. Now the current government, backed by that same alliance of the middle class, business and traditional elites, has itself been cornered by the same tactics.

Last Saturday, the Thai army, which refused to act against the anti-Thaksin "yellowshirts" even when they shut down Bangkok's international airport, tried to disperse the pro-Thaksin "red shirts" from their month-old street camps. The result was the worst political violence in two decades, with 23 protesters and soldiers killed—and a retreat by the security forces. That leaves the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva with few options other than what he and his coalition should have embraced

in the first place: free elections.

Neither side in Thailand's class-based political conflict is a paragon of democracy. Mr. Thaksin, who now lives in exile, was a bad prime minister from 2001 to 2006. He violated press freedoms and allowed massive violations of human rights by security forces. The root of Thailand's years of conflict, however, is the unwillingness of the old establishment to accept that Mr. Thaksin has the support of the country's majority. After a military coup removed the populist leader in 2006, his supporters easily won the election that was eventually held in December 2007. After two more prime ministers were forced from office by demonstrations and questionable court rulings in late 2008, Mr. Abhisit brought the anti-Thaksin forces to power without calling a new election. He has resisted holding one since, for the obvious reason that Mr. Thaksin's supporters probably would win once again.

Mr. Abhisit is now sugg-

esting that he could call an election at the end of this year. That stall is dangerous and unlikely to work. The army commander suggested Monday that it might be necessary to meet the protesters' demand that the parliament be dissolved and a new election called immediately. Meanwhile, Mr. Abhisit's party is under threat of being forced from office by a court order—just like the past two pro-Thaksin prime ministers.

What ought to be clear by now is that anti-democratic tactics, from military intervention to street barricades to convenient court edicts, will not end Thailand's turmoil. The only solution is for both sides to accept that elections should decide who governs Thailand—and that both winners and losers should respect basic political and civil rights.

*The Washington Post*  
Thursday, April 15, 2010

## Siam: It's Your Education, Talk about It

A boy of ten with chubby cheeks and a charming smile, Nu is excited to learn how to plant seeds and watch them grow, a skill he has always wanted to learn. Until recently, he never had the opportunity.

He enters the Nonthun municipal schoolyard and crosses the empty soccer field towards the echoing voices of his peers. He is excited for what the day has in store.

Without hesitation, Nu blends into the mass of children who till and water the soil, preparing for the planting that will occur tomorrow. "It's not hard work, it's fun!" he exclaims as he earnestly helps his friend carry a heavy bucket filled with water.

For one week per month a team of educators from Chiang Rai comes to Nonthun School and works with Nu and other 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who have been deemed 'naughty' by their teachers. Instead of punishment, these children are encouraged to work together, share their feelings, and discover their passions.

The Nonthun School is one of four Khon Kaen municipality schools embracing an alternative education method known as contemplative education. The goal of contemplative education is the optimal development of an individual, meant to be achieved through activities applicable to students' lives that pique their interests and create dialogue.

Drawing from aspects of Buddhism, contemplative education teaches that in order to fully understand yourself it is necessary to have focused self explora-

tion, quiet reflection and unbiased observations of your surroundings.

By taking part in nontraditional education, students like Nu cultivate discipline, reflection and greater self awareness. While activities like gardening connect children to their cultural roots, the art of origami teaches students about traditions other than their own as well as how to be patient, active listeners. Contemplative education instills in youth the skills and knowledge to be better students and classmates.

At Nonthun School, contemplative education is not just something being practiced with the students, but with the school teachers as well. Mrs. Chaveewan Thammarsaeng, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, is a professional woman with tired but passionate eyes. "Contemplative education has taught me the benefit of connecting to my students," she says. This year, "I am trying to remember personal details to get to know them better."

These details will help teachers like Mrs. Chaveewan create lessons that are more suitable to the needs and interests of their students.

While she admits that it takes time, she has noticed changes in certain individuals that make the commitment worthwhile. "Like with their attention span," she comments as she points to Nu sitting at a desk diligently doing his work. He is the only one left in the room.

Changes like this are what makes Mr. Peerapol Pattanapee-

radej, the mayor of Khon Kaen, a strong supporter of progressive education. He believes that in a society where "kids are constantly being ordered around, regimented, and looked down upon," this alternative form of education "creates a safe place where kids can learn to be themselves."

"Students are educated as cogs to fit into the industrial factory world," he continues. "They are forced to remove their creativity and their doubt and instead just respect, obey, and stay within the rules, to be of service to their nation, religion and business. All their humanness is removed."

Contemplative education is a stark contrast to the traditional Thai education system, or "second hand information," as the mayor refers to it, that forces students to regurgitate what others know. He explains that, "Students nowadays know all this information external to their lives but they don't know anything about themselves. They don't know their neighbors; they don't know the local wisdom, their families or their local societies. We produce kids who have no roots, who don't respect themselves."

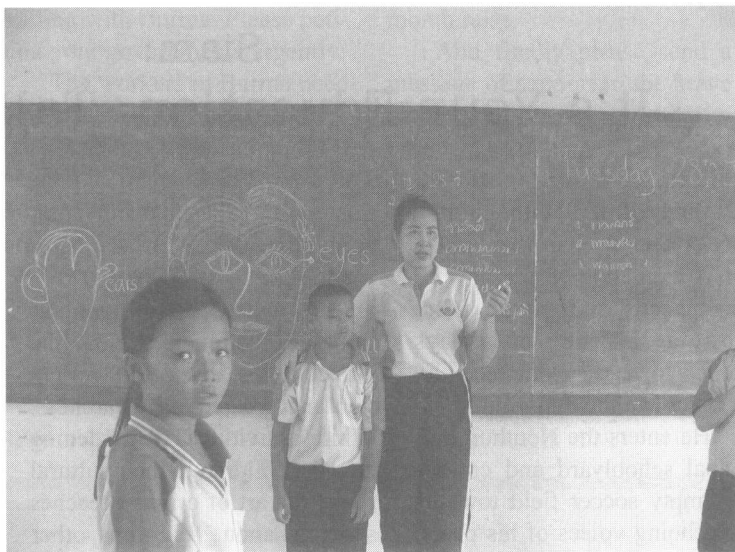
In a similar vein, Mr. Decha Premrudelert, educational advisor to the mayor, comments, "Thai education today is heading towards the end," simply "because it cannot be supported. It cannot make a better society since all it creates is competition and selfishness."

Supporters of contemplative education believe it isn't merely

an educational method being applied in schools; it is a way of life. Dialogue, a core aspect of contemplative education, is the origin of both internal and external change. Referring to his personal experience with contemplative education Mr. Peerapol comments, "Thinking more slowly, speaking more slowly heightens ones levels of awareness. After learning this, I was able to work better with those around me."

Khon Kaen residents are struggling to remain in tune with their local traditions while simultaneously adjusting to the demands of living in a rapidly developing metropolis. After pondering for a moment Mr. Decha states, "People are becoming confused and insecure because of the individualistic tendencies of the modern world. Contemplative education enables people to be more considerate and therefore makes it easier to come together."

This process of social transformation is an opportune time to develop person to person discourse. By teaching its residents



to be introspective, confident, and well rounded people, Khon Kaen has thriving potential to use this form of education to significantly change society.

Meanwhile, at Nonthun School, the fragrance of freshly tilled and wetted dirt is pungent. The children's laughter is contagious and their energy inspiring as they work together to create the garden. Nu and his fellow classmates are learning about local traditions, responsibility and how to work in a group.

Though teachers will never evaluate students on how well they dig in dirt or how efficiently they plant seeds, the metric of success is their personal growth, and their openness to one another's humanity.

Nu washes the dirt from his hands, satisfied with his accomplishments. Each day Nu goes home with twinkling eyes knowing that tomorrow is another day to continue learning.

*Dalya Heller*

## Siam: Thailand's Succession

As father fades, his children fight.

Behind the present unrest in Thailand lie far deeper fears about the royal succession. And those may not be spoken publicly.

IN TRUCKS, boats and buses, protesters streamed into Bangkok for a non-stop rally that was billed as a "people's war against the elite". By March 14<sup>th</sup> the crowd, all wearing bright red and brimming with elation, had passed 100,000. On the stage,

speakers railed against the government and its royal and military enablers. Banners read "No Justice, No Peace". Another bruising round in Thailand's protracted power-struggle was under way, with no clear end in sight.

By mid-week the red shirts seemed no closer to their goal of forcing out the prime minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, and forcing new elections. The army stands squarely behind Mr Abhisit, who took power 15 months ago by a

parliamentary fix and remains the hero of Bangkok's myopic monied classes, as well as the yellow-shirted protesters who support the status quo. But in a one-man, one-vote democracy, the have-nots hold the key to success.

Thailand's twice-elected and now fugitive former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, understood this well. He has refused to keep quiet since the army ousted him in 2006. A court ruling on February 26<sup>th</sup> to seize



\$1.4 billion of his fortune has only made him angrier. Many red shirts consider Mr Thaksin to be the country's true leader and, despite his enormous wealth and privileged life, make common cause with him.

Ruling-party politicians complain that the lowly red shirts are paid proxies and do not represent mainstream opinion. They bat away the idea that an election may be the only way to prove their point, arguing that an orderly vote is impossible amid the tumult. Most of all, they blame Mr Thaksin for the uproar.

But there is another figure in the political landscape to consider: King Bhumibol Adulyadej, at 82 the world's longest-reigning monarch. At the rally site, a giant spotlight portrait of him gazed down impassively on the red-shirted crowds. To Thailand's royalist movement the monarch is the nation's father, and the "fighting children" on the streets are a source of distress to him. Some fear that Thailand's troubles may be thwarting King Bhumibol's full recovery from the respiratory illness that has kept him in hospital since September.

But it is precisely because "father" is on his way out that his "children" are fighting. The death of a monarch is always a moment of national drama and self-reflection. Thais feel a dread of it. Few have known any king other than Bhumibol, who ascended in 1946 to an institution that had slipped into irrelevance. As military rule gave way to a semi-functional democracy, the palace served as a respected power-broker. But its legitimacy depended on the charisma of King Bhumibol and the stealth of his courtiers.

The palace insists that the king is alert and active. But Thais already fear a destabilising royal succession. Investors are especially worried, and the more so because *lèse-majesté* laws dis-

courage frank talk about it. When a large Thai brokerage polled fund managers about political risk factors in 2010, 42% of respondents chose what the brokerage describes as "a change that cannot be mentioned". Rumours of King Bhumibol's death last October sparked a two-day equities sell-off and a furious government witch-hunt for rumour-spreaders. The real thing is likely to outdo that rout.

Thailand has already endured four years of turmoil. The death toll has been low so far, but the rage unleashed last April, when red shirts fought the army in Bangkok, was a glimpse of how deep passions run. Splits within the army itself are starting to appear. Even if fears of all-out civil war seem overblown, it is reasonable to expect more years of political confrontation and paralysis.

The crown itself should pass smoothly. The designated male heir is Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, aged 57, and there is not much scope for doubt about his claim. A long mourning period, perhaps six months or more, will allow a pause in the political dogfight. Some protagonists may come to their senses and seek a compromise. The death of King Bhumibol would also signal a generational shift in Thailand: younger voices could start to be heard.

But this king will be a most difficult act to follow, and Prince Vajiralongkorn is already widely loathed and feared. Most Thais try not even to think about his accession. "This reign ends. And then, nothing," says an academic. The next ruler must fill the shoes of a beatified icon whose achievements have been swathed in a personality cult. The role of a crown prince in an era of great longevity and public scrutiny is tough anywhere. In Thailand it verges on the impossible. "How do you follow someone who

walks on water?" asks a senior Western diplomat.

### Doubts about the prince

This conundrum is a familiar one. King Vajiravudh, Rama VI, who assumed the throne in 1910, had a rough ride in the shadow of his father, King Chulalongkorn, a vigorous moderniser. Even before he ascended to the throne he was tainted by palace gossip of alleged bad behaviour, according to Thongchai Winichakul, a Thai historian at the University of Wisconsin. Vajiravudh was a "fantastic poet and playwright" but an also-ran monarch who was eclipsed by his exalted predecessor. "The royals shot themselves in the foot," Mr Thongchai told a recent public seminar.

His successor, Prajadhipok, Rama VII, fared worse. A bloodless 1932 coup ended absolute rule and nudged the Thai monarchy towards the margins. Prajadhipok fled to exile in London and abdicated in 1935, deepening the drift. He handed over to Rama VIII, King Bhumibol's elder brother, who died in 1946 after a mysterious shot to the head. Bhumibol was proclaimed king the same day, and promptly returned to Switzerland to complete his studies.

In 1926 Prajadhipok had written frankly about the shortcomings of dynastic rule. In a letter, he wrestled with the clash between a society in flux and the law of hereditary kingship, a clash that seems to hang over Thailand today. The king's rule was one "of great difficulty" as public opinion had turned against absolute rule. He fretted over who might be coming next. "Some sort of guarantee must be found against an unwise king," he wrote.

Nearly a century on, no such guarantee exists. Instead, Thais are faced with the prospect of Prince Vajiralongkorn, a career



army officer and fighter pilot, who has already assumed many ceremonial duties from his father. Largely absent in recent years on jaunts around Europe, he is now back in Thailand and in the public eye. The signals are loud and clear. Two weeks after King Bhumibol's birthday speech, the *Bangkok Post* ran a stiff, respectful profile of him under the headline: "King in Waiting".

For Thais used to King Bhumibol's virtues, which include monogamy, Buddhist piety and old-fashioned thrift, the crown prince is a poor substitute. Salacious stories of his private life are daily gossip. A video circulated widely in 2007 showed his third wife, known as the "royal consort", at a formal dinner with the prince in a titillating state of undress. Diplomats say Prince Vajiralongkorn is unpredictable to the point of eccentricity: lavishing attention on his pet poodle Fu Fu, for example, who has military rank and, on occasion, sits among guests at gala dinners. In the 1980s his rumoured ties to the criminal underworld, which he denied in a newspaper interview, inspired the gangster nickname of "Sia O".

In contrast, Princess Sirindhorn, his sister, enjoys a saintly image as a patron of charity. Many Thais are praying for an eleventh-hour change that installs her on the throne. Some army and palace factions are said to favour the princess as the next ruler. Other possibilities aired in recent years are a jump to Prince Vajiralongkorn's children, such as his youngest, Prince Tipangkara, with a regent, perhaps Princess Sirindhorn. The leaked video was presumably a bid to discredit the prince and push other options. So far, however, King Bhumibol seems to have made up his mind that Prince Vajiralongkorn will succeed him.

Paul Handley, the king's un-

official biographer, whose book is banned in Thailand, thinks there is a tiny possibility that King Bhumibol could decide on his deathbed to disinherit Prince Vajiralongkorn. That would require a written command. Life in exile in Europe might suit the prince, who would not want for money or diversions. Inevitably there are other, bloodier, predictions of how he might be removed from the succession. This might explain why soldiers in his personal guard are not allowed to wear guns in his presence.

### Mighty but clumsy

A taste of this came last year when Mr Abhisit, the prime minister, tried to reshuffle the police force. His choice for police chief was blocked by members of his own team, including Nipon Prompan, an aide to Prince Vajiralongkorn, who lobbied for another candidate. A "powerful and mighty" backer was reported to be pushing the second man, a former head of national intelligence under Mr Thaksin. Mr Nipon later resigned from the cabinet. Mr Abhisit was unable to confirm his man, who is currently acting chief. The row exposed Prince Vajiralongkorn's clumsy meddling. It also provoked apoplexy among King Bhumibol's courtiers, says a palace source. Prince Vajiralongkorn was told that "we don't do things like this," the source says.

In fact, the palace has long patronised loyalists in the army and bureaucracy. This is how power operates in Thailand. What made Mr Thaksin such a threat to the palace was his determination to exert similar control. In turn, Prince Vajiralongkorn is itching to meddle in the annual autumnal shuffle of senior jobs in the armed forces and extend his support base, says a senior Asian diplomat. How far he succeeds may determine how long he lasts. Another possibility is a royal par-

don for Mr Thaksin so that he can return to manage state affairs for the new king. This would delight the red shirts. But it would appal Bangkok's elite and split the army. As for courting public support, this seems far-fetched. The prince knows he is unpopular, says a political acquaintance, but "he doesn't care."

One way out of this predicament would be to shrink the Thai monarchy back to its previous size. Top-down reform of the institution is more palatable than a push from below with republican overtones. Under King Bhumibol its stock has fallen already from its zenith in May 1992, when he could order a military dictator to cease and desist. Recent years have exposed the limits of his powers. In 2008 the king was unable to stop the People's Alliance for Democracy from sowing chaos in his name. "We expect too much of him," sighs a senior courtier.

Clearly Thailand needs a new equilibrium. Some fear that the power vacuum left by an enfeebled monarchy will be filled by the army, which is already the steel behind the palace's gilded façade. But the generals who seized power in a coup in 2006 did a dismal job of running the country, and had to return power to the voters 15 months later. Business families do not want a repeat performance, and would prefer to have politicians and professionals in charge. Several banned MPs, some hoping to lead parties, will re-enter the field in 2012. But the rules of the game will need to be reset.

Some might argue that King Bhumibol shares the blame for the failure of democratic institutions to take root in Thailand. Relying on "a few good men" and the army to steer the country has left it in the lurch, says Mr Handley.

It is a sad twilight for the monarch. Thailand was once an

outpost of freedom in a fairly repressive region. Scrappy politics did not choke rapid economic growth, as the bureaucrats kept a steady hand on day-to-day management. In the 1990s Western rights activists hoped that the dynamism of Thai civil society might spread to neighbouring countries. Instead, some now see Thailand as a cautionary tale of a botched democracy.

That may be too harsh. Thailand's rival red and yellow mobs disagree about democracy, but both want a fair political system. To measure tolerance, the California-based Asia Foundation last year surveyed Thais about their views. It found that 79% of respondents would allow unpopular political parties to meet in their area. Only 6% said that they would stop seeing a friend who had joined a rival party. These are healthier figures than in other Asian democracies. Almost everyone agreed that democracy was the best form of government, though 30% would accept authoritarian rule in certain circumstances.

Thailand has not yet given upon democracy. But taking stock of its troubled politics should include talking about the crown. Of course, it is distasteful—and inauspicious, Thais believe—to speak of King Bhumibol's death. But it is unavoidable. The stakes are too high. Respect and fear have kept a lid on the debate. Anyone who speaks out of turn in Thailand risks arrest under the *lèse-majesté* laws or a new, equally nasty computer-crimes law. Several people have been prosecuted for defaming the king and his family, including an Australian jailed (until freed by a royal pardon) for writing a novel that contained an unflattering depiction of the crown prince.

Behind closed doors, a spirited debate goes on over the fate of the monarchy when the king dies. An old prophecy holds that

the Chakri dynasty will last only nine generations. King Bhumibol is Rama IX. Republican voices are rising to the surface—unreported in Thailand's pliant media. The *Bangkok Post* struck a typical tone of pride and menace in its birthday eulogy for the king in December: "The Thai people's love for his majesty is so ingrained in the national psyche that to declare otherwise is unthinkable."

Within palace circles, however, there is a dawning realisation that change is coming. Senior royalists know that King Bhumibol's charisma and influence will not easily transfer to his successor. This is the crux of Thailand's royal impasse. And King Bhumibol knows it, says Mr Sulak. As he puts it, the king "would like to see that the next reign will not be bloody."

To this end, King Bhumibol recently asked three trusted emissaries to present ideas for reforming the institution, according to Mr Sulak. One emissary asked for Mr Sulak's advice, explaining that the findings would be for the king's eyes only. Mr Sulak replied that the palace must be transparent about its finances, including some \$35 billion in assets managed by the Crown Property Bureau, decouple itself from the army and open up to public criticism. Only by becoming a European-style figurehead can a future monarch survive, he argues.

### Preserving the tree

Mr Sulak has often been accused of *lèse-majesté*. He insists that he is a monarchist at heart. "To pull down the tree is easy. But I think it's better to preserve it," he says. Such steps just might rescue the Chakri dynasty. But a radical rethink seems unlikely. Allowing opponents to attack an insecure ruler could quickly escalate. Under King Bhumibol the silencing of opponents has

been controversial, but many tolerate it out of respect. Prince Vajiralongkorn can expect no such leeway.

What might a diminished monarchy look like? Thailand may not be ready for such a thing. In Spain, the palace's annual household budget of €9m (\$12m) is audited by the government. Norway puts its royal accounts on a website. It is impossible to find out how much Thailand's jet-setting royals spend. Japan may be a better model, as a respectful national press keeps its distance.

It took defeat in the second world war and an American occupation to curtail the powers of Japan's emperor. Other royal houses were whittled down to size by assertive parliaments. This happened in Thailand in 1932, but was later reversed under King Bhumibol. Clearly, some constitutional fixes would be needed to shrink the sovereign's role. But power in Thailand flows along patronage networks that start with the king. That is why elected ministers who care about their careers are continually looking over their shoulders for signals from the palace. Mr Abhisit attends so many royal ribbon-cuttings that it is hard to imagine how he finds time to govern, says a senior Western diplomat.

Royal censorship has kept much of this debate under wraps. That is a pity. King Bhumibol famously said in 2005 that he was not above criticism. But not many are ready to test that. Though the internet is humming with opinions, the taboo still stands. And because the country has never had a chance to talk openly, people cannot prepare themselves for what may be a rough road ahead.

*The Economist*,  
18 March 2010

## Siam:

# Rally Symbolic of a Brewing Class Struggle

The mainstream mass media has been so busy blasting Thaksin Shinawatra for being the cause of all political evil that it has failed to see the seeds of the class struggle that have been germinating since the 2006 coup. However, the attacks on the old elite have also been unprecedented.

An SMS from the ever-reliable, pro-establishment news agency INN, that this writer subscribes to, warned yesterday that Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban is concerned about this talk of a “class war”.

Discourse about class exploitation and unequal political voice has been growing among the red-shirt protesters, most of whom are dirt poor with little or no formal education. Well-to-do Bangkokians only have to see the welcome given by the capital’s working class to their red-shirt counterparts to recognise this.

Sure, they talk fondly about Thaksin and demand that Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva step down, but many of their songs, grievances and angst is about class inequality as well as socio-economic and political disparity. The sense of injustice and inequality in Thai politics and society is real and has struck a chord with many in the Bangkok work-

ing and lower middle-class, who warmly welcomed the red shirts yesterday on Sukhumvit Road.

The point is not whether the number of protesters is more or less than 100,000, because there are enough red-shirt sympathisers upcountry and in the slums of Bangkok. And judging by yesterday’s motorcade the poor are a force to be reckoned with even if they are going to disperse in the next few days.

What will not disappear though is that, with or without Thaksin, there is growing recognition that the poor are oppressed and exploited, and their demands for greater socio-political and economic equality have gone unheeded by many in the mainstream mass media, which continues writing columns lambasting Thaksin.

Or perhaps they simply don’t want to admit what they’re seeing?

The level of disdain and bias among the educated middle-class and the elite, mostly in Bangkok, is appalling. They’re not just ignorant about the plight of the poor, but are indifferent to it. In fact, they failed to realise the red shirts managed to shut down a good part of downtown Sukhumvit despite the mainstream media predicting the protesters had

already lost the battle.

The level of real contact between the middle-class and the elite with the poor is mostly superficial and confined to relationships where the latter are servants and subordinates. The middle-class and elite feel that they are entitled to being superior and that the poor should know their place in life. Therefore, when the poor continue supporting Thaksin, many of the well-off folk in Bangkok have no problems supporting a military coup.

Nevertheless, nothing is as incoherent as the belief that only the educated middle-class and the elite are qualified to run this country. One must consider how backward Thailand remains politically and economically when compared to countries like South Korea to appreciate what a “marvellous job” the elite and the middle class have been doing for the Kingdom.

If the upper echelons of society have been screwing-up Thailand for the past many decades, might it not be fair for the poor to now say: “Enough is enough”, and seek a chance to run or ruin this country too?

*Pravit Rojanaphruk,  
The Nation, March 18, 2010*

## Sri Lanka: Permanent People’s Tribunal in Dublin on Sri Lanka 14-16 January 2010. A Report

### The Tribunal

The Permanent Peoples’ Tribunal (PPT) is an international opinion tribunal, indepen-

dent from any state authority. It examines cases regarding violations of human rights and rights of peoples.

The Tribunal in Dublin was organized by The Irish School of Ecumenics Trinity College Dublin, The School of Law and

Government Dublin City University, Permanent People's Tribunal Fondazione Lelio Basso Sezione Internazionale, and Irish Forum for Peace in Sri Lanka.

The Members of the panel were:

**François Houtart** (Chairman) - UNESCO awardee for nonviolence and tolerance, Chairperson of the UN Committee on Economic Recession.

**Daniel Feierstein** - Director of the Centre for Genocide Studies at the 'Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero', and Professor in the Faculty of Genocide at the University of Buenos Aires.

**Denis Halliday** - Former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations.

**Mary Lawlor** - Director, Frontline, International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, Dublin.

**Francesco Martone** - An ex-Senator in Italy, a leading activist in the non-governmental sector and an Ecologist.

**Nawal al Saadawi** - Egyptian Author, medical doctor, known for her outstanding work for women's rights in Egypt and in the region.

**Jinder Sachar** - Former High Court Judge of Delhi.

**Sulak Sivaraksa** - Thai Buddhist peace campaigner.

**Gianni Tognoni** - Secretary General, Permanent People's Tribunal, Rome.

The tribunal was arranged in the form of open presentations for an invited and registered public and in the form of closed presentations of witnesses whose identity had to be covered to protect them from harassment or even persecution of them and their relatives by the Government of Sri Lanka. Here I only refer to the open presentations.

## The Sessions

Francois Houtard introduced the first session by pointing out that the tribunal's power is not legal, but moral which constitutes its credibility. He certified that the resources which have covered the organizational and financial needs of the sessions correspond mainly to the voluntary work of the members of the NGOs supporting the initiative, and that no economic contribution has been derived from sources directly or indirectly related to Tamil organizations, nor to states involved in the events considered in this session. "No Euro has come from the USA", he said. He also pointed out that the tribunal had nothing to do with the elections in Sri Lanka.

He also clarified that the Tribunal is dealing with the crimes committed by the Sri Lankan government, but not with the crimes committed by the LTTE forces in the war. The reason for this is that humanitarian law was created to protect citizens from the State. Any crime committed by individuals or groups can be judged and punished by the State. However, crimes committed by the State usually result in impunity, as the State is not willing to judge and punish its own actions. The category of human rights violations in international law applies specifically to the State. The action of this Tribunal is a way to ratify this principle. On this background the Permanent People's Tribunal was asked to examine the following:

1. Is there sufficient evidence to conclude that the military offensives carried out by the Sri Lankan government was motivated by a deliberate intent to annihilate the Tamil people in whole or in part?

2. Has there been bombing of targets of a purely civilian character, for example, hospitals, by the Sri Lankan government forces and on what scale has this occurred?

3. Has there been mass deportation and detention of civilian population in concentration/internment camps against their will or other acts tending to the extermination of the Tamil people which can be characterized judicially as genocide?

4. Have the Sri Lankan armed forces committed war crimes by indiscriminately using heavy weapons and air power in densely populated areas? Have they used weapons forbidden by international law, such as cluster ammunitions and weapons of chemical nature?

5. Have the Sri Lankan government forces violated the international law of war by executing war prisoners who surrendered themselves to the SL Army or using them against their will for its own propaganda purposes?

6. Have the Sri Lankan government forces committed war crimes by desecrating the dead?

7. Have the Sri Lankan government forces committed war crimes by blockading access to food and medicine as a weapon of war?

8. Has sexual assault and rape been used as a weapon of war?

9. Are there other governments guilty of complicity in the crimes committed by the Sri Lankan government, by aiding the war militarily, or by blocking the UN Security

Council discussion of the massacres in Sri Lanka?

The open session on January 14 was on the last phase of the war in Sri Lanka and its aftermath: Crimes against humanity and war crimes. Evidence of war crimes based on satellite images of the region named 'safety zones' during the least phase of the war was presented, together with an overall view of refugees and human rights especially in the aftermath of the war.

The open session on January 15 was dedicated to the study of local and international factors that led to the collapse of 2002 Cease Fire Agreement: Crimes against peace. How did the Lankan state defend itself to protect its sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security against the separatist movement like the LTTE?. What happened to the Cease Fire Agreement? The consequences of the European Union's ban of the LTTE were also analyzed.

### The Verdict

On January 17 the verdict was pronounced by Francois Houtard and the other Judges in plenum. They mentioned especially the role of the witnesses. The PPT cannot conclude its work without specifically recognizing the fundamental contribution of those eyewitnesses who had the courage of coming to testify on facts that have touched their lives profoundly and forever. They are the most qualified representatives of those victims, whose numbers will never be known and whose suffering could never be described in full. The recognition and protection of their rights are the reasons for the existence and activities of the PPT. The PPT is also well aware that in the current situation, the

rights of those that witnessed the atrocities committed in the country are exposed to further violations, both directly in their personal freedom and life, and through the prosecution of their families. Therefore, the PPT declares that anything that might happen to them would represent the consequence of the effort to maintain human dignity in a situation of inhuman behavior and, if the case would be, should be considered as exclusive responsibility of those authorities and actors that has been dealt with in their judgment. The PPT furthermore declares its readiness and commitment to take an active role in monitoring and promptly acting on any consequence that the witnesses might suffer or the fact of having contributed to the Tribunal's work and deliberations.

The judges, summing up the facts established before this Tribunal through NGO's reports, victims and eye-witnesses accounts, expert testimonies and journalist reports, distinguished different kind of human rights violations committed by the Sri Lanka government from 2002 (the year of the beginning of the CFA) to the present as follows:

- Forced "disappearances" of individuals selected from the Tamil Population.
- Crimes committed in the re-starting of the war (2006 -2009), particularly during the last months of the war.
- Bombing civilian objectives like hospitals, schools and other non-military objectives.
- Bombing the government proclaimed 'safety zones' or 'no fire zones'
- Depriving essential services like food, water, and health facilities in war Zones.

- Use of heavy weapons, banned weapons and Air Raids,
- Using food and medicine as a weapon of war.
- Execution, torture and mistreatment of captured or surrendered LTTE combatants officials and supporters.
- Torture.
- Rape and sexual violence against women.
- Deportations and forcible transfer of individuals and families.
- Desecrating the dead.

Different human rights violations in the IDP's Camps during and after the end of the war:

- Shooting of Tamil citizens and LTTE supporters.
- Enforced disappearances.
- Rape.
- Malnutrition.
- Lack of medical supplies.

All these crimes can be summarized in four conclusions:

1. The Sri Lankan Government is Guilty of war crimes
2. The Sri Lankan Government is guilty of crimes against humanity.
3. The charge of genocide requires further investigation.
4. The International community, particularly the UK and USA, share responsibility for the breakdown of the peace process.

The Judges also made many recommendations to the Government of Sri Lanka. Among them is the recommendation that the government of Sri Lanka establishes as a matter of urgency an independent and authoritative Truth and Justice Commission, to investigate crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by parties in conflict in the course of the last phases of the



war, after the collapse of the 2002 ceasefire, and ensure the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

As far as the current situation in the camps and for Internally Displaced Persons, the Judges recommended allowing free and unlimited access to humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, human rights defenders and media in refugee camps, and many other important matters.

The list of recommendations to the International Community, Donor Governments and the United Nations is also long.

The Judges also referred to a written personal Appeal for Peace to be enclosed in the final version from the Buddhist Sulak Sivaraksa who was a member of the panel and who is honored as foremost upasaka by the Amarapura Nikaya in Sri Lanka. I give two cuts:

“We appeal to the Sinhala Buddhists first of all acknowledge the crimes that they committed against their own Tamil sisters and brothers and ask for forgiveness from the Tamils. Rejoicing at the war victories when thousands have been killed, ‘disappeared’, maimed, raped and hundreds of thousands of people being displaced and detained, is totally against the dhamma. ... The government of Sri Lanka should follow Emperor Asoka who transformed violence into loving kindness treating all diverse ethnicities in his empire with dignity, equal respect upholding different cultures and religions. We need to follow the great Buddhist emperor in order to uphold the world in the twenty first century in peace, truth and compassion....”

## Comments

Now follow some personal comments by me. I was deeply impressed by the integrity of the Judges, but also touched and relieved by the fact that finally justice is at least partially done to victimized Tamil speakers. I must confess that I was skeptical in the beginning fearing the Tribunal would issue another of the many diluted statements issued by NGO's. I was wrong in my skepticism. The Tribunal's analysis may contribute to change the cemented image of Tamil speakers as potential terrorists and their struggle for self-determination may be understood. I see, however, also the distance between the self-image of the Government and the image of the Government by the Judges. The Government represented by the President has no insight into his own deeds. Therefore the chances that he will listen to the recommendations of the Judges are nil. On 14 July 2009 he was interviewed (<http://warvictims.wordpress.com/2009/07/14/sri-lanka-the-man-who-tamed-the-tamil-tigers/>):

- Question. “Many people feel that the way you ended the war sets a dangerous precedent—that the cost in terms of human rights, in terms of civilian casualties, was too high.”
- Answer. **“I reject that totally. There was no violation of human rights. There were no civilian casualties. If I did that, it wouldn't have taken 2½ years to finish this. I would have done this in a few hours. These are all propaganda.”**

There is no sign of regret that Sulak Sivaraksa expects him to have being a Buddhist in the suc-

cession of Asoka. The President has explicitly taken up the Asoka role, but has cut from it the profiling sentiment of regret and passion in Asoka's rock inscription. Even Dutthagamani, another warrior whose role he has taken up, showed regret, but not so the present President of Sri Lanka. His insensibility worries me because it may lead to an accomplished genocide of the Tamil speakers. True, they are not much interested in his taking up different spectacular roles, whether he is a King, god or a Bodhisattva or all, but some of his Buddhist supporters are. They care about the President's proper teaching of and living after the *dhamma*. My advice is that they should explain to him the Vessantara-Jataka.

The Judges also had not much trust in the Government because they recommended not that the Government shall examine its own crimes impartially, but that independent outsiders shall do that.

I am not happy that the Judges suspend for the time being a judgment on genocide. All they have exposed fits into several current definitions of genocide. I have tried to understand them. Is it possibly that their short time perspective of examining committed crimes may have made them cautious? It comprises mainly the period of the rakapakasa administration.

Let us look at another presentation of Lankan war crimes called *Lest we forget. Massacres of Tamils* which was issued by the North East Secretariat on Human Rights (NESOHR) in 2005, 2008 in Kilinocci and was issued again in 2010 in India in English, Tamil, German and French with the title *Massacres on Tamils* on the English edition. I regard this publication in differ-

ent editions and languages from 2005, 2008 and 2010 as one of the most important documentations (among a flood of good documentations). It has an important historical dimension. It presents massacres on Tamil speakers from the 1950s up to the present day. This perspective shall prevent us from focussing the latest—not the last—events only during 2009. A shortened time perspective may tempt us to classify these violations of human rights as occasional aberration by a certain Government of Sri Lanka or as crimes by mislead individuals. We have strong reasons to argue that there is a long-time plan, embracing decades, for the completion of a state sponsored cultural genocide of Tamil speakers implying also physical annihilation of civilian Tamil speakers and crimes against war laws. The annihilation of women and children makes a future for Tamil speakers questionable.

A short time perspective focussing the present like the Tribunal in Dublin in January 2010 has indeed advantages. It can go into depth by using photographic documentation and survivors as witnesses in real time. It can for example show that Hillary Clinton's statement from 3 October 2009 that the (present) Government of Sri Lanka uses rape as arms in the war (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXvM7c0Y-vU>) is correct. Moreover not only the repeated appearance of rape at present can be demonstrated by the Dublin Tribunal, but also of necrophilia by Lankan soldiers on naked female bodies being videofilmed for entertainment. There is no need to modify Hillary Clinton's statement in any way under the objection of the Lankan Government.

But the risk of an applied

shortened time perspective is that rape and other crimes are regarded as aberrations of the Raksapakse administration only. A historical perspective can show that Hillary Clinton's statement is valid for the Jayawardhena, Premadasa, and Kumarantunga-Bandaranyaka administration also.

The title *Lest we forget* has both a retrospective and prospective dimension. It does not indicate an interest for the past only, but also an interest for the future by learning from the past to avoid a repetition and to establish justice by using collected facts in court trials against war criminals. To master the future, we must illuminate the past by a well documented study of atrocities ordered by the Government of Sri Lanka and executed by its Armed Forces. (The NESOHR publication is available on Internet in Tamil and English, soon in German and in the future in French also(<http://www.nesohr.org/>).

This critical comment should in no way overshadow the gratefulness that I feel for the emphatic work of the Judges.

Peter Schalk

University of Uppsala

### Personal Appeal for Peace from Thai Buddhist Sulak Sivaraksa

We would like to appeal to the Sinhala Buddhists first of all to acknowledge the crimes that they committed against their own Tamil sisters and brothers and ask for forgiveness from the Tamils. Rejoicing at the war victories, when thousands have been killed, 'disappeared', maimed, raped and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced and detained, is totally against the dhamma.

After all, forgiveness in Pali

is *apaya*—no fear—we should cultivate spiritual fearlessness. Fear arises from construction of the other. Construction of the other arises from separation of self and other. This is ignorance. The enemy is, in fact, greed, hatred and ignorance. In order to be fearless one needs to break the fetters of ignorance and greed. It is the ideological attachment to a majority dominated state that has caused the war and led to enormous suffering. The notions of minority and majority are wrong perceptions. We are interrelated or 'interbeing'. One who realizes interbeing is fearless. It is this fearlessness that can help transform the colonial construction of the Sri Lankan unitary state. This construction is based on greed and hatred.

Through deep Buddhist meditation we can realize our interbeing. In reality we all are friends, who may have different ethnicities. But with right-mindfulness (*samma smadhi*), we can see that they are all our friends, not enemies. The words war heroes and terrorists are misconceptions. We can live together, acknowledging each other's dignity. Tamils are human beings and they should live their basic human rights as we do. They aspire to live in their own land just like the Sinhalese. The government of Sri Lanka should follow Emperor Asoka who transformed violence into loving kindness treating all diverse ethnicities in his empire with dignity and equal respect, upholding different cultures and religions. We need to follow the great Buddhist emperor in order to uphold the world in the twenty-first century in peace, truth and compassion. The Sri Lankan state needs a transformation.

The Machiavellian approach of exploitation and imperialism

is coming to an end, as the Buddhist teaching of anicca, impermanency has implied and as evidenced by the fact that the Roman and British empires have come to their ends and the American one is on the decline. The future of humankind depends on ahimsa and satyagraha. The power of the truth was not only expressed by Gandhi, but it was proclaimed by the Buddha. Once we confront the Noble Truth of Suffering? not only individually but socially; we can then find out the causes of suffering, which

link directly with greed lobha (capitalism and consumerism), hatred dosa (nationalism, militarism, pseudo-democracy), and delusion moha (mainstream education stressing on the head without cultivating the heart and mainstream mass media).

Then we can overcome social suffering through the Noble Eightfold Path of Sila not exploitative of oneself and others, samadhi, deep meditative practice of self-awareness, and panna, that is wisdom or true understanding, seeing that we are all

interconnected. The Tamils and Sinhalese need to be brother and sister. If this is taken seriously as a reality not as a far-fetched ideal Sri Lanka can really be a land of the Buddha, with a small ?b?. Tamils and Sinhala could be side by side in unity and diversity. This will indeed be a good example of the country in the twenty-first century. It will be a century marked by the strength of spirituality beyond hypocrisy and mediocrity.

## Tibet:

# Dalai Lama Blackballed from Thailand

**B**ANGKOK, Thailand—In the age of growing Chinese influence, there's a simple measure of a country's willingness to test China's wrath. Will they stamp the Dalai Lama's passport?

Add Thailand to the shrinking list of nations that won't.

China is succeeding in its mission to globally ostracize the Tibetan monk, likely the world's best-known Buddhist and the face of Tibet's resistance to Chinese rule. And despite Southeast Asia's entrenched Buddhism, China's diplomatic shadow has now blacked out the entire region for the Dalai Lama.

President Barack Obama is scheduled to meet the 74-year-old monk on Feb. 18 at the White House, only after dodging a proposed sit-down last fall. South Africa, fearing Chinese backlash, banned the Dalai Lama in advance of the 2010 World Cup. In the few Asian countries that still allow his entry, officials gener-



ally dodge photo-ops and sit-downs with the spiritual leader, described by China's communist party as a "jackal in monk's robes."

The Dalai Lama's popularity in America—where he's revered among conservative circles, left-leaning lawmakers and the Beastie Boys alike—is nearly matched in Thailand.

However, as in much of the world, the Dalai Lama's office

says that Thailand has been quietly turning down the celebrity monk's visa requests.

Why would the Dalai Lama want to come to Thailand?

He's routinely invited by various Thai institutions, said Tenzin Taklha, joint secretary of the India-based Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

An estimated 95 percent of Thais are Buddhist, making Thailand perhaps the world's most



Buddhist nation. Though the Dalai Lama practices Tibetan Buddhism—a more mystical branch compared to Thailand’s conservative Theravada Buddhism—he is still highly regarded among Thais.

Thailand is also the base for one of the Dalai Lama’s pet causes, democracy in military-dominated Burma and the release of imprisoned Burmese democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi. Her supporters are rallying support in advance of Burma’s 2010 elections and her possible release.

“His Holiness the Dalai Lama last visited Thailand in 1993 when a group of Nobel Peace laureates held a solidarity meeting for fellow Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi,” Tenzin Taklha said. “Since then, His Holiness has not been able to visit Thailand because of the refusal of the necessary visa from the Thai government, for reasons known to them.”

Why won’t Thailand allow him to enter?

A visit would infuriate China, one of Thailand’s largest trading partners, and likely poison trade and diplomatic relations.

The Dalai Lama isn’t explicitly barred through policy, said Chavanond Intarakomalyasut, secretary to the minister of foreign affairs. “Of course, we would consider it case by case,” he said. “But, generally, we don’t allow anyone to use Thailand as a base country to do any political activities or instigate violence in other countries.”

The Thai foreign minister, Kasit Piromya, has indirectly acknowledged that a Dalai Lama invite would be an unwarranted insult to China.

Last year, he drew an oddly flattering parallel between the Dalai Lama and the fugitive bil-

lionaire and ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who is sought for arrest by the Thai government. Thaksin is currently hopping the globe while organizing a movement to oust the ruling party.

Other countries shouldn’t shelter Thaksin, Kasit said, just as Thailand shouldn’t allow the Dalai Lama to criticize China from Thai soil.

Are there any Asian countries the Dalai Lama can still visit?

A few. The Dalai Lama’s office is based in India, which borders Tibet and openly resents Chinese encroachment into its backyard. He is sometimes allowed to speak in Japan, though officials typically keep their distance. He is also occasionally granted access to Taiwan, China’s bitter enemy, as well as Australia and New Zealand.

But a review of the Dalai Lama’s travel schedule through the last two decades shows only two Southeast Asia visits: the 1993 Thailand visit and a 1992 trip to Indonesia.

The region is now too beholden to Chinese trade and aid to risk a Dalai Lama invite, said





Kevin Hewison, director of the Carolina Asia Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"The U.S. being tied up in the Middle East left a void that China has intentionally filled," Hewison said. "China's trade, investment and aid in Southeast

Asia has made it the most important player in the region now."

These relationships are mostly business-driven and require few diplomatic concessions. "But there are some things you can't do," he said. "You can't support Taiwan. And you

can't push independence for Tibet. It's self-censorship."

The Dalai Lama can barely get into the White House.

Forget SE Asia.

By Patrick Winn

*Global Post,*

February 12, 2010

## Tibet: Forced March Colonization

The Iron Tiger, who from mid-February presides the year 2137 in the Tibetan calendar, will not have it easy in protecting his own. Direct or indirect threats are building up on the horizon of the people of the Country of Snowy Mountains, grabbed by the throat by an arrogant neighbour who only understands the language of force. Inebriated by the illusion of power hammered home on the slightest occasion, forgetful of the lessons of their own history, the present camarilla who hold the reins of power in Beijing imagine themselves to be the Mistress of the World, and spit out angry warnings on all sides as soon as something displeases them. Whether it is about Tibet and the Dalai Lama, or Taiwan, the Chinese dissidents, the adepts of Falun Gong, the Spratley or Paracel Islands, the value of the yuan or again climate change, there is always an official ready to kick off immediately with the sledgehammer argument of "national sovereignty" to intimidate the interlocutor. To such a degree that these ritual vociferations finish up by upsetting even those who wish sometimes to offer the

hand of friendship.

The American President has in turn had the experience—he who upon his installation in the White House was so keen to reorient the policies of his country—ready even to sacrifice certain principles by postponing a meeting with the exiled Tibetan leader before making his first visit to Beijing. The brief lull that some people believed to be apparent in American-Chinese relations did not last long: those who believed in the signs of a happy world dancing to a Washington/Beijing duo, didn't even break even. The annoying thing is that Tibetans are amongst the first to suffer the consequences—as if it were necessary to again prove that Tibet, this question that decidedly disturbs so many people, is largely used by one and the other according to their own immediate interests.

And whilst the Tibetans take all this head on, Beijing continues on the spot, neither hesitating nor relaxing its programme of accelerated colonization. It is useless to be afraid of words, when even the actual Chinese rulers pretend to (feebly) call for anti-imperialism and boast of having "liber-

ated the serfs" by imposing their control with arms on the Tibetan Plateau. In January, the Forum on Tibet, fifth of its kind, sketched out a plan with clear designs—to put to an end the Tibetan people's resistance by drowning it in a tidal wave of investment, of which the first to profit will be the Chinese colons, enticed by this manna. The procedure is not new, even if the Chinese officials play their dirty tricks by dressing it up with tawdry rags in the Tibetan colours. Tibetans are not stupid, especially as the repressing gets more extreme at the same time.

According to official sources, the central government will have devoted 45 milliards of dollars since 2001 to the development of the so-called Autonomous Region. To buy Tibetan loyalty? The result—demonstrated in 2008—has visibly not had the expected result. A handful of daring Chinese researchers have come to the same conclusion. Is it because of that the Fifth Forum wanted to make clear that it would be advisable from now on to give particular attention to the Tibetan regions of Chinese provinces neighbours of the



Tibetan Autonomous Region—which clearly meant the Amdo and the kham, that is, the whole of the historic territory of Tibet? And it doubtless not by chance that Hu Jintao declared during this seminar:—“Tibet is situated at the heart of the national project, it is vital for ethnic unity, social stability and national security.” From that, one can perceive clearly the real but secret aims of the so-called “pacific liberation.” And if one recalls that in 2005 a book by Li Ling was published with the explicit title of “The Waters of Tibet Will Save China”, it is easier to take stock of the issues at a time of global warming, when the official Chinese press announced in a few lines that in 2009, the temperatures in Tibet registered the greatest increase – 5.9°C – when compared to figures recorded since 1961. This does not stop the planners planning the construction of several new airports, as well as the opening of new aerial and terrestrial routes over the whole of the Tibetan territory, without speaking of dams: look for the contradiction!

At the same time, during the meeting at the end of January between the emissaries of the Dalai Lama and Chinese functionaries of the United Front of the Communist Party (responsi-

ble for this thorny dossier), not only the so-called “discussions” did not advance one iota, but the Chinese demands were reviewed to a higher level. It seemed that the exiles must imperatively “not undertake any activity susceptible of harming the vital interest of the People’s Republic of China: be at odds with the Constitution of the PRC; do anything that will undermine the dignity of the Chinese people or its aspirations, or relations between different nationalities inside China.” Only that. In other words, and more crudely, renounce making its own voice heard. But in the same line of thinking, where are the dignity, the aspirations, the interests and the rights of the Tibetan people? Zhu Weiqun, Vice Minister of the so-called United Front was happy to declare, without beating about the bush, that “the Central Government wants to give a chance to the Dalai Lama to correct his errors”. Curious language when it has been proclaimed that the “door is open” to negotiations which, in fact, have never really started...

At the same time, it has been declared, always from official sources, that the security budget has been doubled for Tibet, as for Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang) — which is also another way of say-

ing that the recent personnel changes in posts of responsibility of the so-called autonomous region well and truly indicates a new hardening of attitude, rapidly confirmed by new condemnations. A Tibetan from Nagchu, whose close family and friends are without any news of him, has been condemned to six years for “links with separatists”, whilst Tibetans fleeing their country are systematically arrested in Nepal and threatened with being returned to the Chinese authorities who treat them as “illegal migrants.” It seems however that the Tibetans, united by the ordeal inside and galvanized by the example outside, keep on course and do not give up, as if they know intuitively that “a mistake does not become the truth because the world believes it”, according to a Gandhi’s formula. And rallying round, without realizing it, to the wisdom of Nadejda Mandelstam who survived *against all hope*. Because history shows us that colonization last only a certain time, like empires, and that a colonized people always end up by lifting their heads and shaking off the yoke of the oppressor.

C.B.L.

Newsletter, February 2010

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## Women Come Up Short in Asia

**A** new UNDP report on the status of women should discomfit most of Asia’s leaders

What is the meaning of development? Many supposedly successful countries in Asia and the Pacific could well be asking themselves how they fare on the data about women’s positions in

society compared with supposedly lagging regions in Africa and Latin America. But clearly gross domestic product and internet connectivity are not the only gauges of development.

A United Nations Development Programme report published on International Women’s

Day points to data which should cause plenty of embarrassment in Asia, northeast and South Asia in particular.

Surely the most outstanding and a rebuke to all those who insist that Confucian ideas should rule the modern world is the data on sex ratios at birth. The norm

where there is no interference in natural processes is generally assumed to be between 104 and 105 boys per 100 girls—a ratio determined by nature because of higher death rates among males in the first years. Top of the list is that Communist paragon of male supremacy, China at 120 boys per 100 girls.

But second on the global list of aggressive gender selection is that paragon of the electronic age, South Korea, at 110 boys per 100 girls. This is one area where the South lags the North, which not only has a more sustainable fertility rate but a natural ratio of 105 boys.

South Korea is thus even worse than India, often cited as second only to China in sex imbalance, but only at 108. Generalizing about India is also difficult because some provinces (Punjab is worst) have very high male ratios while others, mostly in the south, have natural levels.

Low economic development actually seems to help gender balance at least in some countries. The most equal in Asia from a sex birth ratio standpoint are Bangladesh and Myanmar, both at 103. Southeast Asia generally comes out well with a regional average of 105 compared with the neo-Confucian Northeast at an average 107. The only poor performer in SE Asia is Singapore which also at 107. Meanwhile Malaysia at 106 is above the regional norm probably because of the impact of its Chinese population on the overall data.

Asia generally compares poorly with the rest of the world. The average in Africa is 103, the most equal to be found anywhere. North America and Latin and Northern Europe come in at 105 and Southern Europe at 107, a sure sign of gender bias around the Mediterranean.

Of course other regions may show greater bias as incomes and health services develop to the point where choice becomes easier. But most in Europe and the Americas have been at that point for many years already.

Abortion or infanticide of females is not of course the only way women go “missing” from the population. In total percentage of “missing women” Pakistan is in the lead at nearly 8% followed closely by India, with China close to 7 percent and Bangladesh and Iran around 4%. Given that neither Pakistan, Iran nor Bangladesh exhibit gender bias at birth, the only conclusion can be that these Muslim societies have high rates of early death due to neglect and disappearances from unnatural causes or in childbirth.

Says the report: “Few countries have adopted or implemented laws prohibiting violence against women, despite widespread evidence of discrimination and assault. Nearly half of the countries in South Asia, and more than 60 percent of those in the Pacific, have no laws against domestic violence. Nor are there many provisions against sexual harassment in workplaces, though 30 to 40 percent of working women report experiencing verbal, physical or sexual abuse.”

Migrant women, a huge category in Southeast Asia, are subject to particular abuse and discrimination, including in such developed countries as Singapore where foreign domestic servants have low wages and even less freedom.

Development has brought more women into the workforce in most countries, but variations are still huge. For instance in Bangladesh 50 percent are in the workforce compared with under 20 percent in Pakistan and 30

percent in India.

China is ahead of almost everyone worldwide with 70 percent in the workforce—clearly a contributor to high growth. It and Vietnam and Thailand over 60 percent are well ahead of developed Asia—Hong Kong, Korea, Singapore are all around 50 percent. (Though some of the differences reflect different age structure as well as social patterns and economic pressures).

Income disparities are also relatively small in both China and Vietnam, with women making nearly 70 percent of male rates, almost up to Australian and New Zealand levels, compared with barely over 50 percent in Singapore and South Korea. Bottom of the heap again is Pakistan, followed by India at 30 percent while Bangladesh is a creditable 50 percent.

Northeast Asia does well on gender equality in education—though it is not alone on this as Iran performs well on this count despite negligible political representation as measured by members of parliament. China does well on that measure too—over 20 percent—but the real power in China lies elsewhere and women are conspicuous by their scarcity at politburo, party secretary and provincial governor level.

In China as elsewhere in northeast Asia, education and the rising economic power of women should in time make Confucian male chauvinism unsupportable. The absolute shortage of women will also erode male dominance. Nonetheless by then it may be too late to offset the damage done by gender bias compared with both undeveloped societies in Africa and the developed ones in the Americas.

Available from [www.asiasentinel.com](http://www.asiasentinel.com)

# Himalaya to Chaopraya Art and Culture Festival

Considering the geography of Thailand and Tibet, these two countries are far away from each other and have no history connected. When we look at the cultures and believe, Thai and Tibetan cultures are linking to each other through Buddhism. Tibet has developed their history and cultures to become a unique one of the world. Tibetans are polite Buddhists who have strong and stable faith toward Buddhism. Recognising these prominent characters of Tibet, the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) together with sister organisations have organised the Himalaya to Chaopraya Art and Culture Festival during 5-10 March 2010 at Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, Pathumwan Junction, Bangkok, Thailand. This event aims to disseminate Tibetan culture representing one of the world's outstanding cultures to inspire society to recognise the value of simple local lifestyle and lead to the exchange programmes on culture, traditions, religions, and arts between Thais and Tibetans.

In the midst of modern culture spreading all over the world, the old traditions of Tibet are being challenged by rapid changes. However, Tibetans in exile are playing good roles to preserve their own beautiful ancient traditions, practices, and cultures. Nevertheless they have to flee from their home land to set up a new life in other countries; the root of culture is still absorbing in their blood and transferring from generation to generation.

This event had faced unexpected obstacles. Even a few days before the opening ceremony,

there was a small group of Chinese—Teochew Club protesting against the Tibetan exchanged-group because they misunderstood that this movement had a hidden political objective. As mentioned earlier in this article, the aim of this event is to provide a chance for Thais to appreciate the beautiful Tibetan art and culture. This was the first Tibetan festival in Thailand.

The content and activity details are purely relevant to Tibetan art and culture together with the performance of hill tribe from Northern Thailand. The festival was divided into two sections; one is the exhibition and the other is art, culture, and music performances as detailed below.

1. Sand Mandala painted by Tibetan monks is one way to practice the mind. To create each Mandala, the monk will sometimes chant and extend their loving kindness to all beings. The painters have to concentrate a lot and start by painting simple geometry shapes. Small details will be added on carefully until the wonderful completed Mandala appears. The Dhamma puzzle behind Mandala is no matter how much things are beautiful, finally they are going to be cleared anyway. On the other hand, things can be also created again after the fall based on the ordinary law of nature. Existence creates emptiness and emptiness creates existence. According to the principle of impermanence, Buddhists should not be attached to things around them.

2. Butter Sculpture is an ancient Tibetan worship tradition. The sculptures are made during annual festivities including the

*Mollam* and other religious celebrations. Butter sculpture is a unique and beautiful art.

3. Thangka is one of the finest forms of Buddhist art. It is the manifestation of the Buddha, Bodhisattva, Dhamma puzzles, and other religious stories. Thangka is significant for Tibetans. They will carry Thangka with them all the time, wherever they move. Traditional Thangka is painted with natural pigments made of minerals. It takes hard efforts to paint a Thangka and the method is complicated. Each can last as long as 100 year.

4. Exhibition of Tibetan lifestyle

Plenty of photos showing activities practiced by the Dalai Lama and old-age Tibetans displayed there. This exhibition tells about Tibet through photos with short descriptions to communicate with the audience and let them imagine their own story about Tibet independently.

5. Tibetan medicine exhibition and check-up

This is the holistic science closely link with Buddhism to take care of Tibetans' health. Tibetan medicine focuses on changing behavior or lifestyle for better health. Pill is just one factor to cure people. Only by taking medicine without changing behavior, a treatment will not function effectively.

The culture and music performances by the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA)—which is an ancient institute based in Dharamshala, India include;

Shanak

Tibetan Ritual Black Hat Dance (Shanak) is a holy ceremony. The aim of this perfor-

mance is to get rid of obstacles to reach happiness. These obstacles mean sorrow and ignorance about the root causes of suffering inside a person. At the beginning of the performance, Tibetan Ritual Black Hat Dancers will pour holy water (black tea) to worship Lama, gods (different Buddha's postures), and Dhamma protectors in order to please and get blessings from them. After that, dancers will invite all friends and Dhamma protector's followers to join the dance.

#### Kongpoi Dha lu

Kongpo province is in the south-east of Tibet. This area is covered with green forest and many kinds of tree. Apart from skills relevant to living in the forest, indigenous men from this area are well known for their archery skills while girls are very beautiful.

#### Domey Tserik

This dance is popular in Tso Ngon and Labrang in Domey province, which is the northeast of Tibet. All male and female dancers cultivate joyfulness by accepting the good deed and loving kindness from each other through music and nice words.

#### Lhokhag Trangoe Dro Dhung

Generally Dro Dhung will be mostly performed for special and auspicious occasions for instance the celebration of the Dalai Lama's accession to the throne. This special dancing originated in the south of Tibet.

#### Yak Dance

Yak is the most important

local animal of Tibet. Yak Dance is originated from the Drowa Sangmo opera. This show reflects the close relationship between Tibetans and yaks. Milk from female yak so called 'Dree' is used to make butter. Then the dree will sing and offer fresh butter to the Dalai Lama.

To Dancing is a local performance from the north of Thailand. "To" is an animal mixing of 5 species. To dancing represents the fun and happiness people are having. Teno and poet reading of Karen hill tribe from the north of Thailand are other performances in this section.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognised the Himalaya to Chaopraya Art and Culture Festival in Bangkok. Accordingly he blessed the organisers and all team members thanking them for initiating this event to disseminate Tibetan culture in Thailand. On the last day of this event, His Holiness the Dalai Lama delivered a message to Tibetans and Thais. He requested Tibetan to preserve their own culture, their unique identity and good relationship with other nationalities. Peaceful means should be used to solve all problems. He insisted that he has always applied the middle-path to govern his people according to the Chinese constitution. He demanded for an independent power to govern his people in terms of culture, language, and Tibetan identity. If Tibet gets freedom from China, the Dalai Lama and his government in exile will not accept any political position.

Finally, the conflict between Tibet and China must be solved by creating acceptable agreements between the two governments. His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasised that all Tibetans should keep good relationship with the Chinese for the sake of peace in the long run.

The schedule of the Himalaya to Chaopraya Art and Culture Festival ended on March 10, 2010. But the Sand Mandala ceremony was organised on March 11, 2010, attended by a big crowd of Thais.

Before organising the Himalaya to Chaopraya Art and Culture Festival, the Tibetan film festival was also held during 16-19 February 2010 at the same place—Bangkok Art and Culture Centre. The film festival intended to portray Tibetan society through movies and documentaries. Additionally, the seminar and discussion were organised to make a clearer understanding about the movies. The lists of movie shown include; (1) *Unmistaken Child* (2) *Kundun* (3) *Tibet: Cry of the Snow Lion* (4) *Himalaya* (5) *The Tibet Book of the Dead* (6) *Dreaming Lhasa* (7) *Windhouse* (8) and *The Cup*

Both festivals attracted attention and drew support from Thais and foreigners. We can say that the festival fulfilled the organising objectives. The audience gained some knowledge. Though the festival ended, the story of Tibet is going to exist in the memory of the audience.

Cakthai

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## Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

I would like to introduce myself to INEB's Kalyanamitra family. I have come into this circle firstly in the position of treasurer after last November and the INEB conference in Chiang Mai. From the INEB working group, I was subsequently promoted to the position of Interim Executive Secretary of INEB in February 2010.

I'm happy to be a part of this family and hope to be able to communicate with you more. I also look forward to doing more 'mindful social action'.

For the first 4-month period of this year, there have been a number of follow-up meetings after the Chiang Mai conference, both in Thailand and in India. The INEB secretariat organized a working group meeting to follow-up and organize the smooth transfer of INEB management, and re-organize the management structure to be more inclusive and accountable. If you want further details, please don't hesitate to request from me directly.

During this period also, reflection and planning for the Youth Exchange for Peace and Social Innovation program took place. Right now, we have seven Buddhist participants on exchange in five countries, and we plan to continue with this activity for at least another two batches of participants.

Regarding to forthcoming activities, there are several international activities and events being organized by INEB partners' network. Please go to the INEB website for further details ([www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)). The website is also a flow of information on different issues, and we will be updating information soon regarding the global Buddhist platform for climate and environmental justice.

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know the date of the forthcoming Advisory Committee (AC) and Executive Committee (EC) meeting for the year 2010, so you can pin down the date of the meeting right a way. We will also shortly send you the program details of the meeting.

The annual AC & EC meeting will be organized from the 19-22 of November 2010 at Wongsanit Ashram, Siam (Thailand). It will start with the first two days of retreat and continue for the next two days with the AC/EC meeting. After the meeting, we have decided to hold the Young Buddhist Executive Workshop (this is for the Executive Committee members aged under 40, and some of the young executive Buddhist partners) from the 23-25 of November, which includes a one day excursion.

Yours in Dhamma,

Moo - Somboon Chungprampree  
Interim Executive Secretary



## Betterment of Buddhism

*For two decades, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists has served as a platform for Buddhists of different traditions to make their religion more relevant to society*

Deep maroon and pink. White, grey and black. Saffron, brown, dark blue and ochre. The colourful procession of ordained men and women was filing quietly along Suthep Road, with bystanders ready to offer alms as they passed. But instead of food for personal consumption, many of the items presented were boxes of medicine and other medical supplies. This was the very first international alms round ever held in Chiang Mai involving, amazingly, a full Sangha body—Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis, laymen and laywomen from different Buddhist traditions. The donations were to be forwarded to ethnic migrants and refugees along the Thai-Burmese border. For isn't *dhana* (giving) deemed as one of the fundamental tenets of Buddhist teachings? As is giving where it is most needed instead of the conventional monk-oriented-only practice. The holy men and women were there mainly to serve as the go-betweens, linking the givers and receivers in this greatly meritorious act.

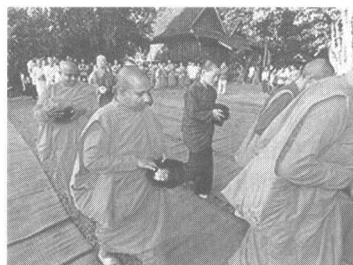
As innovative as the ritual is, the alms round was part of the recent conference that celebrated the 20th anniversary of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (Ineb). Involving over 200 participants hailing from different Buddhist organisations around the world, besides Thailand, there were representatives from Burma, Vietnam, Cambo-



*Photos Courtesy of Bhanuwat Jittivuthikarn and Pipob Udomittipong*

dia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, Nepal, Ladakh, Tibet, South Africa, Europe, Australia, Canada and the US. The idea of monastics from various schools of Buddhism helping ethnic peoples from Burma was thus apt. For it revealed the potential of collaboration across denominations—as evident in the multicoloured robes—and how Buddhism is as much about realising peace and transformation within oneself as for society at large.

Such a balance between spiritual and social work has been the guidepost for Ineb since day one. The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary reunion combined meditation retreats with a semi-academic conference, sessions for cross-border networking, communal chanting led by various Buddhist groups, a peace march through the town of Chiang Mai and the said alms round. The topics of discussions reflect the broad range of work by individual Ineb members—from peace and reconciliation to gender equality, economic and environmental justice, and revival of Buddhism especially in difficult areas (for instance, India, Lord Buddha's place of birth, where the Buddhist Dalits have long suffered dis-



*For over two decades, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists has been working to bridge Buddhists from different parts of the world and across denominations to work for the betterment of the society.*

crimination as the Untouchables in the caste system).

All these important works have stemmed from a very small seed. Back in the '80s, Thai Buddhist scholar Sulak Sivaraksa initiated a new platform that broke ranks with mainstream Buddhism with its narrow focus on meditation and personal liberation. In February 1989, 36 clergy and laypeople from 11 countries met on a houseboat in the provincial town of Uthai Thani, and Ineb was born, which counts His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and the late Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia as its patrons.

In his keynote speech at the beginning of the conference, co-founder Sulak Sivaraksa talked about how this non-sectarian coalition of Buddhists, one of the few such forums at the international level, has gradually promoted better recognition of the term "socially engaged Buddhism".

"Besides its name as an international network, we are at the periphery," said Sulak. "Mainstream Buddhists were

rather suspicious of our 'engaged activities'. Yet from our sincere endeavours over two decades, and with dedicated good friends around the world, we've managed to engage in dialogues with mainstream Buddhists. ... We also have dialogues with engaged Christians and Muslims."

After all, one could contend that the roots of socially engaged Buddhism are to be found in the teachings and actions of Lord Buddha himself, who strove to create an ideal society, the Sangha, that challenged the prevailing caste and other belief systems. Jonathan Watts of the Think Sangha group, an offshoot of Ineb, has traced the development of this concept and practice from being an unknown phenomenon to a now widely popular identity, but one that may still seem unclear in several corners.



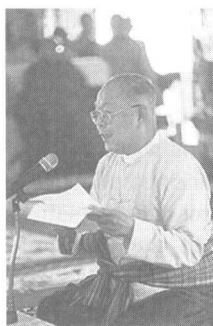
For him, the first phase of socially engaged Buddhism began as a response by Asian society to colonisation. Examples include, cites Watts, the anti-colonial movement led by Anagarika Dharmapala in Sri Lanka in the late 19th century and a similar movement in Burma in the early 20th century, as well as the ongoing efforts by Tibetan exiled communities to counter imperialism of communist China since the occupation of Lhasa in the 1950s.

Subsequent phases of engaged Buddhist practices see diverse directions. This ranges from democratisation and peace

movements—the so-called Saffron Revolution in Burma in 2007 was a recent example—to explorations of alternative development models and works on different aspects of cultural and human rights.

With regard to Ineb, Watts notes its distinctive quality:

"Most organisations build themselves around policies, administrative structures and budgets. For better or worse, Ineb has focused more on the shared interests and activities of socially engaged kalyanamitra [spiritual friends], rather than build itself as an organisation."



*Sulak Sivaraksa, co-founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, during the recent 20th anniversary reunion.*

Such a liberal approach has brought about change throughout the years. Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan painted a dramatic picture of the early years of Ineb in parallel with the volatile politics of the region. The 1988 uprising in Burma sent droves of students across the border into Thailand. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians were languishing in the refugees camps, while the war in their homeland raged on. In Thailand, where the secretariat's office is located (and lumped with a string of other non-governmental organisations founded by Sulak), by the time the third Ineb conference was

held, a military coup took place, and in the following year, several staff in the offices which Ineb shared were caught up in the Black May street protests to oust the military regime, and co-founder Sulak was forced to flee the country. (A charge of lese majeste was filed against him but has since been cleared).

Works for and on behalf of fellow Buddhists across national boundaries continue regardless. In his autobiography, Sulak recalls how the Japanese partner of Ineb took seriously the issue of the Buddhist minority in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh being killed or forcibly relocated to India. A Bangladeshi representative was invited to give talks all over Japan, which happened to be a major source of foreign aid for Bangladesh. "So our efforts had a great impact," Sulak writes.

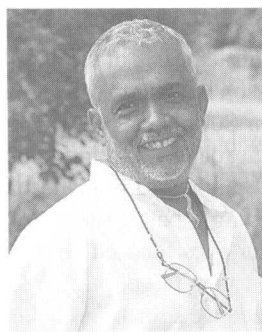
Similar behind-the-scene support was also extended to Burma and Sri Lanka. Following the 1988 uprising in Burma, when a lot of students and minority groups were purged, Ineb provided basic medical training, disseminated timely insider information on the situation of human rights abuse by the military junta, and importantly, assisted in the setting up of a "jungle university"... right across the border" with visiting teachers from Bangkok and the international community offering training. Next was the organisation of six weeks of conflict resolution training for 30 Sri Lankan monks by their Quaker friends from the US and the Oslo-based International Peace Research Institute.

### **Buddhism in action**

*The new chairperson of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Harsha Ku-*

***mara Navaratne, on lessons learned from building peace in his homeland of Sri Lanka***

It has been a wonderful series of symbiotic births and revivals. The ties between Buddhism in Thailand and Sri Lanka have been an intriguing cycle of sharing. In the sixth century AD, the Sukhothai kingdom adopted the Theravada school of Buddhism, transported from India via Ceylon, as the state religion. In turn, when the religion in Sri Lanka faced a decline in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Phra Upali from Ayutthaya was invited and what has since been referred to as the Siam Nikaya lineage was established, being the largest denomination in the island country at present.



**Harsha Kumara Navaratne:**  
*'For me, karuna [compassion] is action.'* Photo courtesy of  
Sewalanka Foundation

A similar phenomenon is now happening in the circle of so-called socially engaged Buddhists. In his advanced age, Thai Buddhist scholar Sulak Sivaraksa decided to pass on the torch of chairing the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (Ineb), which he co-founded, to his Sri Lankan friend, Harsha Kumara Navaratne. At a recent annual reunion of the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), where Navaratne was invited to give a keynote speech, Sulak expressed his trust that the works

of Ineb, trying to promote better understanding among Buddhists worldwide and with other religions, will carry on well under Navaratne's leadership.

The choice seems apt, for in many ways the 58-year-old Sri Lankan has a lot in common with Sulak. For several decades, Navaratne has been involved in peace-building and grassroots development in his homeland, first with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and then with the Sewalanka Foundation, now known as one of the largest non-government organisations in Sri Lanka.

With his quick wit and wry sense of humour, Navaratne is forthright about his views of mainstream Buddhism. During a pre-conference retreat as part of the 20th anniversary of Ineb, he related how he has had a hard time with a few meditation teachers who, he said, had a "bigger ego than anybody I have seen in my life".

For Navaratne, the real practice of metta, or loving-kindness, usually takes place in common people's daily lives. He recalled growing up witnessing his grandmother scooping up a fly that had fallen into a water basin and letting it free. Or his mother, who rushed to give milk to a poor neighbour's child before coming back to feed her own son.

"You can close your eyes and do metta [bhavana] as long as you don't see other people's suffering. [But] for me, karuna [compassion] is action.

"I've worked for the last 35 years as a development worker in every corner of Sri Lanka. I am a Buddhist leader, a student leader, but I've never had any problems working with Christians, with Tamils, with the 'Tigers' [often dubbed a terrorist

group]. The real Buddhist practitioners don't have borders, "me" and "you"; everybody is "ours".

On the other hand, Navaratne lamented how many who call themselves Buddhists have been relentlessly spreading greed, hatred and delusion. How can a predominantly Buddhist country have so much violence? he asked. And with the proliferation of consumerism, a number of people flock to the temples either for escapism or to pray for money and/or power, he said.

In his analysis, a lot of the divisiveness in his homeland has stemmed from centuries of colonialism. The post-colonial era has maintained much of the legacy, be it in the educational, administrative or economic systems.

"When I was young, my country was a peaceful place—our policemen didn't even carry guns. But in the past 40 years we have witnessed so much violence. Tens of thousands of young people have died. Sinhalese have killed Sinhalese, Tamils have killed Tamils, and Sinhalese and Tamils have killed each other. At the village level and the national levels, we lost some of our best and brightest leaders."

Having worked for two decades with the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement, which sought to promote a return to traditional Buddhist values of non-violence and self-sufficiency, Navaratne said one of his biggest lessons was that development work must be based on values and human relationships, which could be found right in the age-old traditions and cultural heritage of their ancestors.

"A political leader who promotes hatred, division and inequality is not being guided by our traditional values. A militant

group that promotes social change through violence and Marxist revolution is not being guided by our traditional values. A development organisation that defines 'development' as the accumulation of material wealth is not being guided by our traditional values."

At Sewalanka Foundation, which Navaratne describes as a "professional development organisation and not a social movement", the focus is on mobilising people so that they will be able to help themselves in the long run. The 800-plus staff, which comprises both Sinhalese and Tamils in roughly equal proportions, have largely been recruited from local areas and groomed through a series of training sessions/educational opportunities so that they will be able to run operations when Sewalanka moves on to the next target area, which usually happens every four or five years.

An oft-cited slogan at the Sewalanka Foundation thus has a tongue-in-cheek but lofty vision: "If you give me a fish, you feed me for a day. If you teach me to fish, you feed me until the water is polluted and the beach is taken for hotel development. But if you teach me to organise, then whatever the challenge, I can join together with my community and we will develop our own solution."

To work in a country torn apart by ethnic and religious wars, trust is of pivotal importance. Navaratne did not elaborate much on the ordeals he and his organisation have faced except to say how the first few years of Sewalanka were a "very, very difficult" period, that they had to work hard to prove their neutrality, and every now and then some of the staff, including himself, would receive threats.

There were times, he said, when he did not know if his children would come back home when they went to school, or when he went to the north (where the most severe clashes took place) whether or not he would be able to see them again.

But over time, Sewalanka managed to carve itself a unique position, able to work in areas under the control of the government and military forces as well as under the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). For one thing, Navaratne stressed how his foundation does not present itself as a Buddhist organisation. With constant efforts to show their inclusiveness, both in principle and practice, Sewalanka (which means "selfless service") was eventually recognised as an organisation representing all ethnic and religious groups, he said.

When working in Jaffna, once a stronghold of the LTTE, he tries to blend in with the local customs - wearing clothes, eating the food, spending time with the folks there. Navaratne seems to pay particular importance to fostering multicultural communications—like music, art, drama—which he said have far more transcendental impact on bridging people together than big money ever can. (After all, it is creative art that has sustained him throughout the years, he added.) He gave an example of a Tamil musical band from Jaffna that has become increasingly popular among the Sinhalese. There is one temple, he cited, that has drawn a following among both the Tamils and Sinhalese and even in the peak of the conflict has seen joint celebrations of hundreds of thousands of pilgrims without any incidence of violence whatsoever.

"For me, the most important step to attaining peace is that you respect another person—his beliefs, his language, his ways of life, his music, his dance, the culture he was brought up in, the way he walks ... If you try to understand that and respect it, then that's the first entry point to peace.

"Don't miss any opportunity. It can be small. It can be big. If there is an opportunity for building up society, please take that opportunity. Sri Lanka has missed so many opportunities for building peace in the past. If you get an opportunity to do something, even in a small way, if you think it is the right thing, do it. If you can do it at an individual level, they can do at a bigger level."

And at the end of the day, the key lesson is never to call it quits.

"In Sewalanka, we say 'we make the road by walking.' There is no straight, ready-made path to building a better society. We keep our eyes focused on where we are trying to go, but to reach that place we sometimes have to try more than one route. If there is an obstacle in our path, we don't give up; we find a way around it. We have to compromise and adjust. We have to be flexible and creative. Our spiritual values are like a compass telling us whether we are heading in the proper direction. We learn as we walk.

"For me, this is what it means to be a practising and engaged Buddhist. It isn't easy. The world is complex and full of suffering. It is frustrating to see the spread of individualism, capitalism and consumerism. It is difficult to navigate political obstacles and differing viewpoints. When we look at all of the challenges before us, it is tempting to stop



walking. It is easier to step off the path and withdraw. Some people withdraw into a personal meditation practice. Others withdraw by creating utopian societies or communities of like-minded people.

“An engaged Buddhist continues interacting with people that have different views and conflicting opinions. An engaged Buddhist keeps walking through the messiness of changing circumstances and unexpected

obstacles.”

*Vasana Chinvarakorn*  
from *Bangkok Post*,

Tuesday, March 30, 2010

## From IRA Leader to Zen Buddhist Practitioner

George Lennon, former Commanding Officer of the West Waterford Flying Column, Irish Republican Army, was raised in Ireland and played a central role in the independence struggle in Ireland. George was awarded an Irish War of Independence medal and was the youngest Irish Republican Army commander in the War of Independence of 1921. In America George was attracted to the pacifist tenets of the Society of Friends (Quakers). With Chet Carlson, inventor of “Xerography”, he became a founding member of the Rochester Zen Center. His views were set forth in a short memoir (“Trauma in Time”) and a play (“Down by the Glenside”), both unpublished. The latter work had to do with the issue of a captured enemy combatant, a matter with which he had dealt with personally when faced with the necessity of executing childhood acquaintance and member of the armed Royal Irish Constabulary. This book, “Trauma in Time” involved the shooting of a friend of his family on the opposite side of the independence battles for Irish independence. Recently the military historian, Terence O’Reilly, published in September of 2009, “Rebel Heart: George Lennon Flying Column Commander”.

To give some background

on George Lennon, as a youth of thirteen he drilled with youngsters “up and down the street using their hurleys as mock rifles”. During the Easter Week Rebellion of 1916, at the age of fifteen, he undertook a search for missing armaments from an ambushed train then left his Christian Brothers School at age sixteen to devote himself to the struggle for an independent Irish Republic. He was incarcerated at age seventeen in Waterford for stealing a rifle from a British soldier. On another charge, he celebrated his nineteenth birthday in Cork Male Jail but was released due to suffering from “Spanish Influenza”, a disease which resulted in the deaths of millions of people between the years 1918 to 1919.

George led some West Waterford (Deise) men who successfully put their small numbers against the British establishment in Ireland. After a highly successful attack on a police barracks in Kilmallock, County Limerick, he served with the men of the East Limerick Flying Column, the first active service unit composed of men “on the run”. Having trained under two distinguished IRA men he returned to West Waterford to serve as the youngest commanding officer of an active service unit—the Deise Flying Column. Under his lead-

ership the guerrilla fighters made West Waterford difficult to govern by the English, who were at this time, recovering from the great conflicts that had been taking place in continental Europe. George undertook seventeen engagements against British forces as well as the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Black and Tans (an unruly group of ex soldiers sent in by the British military following WW I). There were other engagements including gunrunning activities and arms seizures. But disillusionment began to set in with what George regarded as a “premature” truce declared 11 July 1921. Entering Waterford City in March of 1922 his I.R.A. “Irregulars” claimed it for the newly established Irish nation since the 12<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Norman invasion and settlement. In the ensuing battle against the Irish Free State forces his men fired the first and last shots at Ballybricken Prison. Retreating westward he made the decision that “we were not going to live off the good country people again” so he resigned as Vice Commanding Officer of the West Waterford Brigade on August 1, 1922.

Having being “on the run” from the authorities he lacked the educational background and financial resources to pursue a



profession or further his education. The closing of the family run Dungarvan Gas Works did not allow for a livelihood in this respect so with his revolutionary idealism compromised by a truce and subsequent Civil War George emigrated to the United States along with a number of his comrades. He resided for ten years (1926-1936) in New York City and worked with his brother-in-law George Sherwood as well as editor Joseph Campbell, to become the "business manager" of the "Irish Review" a "magazine of Irish expression".

His return to Ireland in 1936 was fictionalized in a 1938 novel, "Dead Star's Light", written by Una Troy under the nom de plume of "Elizabeth Connor". While the book was not banned, as was an earlier work, it did not elicit an enthusiastic response from the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, which, by reason of the Irish Constitution of 1937, occupied a very "special position" regarding censorship of books & films.

This return to his native land was short lived. George was viewed by some people as a "communist, an anti-cleric, an agitator, a gun-man" but his nostalgia for Ireland began to dissipate and he once again departed the land of his ancestors. Two years later his wife and son joined him in New York City which was the same year that his novel was adapted for the Abbey stage as "The Dark Road". Upon his 1991 death in Rochester, N.Y., he was cremated, per his wishes, without ceremony. His ashes were bequeathed to Hugh Curran and were brought to Maine. There have been recent events dealing with George's contributions to Irish Independence. For instance, the Waterford County Museum hosted a talk and exhi-

bition entitled "The Road to Independence" on 19 September 2009 in the Dungarvan Town Hall where the role played by George Lennon was extolled.

George Lennon and I knew each other for seven years in Rochester, especially where it concerned our mutual involvement with the Zen Center of Rochester. I had become a monastic under Philip Kapleau at the Center in 1967 and immediately came to know George, who was a founding member of the Center. His brogue was still very strong and his sense of humor acerbic and distinct. The Zen Center that he helped develop had been a Vedanta group led by Doris & Chester Carlson. Chester Carlson was the inventor of the Xerox process for copy machines who set aside a certain amount of money to bring Philip Kapleau to Rochester in 1965. The invitation was largely based on the readings of the Vedanta group in "The Three Pillars of Zen", a book which eventually became one of the few Buddhist texts to sell over one million copies.

My arrival in 1967 coincided with a growth of membership and a gradual shift away from Vedantism to a Zen Buddhist practice involving much sitting meditation. This period coincided with an influx of youthful meditators from around the country driven by a sense of despair and alienation, largely as the result of the Vietnam War & the awareness of the pain and suffering taking place there. Initially I was the only monastic living in the house with Philip Kapleau but about a year later two more monastics joined me. During that first year there was a rift with the Carlsons and our group had to find other means to finance the Center. We moved shortly thereafter from a rela-

tively small house on Buckingham street to Arnold Park. This move represented not only a move to much larger quarters but also a shift in emphasis toward a newer younger generation, many of whom were strong advocates of peace against the violence taking place around them.

The older generation that had so recently invited Philip Kapleau to Rochester turned away from this newer version of Buddhist meditation practice but a few stayed on. One of these was George Lennon. Over the course of the next few years I was dimly aware of George's role as a member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and since I had spent my youth in Donegal, Ireland with a father who had also been a member of the IRA, George and I had a good deal in common.

Alongside me, George undertook the job of helping Philip Kapleau on a day to day basis by driving us around town for shopping or for attending meetings or giving talks. George also helped out around the meditation center and assisted Philip Kapleau in evening meditation sessions as well as on weekend retreats.

Prior to arriving in Rochester I had been living in Toronto where, in the evenings I meditated with a Zen group there, although two years earlier, in 1965, I had begun my Zen training with the "Zen Studies Society" in New York City under Yasutani Roshi. The Zen Studies Society was co-founded by my mentor at that time, Bernard Phillips who was the chairman of the religion department at Temple University. I began my investigations of Buddhism under his tutelage and at the same time Bernard arranged to bring Yasutani Roshi from NYC at the urging of Philip Kapleau whom he had come to

know in Japan. I would often visit Bernard on my trips back to Philadelphia to visit my parents and on one of these visits he recommended I go to see Kapleau in Rochester.

Once settled in at the Rochester Zen Center George's presence made a great deal of difference to me. We both shared the same heritage and tended to have an instinctive skepticism for organized religion. As a result we became very good friends and I would often visit him at his home near Lake Ontario where his wife, May, would make wonderful meals for us. When problems arose, as they often did at the Zen Center, it was to George that I turned for advice.

George had an incurable irascibility and humorous cynicism that I found profoundly appealing. He and I were on the Board of Directors of the Rochester Zen Center but George had the Irish habit of cutting through vagueness and delving into the essence of the issue while being able to humorously deflate pomposity without hurting anyone's feelings.

As noted earlier, the Vietnam War was in full swing at this time so we saw an influx of returning veterans, some of them with what would now be diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). There were others in their early twenties who, like myself, were desperate to embrace an authentic spirituality. Within a couple of years our small Zen Center had moved to Arnold Park where a massive fire took place at the very time we were all involved with renovations. I was the head monk in charge of overseeing all the renovations but on one weekend when I happened to be away in Toronto, a devastating fire occurred that gutted the building.

This repair and renovation required two years of considerable effort to accomplish and fortunately we had more than thirty volunteers working daily on-site.

My supervisory role included being the "Jiki" in charge of the Zendo so that I often felt overwhelmed with the seven day a week responsibility to make the Center functional. In those times George was my refuge and the one who could most easily relax my fragmented energies.

George attended most of our once a month weekend retreats that we continued to have despite the fire. Although he suffered from a serious arthritic condition that caused him excruciating pain while sitting in meditation for any extended period of time, he persevered but was unable to attend our seven day retreats held at the Gratwick estate, about thirty miles south of Rochester.

Just prior to our move in 1968 to Arnold Park Doris & Chester Carlson had halted their stipends in reaction to our expressed need to be more independent. George maintained his individual mindset and kept up a balancing act of staying on with the Zen Center while also participating with Doris Carlson and her Vedanta group. Doris had funded a small bookstore and library in downtown Rochester and I'd often find George there talking with visitors and providing tea or coffee and fascinating conversations.

The following year (1970) I got married, and my wife, who had become very fond of George, asked him to "give her away" since her own father was no longer alive. George did so with aplomb and dignity and walked her down the isle at one of the first weddings to have ever taken place at the Rochester Zen Center.

George and May were kindness personified and my wife, Susan and I, felt honored to continue to be invited to their house and to enjoy their kindness and generosity. Susan had spent over a year in the Wicklow Mountains near Dublin where she learned hand weaving design with Lily Bohlin, so both of us felt a wonderful sense of nostalgia whenever we were freed up enough to spend the afternoon with both of them.

In 1972 we moved to a farm fifteen miles away from Rochester. I had begun a separation from PK, no longer feeling a connection to him as a teacher, a necessary condition if one wanted a good teacher-student relationship.

With our young son Oisín we moved to Vermont and two years later to Maine where we joined Moonspring Hermitage (now known as Morgan Bay Zendo) but during those times we still kept up contact with George by phone calls and letters. After he died we were given his ashes and took them back to Downeast Maine and placed them at the foot of a tree behind our owner built home. Keeping George's tree area cleared of weeds and long grass was a task I gladly assumed in order to honor his memory. Eventually some of the ashes were sent back to Ivan in Rochester with the understanding that they would be placed in the Rochester Zen Center country Zendo.

George Lennon was an integral part of my life and in retrospect I don't believe I could have survived the responsibilities and psychological adjustments I had to make at such a young age in order to live as a Zen monastic and practice a radically new way of living a spiritual life.

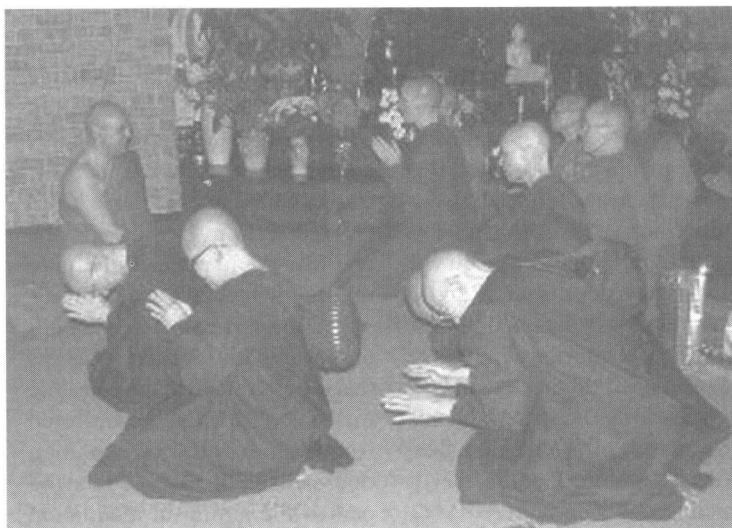
*Hugh J. Curran*  
University of Maine

## The Gathering of Elders

The latest gathering of Western elders of the Ajahn Chah Sangha (referred to informally as WAM) took place from the 7-9<sup>th</sup> December 2009 at Wat Pah Nanachat, in Ubon, Northeast Thailand. The gathering was attended by some twenty-eight elders, including Ven. Ajahn Sumedho, abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England, the senior Western disciple of Ajahn Chah. Luang Por Liem, the abbot of Wat Pah Pong, (Ajahn Chah's monastery) kindly gave an opening address.

The gathering this year was dominated by discussion of the unfortunate events surrounding the delisting of Bodhinyana Monastery in Perth, Western Australia from the Ajahn Chah Sangha, and the estrangement of an old friend and erstwhile member of the group, Ajahn Brahmavamso.

The events of the last two months have caused an unprecedented storm in our communities, both monastic and lay, and feelings of division have run high throughout the wider Buddhist world. Evidence of this was clear in a petition and various letters presented to the gathering. Several elders noted how many familiar names appeared in the documents. Sympathy with the feelings expressed in them was mixed with a regret that they were often based on an interpretation of events that differed markedly from our own. There was a sense of frustration that we had not as yet been able to adequately transmit our understanding of the various issues raised, accompanied by an acknowledgment that it was hard to see how it could have been any other way. Our



*"The Perth Ordination": On Sept 22, 2009, four bhikkunis were ordained at the Bodhinyana monastery, setting off a monastic firestorm which resulted in the expulsion of Ajahn Brahmavamso from the Wat Pah Pong Sangha*

commitment to the principle of consultation and consensus meant that we had no choice but to delay crafting a coherent response until we could come together as a group and discuss the matter face to face.

It might be worthwhile at this point to give a brief overview of the nature of our Sangha. The first thing that must be said is that the Ajahn Chah Sangha is far from being the monolithic Vatican-like entity that some have portrayed it as. It is in most senses a noticeably loose and flexible association of monastics. It currently consists of well over 300 monasteries, with perhaps 2200 Thai monks and nuns and some 170 of various other nationalities, 40 of whom reside in Thailand with the remainder living in branch monasteries throughout the world.

Membership of the Ajahn Chah Sangha is voluntary and contingent on accepting certain basic standards and principles.

The Western Sangha is a subset of the whole, autonomous in the running of all its own affairs overseas—except in cases whereby they directly oppose the wishes of the larger group. In turn the Ajahn Chah Sangha in Thailand operates within constraints overseen by the Thai Sangha governing council (Maha-thera Samakom) and, through respecting those, is able to maintain its own distinct character.

Ajahn Chah is one of the most loved and revered figures in the Buddhist world. Association with his name confers privileges and responsibilities, both spiritual and material. It is no surprise then that the elders of the Ajahn Chah Sangha consider it their duty to care for the integrity of the lineage. For the Ajahn Chah Sangha the crux of the problems leading up to Ajahn Brahmavamso's delisting was his determination to follow his own highly controversial agenda, without consultation and contrary to the

wishes of the elders. The particular topic on his agenda—the ceremony performed in Perth on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October—was an important but not the crucial element.

One of the reasons that we have found it difficult to respond to matters surrounding that ceremony has been our feeling that the issue has been framed in a seriously misleading way. It seems to us that a number of factors have been conflated that need to be dealt with separately. In addition, the delisting of Bodhinyana monastery by the Ajahn Chah Sangha has been presented on the web as a patriarchal knee-jerk. The situation of the siladharas in England has been cited as a proof of our unwillingness to give the appropriate respect to women's spiritual aspirations. We do not see things in this way.

Here we will offer an explanation on what we see as three related but separate topics:

- \* The event in Perth and its repercussions
- \* Bhikkhuni ordination
- \* The Siladhara Order

## 1. The event in Perth and its repercussions

In mid-October Ajahn Brahmavamso informed Ven. Ajahn Sumedho that he would conduct a bhikkhuni ordination in Perth before the end of the month. When the news reached the larger Sangha the reaction was one of surprise and a deep dismay. The source of these feelings was not outright opposition to bhikkhuni ordination as such (in fact a number of our Western elders consider the arguments supporting its legitimacy to be well-founded), but the sense that the way the ordination had been arranged constituted a serious betrayal of trust.

What made us feel that way? Well, a meeting of the Western elders of the Ajahn Chah Sangha had been planned for December, and one of the main items on the agenda was to be the topic of bhikkhuni ordination. This meeting was to be hosted by Ajahn Brahmavamso and his Sangha in Perth. Given the importance the elders attached to the coming discussion, we could not understand why the ordination should be rushed through before our meeting. Why, we wondered, could it not have been performed after our meeting? Why despite a long period of preparation were we given so little notice? And why should the preparations have been deliberately concealed? We were to be presented with a *fait accompli*. A major and controversial innovation, considered illegitimate by the Thai Sangha, would be performed unilaterally. The message to us seemed to be that this ordination was none of our business. Our part was merely to get used to it.

We still feel that we have not received any satisfactory answers to these questions. We do not understand why Ajahn Brahmavamso should have felt able to act in this manner, given that both verbally and in writing he had affirmed that he would not do so. In fact as recently as last year, in a written response to one of our elders, he had stated that he felt hurt that anyone could believe that he would consider such a move. We have been told that Ajahn Brahmavamso subsequently changed his mind and that we—should move on.—But, given the emphasis we as bhikkhus place on keeping our word, we do not consider this to be an adequate response.

To the Ajahn Chah Sangha

elders the issue was thus primarily one of a disregard for the agreed standard of seeking and gaining consent for actions that affect the whole group. In June 2009 the Ajahn Chah Sangha at Wat Pa Pong reaffirmed its willingness to conform with the Thai Sangha governing council's current position: that bhikkhuni ordination has ceased to exist and cannot be legitimately revived. It was taken as given that continued membership of the group would be contingent on upholding that resolution. In our monastic culture, the disrespect perceived in Ajahn Brahmavamso's actions is, in other words, profound. It is comparable to a slap in the face.

Having decided to go ahead with his plan come what may, Ajahn Brahmavamso did so without informing either his preceptor, Somdet Buddhajahn, (currently also the acting head of the Thai Sangha), or Luang Por Liem, the head of the Ajahn Chah Sangha. The reason that that is significant is that he was performing a ceremony considered highly controversial by the Thai Sangha, and one bound to fail to receive their acceptance.

Ajahn Brahmavamso had, over the years, received permission to act as a preceptor and had been granted a royal ecclesiastical title—these are no small things for a Western monk to be honoured with. These signify tremendous recognition, trust and responsibility. In acting as he did Ajahn Brahmavamso seemed to render them meaningless. It was widely perceived as gross ingratitude, particularly amongst the Thai Sangha.

At the November 1<sup>st</sup> meet-

<sup>1</sup> To hear the recording of this, please visit [www.forestsangha.org](http://www.forestsangha.org)



ing at Wat Pah Pong, Ajahn Brahmagamso was given the opportunity to reconcile himself with the Sangha of Wat Pah Pong, and by extension the Thai Sangha at large, by acknowledging the invalidity of the ordination ceremony. Having been formally presented with the option three times, he still felt unable to do so. The Sangha felt in turn that it had no alternative but to delist his monastery. As can be heard clearly on the recording of the meeting the resolution was by no means a matter of 'a few grunts,' as it has been widely represented, but rather it was a rousing agreement on the part of the 160 strong monastic assembly, with Ajahn Brahmagamso himself providing the solitary voice of dissent.<sup>1</sup> The resolution was not intended as a punishment but as a formal recognition of a parting of ways. From this point on Ajahn Brahmagamso could no longer consider himself to be representing the Ajahn Chah community.

## 2. Bhikkhuni ordination

There are reasonable arguments in favor of bhikkhuni ordination, and reasonable arguments against it. Within our community opinions on the matter vary. In the light of this, the situation we currently find ourselves in is a balancing act of daunting proportions; on the one side there is the need to be faithful to our origins, and on the other the need to be faithful to the time and societies we live in.

As part of a larger tradition rooted in Thailand, any changes of this magnitude which we might wish to initiate would require the consent of the wider Sangha. In order not to become ripped apart, all the members of the Sangha body must proceed in the same direction. Since our lineage

does not, at least at present, formally accept the legitimacy of Theravada bhikkhuni ordination, we do not have the authority to carry it out on our own initiative, without breaking that connection with our roots. This view is not just restricted to the Ajahn Chah Sangha. For example, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, at the conference he called on bhikkhuni ordination in 2007, said he could not go ahead with reinstating the bhikkhuni order without the full consent of the Tibetan Sangha, despite the unanimous agreement of the conference that it should be.

The way we see it is that, in order to effect significant change in the status of practice opportunities for women in the Theravada world, it is not just a matter of going our own way with sanctioning bhikkhuni ordinations and hoping, let alone expecting, that the wider Sangha will just go along with that. Rather the effect of such a move would be to drive a wedge between the Western branches of our community and the other 300 or so based in Thailand. From our point of view it seems that there would be very little positive result from this orphaning of ourselves from the roots of our community. We realize that this is probably not the view of many Buddhists in the West, however, this kind of severance is something we see as being a damaging wound that would compromise the spiritual welfare of all women and men, lay and monastic, that are a part of this lineage of Dhamma practice.

The Sangha is an ancient institution; it is the longest surviving organization that still operates under its original bylaws. It is also almost 1000 years since the last recorded Theravada

bhikkhunis of the classical era lived in Sri Lanka. For such a huge change as this to take place, to reinstate this venerable and rich lineage of Dhamma practice with the full approval and sanction of the wider Sangha, it seems reasonable to take the time to gain a broad consensus.

Even though changes in such an ancient organism must necessarily occur slowly, it is also the case that change can come. There are high-ranking and esteemed elders of the Thai Sangha, notably the acting supreme patriarch, Somdet Buddhajahn, who have made it their business to investigate the status and training of bhikkhunis. It is also the intention for some of those who attended this meeting of Western abbots of the Wat Pah Pong lineage to consult with members of the governing body of the Thai Sangha in order to discuss further research on the topic of the bhikkhuni lineage and opportunities for renunciant practice of women in Theravada Buddhism.

The Theravada tradition is like a gnarled and deeply rooted oak, yet one that still bears abundant and fertile seeds. The depth of its roots and the thickness of its branches are some of the reasons why it has lasted for so long. If it was a flimsy sapling, to change and mold it would be easy but its ability to withstand the vagaries of weather and disease would be significantly less. It is our concern to treat this venerable entity with the respect that it deserves and to tend its seeds so that they too may flourish and their potential be fulfilled.

## 3. The Siladhara Order

*A shared goal, a specific opportunity*

In the case of the Siladhara and the 'five points' our sense is



that there has been a miscommunication regarding the overall perspective of how the established Bhikkhu Sangha seeks to support a modern nuns' order, as well as misinformation regarding the 'five points.' However we do feel that we share the concerns of the petition in that we are aware of the limited opportunities that there are for women to train in Dhamma-Vinaya, and also have a wish to support women's aspirations towards liberation.

The Bhikkhu Sangha has preserved and sustained the Buddha's dispensation for more than two thousand years and we acknowledge that it is its responsibility to pass it on. As in Theravada there is no consensus on the re-establishment of the bhikkhuni training, and no lineage or present company of great Theravada bhikkhuni teachers to instruct newcomers, what we can offer at this time has to operate within the Sangha vehicle as it is working in this day and age.

Of course anyone can practise morality, meditation and renunciation; but to belong to an order of Buddhist nuns means being accepted into the larger monastic Sangha, of which the only element that remains universally recognized is the Bhikkhu Sangha. Through being connected to such a body, one has access to the resources of monastic teachers, and the trust and welcome of lay people who have faith in the established Sangha, as well to the material requisites and infrastructure of monasteries. This set of opportunities underpins the vehicle that has come to be known as the 'Siladhara' (= those who uphold virtue) training.

### *History of the Siladhara Order*

In 1983, Ven. Ajahn Sumedho, having received the permission of the Thai Sangha that had authorised him as Preceptor, gave the Ten Precepts to a small group of women who had already trained under the Eight Precepts for more than three years at Cittaviveka Monastery in England. Ajahn Sumedho's aim was to provide an opportunity for women to train as alms-mendicants within the conventions that were held by the Bhikkhu Sangha. Subsequently, he asked that a training be developed that would flesh out the basic moral structure that the Ten Precepts represent with details that could support the nuns as an autonomous Order. So a training was developed that drew from the Bhikkhuni-Vinaya in order to cover issues that might occur for women, as well as protocols that would enable them to manage their own affairs. Through the ensuing years the training evolved through discussions with the nuns, consultations with Ven. Ajahn Sumedho and the elders of his community, and presentations to Thai and Sri Lankan elders.

There was no intention or authorisation however to establish a Bhikkhuni Order, or any new independent Sangha. Therefore the relationship between the Siladhara Order and the Bhikkhu Sangha was held to be one in which the siladhara would receive ordination from an authorised bhikkhu preceptor. Moreover the convention of 'seniority' would apply as a relational guide. This is the case in the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Vinaya, and also defines the relationship between the Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni Sanghas as set up in the Vinaya.

Such an understanding is basic to the monastic form; it was there at the beginning and was not a new structure imposed upon the nuns.

### *Seniority isn't a power structure*

The convention of seniority in Theravada Buddhism acknowledges that the Bhikkhu Sangha preceded that of the nuns. In daily life it covers matters of courtesy, like who sits where in a formal group gathering, who stands where in a queue for the meal, and who pays respects to whom in the act of formal greeting. Seniority also implies that the senior person in the relationship is expected to look after, encourage and otherwise offer support to the junior.

However, the nuns may occupy positions of authority both in terms of teaching Dhamma, and of training members of their nuns' community. They are shareholders of the charitable Trust that owns and is legally responsible for Amaravati and Cittaviveka. They also occupy positions on the Council of Elders that oversee 'Sangha business' in the group of monasteries that were established in the name of Ven. Ajahn Sumedho.

It also has to be borne in mind that the aims and structures of Buddhist monastic life are not designed to implement power over each other, or power in terms of management, rather they are intended to establish the authority and inner strength to combat the fires of ignorance in one's own mind. In this respect there is full equality of opportunity for women and men. That said, as unenlightened beings, we recognize that there also need to be safeguards against the abuses of position that may occur in the course of community life.

*The 'five points' and the future*

In the last few years, there has been growing divergence between the Bhikkhu Sangha and the Siladhara in terms of the understanding of the relationship between these two communities at Amaravati and Cittaviveka. At the same time, Ajahn Sumedho's recent concern has been to firm up the understanding of the terms under which the Siladhara Order receives its authorisation from the Bhikkhu Sangha. Recognizing that he will pass away in due course of time, Ajahn Sumedho's intention is that the Bhikkhu Sangha within these monasteries should act as guarantors of the Siladhara Order in the future, and that steps should be taken now to carry this through. This is the origin of the 'five points.' Please bear in mind that these are not a manifesto of a global vision for all women who aspire to liberation, but a memo that outlines what these particular monasteries can offer. It seemed important to get these clearly laid down so that interested parties would know from the outset what they were committing to in terms of the relationship to the Bhikkhu Sangha. Then any aspirant could make an informed choice as to whether to get on board, or to look for another vehicle.

We acknowledge that there may have been failings in the way that these five points were presented to the nuns, and some of us sense that this point will need to be addressed in the future. One agency that has been implemented to improve the process of feedback and consultation is that of a 'liaison bhikkhu' who should be acceptable and respected by the nuns and act as a channel of communi-

cation whenever dissonances arise in each dual-gender community. The intention is to continue to develop ways of improvement, this being the principle whereby the Buddha established the Vinaya.

One of Ven. Ajahn Chah's phrases about the mode and environment of Dhamma-practice was that it should be 'good enough' for enlightenment. Whatever the feelings and views that may be aroused when a conservative Asian contemplative tradition meets the psychological zeitgeist of the modern West, our intention has always been to offer something 'good enough' - something both immediate and workable. Still this is no small matter. The Siladhara Order depends on the commitment of women of integrity to make it a lived-in reality, and we feel that the efforts and results of the nuns' practice has been seriously understated in the articles that have been generated around this topic. This is unjust, particularly in the light of the rigor with which they apply themselves to their training.

Meanwhile, the Siladhara Order is currently sending out a branch to America at the same time as it is receiving positive comments from the renowned bhikkhu-scholar P.A. Payutto and the acting head of the Thai Sangha, Somdet Buddhajahn. We hope that, modest as the origins of the Order have been, it may yet spread wherever there is interest in the Buddha's teachings and be a source of light for both East and West.

#### **4. How to move on?**

Respect is an important quality in Buddhism. In its widest sense it means respect for Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. It

also means the quality of mutual respect between people and it was reiterated, specifically in terms of respect for elders, as a foundational principle by the Buddha in his last days. Herein he defined it as one the seven causes of the long-lasting welfare of his dispensation.

Respect for elders is signified in the very name for this tradition. 'Theravada' means 'the way of the elders' and the defining spirit of this way of Dhamma practice is one that can accurately be referred to as 'conservative.' It aims to conserve the way the teachings and the monastic discipline were formulated in the earliest days as a path to liberation. The movement to the West was not initiated in order to develop and modify Buddhism, but to continue the practice of Dhamma-Vinaya wherever lay people had made invitation and offered to support it. Nevertheless, if this meeting of timeless aspiration and contemporary contexts is conducted in harmony, the fine-tuning of how Dhamma-Vinaya is applied in the present is a natural consequence.

Disharmony is an obstacle to this, and we wish that all of us who have concern in this area take steps to avoid the danger of polarization in the Buddhist world. Meanwhile, we hope that this preceding article has helped to generate the kind of understanding that can be a step in the right direction.

*Wat Nanachat,*

December 15, 2009

*Ubon, Northeast Thailand*

# Buddhism Among India's Most Oppressed: Notes & Impressions

I am just back from several weeks in India, learning and teaching in the "untouchable" communities of Maharashtra. This is a movement I have wanted to visit and feel since I first learned of it, more than twenty years ago. The experience was wonderful and very powerful—the sweetness, sincerity, intelligence, and generosity of all those I met lingers still. Jetlag aside, a piece of my heart remains with these friends in Pune, Nagpur, and Mumbai.

At the risk of sweeping generalizations, my first impressions of India stayed true to the end of my journey. Having spent time in Burma, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, I sense a kind of freedom and intimacy among people in India, even in the midst of the most jarring discrepancies of wealth and standing. It felt familial in the best (and maybe in the worst) sense of the word. And there is something to the fact that India is by far the world's largest democracy. Democracy there is every bit as flawed as it is in the U.S., but the energy of people in the streets and fields is limitless.

But first, some background. There is a Buddhist revolution in India hiding in plain sight. Close to thirty million Dalits presently identify as Buddhists, with several million actively engaged in meditation and social work. These are the wonderful people I was with for my whole time in India—at their retreat centers, at modest *viharas* or centers in the heart of the urban slums, visiting their social programs (schools, student hostels, nurseries, women's health and livelihood projects), learning and teaching

in these places day by day.

It is hard to find the right word for these most varied communities. Every descriptor is problematic, seen as demeaning by one group or another: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (roughly 300,000,000 or 25% of India's population) are the terms used in the Indian constitution; untouchable is a legally proscribed status; ex-untouchable is euphemism; Dalit, which means "suppressed" or "broken to pieces" in the Marathi language, is a more contemporary word, not acceptable everywhere. Gandhi's term *harijan*, which means "children of god," is considered patronizing to people who hardly feel themselves blessed by any divine presence.

The countless Dalit communities, differentiated by region, ethnicity and (sub) caste have traditionally been identified with butchering, removal of rubbish, sweeping, removal of human waste and dead animals, leatherwork, and so on. These tasks, and others are seen as impure activities, polluting to higher castes. And that pollution is somehow contagious. Therefore, as impure, Dalits were excluded from aspects of ordinary Hindu life. They were not allowed to enter temples, go to schools, or live within the boundaries of rural villages. Accidental contact between Dalits and other castes even today can call for elaborate rituals of purification.

These communities are distributed across the nation, though the largest concentration of Buddhists is in the South/Central Indian state of Maharashtra, where I was. This is not something

rooted in Indian history, but in a political and social assertion of freedom led by a remarkable figure—Dr. B.R. Ambedkar—less than sixty years ago. Dr. Ambedkar (or Babasaheb as he is referred to by his devotees) was born to a poor but educated Mahar caste family. By virtue of his brilliance and good luck he was among the first untouchables to attend an Indian university, and continued with doctorates from Columbia University and the London School of Economics.

In 1935, concluding that the dominant Brahmin/Hindu caste system could not be reformed even by the most liberal-minded Hindus, Dr. Ambedkar urged the untouchables to give up the idea of attaining religious rights; to leave Hinduism and adopt another religion. He saw caste as a "system of graded inequality," in which each sub-caste measured itself above some and below others, creating an almost infinite factionalism, dividing each community against another, making unity of social or political purpose almost impossible. He said then: "I was born a Hindu, but I solemnly assure you that I will not die as a Hindu." He investigated Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism—and was courted by each of these groups, who were well aware that Ambedkar's conversion would bring millions of untouchables with him.

In the end he decided that Buddhism was the best home for his people, as indigenous to India, where it had been defining religious tradition for nearly 1500 years. He wrote:

The teachings of Buddha are

eternal, but even then Buddha did not proclaim them to be infallible. The religion of Buddha has the capacity to change according to times, a quality which no other religion can claim to have...Now what is the basis of Buddhism? If you study carefully, you will see that Buddhism is based on reason. There is an element of flexibility inherent in it, which is not found in any other religion.

After long consideration and consultation, and in ill health, feeling the shadow of mortality, Dr. Ambedkar converted on October 14, 1956 at the Deekshbhoomi (Conversion Ground) in Nagpur from the senior Buddhist monk in India, U Chandramani, taking the Three Refuges in Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and receiving the five essential ethical precepts. Then he did an unprecedented thing for a layperson, turning to 400,000 followers who were present, giving them the three refuges and his own twenty-two vows, which included the five precepts and the renunciation of particular articles of Hindu practice and belief. This was signaled a momentous renewal of Buddhism in India. A number of mass conversions followed directly, but by early December, less than two months later, Dr. Ambedkar succumbed to complications of diabetes and heart disease.

There is much more I could say about this extraordinary and controversial man. Ambedkar's bust or statue is seen in towns all over India, celebrating his primary role in drafting the democratic and secular Indian constitution, and for his ceaseless advocacy for the most oppressed. But the Buddhist movement he began left without

an effective leader for more than two decades.

In 1979 the British Buddhist teacher Ven. Sangharakshita, founder of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, returned to India where he had lived as a monk and had known Dr. Ambedkar. Following that visit, one of his senior students Dharmachari Lokamitra and others from India and the West created Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayaka Gana (TBMSG) in order to develop a new Indian or Ambedkarite Buddhism, fusing dharma practice and social action.

TBMSG continues to thrive thirty years later, with four retreat centers, schools, hostels, nurseries, and hundreds of dedicated volunteers and lay-ordained teachers (*dharmacharis and dharmacharinis*), almost entirely from the oppressed classes. Their Nagarjuna Training Institute or Nagaloka, in the city of Nagpur, offers a ten-month training program to young students, potential leaders from all across India, the essentials of which are:

- Training for transformation of self and world, by way of meditation, study, and dialogue
- Responding to discrimination and social problems (Compassion in Action)
- Encouraging women leadership
- Networking individuals across narrow caste identities and building communities

It was wonderful to spend time with these students, teaching, learning from them, and debating matters that are central to the transformation of their lives and the life of their communities.

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Twenty years before his conversion, Dr. Ambedkar wrote: "If you ask me, my ideal would be a society based on *Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity*," an expression he borrowed from the French Revolution. Becoming a Buddhist in 1956 he took up another ideal—Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. I was laying in bed in the early morning cool of Konkanapur when I realized that these two ideals are, in fact, one. It seemed like an original insight, but when I mentioned it to Lokamitra he laughed, saying this had been a central point of discussions about Ambedkarite Buddhism in the early 80s.

Liberty is the quality of actualized liberation as embodied by the Buddha. But as in the realization of enlightened life, liberty is a practice, something that must be aspired to and worked at. It is not a static quality.

Equality is dharma in the sense that we see all beings as equal. Hakuin Zenji's "Song of Buddhism" begins: "From the beginning all beings are Buddha." Each sentient being is precious. As I like to say, all people are chosen—not just those of a particular religion, caste or nation. At the same time, Dr. Ambedkar was clear in his thinking and writing that each person has strengths and weaknesses, skills and shortcomings. In this respect we are unequal and individual, unique. But, taken together, liberty and equality, encourage us to be completely ourselves, as large and open as we can be, respecting and valuing each other as precious.

Fraternity is the cutting edge of Ambedkar's Buddhism and the new Buddhist movement. Fraternity is sangha, the community of practitioners, and the wider community of all beings (hence, linked to equality). In



the Buddha's time there was a "fourfold sangha," monks, nuns, laymen, laywomen. Somehow Asian Buddhism has reduced this to the onefold sangha—monks. This is not the kind of sangha we have at BZC, nor is it the shape of Ambedkarite Buddhism.

But fraternity is a challenge for the Dalit community—perhaps even more than race, class, and diversity challenge our Western Buddhist centers. The social realities of India divide among religions—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, and Buddhist; between caste and non-caste peoples; and, most critically, among the many Dalit groups themselves within a system of "graded inequality," each scrambling for the smallest privileges of social position, economic opportunity, and political power. Fraternity is the principle of unifying. And as we all know, this is hard work.

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There is much about this new Indian Buddhist practice that we share in the west. On both sides we have turned to the dharma in response to the Buddha's central message. He said: I only teach about suffering and then end of suffering. Knowingly or not, many of us in the west come to Buddhism to deal with suffering, often dissatisfied with the religious traditions we were born to. For Dalits, whose material circumstances may be so different from ours, the motivation is the same: to learn about suffering and to reach its end.

Three "marks" of Western Buddhism also appear among the Ambedkarites. Theirs is primarily a "lay" Buddhist movement, comprising family members, workers, and lay teachers, much like our own centers here in America. Dr. Ambedkar was highly critical of Asia's monastic

orders, which he saw as elitist and uninterested in establishing Buddhist practice for laypeople in their respective countries. So it is not surprising that the new Buddhists have created a lay or lay-ordained movement. The model of FWBO/TBMSG is an order of *dharmacharis*, meaning followers of the dharma. These order members are meditation teachers, study leaders, and ministers. As Suzuki Roshi might have said: Not quite priest, not quite lay. But many dharma functions are also led by well-schooled Buddhists who are independent of TBMSG.

Where the rise of women teachers and practitioners is fully established here, this aspiration is increasingly evident even in India, where a patriarchal traditional culture in religion and in society still exists. The new Buddhist women are leading schools, social work, and dharma communities as teachers or *dharmacharinis* in their own right.

The third "mark" is social action, or the unity of dharma practice and social work—compassion in action. When I came to work at Buddhist Peace Fellowship in 1991, engaged Buddhism was outside the mainstream. Twenty years later, countless centers and groups are involved in prison work, chaplaincy, feeding the poor, and organizing against war. We see this as a responsibility that flows from the Bodhisattva vow to save all beings. But from the start, Dr. Ambedkar's vision of Buddhism incorporated a vision of society and social liberation, far beyond the introspective caricature that some have of Buddhism. So it is natural that an Indian Buddhism movement, rooted in the most oppressed would see the fluid unity of personal development and social

transformation.

With all this in common, it is painful to see this dharma unfolding in India beyond the eyes of other Buddhists. I could speculate on why this is so, but really the time has come for all of us to see that a Buddhist movement in India is potentially vast. For engaged Buddhists, this social responsible movement promises to change the way our practice is seen by all the world's religions.

Ambedkarite Buddhists hunger for dharma and for contact with the wider world. Very few from outside FWBO go to India to practice with TBMSG and other Buddhists. It is not that they need Buddhist "missionaries." Teachers there know the dharma and the Buddha's teachings. But they need help, they need to be seen and valued in the world. And as the dharma rises in the slums and in the poorest villages across India, we can learn, be inspired, and rededicate ourselves to liberation for all beings, irrespective of class, caste, gender, and tribe. This is a noble and natural aspiration.

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*Thanks to Mangesh Dahiwalé, Dh. Lokamitra, Dh. Maitreyanath, Priyadarshi Telang, Bharat Wankhede, Dh. Vivika-mitra, Dh. Viradhamma, and many others who made this journey possible and helped me along the way. I hope to see you again soon.*

*Hozan Alan Senauke*

#### *Biographical Note*

Rev. Hozan Alan Senauke is founder of the Clear View Project, vice-abbot of Berkeley Zen Center, and a long-time INEB participant and member of INEB's Advisory Council.

# Alternative Development and 'Buddhist Economics'

INEB Conference *Networking Session* and  
*Future Working Group?*

*During the INEB bi-annual conference, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2009 we had a plenary session on Buddhist Economics and network sessions.*

*Excerpts of some (revised) notes circulated ahead of the INEB conference:*

**Alternative development** can be seen as a broad umbrella-concept: it overarches an enormous diversity of development (or 'anti-development') philosophies, ideas and practices.

The major platform of alternative development is arguably the World Social Forum (WSF). The first WSF took place in 2001 in Brazil. It was preceded by the *Alternatives to Consumerism* (ATC) gathering in Thailand in 1997, organized by Sulak Sivaraksa.

From a holistic perspective 'new economics' can only blossom in parallel with likeminded impulses in culture (values, art and way of life, education, community spirit, ethics etc) and governance (justice, living democracy, participatory decision making, consensus building leadership etc.). A new development paradigm would include culture, governance, ecology and economy: the four pillars of Gross National Happiness.

## Historic context

East and West. North and South. Critical analysts identify international 'development', after political liberation, as a second stage of colonialism.

Numerous 'development decades' did not prevent the gap between rich and poor to grow, the environment to degrade, and to consolidate life without security for many.

Western influence has shaped the kind of 'globalization' driven by neo-liberal economics that presently dominates the world. Its core aim is to promote a "free" market economy'.

Alternative development in contrast is rooted in localization, in community and in eco-system. However, it in the same time encourages the free flow of inter-cultural, international and global human scale exchanges.

A prominent symbol of 'neo-liberal globalization' is the so called *Washington Consensus* pointing at a cluster of powerful ~ non-democratic ~ institutions shaping the global financial and economic 'architecture': World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO).

A breakthrough in critique towards the *Washington Consensus* resulted from the demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle, 1999.

Whether the present (post?)-

**crisis of 2008/2009** is deep enough to force a paradigm shift in economics has to be seen. Joseph Stiglitz stated, "*The Fall of the Berlin Wall was for Communism what the Fall of Wall Street is for Market Fundamentalism.*"

**Sources of inspiration for alternative development.** There are many sources of inspiration and our challenge is to understand, explore, formulate, experiment how 'engaged buddhism' plays and can play a role in shaping alternative development and ~ more focused ~: 'buddhist economics'.

Three important impulses emerged in the early 1970's, with related movements today:

- Buddhist Economics as described by E.F. Schumacher in his book *Small is Beautiful. Economics As If People Mattered*. His ideas were based on experiences, in that period, with real life in Burma. Schumacher College in U.K. and its think tank provides one of the platforms in this 'tradition'. It relates to a great diversity of initiatives worldwide.

Many traditional small-scale (organic) farmers and entrepreneurs still work in the spirit of Buddhist economics, but globalization and modernization threaten traditions. Buddhist economics have to be empowered and 're-invented' in the context

of globalization.

'Buddhist Economics', as E.R. Schumacher observed it in Burma in the 70's, is characterized by family-based economic activity, care for fellow-beings, care for nature, barter trade and minimal role of money.

- *The Limits to Growth* a groundbreaking publication launched by the Club of Rome. Studies found 30 years later that most predictions were in compliance with reality at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Club of Rome is still active today as an independent think tank. Much of the argument re-appeared as the Climate Change debate.

- *Gross National Happiness (GNH)*: a concept launched by the then 17 year old 4<sup>th</sup> King of Bhutan upon ascending the throne, after the early death of his father. It became the leading (but until the late 90's a 'hidden') thought behind gradual and endogenous modernization, including appropriate democratization, of Bhutan. The present, 5<sup>th</sup> King, is dedicated to the GNH mission as head of the new constitutional monarchy. GNH is included in the constitution.

A 'GNH Movement' is taking shape. The first international conference on GNH was held in February 2004, Thimphu, Bhutan. Subsequently GNH2 took place in 2005, Nova Scotia, Canada; GNH3 in 2007, Nongkhai and Bangkok, Thailand; GNH4 in 2008, Thimphu, Bhutan; GNH5 was held in Brazil, November 2009.

One aspect of the 'GNH Movement' was articulated in the speech of Joseph Stiglitz in Bangkok, August 2009. The title of his speech was *Globalizing*

*the GDP Debate*.

[During the GNH3 conference in Thailand, Laurence Brahm, an American author who lived in China for many years and is now based in Lhasa, Tibet, launched the alternative concept of an emerging *Himalayan Consensus* to replace the Washington Consensus. He launched his book *The Anti-Globalization Breakfast Club. Manifesto for a Peaceful Revolution* in Bangkok in mid 2009.]

Several Buddhist social organizations in Asia target community development and poverty alleviation. The Sarvodaya Shramadana movement in Sri Lanka branched out in a diversity of initiatives. Sewalanka Foundation, a professional secular development organization emerged. In Thailand 'development monks' support savings groups and seed banks. The Santi Asoke movement in Thailand combines puritanism with self-reliance.

Some common ground is found in the concept of Right Livelihood, one step of the Eightfold Path.

There is an increasing influence from Buddhist philosophy and meditation practice on mainstream responsible management science and growth of ethical business.

Observers signal a tendency in China to co-opt Buddhism as a new state philosophy supporting its unique blend of communism and capitalism. In Thailand much Buddhism is compliant with super-capitalism and consumerism.

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, after his early-years' retreat in Taktshang monastery, Bhutan,

warned for 'spiritual materialism'.

The Sensex in India and Dow-Jones apply since recently a 'Dharma Index' to monitor the results of faith-based investment. 'Faith-based' socially responsible investment or banking has become a serious factor.

[The recently established Buddhist Economics Research Platform is a joint initiative of the Business Ethics Center of the Corvinus University of Budapest and the East-West Research Institute of the Budapest Buddhist University. The Platform aims to connect people and institutes engaged in developing Buddhist economic theory and practice and to spread ideas and working models of Buddhist economics to the general public. Its second international conference was held in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand in April 2009 under supervision of Prof. Apichai Puntasen (Thailand). The platform focuses on academic exchanges.]

## INEB and Buddhist Economics

The question is whether INEB, in addition to more academic approaches, can serve as a platform of practitioners in Buddhist Economics, promoting experiential exchanges and inspired advocacy. Typical for INEB would be that these efforts are also to address 'structural violence' of the economic system as well as its inspired non-violent transformation.

Inter-connectedness, interdependence; Right Livelihood; Sangha as the symbioses between working lay-people and spiritual teachers freed from mundane effort to survive; dana

or generosity are some possible constituting elements for Buddhist economics in practice.

Phra Paisal Visalo (INEB Advisor) inspired an alternative approach to dana in reaction to the ritualization of generosity and merit making and the frequent lack of transparency of managing Temple capital and income.

Expansion and deepening of awareness through meditation will lead to 'critical holism': genuine engagement, including economic responsibility.

The most confronting question is maybe whether INEB will be able to survive and flourish thanks to pre-dominantly financial support from Buddhist sources.

## Summary

**Diverse Dimensions of Buddhist Economics** (in discussion to be completed and illustrated with more examples)

*The way Buddhist organizations handle their finances*

- Temples, cultural heritage
- Education, monastic life
- Humanitarian support
- Accumulation of capital and return on capital

*Perceptions of dana, philanthropy*

- Food offering
- Donations to monks and nuns
- Donations to the temple

Return on capital: socially responsible and sustainable investment?

*Development agencies; support for suppressed groups*

Examples:

Niwano Peace Foundation  
Bridge Fund (USA; Europe)  
Burma support

*Grassroots initiatives*

Examples:

- Rural
  - Sri Lanka: development monks; village initiatives; organic agriculture
  - Thailand: saving groups; seed banks
- Urban
  - Bernie Glassman (Greyston Bakery)
  - Publishing houses (Wisdom, Shambala etc.)
  - Thai Green Market Network

*Advocacy and pioneering practices towards systemic changes*

Examples:

- Sulak Sivaraksa 'Alternatives to Consumerism'
- Helena Norberg Hodge 'Bringing the Food Economy Home'
- Gross National Happiness
- Mind&Life dialogue on Compassion and Altruism in Economic Systems (H.H. the Dalai Lama, Matthieu Ricard and others)

*Poverty reduction*

- Jambudvipa Trust

*Sufficiency economy*

- Thai royal patronage

*Wealth distribution*

- Peter Senge

*Indicators*

- GNH Index
- 'Dharma Index'
- Sufficiency economy index

*Theoretical, conceptual articulation of Buddhist Economics*

- Nakamura Hisashi

- Ven. Payutto
- Apichai Puntasen
- Sander Tideman
- David Loy
- David Korten

*Meditation practice and Buddhist ethics in management*

- Spirit in Business
- Zen

*Opportunities for cooperation with initiatives of other religions; secular groups*

- 3iG (International Interfaith Investment Group)
- Economy of Sharing (Christian groups: CCFD, Trocaire, Focolare)
- Fair Trade
- World Social Forum
- World Economic Forum

## Proposal

- To co-organize under INEB-auspices, and with partners, a series of meetings to explore some of the dimensions of Buddhist Economics in more depth and detail.

-Sri Lanka (with INEB Sri Lanka)

-Europe (with European Buddhist Union)

-USA (with Bridge Fund)

- To report the results to the INEB conference 2011 in Deer Park Institute
- To establish a long term INEB 'Buddhist Economics' working group, in close cooperation with the INEB Finance working group



## The Activist Buddhist

Sulak Sivaraksa exudes a rare blend of calm and passion for action. Carrying a tall gnarled staff, dressed in a baggy outfit, and with an everpresent cloth bag stuffed with copies of his books, he's a presence wherever he goes. He prides himself on the many labels people attach to him: intellectual, troublemaker, jailbird, engaged Buddhist, spiritual leader. He carries them all with a smile, wise words, and a barb or two.

Born in Siam (he still uses that name for Thailand), Sulak was a rebel as a teenager, finding solace as a monk, then in his studies in the United Kingdom. But he was dissatisfied with what he was taught about Buddhism. His teachers argued that religious leaders who meddled in society and politics lost their spirituality. Sulak believed that was fundamentally wrong. Practicing meditation and mindfulness without engaging with poverty "is escapism, not Buddhism." As he puts it, "To be Buddhist, you should not only adhere to the main teachings—not killing, stealing, having sexual misconducts, or lying—but you also have to distance yourself consciously from the structures of violence that frame our lives. Maybe you do not kill directly, but you kill through the social structure. You don't steal directly, but you let the bank steal."

So Sulak became one of the founders of a worldwide Engaged Buddhist network. The network's goals are revolutionary, but at its core it is about friendships. For Sulak, Buddhism's main priority is good friends. They tell you what you

don't want to hear, and act as your external voice of conscience.

Sulak has a very modern notion of fighting poverty, grounded in justice as well as a Buddhist dose of loving kindness. Helping the poor is good but not enough. Buddhism demands social change. He has challenged many, including the Dalai Lama, to take a more active role in fighting the causes of suffering, and to overcome them nonviolently. And he believes that issues are tightly interconnected.

What does this mean in practice? Sulak started an education movement that includes explicit spirituality that is, he says, catching fire. Even businesses are coming along, through a Social Venture Network. "They try to be different without being goody-goody, to care about labor unions and the environment."

Sulak rejects the idea that Buddhism teaches fatalism. Burmese monks, he said, hesitated to join his movement because they feared that their bad karma would contaminate others. But Sulak convinced them that bad karma can be changed.

Sulak pressed Thai temples to look after people with HIV and AIDS. He challenged dam construction that hurt fish and displaced people. He encourages the ordination of women monks. And he also propounds an ancient practice of ordaining trees, to make a point about protection of the environment. Before a group of Christians, Sulak argued that animals, plants and trees are all living beings, and we must care for all because all are inter-

connected.

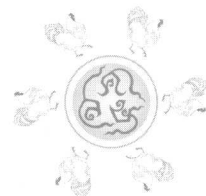
Sulak is a stalwart of inter-faith events, traveling the world with a large network of friends. Friendship for him has no barriers, whether gender, nationality, or faith.. Buddhism, he says, is to learn how to change greed into generosity, hatred into compassion and friendship, delusion into wisdom and understanding. All religions, he says, teach people to be brave, humble, and generous. People must respect other religions as their own.

It was Sulak who came to mind today as I logged on to Facebook which asked me thoughtfully, as it always does, "What's on your mind?" There's so much to choose from where faith is concerned and plenty to despair about, from senseless violence in Jos, Nigeria, to homophobia in Uganda. Sulak's smiling wisdom offers some reassurance that with networks of friends, the core values of caring and compassion, and the will to action, we will find the courage to bring about change we still hope for.

*Katherine Marshall*

*Faith in Action*

*Katherine Marshall is a senior fellow at Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, a Visiting Professor, and a senior advisor for the World Bank.*



## *The Holy Tree*

*For the "Forest Monks"*

*With a grand display  
Of your truth and your way,  
Each leaf lay its greatness  
Hand to hand with mine—  
Veined and branching—*

*So I remember the roots of love  
I thought were lost,  
And am taught to leave learning  
In its empty rooms of yearning  
For a wooded wonder  
Which cannot question  
The hope of my heart.*

*Now as I wrap myself 'round  
The strength of your sound,  
I find your melody is my own;  
And this harmony call me home.*

*~ Roxanne Ivey*

## Fua Haripitak

The centennial birth anniversary of Fua Haripitak will be on 22 April 2010.

Fua was the greatest living Thai artist of his time. His artistic creations were as spectacular as those of any leading international artist. But he chose to devote his mind and life to the restoration of traditional Thai art. In other words, he helped preserve important Siamese artistic and cultural currents. The Thai ruling elites are however oblivious to this virtue. Without Fua, the Tripitaka Library at Wat Rakang Kositararam wouldn't have been restored to its proper greatness by the early 1980s. But like all things restored by Fua, the Library was ultimately and sadly abandoned to the ravages of time. Fua's efforts were all in vain. The proper way to pay tribute to Fua Haripitak is therefore to continue his life mission so that Beauty will exist alongside with the Truth and the Good.

It would be meaningless to ask UNESCO to recognize him as a great international personality because many mediocre Thais had also lamentably received this recognition. For instance, I'm referring to M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. He committed the grave intellectual 'crime' of plagiarism, but UNESCO turned a blind eye and approved the nomination of the Thai government. The Thai government has an unfortunate knack for nominating mediocre Thais to receive UNESCO's recognition. It does not seem to mind to be a laughing stock of the international community.

It is true that Fua once won the Magsaysay Award for public service. That was a time when the Award was still prestigious and



dignified. He was hoodwinked to join the Royal Institute—now also merely a semblance of its former self.

The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) had collaborated with Fua on numerous projects and activities pertaining to art restoration. SNF had also looked after his health and wellbeing till the end of his life. On the occasion of Fua Haripitak's centennial birth anniversary, SNF in collaboration with Silpakorn University (where he once studied and taught; perhaps its greatest student and teacher) and many contemporary artists will organize commemorative activities throughout the year.

We will kick off the commemoration at the Tripitaka Library, Wat Rakang, in the morning of 22 April 2010. The building is an architectural as well as an artistic marvel of the early Chakkri Dynasty. Hopefully, many contemporaries will again see its tremendous value and seek to restore it to its original greatness. This seems to be a good way to begin commemorating Fua's legacy.

In the evening of the same day an art exhibition will be opened at Silpakorn University, and it will run for several days. This art exhibition will then be carried over to the Bangkok Art and Culture Center at the Pathumwan intersection.

Aside from organizing a keynote address, a number of seminars or discussions, and art exhibitions, a book will also be published so that contemporaries will know about Fua's life and work.

Kamron Kunadilok has also finished a play based on Fua's life, and it will be performed on this occasion as well. One of Kamron's previous plays, *The Revolutionist*, is about the life of Pridi Banomyong. It was fairly successful too. Fua's love life—to put it modestly—was much more interesting than Pridi's. Although Fua did not 'rupture' or 'revolutionize' Thai politics like Pridi did, the former did 'overturn' the art scene in Siam.

Fua's paintings are numerous and exceptional. It is extremely difficult to find any contemporary Thai artist who will be able to match Fua's artistic talent and skills. It will be a proper homage to Fua by establishing an art and cultural center in his name.

The main organizers of this yearlong commemoration include SNF, Silpakorn University, Poh Chang School of Arts and Crafts, the Association of Siamese Architects Under Royal Patronage, the Society for the Conservation of National Treasure and Environment (which had collaborated with Fua in the restoration of the Tripitaka Library.)

Hopefully, this commemoration will help awaken the Thai civil servants and Thai Sangha to perceive the importance of Thai art—its study and preservation—and the ability to distinguish between mediocrity and excellence.

## Abdurrahman Wahid

Once they assumed power many of my close friends would often alter their stance toward me, become indifferent, or even declare that I'm their enemy. Wahid was an important exception. Even when he was president of Indonesia (the first to do so through the democratic process) he remained steadfast in our friendship. He had even invited me to be a guest at the presidential palace.

I had an opportunity to bring a group of Indonesian Buddhist youths (many of them of Chinese ethnicity and marginalized by the mainstream Muslim community) to meet with and talk to Wahid. They all admitted that Wahid was more Buddhist than they were. Despite numerous calls to crack down on oppositional groups, Wahid stated that it was easy for those in power to deploy violence. However, nonviolence—which was more difficult—was the correct and proper mode of engagement.

I also brought the special envoy of the Dalai Lama to have an audience with Wahid. Wahid promised to discuss the problem of Tibet with the vice president of China when the latter was in Indonesia for a state visit. Wahid was perhaps the first head of state to have done so. (Jimmy Carter openly raised the cause of Tibet with China only when he was no longer US president.)

Wahid and I were colleagues in the Asian NGO networks since the early 1970s. We both helped establish the Asian Cultural Forum on Development, which I later served as coordinator and Wahid acted as a board member. We met each other regularly in meetings, activities, etc. We at-



tempted to infuse developmental work with spirituality. Though we were from different religions we respected one another sincerely.

Wahid often proclaimed that Brahmanism and Buddhism had deep roots in Indonesia. Indonesia only became a Muslim country in the past few centuries. Therefore a good Muslim in Indonesia must not neglect these ties with the Indian subcontinent. They are woven into the national culture of Indonesia. Aesthetically this can be seen in the influences of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Although the power of Buddhism has considerably waned in Indonesia, its substance—nonviolence—must not be neglected. Therefore Wahid urged all politicians to tread the path of nonviolence, which would help cultivate political transformation for the better.

Wahid greatly respected Mahatma Gandhi. He employed both truthfulness and nonviolence in governing Indonesia. He initiated a process that ultimately culminated in peace in Aceh. He openly apologized to the inhabitants of Aceh and East Timor.

The Thai government once asked me to help resolve the

conflicts in the deep south. In turn, I went to Wahid for consultation and assistance. At that time, Wahid was no longer president. But he still served as a vital spiritual force and guiding light and possessed significant political influence and cultural appeal. Therefore he greatly aided our work. He also enabled me to develop important linkages in Malaysia. Unfortunately, the Thai government was not serious in pursuing this channel and the situation eventually spiraled out of control.

We celebrated the centenary of Pridi Banomyong's birth at roughly the same time as Wahid became Indonesia's president. Although he was not invited by the Thai government Wahid attended the ceremony. He delivered a memorably address on Pridi while that of the then Thai prime minister was tepid and banal.

When I was under arrest on the charge of lese majeste Wahid wore the Thai "morhom" shirt wherever he went throughout Indonesia. When asked about the shirt he would reply that it signified the support he had for a special friend who was being persecuted by the powers that be.

Wahid was a beloved and virtuous friend. We had both criticized and cautioned one another on several occasions. We understood one another profoundly. I was also well acquainted with his wife and four daughters. He inherited the role of religious leader from his grandfather and father. Although he had no son his daughters are inclined to carry on his legacy, politically, religiously and culturally.



Wahid was a witty person with a good sense of humor. More importantly, he could often laugh at himself. He could make somber and grim-faced people talk to him in a relaxed manner. This is an art that is not easy to match and is one of his ingenuities.

One of his famous remarks was that "Sukarno, (the first President of Indonesia) was mad with women, Suharto (the second President) was mad with money, Habibie (the third President) was mad with everything and I myself (the fourth President) made every body mad". When he told this joke to Fidel Castro in Cuba, Castro said "Like you, I must make every body mad

because my speech usually lasts 4 to 8 hours!"

Wahid was a superb local administrator and grassroots organizer. He could bring in and lead millions of people. His activism profoundly challenged the dictatorship in Indonesia. But as a national leader Wahid was a failure. This was partly due to the entrenched power of the old elites who collaborated with external agents.

He was removed from office on the false charge of corruption. In fact he was perhaps the most honest Indonesian leader. Of course his administration wasn't agile and dynamic. But was this a sufficient reason to remove him from the presidency?

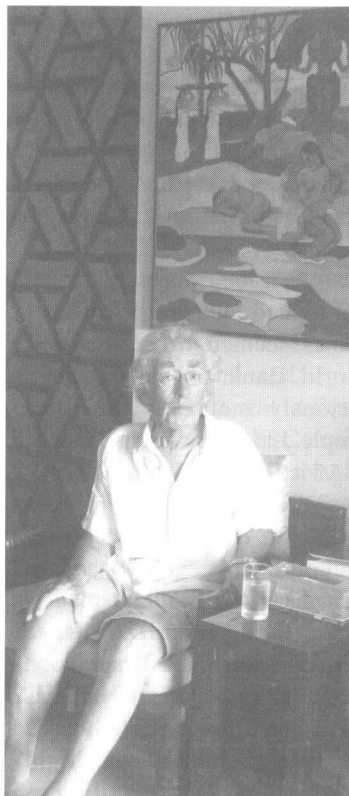
Wahid had poor health. But his mind and will were strong. He was a religious man who could grasp the heart of religion. He was at one with God in a humble and simple manner. He was ever sincere and compassionate to everyone he came into contact with.

I am very proud to have had a dear and virtuous friend like Abdurrahman Wahid who passed away at the age of 69 on 30 December 2009. It was a terrible loss for me and for his friends worldwide. Even in Indonesia Wahid's political opponents paid homage to him and mourned over his passing.

## In Memory of Nicholas Bennett (23 June 1942 - 9 February 2010)

Nicholas Bennett passed away on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010 in Portugal. He had a summer house there to live with his French wife, Montanette. He had another house in Phuket where he often used it to escape the cold English winter. He sold his parents' house in Hampstead, London, to buy these two houses and obtain other little pleasures toward the end of his life—after his retirement from the World Bank. He had time to practice deep meditation and yoga daily.

Nicholas was a strange figure who challenged the mainstream. At the same time he was closely affiliated with mainstream institutions throughout his life. Before he undertook university education he went on a solo journey to Timbuktu, Africa. He recounted this exciting adventure in his book *Zigzag to*



*Timbuktu* (published in 1963).

When he was studying PPE at Oxford he joined the protest against British development and possession of nuclear weapons. He was caught along with Bertrand Russell who at the time was more than 90 years old. Nicholas was not yet fully 20.

His first job was at UNESCO, which sent him to work as specialist at the Thai Ministry of Education in Bangkok. This specialist had long hair and wore jeans and rubber slippers to work. But Khunying Amporn Meesuk, the then director of the ministry's office of public relations, had high regards for him. Nicholas helped draft many proposals for the ministry, enabling it to convince foreign donors to sponsor many of its projects or campaigns.

Nicholas and Montanette

lived in the Thai kingdom from the late 60's to the early 80's. This was a period of great transition in the country. He befriended many progressive youths and actively supported them—morally, intellectually, etc. He introduced them to many new books. His house became an oasis for many of these youths such as Seksan Prasertkul, Wisit Wangwinyu, Pracha Hutuanuwat, Santisuk Sophonsiri, and Paisarn Wongworawisit.

Prior to the outbreak of the 6 October 1973 calamity we Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims established the Coordinating Group for Religion and Society (CGRS). We hoped to utilize religion as a power to help reduce or limit violence, which was rearing its ugly head.

Bishop Bunluen Mansap and Koson Srisang from the World Council of Churches were the main driving forces among the Christians. I represented the Buddhists. But violence erupted with a vengeance on 6<sup>th</sup> October. I was forced into exile for 2 years along with Koson Srisang.

During this period Nicholas joined CGRS and actively supported its activities. He collaborated with Gothom Areeya and Srisawang Puawongpat; the latter two became members of CGRS on the advice of Puey Ungphakorn. Like me, Puey was also forced into exile. During our exile in London both of us helped establish the Mitra Thai Trust. The Trust secretly coordinated with CGRS on issues of public relations and human rights.

When Nicholas was in England he met with us several times to discuss the establishment of the Trust. Some of our meetings even took place at his parents' house. He subsequently encouraged his young Thai friends in

particular Santisuk Sophonsiri and Paisarn Wongworasit to closely engage with the activities of CGRS. At that time Paisarn was already ordained as Phra Paisarn Visalo. Nevertheless, he devoted himself to CGRS until its last days.

While working in the Thai kingdom Nicholas wrote a book entitled *Bridge and Barrier on Development*. He posed many penetrating questions on development and introduced Thais to many alternative educators such as Paolo Friere and Ivan Illich. Eventually we became particularly close to Illich, visiting his 'alternative school' at Cuernavaca, Mexico.

Nicholas left the Thai kingdom to work at the World Bank. He was the World Bank representative to many poor and developing countries, beginning with Nepal. In Nepal he travelled by foot for days to visit small and remote villages. (He did not own a car but had a motorcycle to drive in the city.)

Nicholas was happy and at ease with the local people who lived far away from urban areas. He educated them as well as learned from them. Though he had to converse with them via an interpreter they sincerely trusted and treated him as a friend. Nicholas seemed to be the first World Bank official to have seriously met with the rural people. Later, he was also posted in Africa.

When I was living in exile in the US I would meet with Nicholas whenever he had to visit the World Bank headquarters in Washington, D.C. When I fled the Suchinda Kraprayoon dictatorship to Japan, Nicholas also came to see me.

Our friendship was tight and secure. When Nicholas

bought a house in Phuket he often invited my family to visit him and stay over at his place. When I turned 70, Nicholas wrote a lavish praise to my festschrift: *Socially Engaged Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sulak Sivaraksa on His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday*. He later gathered many of my articles and put them together in the volume *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. He also wrote its foreword. I feel much indebted to him.

His autobiography *All in the Cause of Duty* will be out in French by a Swiss publisher. It also be translated to Thai.

We will hold a merit-making ceremony for Nicholas at Ruen Roi Chanum, Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (666, Charoen Nakorn Rd., Klongsan, Bangkok) on Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2010. It will start at 10am. Phra Paisarn Visalo will also deliver a reflection on his virtuous friend Nicholas. When Ruen Roi Chanum was newly constructed in 2003, Nicholas was at the opening ceremony and gave the Sem Pringpuangkaew Lecture.

In sum, he was unique, unforgettable, full of energy and creativity, having no place for fear or mediocrity. He loved life, his family, the underprivileged. His courage was incredible, he never stopped writing, thinking, reading and giving in whatever help was needed around him. Yet he described himself as an authoritarian, anarchist and activist. We miss him, but his formidable nature remains an example for all of us.

He is survived by his dear wife, Montanette, and children, Patrick, Nathalic, Lucy, Julia and eight grand children.

# George Willoughby

George and Lillian Willoughby served as a model couple. They lived together for more than 60 years with love and understanding. They led a simple lifestyle that challenged mainstream society nonviolently. In this respect they are worthy of emulation and respect.

The love and understanding of this couple extended to friends and acquaintances within and beyond the confines of the American border, their homeland, such as in South America, where George grew up, and in India, where both George and Lillian attempted (in many respects successfully) to follow the path of Mahatma Gandhi. The couple was close to many of Gandhi's followers. Whenever they were in India both George and Lillian preferred the companionship of the local people more than Westerners. George in particular travelled extensively throughout India—by train (third class), bus, or foot. Once, George arrived at his destination by train but missed the pick-up rendezvous. It was already late and therefore he slept at the train station like the other Indian passengers.

George used to admire the Sarvodaya movement, which was founded by Ariyaratne. Ariyaratne has attempted to cultivate Gandhian principles such as rural development, self-reliance, and mutual interdependence in Sri Lanka. But George later sensed that Ariyaratne had not truly followed the path of non-violence and truthfulness. As a kalyanamitta (virtuous companion) he therefore raised this concern with the latter. Ariyaratne had no stomach for George's



criticism. Inflamed, he even asked the Sri Lankan government to ban George from entering the country.

Since he couldn't get into Sri Lanka, George came to the Thai kingdom instead. He helped us train young Buddhist monks and lay people in the practice of nonviolence. Members of other religious communities also benefited from his expertise. George enabled us to develop contacts with leading nonviolence practitioners worldwide. Through him we also participated in the Peace Brigade International and the War Resistant International. Partly through these connections, I myself became internationally renowned. We also collaborated with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

George was involved with all of the abovementioned organizations. He also taught at Pendle Hill, which is an AFSC institution and is located in Pennsylvania. Subsequently, he felt that teaching was straight-jacketing his creativity, inhibiting his ability to challenge unjust social structures. He left Pendle Hill and chose to be unemployed. Lillian closely supported her husband's decision.

The couple set sail to the Pacific Ocean to protest against

the testing of nuclear weapons. They were both caught. George later filed a suit against the US government and won.

During the Vietnam War George helped many American boys to escape the draft through the well-known "peace testimony." As Quakers, George and Lillian were pacifists and peacemakers and asserted their right not to participate in and prepare for war. They believed that all humans are friends and are equal.

Supported by the Quaker movement, George and Lillian frequented Asia approximately every 5 years. They stayed over at friends' places in a simple manner. They recorded their reflections on each trip and circulated these notes among their friends. Their reflections were often useful and their commentaries were sharp and witty, reflecting a supple understanding of local contexts. George and Lillian also presented views that were in direct opposition to those of the powers that be.

George and Lillian were my best American friends. They were also very close to my family. George was the eldest of my friends. Every time he came to Bangkok, he stayed at my house. If I happened to be in the US I often stayed with the Willoughbys or George would ask his daughter to drive to see me.

I am also well acquainted with their children. Each of their children is highly independent. Sometimes they would quarrel with their parents. But George got along well with his children. He tried to understand his children as well as others beyond his family. He told me to confront

every problem mindfully and to try to understand a situation from the point of view of the opposite side.

Although George and Lillian were already getting old, they joined the Movement for a New Society and lived with the younger generation of social activists. Members of the Movement wanted the time to reflect and meditate and to create revolutionary change in society through nonviolence. They also wanted to express sexual freedom. To the young activists, George and Lillian must have appeared pretty conservative sexually since they were always faithful to one another. The Movement

also published many provocative books and materials before it was terminated in the late 1980s.

Toward the end of their lives George and Lillian in conjunction with several others bought lands in the 'underdeveloped' part of New Jersey and set up some sort of a cooperative. They intended to preserve this vast expanse of land from the so-called "land developers."

Oberlin College in fact awarded honorary doctorates to George together with Lillian since both shared thoughts, speeches and actions together.

Lillian passed away on 15 January 2009. I wrote a short piece on her in my English book

*Rediscovering Spiritual Values: Alternative to Consumerism from a Siamese Buddhist Perspective* and dedicated my most recent English book *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* to her memory. George was greatly satisfied. With the absence of Lillian, it seemed that a part of George was missing as well. He had planned to visit India again in February this year but passed away peacefully on 5 January 2010. He was 95 years old.

I have lost another virtuous and beloved friend.

## In Memory of Yoneo Ishii

Since late last year it seems that I've continuously lost good friends-one after another. It is a sad but inescapable fact for a 77-year-old man like me. The latest on the list is Professor Yoneo Ishii who passed away on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2010 in Japan.

Professor Ishii was my first Japanese friend, and he had been a good friend for almost half a century. He was a vital figure in the Thai Studies and Southeast Asian Studies circles. He had a profound love for and understanding of Thai culture. He had wanted to live in the Thai kingdom and to study the Thai language since he was very young. He sat on an entrance examination and got accepted by the Japanese ministry of foreign affairs. Given his impressive capability and diplomatic skills, he was highly rated by his superiors. They asked him where he would like to be posted abroad.



They thought Ishii would choose the US or England. To their surprise, Ishii said he wanted to work in the Thai kingdom.

When he was working at the Japanese embassy in Bangkok he received the permission to undertake Thai language study at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. He eventually became the favorite disciple of Phya Anumanrajadhon. When we celebrated the centennial anniversary of Phya Anuman's birth Professor Ishii helped us to

hold an exhibition of his late teacher's life and work at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka. Professor Ishii also gave a keynote address on this occasion.

To better understand Thai culture Professor Ishii believed it was necessary for him to be ordained as monk for one rain retreat (3 months). At first he wanted to be ordained at Suan Mokh. But Ajarn Buddhadasa Bhikkhu replied to his request that there were many good temples in Bangkok for him to ordain as monk for a short period. He finally got ordained at Wat Boworniwes in 1957. Although the Prince Patriarch Vachirayarnvong did not serve as his spiritual teacher, the former regularly asked about the Japanese monk.

Ishii did not want to be a lifelong diplomat. He left the ministry of foreign affairs and



furthered his studies. Eventually he became professor at Kyoto University and director of its Center of Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS). He was influential in developing its staff and library. CSEAS soon became world class—comparable to Cornell University.

He asked my wife who represented Suksit Siam bookstore to help him find good books in the Thai, Lao, and Khmer languages for the CSEAS library. My wife also recommended him to buy cremation volumes from Charas Pikul. The library bought thousands of volumes from Charas—there's a Charas Collection at CSEAS. Professor Ishii had to ask librarians from Thammasat University and Bangkok Bank to help sort out and catalogue

the Thai books at the library.

Professor Ishii wrote many academic books and articles in Thai, Japanese and English. Some were co-authored with his students and Thai friends.

When he completed his term as director of CSEAS, Ishii moved to Tokyo. At first he worked at Sophia University. Then he became president of Kanda University. He was also the chair of the Japan UNESCO National Commission from 1998-1999. His final position was president of the National Institutes for the Humanities.

He had always been gentle and friendly to me and my family. On his recommendation, the International House of Japan invited me to Japan several decades ago. It was my first trip

to that country. He kindly acted as my personal guide during the trip. In return, I asked him where he wanted me to take him around in the Thai kingdom. He had lived in the Thai kingdom for many years and had travelled extensively throughout the country. He responded that he wanted to see MaeKlong. Although it is located near Bangkok, it was quite difficult to get there decades ago. So MaeKlong it was. We sailed on the river and admired temples on the banks approvingly.

The passing away of Professor Ishii is a major loss for me and my family. The Thai country and Thais interested in Japanese and Southeast Asian Studies will miss him dearly.

## Uab Sanasen

Uab Sanasen and I were close friends for more than 60 years. Our friendship began when we were in *mathayom* 2 at Assumption College, and he had supported me in various ways ever since. Uab was artistically talented since he was very young. I on the hand cannot even draw properly. I remember asking Uab to draw something for me to hand in for the art classes in school.

When I entered *mathayom* 6 I initiated a little journal to be read by and circulated among my classmates. Uab was primarily responsible for designing the cover and managing the layout of each volume. The journal was short-lived. It was confiscated by a teacher after publishing 5 volumes. At first the teacher praised us for the journal's fine



quality. But he soon found out that it contained messages highly critical about him. The journal's publication was thus abruptly terminated, and I was almost expelled from school.

When Uab completed *mathayom* 6, he attended Silpakorn

University. I on the hand remained at Assumption College to finish my *mathayom* 8.

When I held a cremation ceremony for an aunt who had raised me and siblings since we were young Uab was kind enough to help with flower ar-

rangement and other matters. Thanks to Uab's talents, it was a beautiful ceremony worthy of my aunt's dignity. And it was also affordable; I had yet to finish high school and did not want to financially bother my relatives.

Although I went abroad for many years, I maintained regular contacts with Uab. Whenever I had to publish something I always asked Uab to design the cover. In Uab's hands, even cremation volumes became creative and stylish.

When I started publishing the *Social Science Review* I again had to rely on Uab's artistic skills. Especially noteworthy during this period was Uab's design of the multi-volume books entitled *Records of Variety of Knowledge*, which is the correspondence between Prince Narisaranuwatiwong and Phya Anumanrajadhon. This collection was first published in 1963 on the occasion of the former's 100<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. The second edition was released in 1978 to mark the latter's centennial anniversary. The third edition was recently published last year. I consider this collection of books to be the best that I have ever published. Therefore, when I visited Uab when he was terminally ill to give him the third edition of this collection, I also told him how highly I thought of its quality. He laughed at my remark with pleasure.

Uab also opened the door for me to enter the Thai art community. He introduced me to his teachers and friends, young and old. Let me mention a few names at random: Angkarn Kalyanapong, Prayoon Uruchata, Fua Haripitak, Silpa Bhirasri, Suwannee Sukhontha, Thepsiri Suk-sopha, Nipphon Kumwilai, Nanda Chareonpan, etc. I've befriended

several of these figures and most of them have assisted me in my publications.

This year we will be celebrating Fua Haripitak's centennial anniversary. Although Uab was very sick he agreed to serve as advisor to the organizers of this event. He even gave an interview about his teacher.

At the time when Uab was working for Channel 4 television, which was situated in the Bang Khun Phrom Palace area, I often visited him. I introduced him to my English friend Malcolm Hossick who was then teaching at Chitralada School and Vajiravudh College. Both of them shared a passion for music and eventually became lifelong friends.

Uab had also worked with me at Thai Wattana Panich Publishing House. He led the company's design department. We had planned to turn the company into the largest private producer of progressive textbooks feeding the academic and art circles in the country. We also intended to publish textbooks for university level education. The plan did not materialize as investors at the time were short sighted and deep down they probably feared the expression of intellectual freedom.

Uab eventually left the company to teach at the Faculty of Public Relations and Mass Communication, Thammasat University. The consequences of the 14 October and the 6 October events forced him to leave the university and become an independent artist, running a small business with his wife Wisuta to make a living.

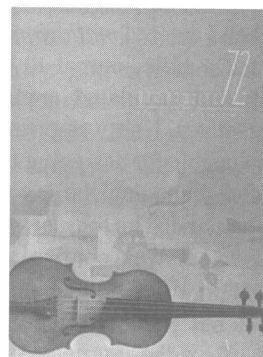
When Uab and Wisuta opened Nuan Nang Art Center in Soi Attakarnprasit on Sathorn Road, he took many beautiful

photographs for my family. Uab had acted as my 'photographer' ever since we were young. He photographed my wedding ceremony as well as many members of my family. His photograph of my wife looks like a painting. He also drew my portrait in Chinese style while asking me to dress like a Thai nobility. This portrait pleases me immensely to say the least.

Uab and Wisuta then moved to live in Uthaitani and Chiang Mai. I visited them in both places. Wisuta booked me two years in advance to give the opening speech at Uab's final exhibition marking his 6<sup>th</sup> cycle anniversary, which was held at Queen Sirikit Art Gallery on 26 November 2007. Of course I gladly yielded to her wish. I also presided over the wedding ceremonies of their daughter and of their son.

Uab was a Dhamma practitioner of the forest lineage both in Udonthani and Sakhonnakorn. He respected many Western monks at Wat Pa Baan Taad. He also designed the cover of *Forest Dhamma*, the first English book of Phra Maha Bua Yanasampanno.

Uab had a good wife and 3 lovely children. He also had a few virtuous companions. To a large extent he understood life well. Truly, he was a righteous person.



12<sup>th</sup> December 2009

Dear Sulak,

We feel that the spirit, values, and concerns in *Seeds of Peace* are what we, the rest of the world, and the next generations need. So we're sending you the longest donation we're making this year. Unthinkingly capitalistic, we had had money in the U.S. stock market, which was a big mistake. So we're depleted, but we support you and INEB as well as we can this year.

With love to you and Nil,  
Peggy & Ken McIntosh

Royal Government of Bhutan  
Prime Minister

29 December, 2009

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

I want to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to you for being with us from 7-12 December for our ground-breaking gathering on *Education for Gross National Happiness*. In particular, I want to thank you for your pioneering work and lifetime commitment to Buddhist and spiritual education, and to bringing the profound insights of Buddhism to bear on vital social issues. The contemplative approaches to education that you have so long advocated are precisely in line with our view and understanding of GNH, and with what we want now want to implement here. In fact, I appreciate your regular reminders that the treasure of our Buddhist legacy is our greatest source of strength in providing the means for us to move forward effectively. I am deeply honoured that you come to our little corner of the Himalayas to share your inspiration and knowledge with us.

It is quite literally true that without the presence and inspiration of our international friends at this workshop, we would not be moving forward determinedly towards implementation as we now are. In order to dare to undertake what we are attempting—an unprecedented nationwide educational transformation that reflects the most profound ecological and human principles and values—we need the very best minds, talents, experience, and knowledge on our side. We now know that we have that, and can therefore proceed without hesitation.

I think that the only real thanks I can extend to you is a commitment to put into action what we discussed. And if we can do that, then I have no doubt that the ripples from our new GNH-infused education curricula will spread far and wide beyond our own borders, as they must if we are to engender an essential change of consciousness in a world presently consumed by materialism.

Although this is intended as a sincere note of thanks, I do have to ask your forgiveness by ending with yet another very blunt and forthright request: Please stay closely involved and connected with us and with this initiative. On 7-12 December, we planted a seed together. But we have a long way to go to realize our objectives, and we have barely begun to tap the depths of your knowledge and experience. Indeed, we are fully aware that we have just initiated a multi-year process that will involve major curricular and structural reforms, and that, in order to succeed, we really need our international friends on board for the long haul.

I know that you are in great demand and have major commitments both at home and abroad. But please see the task on which we embarked together in the week of 7-12 December as having the potential to transform the consciousness of our young people globally, and please continue to give this endeavour priority among your many important commitments, as I know you already have. Indeed, I hope we can pair the educational transformation that we have just launched with a wide range of related societal actions, where your knowledge and experience will also be invaluable.

I value and treasure our connection and your own strong personal relationship with the Kingdom of Bhutan, and I am deeply appreciative of your willingness to take time from your very demanding schedule to help us initiate this ambitious educational reform. I hope you share my aspiration that this is just one step in a long and fruitful friendship and collaboration that has the potential to create far-reaching benefit.

With warmest wishes and many thanks,

Yours sincerely,

(Jigmi Y. Thinley)

March 10, 2010

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

I recently read your wonderful new book *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Thank you for this truly inspiring book. The Editor of the Mindfulness Bell, Natascha Bruckner, is planning to make Buddhist Economics and Right Livelihood the theme for the Fall 2010 issue of the Mindfulness Bell. As you may know the Mindfulness Bell is a publication of Plum Village and the international Thich Nhat Hanh Sangha. I enclose a copy of the most recent issue.

We would like to invite you to write a short article on this subject for the fall 2010 issue. This is such an important topic and you are at the forefront of the movement to bring compassion, wisdom and understanding to our trouble world. An article from you would be a wonderful way to introduce this topic to our readers. The deadline for the article would be July 1, 2010, Note that in this same issue there will also probably be a book review of your book.

We are very grateful for your contribution to international understanding and it would be so appropriate to include your article in the Fall 2010 issue.

Please let me know if it will be possible for you to do this. My mailing and email address are below  
With sincere thanks and a bow to you.

David Percival  
Mindfulness Bell Subscription Coordinator  
745 Cagua SE  
Albuquerque NM 87108-3717, USA

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30<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Dear Sulak,

We have not forgotten you and your birthday! We only were busy. Especially this year's terrible winter kept us hard-working all day long. Since a few days snow and ice have disappeared. Nature has re-discovered and spring comes slowly and shows its colourful signs of new life.

Receive our best wishes for the new year of your lifetime. May you enjoy everyday. May you be blessed with physical and mental health. May you receive the strength you need. We are sure that you have celebrated the birthday together with the larger family and friends. Hopefully in good health and with an open mind to the suffering of nature and to the differences in humankind.

These days we can see in television and listen to the radio, the tragic confrontation within your people in Thailand. I am feeling like older people may feel remembering the old days of Siam when there was a feeling of unity, a sense of freedom and a trust into future. But is it, that we may have difficulties to understand the present generation in their protest to an indecent life, a not-acceptable way of leadership?

Hope, you had a good day and that you could celebrate your birthday with family and friends.

With thoughts of Peace and Friendship, yours

Inge and Wolfgang

P.S.: Thanks for the Post-Card !!

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30<sup>th</sup> March 2010

Dear Ajan Sulak,

Hope this will find you in good health and spirit. I'm very happy to write you about our work done in Leh. The attachments are the brief report on our work done after we returned from INEB-42 day training in Thailand. We recieved a precious and noble gift from you through INEB which we distributed to our people and still we are willing to distribute it to them throughout of our life.

Dear, Ajan we need your guidance and advice on such work in future. We also wrote to INEB office a few weeks before in this regard. Here we are having problems with good and experienced resource persons and also with facilitators right now. Only two of us are fully engaged in this workshops based on INEB



training. Therefore what we need is more facilitators with good experience and exposure. The existing facilitators need to develop their skills, experience and need to learn more about Engaged Buddhism and social services.

Hope that your kind guidance will make us able to develop a branch of INEB in Leh in the future to guide our youth here.

looking forward to receiving your reply.

With regards

Phuntsok Namgyal (2008 INEB participoant)

1<sup>st</sup> April 2010

Dear Sulak,

A word of welcome from California—I search the *New York Times* for a mention of you in the midst of articles on the demonstrations and protests in Thailand right now. I trust that you and your family are OK. I would be interested in your feelings about the demonstrations.

I have just written a check for INEB & *Seeds of Peace* but seem to have lost the envelope for mailing. Can I send it to a U.S. address? If not, it should be to the INEB address?

The family is well, although Curtis has had some health problems but is better. I am still working at my housing discrimination work—with the recession in the U.S., money for nonprofit organizations is way down and I have had to make some salary cuts. However, we are still doing good work. Obama has had his ups and downs but was successful in getting the health insurance reform bill through. Lots of conservatives in the U.S. right now. Underlying some of it is a resentment of immigrants, many of them illegal. Blythe is doing her organic farming and working to save the earth; Perri is teaching sex education to high school kids and Kyle is still working for the Ford Foundation. Remember them?? My eldest grandson is at Cornell, majoring in drama, of all things, and loving it.

I love getting the *Seeds of Peace* and pray that the Buddhist way will overcome the militaristic events in the world.

A hug for you from me.

Nancy Kenyon

nancykenyon@mac.com

### The European Buddhist Union in Action

The European Buddhist Union is a federation of Buddhist communities, organisations and networks of all traditions. Its principal aim is to promote collaboration between the members and fellowship between all Buddhists in Europe.

Since a few years, the EBU has adopted a flexible structure of working committees. All members can contribute and participate in the most efficient way and decisions are always made according to democratic procedures and Buddhist habits of consensus.

At this moment, the platforms of National Unions, Sanghas and communities, Youth, Academic activities and Relations with the European Institutions are functioning actively. The next General Meeting will be held in Budapest (Hungary) at the end of September. For more information about the activities of the EBU: [www.e-b-u.org](http://www.e-b-u.org)

During the last Council meeting, the President of the EBU, Frans Goetghebeur, was asked to launch a new committee “Engaged Buddhism”. The aim would be to connect all initiatives in this field in Europe, so that mutual support can be intensified.

All suggestions and advices may be sent to him at [frans.goetghebeur@tibinst.org](mailto:frans.goetghebeur@tibinst.org).

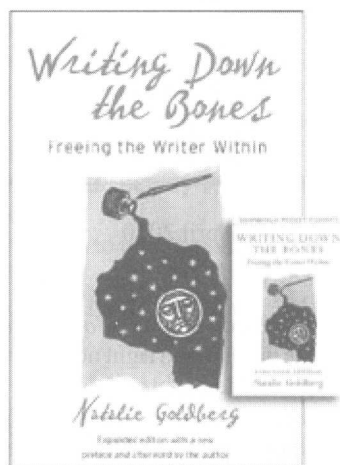
# Writing Down the Bones

Natalie Goldberg, Shambala

Natalie Goldberg's first book with its funny (very zen!) title has become a classic of Western Zen literature. First published in 1986, it has gone through a number of different editions; the current edition (on which this review is based) is an expanded version with a new Preface by the author and a transcript of an interview with Tami Simon of Sounds True, from whom a number of audio cassettes and CDs by Natalie are available. It comes in the form of one of the Shambala Pocket Classics.

Having stated that it is a western Zen classic, it should be added that it is a book that can be read and studied with benefit by all writers, whatever religious tradition they come from, including those with no religion at all.

Natalie sees her writing as part of her zen practice, just as valid as meditation or any other aspect of her practice, and she brings to her writing the same discipline she brings to all the other aspects of her practice. She encourages all writers to be disciplined about their writing and above all else to write. If you want to be a writer, write. If you want to learn to be a writer, write. If you want to learn what writing



is all about, write—but I also suggest you read this book. It is full of exercises which she recommends and it overflows with insights about the writing process. My wife, a former publisher, commented on how much more I was writing since reading Natalie's book. She also seemed to think I was writing better.

Natalie does not tell you in what style you should write, nor does she tell you what you should write about, but she does suggest you find special and appropriate places in which to do your writing. Above all she emphasizes the need to be mindful all the time you are writing. Otherwise your

writing easily becomes glib, false, boring. Good writing has integrity. I am currently reading a 500 page novel by a famous and highly successful novelist, but I can't help wishing he had read Natalie's book and taken her advice. If he had, the book would have been at least a hundred pages shorter and would not have contained the amount of very boring technical information which has no bearing on the plot of the novel and seems to be included to show off the author's expertise. This exercise of the author's ego almost made me give up reading the book.

There is much more in Natalie's book. She indicates that some of the things she recommends are appropriate in certain situations, while others are appropriate in different conditions. So one might think, superficially, that she is contradicting herself, which would be to fail to grasp the book in its entirety. To sum up, I don't believe anyone who writes or would like to write could fail to benefit from reading this book

Ian Mayo-Smith

## The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

I first met Sulak Sivaraksa some ten years ago in Bangkok. He arranged for my wife and five-year-old daughter to volunteer in a children's village school, located on the banks of the forested River Kwai. Sulak, social thinker, teacher, critic and activist, co-founded the democratically run school of socially disad-

vantaged young people, as he did many other grassroots organisations in Thailand and Asia, including the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM): a forest retreat centre for activists and social reformers, where courses are held in alternative development, conflict resolution, non-violent action, Buddhist eco-

nomics, globalisation and its impact, and meditation for social action.

Co-founder of the International Network for Engaged Buddhists (NEB), 76-year-old Sulak, who was educated in the UK, has authored more than 100 books in Thai and English, including *Seeds of Peace: A Bud-*

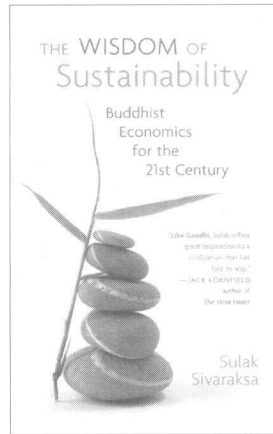
*dhist Vision for Renewing Society* (1992) and *Conflict, Culture, Change: Engaged Buddhism in a Globalising World* (2005).

His latest book, *Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, based on a series of lectures and essays, continues the groundbreaking work on Buddhist economics begun by E. F. Schumacher in *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered* (1973).

Sulak's succinct, 100-page volume, which is divided into eight chapters, expands on his past themes about the dangers of consumerism, the political, economic and exploitative realities of structural violence, and the need for grassroots interfaith activism. He addresses various dimensions of social and ecological sustainability, including creating cultures of peace, re-envisioning education and cultivating genuine security.

Sulak uses time-tested Buddhist logic and practices to question our Western approach to conflict. For example, when former US President George Bush's response to the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center was to "rid the world of evil".

Sulak offered another solution: "When attacked, your choice isn't simply between violence and inaction. Other responses, including dialogue, law enforcement, negotiation and diplomacy are possible. When parties take the time to listen to



each other, animosity often dissolves. Rather than divide the world between good and evil, we need to see each other, first and foremost, as ... fellow human beings."

Gandhian nonviolence helps to formulate Sulak's vision of a peaceful world. "An eye for an eye just makes the whole world blind," the Mahatma said. And Sulak asserts that nonviolence is the Buddha's master precept.

In each chapter, Sulak's moral vision, infused by the Buddha's teachings, addresses the spirit of our age, whether the subject is neocolonialism, global, capitalism, modern agriculture, 'development' or the World Bank.

He approaches the problem and looks to 'Gandhian Development' which, he maintains, bases its ideas on the same foundations as Buddhist philosophy, for, he

claims, "it aims at the reduction of craving, avoidance of violence and development of the spirit". In Buddhist development, "work is not simply to 'get ahead', but is something to enjoy; a sense of working for basic needs, in harmony, with others".

This "with others" is a constant theme of the book, and emphasises the relationship to the world around us and to ourselves. Schumacher, quoted throughout, reminds us that "human beings are incalculably more important than profits"

And although, as Sulak suggests, "real security depends on working on ourselves", it is in relationship with other—our community, culture, social interactions and environment—that the wisdom of sustainability reveals itself.

"Trying to create a fortress, a gated community for the self can never work", he writes. "There is always a 'we'. Our only enemies—greed, hatred, and ignorance—are within us. External enemies are primarily projections of our inner fears. We rely on each other."

Perhaps Sulak doesn't offer all the answers to the questions he raises. But his message is very clear: inner work is inextricably linked to social action. Nurtured together, they can create a life that is fulfilling, rewarding and of benefit to others.

Roger Ash Wheeler

## The Gentiles: A History of Sri Lanka 1498-1833

By Agnes Padmini Thambynayagam

There is nothing I enjoy more than reading a book that is described by the publisher and critics as "controversial" or "provocative." *The Gentiles, A*

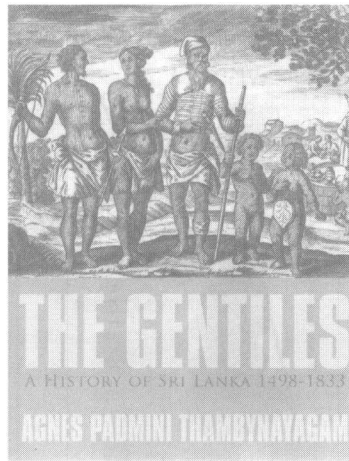
*History of Sri Lanka 1498-1833*, a carefully researched and well written book by Agnes Padmini Thambynayagam is such a book. As you may have guess by her

name, Ms. Thambynayagam was born in Sri Lanka and spent her growing up years there.

Sri Lanka, which was formerly called Ceylon, is a rela-

tively small island with an area of approximately 25,000 square miles, located just south of India. These days its population of approximately twenty million people consists of a rich melting pot mainly classified as Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, and Burgers. This population came about due to the occupation and settlement by the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, and other Europeans between 1505 and 1832. In fact, Ms. Thambynayagam asserts that, "the consequence of such an evolution over three hundred years has resulted in not only much variation in appearance and skin colour, but in the language, religion and culture of those now living in Sri Lanka." This assertion runs contrary of all norms of traditional teachings and beliefs on the subject which is why the book will be considered controversial by many.

At this point an explanation about the word "Gentile" in the book's title may be in order; because I suspect I am not the only reader that associates that word only as a definition of a non-Jewish person. In the con-



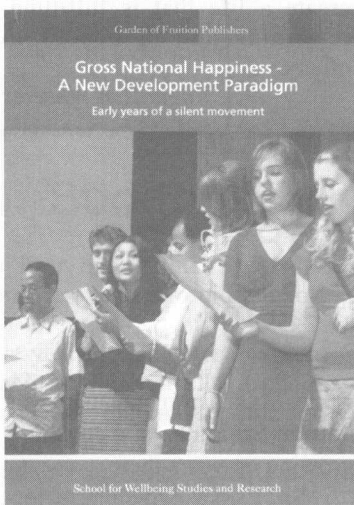
text of this book, the Gentiles were Christians who settled in India and Sri Lanka from countries surrounding the Mediterranean and Red Sea before the sixteenth century. From a sales and marketing point of view, it is unfortunate that the word is used prominently in the book's title. Searching for the book on Amazon using variations of the word Gentile, for example, could present the reader with well over six hundred titles (I stopped counting at 600) to sort through depending on the books positioning. I point that out because I want the book to succeed so when

you search for the book by all means use the full title or the author's last name.

*The Gentiles, A History of Sri Lanka 1498-1833*, is not only an excellent read, but a first rate piece of academic research as well. It is meticulously documented with footnotes and bibliographies; and contains a treasure trove of maps, drawings and photographs—many of the latter of friends and family of the author. Reading this book will take you on a fascinating journey through a charming and exotic country hitherto mostly unknown save for news coverage of a civil conflict that appears to now be resolved.

Ron Standerfer

*Ron Standerfer is a novelist, freelance writer, book reviewer, and journalist whose articles have appeared in numerous news publications including online editions of the Chicago Tribune, USA Today, and the Honolulu Star Advertiser.*



## ***Gross National Happiness—A New Development Paradigm***

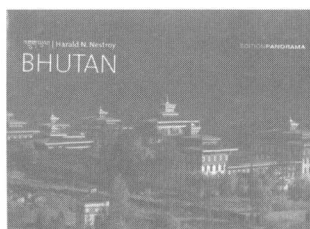
### **Early years of a silent movement**

This book is one of the 20 trial copies we have printed (applying new 'print-by-order' technology), mainly to provide the authors with an idea of how we intend to publish the book soon. In its present state the book still needs a last—hopefully limited—round of corrections. We request the speakers whose edited speeches has been used in the book, and all who like to advise us, to let us know any corrections suggested before the final version will be published, so before 30 May 2010.

Thank you very much for your cooperation,

Suan Nguen Mee Ma-Garden of Fruition publishers  
77,79 Fuang Nakorn Rd,  
Wat Rajabopit, Bangkok, Siam



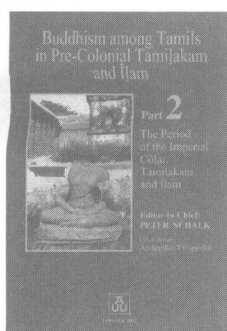
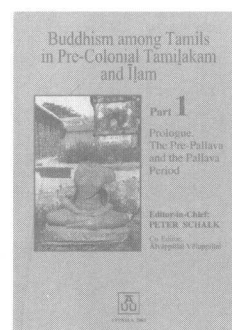


**Bhutan**

All photographs and texts:  
Harrold N. Nestroy and EditonPanorama  
A production by EditionPanorama, 2009 Germany

***Buddhism among Tamils in  
Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Ilam  
Part 1 The Period of the  
Imperial Colar Tamilakam and Ilam***

Edited by Peter Schalk and co-editor: Alvappillai Veluppillai,  
Printed in Sweden by Elanders Gotab, Stockholm 2002

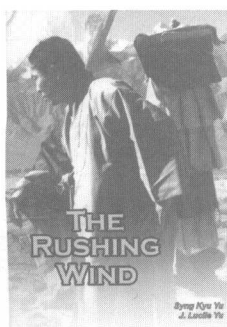
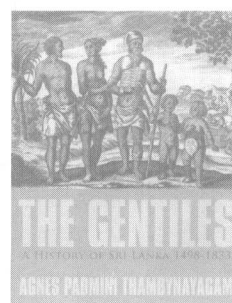


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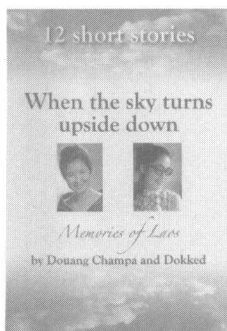
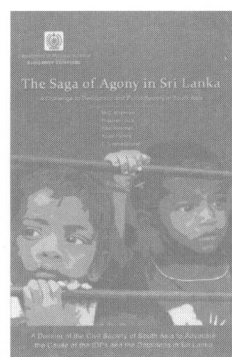


***The Rushing Wind***

By Syng Kyu Yu and J. Lucile Yu  
Published by Finger Pressure, LLC, 2009

***The Saga of Agony in Sri Lanka:  
A Challenge to Democratic and  
Plural Society in South Asia***

By M.G. Krishnan, Prakash Louis,  
Paul Newman, Kusal Perera, E. Deenadayalan  
Published by Department of Political Science,  
Bangalore University, 2009

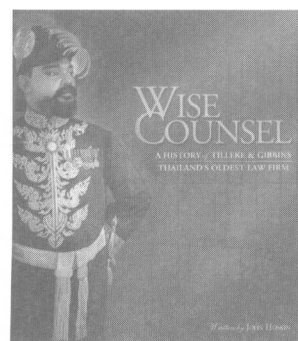


***When the Sky Turns Upside Down: Memory of Lao***

By Douang Champa and Dokked  
Edited by Ruth Foster  
Published by Dokked Publishing Co., Ltd, 2009  
Vientiane, Lao P.D.R.

***Wise Counsel: A History of Tilleke &  
Gibbins Thailand's Oldest Law Firm***

Written by John Hoskin  
Edited by Keith Hardy  
Published by Mark Standen Publishing Co. Ltd.,  
and Tilleke & Gibbins International Ltd



Celebrating Fua Haripitak's Centennary on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2553

