

SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.14 No.1 Jan.-Apr. 2541 (1998)

**Special Issue On
'Alternatives to Consumerism'**

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**And
Remembering Gandhi On His 50th
Death Anniversary**



SEEDS OF

C O N T E N T S

Publisher

Sulak Sivaraksa

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Cover

Pali verses by the Venerable
Somdech Maha
Ghosananda

Lay-out

Song Sayam., Ltd.
Tel. 662-225-9533-5

Published by

INEB

Ph & Fax [66-2]433-7169

E-mail: ineb@loxinfo.co.th

&

TICD

Ph. & Fax: 662-437 9450

Distributed by

Suksit Siam

113-115 Fuangnakhorn Rd.

Bangkok 10200

Fax [66-2]222-5188

Baht 100 per issue

Payment info

USA: Bank of America

Shattuck-Vine Branch

A/C No: 05570-15663

Thailand: First Bangkok City

Bank Public Company Ltd.,

Sao-Ching-Cha Branch,

Bangkok

A/C No. 007-2-08966-6

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Step by Step

*A peaceful heart makes a peaceful person,
A peaceful person makes a peaceful family,
A peaceful family makes a peaceful community,
A peaceful community makes a peaceful country,
A peaceful country makes a peaceful world,*

Samdech Preah Maha Ghosananda

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 International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). Suggested minimum donation US\$ 20 per annum, postage included. Personal cheques from UK and USA are accepted.

INEB

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Bangkok 10206

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E-mail: ineb@loxinfo.co.th

The goals of INEB are to :

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

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The objectives of TICD are to :

1. Coordinate work among individuals, groups of individuals and various agencies dealing with religions and development in the course of working together.
2. Share experience in and knowledge of religions and development as well as exploring ways and means of working together.
3. Offer training and secure resources in terms of man-power and materials to support and enhance the agencies that need help.



Letter from H.H. the Dalai Lama to H.H. the Sangharaja of Thailand on the occasion of the latter's 84th birthday.

The Dalai Lama

December 1, 1997

Your Holiness,

I am extremely happy to send this letter through Ven. Doboom Tulku, Director, Tibet House, New Delhi.

I would like to felicitate you on the special occasion of your 84th birthday anniversary. As in the past, I pray for your long life, good health and success in your wonderful Dharma work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude for your generous gift of a thousand Buddha images for the Tashi Dhargye Monastery. This gift is a symbol of the cordial and brotherly attitude Your Holiness has for the Tibetan Buddhists. It has always been my sincere hope that there will be more contacts and better understanding between the Thai and the Tibetan Buddhists.

With prayers and good wishes

Yours sincerely,

(H.H. the 14th Dalai Lama)

EDITORIAL NOTES

The industrialist was horrified to find the fisherman lying beside his boat, smoking his pipe.

-Why aren't you fishing? said the industrialist.

-Because I have caught enough fish for the day.

-Why don't you catch some more?

-What would I do with them?

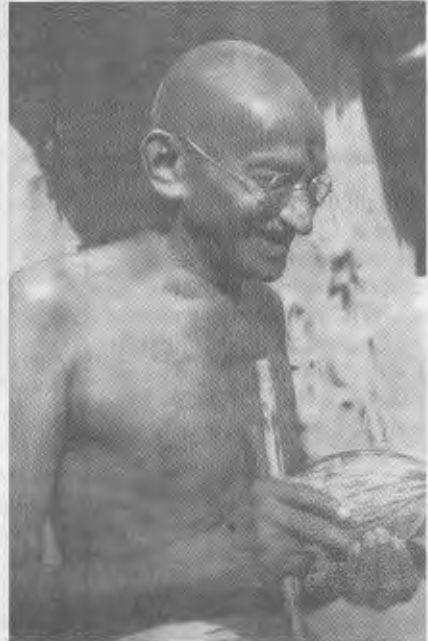
-Earn more money. Then you could have a motor fixed to your boat and go into deeper waters and catch more fish.

That would bring you money to buy nylon nets, so more fish, more money. Soon you would have enough to buy two boats even a fleet of boats. Then you could be rich like me.

-What would I do then?

-Then you could sit back and enjoy life.

-What do you think I'm doing now?



This pithy story says it all, doesn't it? Not only does this fisher know how to enjoy life, he respects the fish, is in tune with his wants, seems self-reliant and could easily teach many people in the rich and poor nations alike, a thing or two about mindful consumption.

Spirituality and consumerism was the focus of the Alternatives to Consumerism(ATC) Seminar held at Buddhamonthon Park, 8-12 December 1997. This issue is devoted to the Seminar and various related activities before and after. This issue is also devoted to the champion of simplicity, Mahatma Gandhi, as we remember his 50th death anniversary. Lack of space precludes the printing of some inspiring speeches and articles connected to the two themes. These include: *Spiritual Education from a Buddhist Perspective* by Pracha Hutauwatr, *Rethinking Education on the Verge of Globalization* by Pipob Udomittipong and *A Gandhian Perspective on Alternatives to Consumerism* by Gedong Bagoes Oka. These will be published at a later date through our occasional papers. Worth mention is also the Alternative Politics in Asia Seminar at Wongsanit Ashram, 1-5 December. Participants from Southeast and South Asia discussed the problems, vision and strategy of politics in Asia.

The topic of spirituality and consumerism couldn't be more relevant now in a country like Thailand, as the vile aftereffects of excessive consumerism become apparent. The economic situation is grim. But, in the words of one ATC participant, Vicki Robin, author of *Your Money or Your Life*, a manual on voluntary simplicity, "this could be a really wonderful opportunity for the people of Thailand to reconsider adopting the great god of materialism". I sincerely hope Vicki's words come true.

Wishing you all a very happy and peaceful 1998!

With Metta

Zarina Mulla

Zarina Mulla

BANGLADESH:

Non-violence Training for Buddhist Women

The November 4-6, 1997 Non-violence training held in Khagrachari in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh, can be termed an unique one in the annals of non-violence training. It was a training exclusively for women, and attended almost entirely by tribal women. All but one of the 30 participants were Buddhists. The training took place in a Buddhist temple complex in a rural setting. The training was cast against the backdrop of the imminent ending of the state of belligerent violence in the CHT. The purpose of the training was to select and prepare non-violence trainers for the future; on the last day of the training there were strong requests to have a deeper level training for some of the

participants, and also proposals to hold similar base training for other tribal groups in other tribal centres of the CHT.

Twenty-six participants were Chakma tribal women, 3 were from the Marma tribe, and there was one Muslim woman from Chittagong. More than one session was devoted to tribal culture and the tribal response to violence, keeping the situation of the CHT in focus. The training focused on causes of violence, especially violence to women; history and relevance of non-violence and the role of Buddhism; techniques for trainers; and methods of social analysis. The training was coordinated by BICPAJ and Buddhist Peace Fellowship of Bangladesh,

BPFB, and conducted by Br. Jarlath D'Souza, CSC, in collaboration with Sangeeta Barua, Ratna Prova Chakma, Paul Charwa Tigga, and Ven. Sumanankar Mahathero. In the role play, events were taken from the non-violent actions of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Ven. Somdech Maha Ghosanda of Cambodia, etc. At the ending, gratitude was expressed for the support of Shelley Andersen of the Women Peacemakers' programme of IFOR, Netherlands, and to Chittagong Regional Office of Caritas Bangladesh.

Br. Jarlath D'Souza, Buddhist Peace Fellowship of Bangladesh

BURMA:

Buddhist Women in Burma

The Rocky Path Towards Liberation

It is three o'clock in the morning and everything is calm and peaceful. Only the noise from the kitchen indicates the beginning of a new day. While monks and lay-people are still asleep, Daw Yewadi, a Buddhist nun, is already busy with preparing breakfast for the guest monks who came here to pay respect to Ven. U Vinaya, better known as Thamanya Sayadaw, a highly revered 85 year old monk living at Thamanya Hill. This hill, located around 35 kms east of

Pa'an, the charming capital of the Karen state on the banks of Salween-river, became a popular pilgrimage place after the Sayadaw settled there in 1980. After finishing preparing food Daw Yewadi sits in the Buddha hall for meditation and chanting, before she serves breakfast to the monks. For more than eight years she lives at Thamanya Hill. Her responsibility is to take care for the monks who come along with hundreds of pilgrims daily to visit the Thamanya Sayadaw. With

Daw Yewadi around 400 monks and 200 other women ascetics live at this spiritual place, attracted by the teachings of the Sayadaw. Around the hill, which is close to areas that saw fighting between the Burmese and Karen armies for more than 40 years, he set up a three mile haven of non-violence. All the villagers in this area committed themselves to refrain from eating meat and killing. Concerned with the education of the people, he set up a middle and an elementary school which he con-

tinues to support. The majority of the pilgrims are women who look for spiritual enrichment, relaxing from their daily burden and for the Sayadaw's blessing for them and their beloved ones. Although most of them are very poor, thousands of Kyats are daily donated to this venerated monk.

It is obvious that in Burma Buddhism plays a significant part in the everyday life of a woman. In the temples and at pilgrimage sites (like Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon, the Golden Rock in Kyaikthyu in Mon State or the Mahamuni temple in Mandalay) women are always in the majority. Women offer alms to the monks, prepare the meals in the temples and take care of the monasteries. But while their support is crucial for the very existence of the male Buddhist Sangha, they play a marginalized role in Buddhist society. Like in other Theravada-Buddhist countries they are not allowed to be fully ordained as a Bhikkhuni. While it is evident that the Bhikkhuni order in Sri Lanka existed until the eleventh century (s. Senarat Wijayasundara, Sri Lanka: The Order of Buddhist Nuns and its Revival, in: *Seeds of Peace* 1/1994, pp. 23-25, and Dr. Hema Goonatilake, Theravada Nuns: Reclaiming the Lost Legacy, in *Seeds of Peace* 3/1996, pp. 13-14) it is unclear whether the order ever existed in Burma, although nuns are mentioned in some inscriptions from the time of the Bagan Empire (11th - 13th century). There is little written account about women living a religious life in Burma. About the time of King Mindon (1825-78), a devout Buddhist who organized the 5th Buddhist Council in Mandalay to commemorate the 2,400th anniversary of Buddha's Parinibbana, it is reported that he

often listened to the preaching of the two famous Thilashins Saya Kin and Saya Mai Nat Pay and even sent one of his daughters to live for some time as a novice.

But unlike Thailand, where only few places exist for Mae Jees to live autonomously (most of them live in the compound of a Wat), in Burma Thilashins ("Keeper of the precepts") are more independent. Almost in any bigger city one can find nunneries (kyaung) and on the streets Thilashins are a familiar view. According to the Ministry for Religious Affairs there are around 20,000 Thilashins in Burma. But their actual number is several times higher since many women join the religious life for a short period (like their male counterpart), most preferably during the Burmese summer (between March and May). And those are hardly to count. In nunneries like the Daw Nyanacari Myanaung Kyaung in Sanchaung Township in Rangoon at this time the number of nuns easily doubles. In the wake of a Buddhist renewal after the Independence of Burma in 1948, especially under the U Nu Government, the status of Thilashins rose significantly. New nunneries were founded and the educational standard improved. One outstanding example is the above mentioned Daw Nyanacari Myanaung Kyaung. Founded in 1947 by late Daw Nyanacari, until today a highly revered nun, the nunnery, with its 30 branches countrywide is one of the most prestigious schools for nuns in Burma. Its reputation for pariyatti (study) and parapatti (practice) attracts even nuns from other countries like Nepal, Viêt Nam or Germany. At the moment 200 Thilashins are living permanently there to undergo their studies which include Buddhist

literature, Pali, Abhidhamma, scriptures, etc. Around 50 of them are attending the course for dhammacariyas (Teacher of the Dhamma), which is currently the highest educational title Thilashins can gain. This course takes around three years and allows the graduates to teach in other nunneries. There are only nun scholars at this school which is administered by an Executive Committee of fifteen members under the leadership of Daw Zayawadi. "There are currently no chances for nuns to do further Buddhist studies at the University level", complains Ma Yuzana Nya Ni, an ambitious nun in her late twenties, who is preparing herself for becoming a dhammacariya. But she is confident that she can continue her studies after graduation. There are concrete plans to build an Institute for Higher Buddhist Education in Sagaing near Mandalay and in Rangoon with the support of U Nyaneithara Sayadaw, where a masters, and probably a doctoral degree can be obtained by Thilashins.

Like other nunneries the school receives its main support from generous lay-Buddhists and the families of the Thilashins. The Government donates only 200 sacks of rice each year. Twice a week the nuns go out to the markets and streets for receiving alms. The strict organized day is filled with periods of studies, meditation and manual activities. Without question Sagaing on the bank of the Irrawaddy River in the south of Mandalay is the center of Burmese Buddhism. About 3,000 monks and 2,000 Thilashins live in some 500 kyaungs which are spread around the hill. The Hkaymaythaka Kyaung, the biggest nunnery in this area is recognized as the place where the first title of

dharmacariya was earned and where the nuns observe a strict routine. While a qualified Buddhist education and meditation practice is the major concern of the nunneries, social activities are rather rare. In Mingun, around 10 km north of Sagaing, a Home for the aged was founded in 1927 by Daw U Zun and it still exists to this day. Poor families can bring their daughters to the Buddhist Girls' Home in Mergui in the very South of Burma or to the Dhammaythaka Kyaung in Rangoon. Around 60 girls from all over Burma live in this nunnery under the care of Daw Dhammaythi. As novices they follow the way of life of the Thilashins. In early 1997 a school was opened for these girls where two nuns and two lay-persons teach them up to the tenth standard.

The motivations for becoming a nun are without question diverse. "Many young women are looking for a secure life. You see, nuns don't have to worry about food and clothes", explains Ma Yuzana Nya Ni as one of the reason for becoming a nun. This is obvious in one of the poorest countries in the world, which ranges at number 131 out of 175 countries according to the Human Development Index (HDI) of 1997. Nearly 80% of the population lives in rural areas and most of the Thilashins originate from there. In the countryside, especially children and women face a harsh life. According to UNICEF statistics, around one third of the children under the age of three are severely or moderately malnourished. The infant mortality rate is nearly 10% and the maternal mortality rate with 140 per 100,000 live births the third highest in the East Asia/Pacific Region. Despite a relatively high adult literacy rate of 82.7 per



Young Novices in Rangoon

cent, nearly one third of the women are illiterate and girls are the first to drop out of schools for supporting their families. Economic hardship and family responsibilities make it more difficult for women to enter a religious life. It is said about the already mentioned Daw Nyancari that she escaped from her home three successive times after her parents refused her permission to enter a monastic life. As the youngest daughter she was expected to look after her parents when they got old. Only later they accepted her decision and argument that she would benefit them more by being a Thilashin. With her highly regarded knowledge Daw Nyancari became later a respected Buddhist scholar, known as "teacher for 500 Thilashins and more". Another reason for entering the nunhood is the situation of elder women without children or whose children are not able (or willing) to support them. They can be found in numerous nunneries. Living a religious life is for many the only alternative to survive. Although the educational standard of most of them is very low and only a few receive

some Buddhist education in the monasteries, their contribution for the community is important. Some of the old Thilashins may hope to follow the example of Sona Theri, a distinguished elder Bhikkhuni whose story is told in the Therigatha. Before ordaining she was married, and had ten children. She entered a monastic life because she was rejected by all of her children. Due to her age and frailty she could do her walking-meditation only by holding on the wall that surrounded her nunnery. But through her persistent efforts she became very quickly an arahant.

Without question the life of a Thilashin became more attractive in Burma in recent years. Their number and educational standard increased. But unlike Sri Lanka or Thailand where the efforts for restoring the Bhikkhuni order are growing stronger (s. Raja Dharmapala, Sri Lankan Attempt for Bhikkhuni Higher Ordination, in: Seeds of Peace 3/1997, pp. 9-10) in Burma similar attempts are unthinkable. Many follow the position of Sayadaw U Pandita, one of Burma's most renowned meditation master:

"Formerly there were bhikkhus or monks, bhikkhunis or nuns, sikkhamanas or probation nuns, and samaneris and samaneras, female and male novices. In the course of history, the order of Theravada bhikkhunis died out. Strictly speaking in our own time, the ordained sangha consists of bhikkhus and male novices only, who practice in accordance with the Buddha's rules of conduct... No matter. All

yogis, formally ordained or not, share virtues of purity, of morality, of concentration and of wisdom... It is nonetheless still possible to become a bhikkhu or a bhikkhuni according to the suttas, the Buddha's discourses. For this, the only requirement is a sincere practice to purify one's mind according to the Noble Eightfold Path. There is no loss of privileges in this form of bhikkhu-hood: in fact, it may be

more appropriate for our times. If everyone simply becomes a bhikkhu, there will be no problems, no inequality." (Sayadaw U Pandita: *In this Very Life. The Liberation Teachings of the Buddha*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1992, 132ff.).

Martin H. Petrich is Executive Secretary of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

CAMBODIA: Toward an Environmental Ethic in Southeast Asia

From 5-7 November 1997 the Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh held a regional seminar 'Toward an Environmental Ethic in Southeast Asia'. It was attended by some 50 people from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Burma, Philippines; Thailand and Sri Lanka. The seminar was organized in cooperation with the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation (Germany) and the UNDP's Environmental Technical Advisory Programme (ETAP) at the Centre for Culture and Vipassana in Prek Ho, Takhmao (Kandal Province). The purpose was to contribute to the development of a holistic, ecology-based environmental ethic, drawing on the indigenous and Eastern belief systems and cultures of peoples in the region. The seminar sought to develop the outlines of a social ethic relevant to the peoples and cultures of the region in order to assist educators, policy-makers, businessmen, academics, the media as well as the general public. It considered Buddhist, Islamic and indigenous/highland peoples' perspectives on the environment and

the environmental crisis in an attempt to synthesize and provide a framework for future action.

Based on the premise that environmental ethics is a way of life and not merely a concept, the participants formulated and adopted the following working ethical principles for environmental action:

- (1) Realise and be mindful that the entire universe is inter-related and inter-woven;
- (2) Further the emerging pattern of social change from a model of individual self-interest to a society based on meeting basic human needs;
- (3) Promote responsive moral leadership on environmental issues by representatives of religious and indigenous communities;
- (4) Recognise and encourage the special role of women in fostering environmental ethics through initiatives in their communities;
- (5) Cultivate caring and nurturing qualities in human beings as opposed to dominating and

exploitative behaviour;

- (6) Integrate ethical and environmental concerns into all forms of education, including especially community learning;
- (7) Promote reciprocity as a tool for mutual aid and community action as building blocks for a cooperative society;
- (8) Reclaim indigenous knowledge and wisdom for all humanity;
- (9) Develop an inner ecology of the mind through integral human development;
- (10) Celebrate the similarities which connect people as well as the diversity that reinforces their cultural identities;
- (11) Investigate and analyse causes of the environmental crisis as a means to explore directions that point to transformation for a sustainable future;
- (12) Promote and conduct further inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue on environmental ethics.

Source: The Buddhist Institute, Phnom Penh

INDIA:

A Gandhian Seminar Towards Global Unity

Between 2-4 October 1997 about 75 Gandhians, mostly from India, gathered to discuss the topic of "Towards Global Unity". The site was the Acharyakul Institute set up by a Gandhi follower Vinoba Bhave, just off the Gandhi Centre Sewagram near Wardha town. Most of the participants were elderly and seasoned Gandhians and/or committed disciples of Vinoba Bhave. To quite a few Gandhians of India today, Vinoba is the true spiritual successor of Gandhi. The "Acharya" or teacher is accepted as the messenger of the "Mahatma" or the great soul (Gandhi). Vinoba's symbol of peaceful walking actualized Gandhi's desire to spread the 'Gospel' of non-violence among the common people living in the villages. Vinoba in his walks called for gifts of land from the better-off for the use and owner-

ship of the landless, and these amounted to thousands of acres all over India. Even in Bangladesh during his two-week trek there in 1962, Vinoba received land as "Bhoodan". Giving away one's excess wealth and living simply was the formula that recurred often in the different prayers and talks during the conference. Special sub-themes were the growing tensions of today; Gandhism at the turn of this century; and the role of women in the process of combating materialistic globalization. There were also two special speakers, apart from the main theme: Masanobu Fukuoka of Japan, who demonstrated his process of farming without using any fertilizer; and the hermit Swami Chidananda of Rishikesh in the Himalayas, who spoke of the inter-connectedness of science and religion.

The atmosphere of the seminar was friendly. Taking part in the evening prayer ceremony at Sewagram Ashram of Gandhi, and visiting Paunar Ashram of Vinoba about 20 kms away were unforgettable experiences. On the last day it was proclaimed by consensus that the next such gathering would take place three years from now, in the year 2000, and at this same venue. There were only about fifteen women participants. Of the dozen or so papers presented, only two were by women, Dr. Medha Nani-vadekar of Shivaji University of Kohlapur, and Dr. Leena Deshpande from Pune. Quite a few pointed out that there should be a more visible participation by women in future Gandhian gatherings of this type.

By Br. Jarlath D'Souza

INDONESIA:

Seminar on Love in Action

The Union of Indonesian Buddhist Students (HIKMAHBUDHI-KMBJ) has held a seminar and discussion on Thich Nhat Hanh's book 'Love In Action: Writings on Non-Violent Social Changes' in cooperation with the Center of Indonesian Culture Studies (PUSKAKINDO) on October 11, 1997. The seminar aimed to enhance consciousness and social commitment to take part actively, positively, critical-

ly, and dynamically in efforts to uphold justice and peace through love in action.

Invited in the seminar was Somdech Preah Maha Ghosananda as the keynote speaker, together with five other speakers representing various religions, i.e. Dr. Said Aqil (Muslim), Sabam Sirait (Christian), Krishnanda W.M. (Buddhist), Ida Bagus Gunadha (Hindu), and Romo Ignatius Sandyanan

(Catholic). Opened by the Ambassador of Cambodia, His Excellency Mr. Keo Puthreasmey, the seminar highlighted issues on the violence easily occurring in Indonesia which is viewed as the solution to the problems in the society as well as the nation.

The rise of social wavering, in accordance with the seminar results, reflects the conditions of the inability to accommodate the expectations of the society to



Ven. Maha Ghosananda among the participants of the seminar

social changes for a better life. It points out that there is something lost and unhealthy in the national building marked with the drop of ethical values, whether in politics, economy, society or culture. Meanwhile, religion is often manipulated for the sake of politics. These conditions are even worsened by the unjust law practices concerned with criminal violent acts.

To address the issues on social violence, the seminar came up with some thoughts of solutions, which are as follows:

- * Every effort for understanding the aspiration of the people is essentially required, as well as

seeking the alternatives to solve each problem wisely for non-violent social changes.

- * A deep reflection on violence issues is needed to find out and to overcome roots of the problems which cause various violent acts through actions of love and compassion.

- * The cooperation and solidarity from all parties are encouraged to deal with problems of violence.

- * Truthful comprehension on religion should be promoted in order to prevent the manipulation of religion for destructive goals. Besides, all religions possess the universal love to be spread out for the prosperity of human beings which will further lead to the

achievement of freedom, justice, and peace.

- * Righteous practice of the law should be conducted by taking into consideration the moral approach and voices of the people

These thoughts of solution for non-violent social changes were further accumulated in the Principal Thoughts of the National Problems conveyed and discussed with the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Try Sutrisno, during a one and half hour courtesy call on November 4, 1997 at the Merdeka Selatan Palace, Jakarta.

Yabin is a member of KMBJ

MALAYSIA: 'Operation Lalang' -10 Years Later

On 26th October 1997, around 150 Malaysians converged at the gates of the detention camp in Kaunting, Perak, to mark the 10th anniversary of a mass crackdown

against dissidents under the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA), also known under the code name 'Operation Lalang'. On 27th October 1987, 118 politicians,

social activists and academics, were arrested and imprisoned for up to two years. Among the detained were prominent figures like Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, Lim

Kit Siang, Dr. Syed Husin Ali and Br. Anthony Rogers. ISA, which was introduced by the British Colonial power in 1948, allows the government to detain a person without trial for any length of time in the name of national security. In a public declaration the group of protesters and a number of Malaysian organizations demanded to abolish the ISA. They appealed to the

Government to a) repeal the ISA and all other laws allowing for detention without trial; b) release all detainees held under such laws or charge them in open court for any alleged offences. According to the group thousands of people were detained under ISA. "Memory is important. Malaysians should never ever forget that Operation Lalang happened", Muzaffar stresses: "The ISA

should go. It should be abolished immediately. The ISA is a blot on our dignity, It is a slur upon our democracy. It shames our nation".

Source: Aliran for Unity Monthly, 1997 : 17 (10)

See also Aliran's homepage: <http://www.malaysia.net/aliran>

THAILAND: Buddhist Monks and Teachers Behind Most Child Assaults

According to a report of the Child Protection Foundation, Buddhist monks and novices are, besides teachers, the major offenders of sexual assaults on children. Places of sexual abuse are homes, temples and schools. The report records 200 serious cases of abuse in the last three years. 93 assault cases were committed by teachers, monks and novices. One of the reasons

why they are the major groups for such crimes is the pressure by regulations and principles, according to Soompon Jitrabab, lecturer at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. Furthermore, they have more chances and authority to force children to do whatever they want. Teachers and monks are highly respected in Thai society. More than 90% of the suspects were

able to flee due to protection by surrounding people. In most of the cases children were found to have been raped repeatedly for long periods of time and more than 100 have been raped up to 200 times and more.

Source: Bangkok Post, 22 September 1997



ALTERNATIVES TO CONSUMERISM GATHERING 1997 SPIRITUALITY & CONSUMERISM SEMINAR

Buddhamonthon Park, Thailand

Following is a brief summary of the Alternatives to Consumerism Gathering, (ATC) organized by the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute. Full texts of the keynote speeches as well as other supplemental information about the Gathering will be published in separate occasional papers in the nearest future.

Monday December 8th: The Call.

The day began with chants from the Tibetan monks. After a few words of welcome from Sulak Sivaraksa, we began the seminar with prayer from some of the many traditions represented, including Buddhist, Sikh, Moslem, Christian, Hindu, Quaker, Indigenous, and others.

Ajan Sulak presented an opening speech, emphasizing spirituality as the essence of life. The world was now controlled by multinational companies with more power than any nation state. Perhaps if religious leaders joined together and went back to spiritual traditions, that could provide an antidote to consumerism. We were reminded that in just over one month would be the 50th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom. Fifty years ago he could move the people of India to challenge the most powerful empire of the day, the British empire, by the strength of his spiritual leadership. Today multinationals and consumerism are much more powerful than any colonial empire; but if we could follow the Mahatma's example and bring his spiritual force back into the world, we would succeed in countering these forces.

Next Rajagopal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi presented a keynote address, stressing that the people gathered there were not happy about the profit-centered devel-

opment model and were more interested in a people-centered development model. *"An activist friend of mine in Thailand once said look, you develop your supermarket at the cost of our supermarket. This is our supermarket; the forest, this water, this land, is our supermarket. When we need medicine, we go to the forest; when we need fruit, we go to the forest; and you have taken that away, for setting up industries and building roads. And then you set up a supermarket for yourself in Bangkok, while we are deprived of our supermarket..."* he emphasized that there were quite a few lessons one needed to learn from Gandhi. The contribution that Asians could make in today's world was promoting the idea of simplicity; People respected Gandhi for his simplicity.

Next Elizabeth Roberts, or Rabia for short, presented the second keynote address, this one from the point of view of an activist involved mainly in social and environmental justice issues, founder of several NGOs, and teacher at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado, USA. She began powerfully: *"People in my country are lonely."* This simple but profoundly honest statement was then followed by a brief account of the reality in the United States.

Was there a way to counter the alarming onslaught of media and malls? She concluded: *"We hope to look to our religious tra-*

ditions, for they hold the stories of what it means to live in this world; they hold the stories of what the good life is about. I believe that to do the job that needs to be done even our religious traditions will need to stretch and grow; and they will need to ask from their followers more than simply being good."

Next, Jane Rasbash who has run the Alternatives to Consumerism (ATC) Secretariat for the past several years gave a brief overview and background information on the project and plans for the future. Pracha Hutana-watr, followed by suggesting that we all took extra care to keep in mind the fact that all of the participants had come from very different backgrounds, and very different kinds of societies; some had walked for days from the jungle, to meet with us, and had a painful time getting a passport, as many governments still were not willing to accept the indigenous peoples of the land as full citizens. And then there were people who had come from big cities, metropolitan cities, all over the world. Pracha then outlined the program for the five days of the Gathering together with Ajan Sulak, that the event was also taking place in honor of the seventh cycle birth anniversary of His Holiness the Sangharaja, the Supreme Patriarch of Siam; he thanked the Santi Asoke movement, who were providing food for the seminar and invited Lama Doboorn Tulku director of Tibet



The Tibetan Monk Delegation at the ATC Gathering

House in Delhi, to read a message from His Holiness the Dalai Lama to His Holiness the Sangharaja. After this the Thai monks present recited the stanzas of victory in honor of both H.H. the Sangharaja and H.H. the Dalai Lama. After lunch, the Tibetan monks recited the sutra from the Tibetan tradition in consecration of the one thousand Buddha images in a remarkable ceremony greatly enjoyed and appreciated by all.

The afternoon program consisted (as it would throughout the Gathering) of breaking up into smaller groups of about ten participants with diverse backgrounds discussing relevant topics. On this day the topic was "The Call - What made the participant interested in the issue of consumerism?"

Tuesday, December 9th: Problems and Causes of Consumerism.

To begin the day's session, Ramesh Sharma from the Gandhi

Peace Foundation in New Delhi chanted an interfaith prayer. Then Dr. Rosemary Ruether, feminist theologian and professor at Northwestern University, was introduced as our first speaker. Following is a brief extract of her speech: "I have a number of complex points to make. The first concerns the system of consumerism, the drive to accumulate; 'to have is to be', the drive to acquire possessions... 'I shop therefore I am.' We need to see this as a deep system that has been shaped by modern science, technology and colonialism of the last several hundred years. It is rooted in the death of nature: the development of an ideology which defined all reality as dead matter in mechanical motion, and thus denied spirit, god, life... allowing no meaning, no inwardness, no spirituality, no subjectivity... all of which are illusion. There are only hard realities, only atoms; only mechanical force. **This materialist philosophy underlies consumerism; there is**

no soul, there are only things, and we also are only things...

Consumerism is a middle class problem, a problem of the affluent, but it affects just about everybody. The underside of the system, the poor, suffer from polluted air and water; their children play in the dumps of the affluent; their misery is defined by the system, while their minds are colonized by it".

"Even to think that there is an alternative is considered heresy. We want an alternative that is broader than communism, that includes women, the environment, etc.; that overcomes the split between mind and body, that is more holistic, that focuses on communities. But the local is not enough if it is small drop-out survival experiments falling through the gaps in the system; we need to network, we need an alternative to globalization which can then really challenge and create new patterns, new ways of living. But this is risky stuff, long term, and very serious; risky



The ATC Gathering

because as soon as it becomes strong enough to really challenge the system, the system will come down on it. As soon as the alternative is real you become a heretic."

Our next speaker, was Walden Bello, a Philippino economist who is the driving force behind a Thai NGO called "Focus" that does policy analysis and research for the South. He elaborated on the processes and structures of economic globalization, their relation to consumerism, and alternatives: *"In a process led by US economic and political interests, represented by large transnational companies, the nation states of the world are turning into one borderless mass, with no economic barriers. They are trying to remake the world an image of the US economy - no state intervention, little restraint in capital's relationship to labor... They say they are seeking a "level playing field": level in that it is extremely advantageous to US corpora-*

tions. We are told there is only one valid model: the Anglo-American model; the European and Asian models are no longer legitimate... Globalization equals Americanization; the triumphant nationalism of globalization is an American process... And it is a process without cultural and political dimensions...

The assembly then broke up into small groups to discuss the speeches and to come up with two or three questions for the speakers. Each group put forth a question to both speakers.

Wednesday December 10th: The Vision.

To begin the day's session, the leader of the Ban Krua Moslem community of Bangkok performed the opening prayer ceremony. Then Fazlin Khalid of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology, UK, was invited to describe the Ohito Declaration.

Next, Ajan Sulak described the history of Buddhamonthon,

and then invited Madame Oka and Nyoman Sadra of Bali to light the candles.

The rest of the morning was primarily devoted to a panel discussion, with Betty Cabazares of the Philippines as moderator. She formulated the topic of the day - "The kind of society we would like."

The panel members: Sock Nye of Malaysia; Anjana Shakya of Nepal; Andrew Nugent-Head, an American who has been living in China for eleven years, working with an organization dedicated to preserving traditional arts and culture; Christine Wandera, of Amani PeT theater company, Kenya; Mae East of Brazil, who is active with the Findhorn community; and John Thomson, of Emerson College, UK.

Sock Nye brought up the necessity to modify the current western paradigm, from a linear to a holistic one, emphasizing interconnectedness and long-term sustainability. Anjana



A Working Lunch at the ATC

related her experience growing up in Nepal, the country gradually being "consumed" by consumerism while simultaneously losing the ability to be self-reliant. Andrew spoke of his conviction that sooner than later we would be looking towards traditional arts and knowledge to help humanity out of the current crisis. Christine emphasized the relevance of community activities, namely folk theater, in solving problems of modern society. Mae described her home at the Findhorn Community, Scotland, and how this community was working towards real sustainability. Finally, John Thomson pointed out a number of facts to help understand the problems today, concluding that we needed a new relationship to the earth, recognizing it as a living organism.

Thursday December 11th: Alternatives - The Path.

To begin the day's session,

achieve the goals, along with concrete plans to be shared the following day. The panel members were Bishop Labayen of the Philippines, Elias Amidon of the USA, Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, Anita Fernando of Sri Lanka, and Teresita de Guia of the Philippines, with Vicki Robbins of the USA as moderator.

Vicki introduced the panel members and the topic, then presented some questions for discussion: In the face of the current economic and political realities, how could we prevail? What tools did we have? How do we reclaim our children? How could we work together? How could we be effective? Bishop Labayen emphasized the need to reconnect with our own cultures and wisdom traditions, to rediscover the treasures of the indigenous peoples.

Elias Amidon talked about beauty in sustainability.

"Native Americans speak of

Bishop Labayen and a participant from Laos lit the candles.

Tian Pal-maka and the other participants from Orissa, India, performed the opening prayer ceremony. It is a ceremony of Tian's tribe and includes tribal drumming, and what appears to be the spiritual possession of one of the members.

The session took on a similar form as the day before, with a slightly different topic - The Path - how to get there, how to

the beauty way", and it has been said that the first sign of a loss of sustainability is the loss of beauty. But what is beauty? Beauty fits; it fits with its larger environments; it is not out of place. Also, beauty, besides being sustainable, is unique; it cannot be mass produced. And finally, beauty has presence. The beauty way is a spiritual practice; let that practice of beauty guide us." Next, Teresita de Guia spoke about continuing the momentum created by the Alternatives to Consumerism Gathering, networking between groups in various places, trainings, etc.

Then Anita Fernando shared her experiences from work in a community center in Sri Lanka and some practical steps towards greater self-reliance. Finally, Ajan Sulak presented three points regarding "the Path": 1) how to link alternative people and institutions into an alliance or movement; 2) how to challenge the status quo; and 3) what were skillful means to achieve alternatives in the near future.

Friday December 12th: Commitment/Closure.

To begin the day's session, Christine Wandera and Lodi Gyari, director of the Campaign for Tibet and personal representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama, lit the candles.

Kiefer Foote, a native North American of the Lakota Sioux, performed the opening prayer ceremony.

To close the conference, all participants joined together in a large circle for the final prayer ceremony. Members shared their prayers, thoughts, or feelings as the spirit moved them. Finally, Ajan Sulak shared a few words of encouragement and inspiration for the long road ahead of us all.

Pavel Gmuzdek is a student at Naropa Institute.

Moo helps Ven. Somdech Maha Ghosananda at the ATC



The ISEC photo exhibition on consumerism



Workshop on building communities



The Gandhi Corner



Putting words into action -
Ramesh from the Gandhi Foundation
at his spinning wheel



Workshop on Natural Healing

Guruji guiding a 6 AM yoga session at the ATC



Solidarity dancing under the full moon with the Lisu - Chiang Rai Walk



The well - attended workshop on sewing the gnomes together: gifts from the "Dutch delegation"

Inter - community,
Inter - generational bonding - Chiang Rai Walk



Haute Cuisine at its bioregional best - Chiang Rai Walk



A vigorous Thai massage available to all at the ATC



Declaration on Alternatives to Consumerism: Draft

We, the people gathered in Thailand in December, 1997, representing many countries, religions, wisdom traditions, cultures, individuals and organizations do declare that the rampant growth of consumerism is harming minds, bodies and spirits, and threatening the life of our communities and the whole earth. The culture of consumerism requires consumption which is not necessary to meet our basic material and spiritual needs.

The Problem

We cannot separate ourselves from consumerism. It is in and around all of us, induced by greed, materialism, exploitation and self-indulgence. It is an obsessive yet futile attempt to fill the vacuum in our lives created by a loss of meaning and spiritual direction.

Consumerism begins with the belief that more is better, and eventually results in irresponsible multinational corporations, degradation of the environment, and endless bombardment of pressure to increase our craving for non-essential goods. A painful consequence is the systematic widening of the gap between the poor and the rich.

The Vision

We are ready to face this crisis on our planet and we resist the spreading of "monoculture" around the world. Our vision is holistic and transformative. We want to bring together art, science, nature and religion to more deeply understand that all things are interconnected and interdependent. Thus, economic activities will be more responsive to important social, political, spiritual and environmental considerations. We envision a sustainable future which supports fulfillment of the positive potential of humanity and safeguards future generations. We envision a restored earth with healthy children, vibrant and creative communities, and valued elders.

Alternatives

The positive potential of humanity includes love, spirituality, unity in diversity, non-violence, responsibility, joy and altruism. Nurturing these potentials may lead us to a universal culture of caring and stewardship. We want to reclaim friendship, family and community values as the basis for bonds of solidarity. We are open to the spirit of justice leading to genuine reconciliation.

We commit to :

- develop in ourselves a sense of caring, respect and responsibility for the true well-being of all life;
- live with integrity and simplicity;
- encourage the growth of varied local alternatives in education, trade, industry, agriculture and politics;
- promote and strengthen communities which are inclusive, self-reliant, holistic and supportive of each other, and which grow from shared values and wisdom;
- facilitate meaningful interaction and communication between these local groups;
- express our genuine human needs, listen carefully to each other, participate in decision-making, and join in the action of our communities;
- define and implement ethical principles for science, technology and commerce.

BUDDHAMONTHON

December 12, 1997

Declaration on Alternatives to Consumerism

The Draft Declaration, Process and Comments

As one of the organizers of the Alternatives to Consumerism Gathering I would like to comment on the Declaration on Spiritual Alternatives to Consumerism. Whilst no doubt the statement has great value for many participants and all were invited to comment and suggest the content, it became obvious to me that it was not representative of all and should not be circulated as such without some additional comment.

Part of the process at the Spirituality and Consumerism Seminar was the formulating of the Declaration. Some Network friends formed a drafting committee and took on the task with gusto and all were invited to participate. Preparation for the Declaration had been ongoing for several months with the Secretariat circulating a request for input to spiritual leaders from different traditions. The Declaration aspired to firstly be an expression of shared concerns and universal principles and secondly a series of diverse statements conveying inspiring messages and creative recommendations from different traditions. Perhaps it was a little unfortunate in a meeting with an underlying emphasis on diversity that the focus of the Declaration stayed firmly on the first aspiration.

The drafting committee worked long into the evenings pouring over the contributions already sent and opening a lively forum for debate and discussion with concerned and interested parties. They found an informal "office" on the balcony of one of the dormitories and the creative energy pulsed out and drew many people in to contribute. For the drafting committee and a few other concerned people it became a mission to produce a statement representing the universal concerns of us all. A surprising

number of participants found their way to the lively corner, however, the time allocated for contributions was largely in the afternoons and there were many other interesting activities going on. The most popular were the practical healing workshops and many felt that their priorities lay elsewhere in less literary pursuits.

The Declaration is in English and it ended up focusing on a short and very articulate statement. The majority of people with input were from a background with a western style education and trained to present themselves and their ideas sharply. "The violence of reason", and Indian friend mentioned regarding the dominant education system. For some friends who were unsure of expressing themselves in English, those who did not speak the language and those whose wisdom was expressed in non-literary forms, the process was not so welcoming and perhaps it is not surprising that their input was minimal. One learning observation of the process for me was that those from the dominant western cultures seemed to have a great need to express themselves as individuals, whilst the indigenous people were all very much there as part of their communities.

So whilst the drafting committee had set up what seemed like a democratic process, in actuality many people chose not to participate for a variety of reasons. By the third day, the Committee had a first draft ready and this was circulated to each of the home groups and at this point everyone had an opportunity to comment. Although the Declaration was generally accepted, there was some strong criticism that the statement did not reflect what had happened in the meeting and was rather general. The group I was in focused on laboriously changing

minute words and commas, other groups added concepts and ideas. At the end of the afternoon the suggestions were turned in to the committee and the Declaration amended accordingly. An arduous task with suggestions from around ten groups! Again, they worked long into the night to be able to present a second draft by the end of the seminar. This draft was circulated the next day and one of the indigenous Americans dramatically stood up in front of the group and spoke of some of the hidden feelings about the process with these words:

"There is no compassion in this document. What I would like to do on top of what I have just done here (... *tears up the declaration*) is to say that the responsibility of us is to recognize what is already out there. Respect and honor, please... respect and honor the people who are living the lives that we wish to live... that we are talking about here."

From many exuberant comments on the "success" of the conference, the story of what happened with the Declaration seemed to be a powerful learning experience for many, especially from the West. The people from the indigenous cultures were less vociferous with their praise and more reflective in their comments. Several expressed to me a real yearning to share and exchange their stories and experiences. This was achieved somewhat in the small groups and informal exchange during the conference, but sadly, the Declaration process was not conducive to this.

The process for the Declaration is still ongoing - if you would like to comment, please contact the Secretariat.

Jane Rasbash worked at the Alternatives to Consumerism Secretariat for the past three years and was the main coordinator.

SAO PAULO MESSAGE of the Alliance for a Responsible and United World

From December 1 to 6, 1997, women and men from fifty countries, supporters of the Alliance for a Responsible and United World, met in an international assembly near Sao Paulo, Brazil. About two hundred people on four other continents, meeting in Algiers (Algeria), Bangalore (India), Barcelona (Spain), Kigali (Rwanda), Roubaix (France), and Tolga (Norway), participated with us here in Bertioiga through the Internet.

This was the kind of meeting that has long been imagined but rarely attempted on such a scale with such multicultural collaboration. Four hundred *ordinary* people in seventy countries took part in our discussions, which concerned the means and goals for collective, coherent action *in the immediate future* and on behalf of the *long-term* future of all peoples and the planet itself.

Initiatives for change already exist throughout the world. We intend to learn from them. We also hope to interact with those who are engaged in these initiatives so as to strengthen our will toward common goals.

We ourselves gathered from such distances, with such diversity, in the belief that if the dominant societies continue on their current path, humanity and nature will be destroyed. Among the most urgent questions we are facing, we stress the following:

- How can we find a way toward a sustainable life and livelihood when water, soil, air and sources of energy are jeopardized by pollution, waste, selfishness, pervasive corruption and lack of political will on the part of governments to implement international agreements?
- How can we find a way to nurture local and regional communities in the face of systems of production and consumption that betray the common good and undermine the dignity of human beings - especially of women, refugees, and the disabled?
- How can we find a way toward new forms of political decision-making while even democratic state systems seem incapable of fulfilling their promises to represent the poor, the landless, and the displaced?
- How can we find a way toward a world with no economic gap between North and South, and no aggravated unemployment in the North or South, despite the overwhelming presence of businesses seeking only short-term profit and economies seeking only short-term security?
- How can we find a way to promote the value of cultures, sciences, and traditional wisdom as the foundation of social and spiritual development when the fruits of culture, science, and art are often set against each other in our systems of education, or are reduced to commodities?
- How can we raise our children with respect for their abilities and regard for their potential, in a world where adults often avoid their responsibilities, where youth are not empowered, and where the media pursue adolescents as if they were criminals?
- How can we eliminate the poverty and subordination of women, and all violence committed upon them, when the majority of our societies are dismissive of women's human rights?
- How can we prevent or solve regional conflicts that uproot peoples, scatter ethnic minorities, and destroy the environment?

In order to deal with such complex challenges, we must transform our ways of living and thinking. Recognizing that the contemporary world is unbalanced and that the prevailing mode of life and thought are leading us to self-destruction, we reaffirm the following principles of the Alliance's Platform of Action:

Principle of Safeguard:

The limits and rhythms of nature must be respected, preserving its essential elements - water, air, soil, oceans and all other sources of life.

Principle of Humanity:

Every human being must have the right to fulfill her/his whole human potential, with access to what is essential for well-being and for living in dignity, respect, equity, happiness and solidarity.

Principle of Responsibility:

Individuals, enterprises, nation-states and international institutions must take responsibility for building peace among human beings and establishing harmonious relationships between our societies and the natural world.

Principle of Moderation:

We must pursue a way of life that avoids waste and affirms simplicity, promoting social equity and ecological balance by means of self-regulation of consumption.

Principle of Prudence:

The creation and use of new technologies must go hand-in-hand with the capacity to control their present and future risks to our planet.

Principle of Diversity:

We must preserve and encourage the diversity of civilizations and cultures, allowing both for innovation and for the affirmation of traditional knowledge.

Principle of Citizenship:

We must consider ourselves and all human beings as members of our own community, integral parts of the broader human community.

*For the full text of the SAO PAULO MESSAGE please contact **Fondation pour le Progres de l'Humanite, 38 rue Saint-Sabin, 75011, Paris, France.***

Creative Street Theatre

From November 27th through December 1st 1997, a Creative Street Theatre Workshop was held at Moo Ban Dek, Kanchanaburi. The workshop was one of the opening events of the Alternatives to Consumerism Gathering, a project of the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, which took place in late November and throughout December at various sites around central Thailand. The facilitators for the workshop were Otieno Ombok and Christine Wandera, of Amani PeT - a theatre company of young artists spreading the message of peace, justice and reconciliation through participatory theatre - from Nairobi, Kenya; assisted by

Parichat Jungwiwatta, who teaches drama at Thammasat University in Bangkok.

From the first day, it was clear that the workshop was going to be something of an adventure from the somewhat eclectic group of participants. Not only was there remarkable ethnic diversity - including the facilitators, there were six Thai, six Indians, two Kenyans, two Kachin, one American, and one Canadian - there was also a dramatic range of age, background, and theatre experience, and an even split between men and women. To complicate matters significantly, there were three language groups requiring translation from Eng-

lish; not to mention a group full of predominantly strong-willed, powerful personalities. For a workshop whose subject is, by nature, utterly dependent on group process and interaction, it was clear, at least to this participant, that the principal challenge for the days ahead, both for the group and for the facilitators, would be overcoming whatever barriers might be present, leaving behind whatever cultural baggage we all carry locked in our unconscious selves, to gel or coalesce into the kind of functional, participatory group or micro-community that was required for the work we were to attempt to carry out. That we succeeded at

all is, I think, a testament to the remarkable skills of the facilitators; their dexterity in allowing full participation at all times, while still maintaining control, and particularly in steering this group along the difficult path to a final product, was remarkable. Ombok particularly, in his ability to allow everyone full expression and yet retain an often unnoticed, almost subliminal, grasp on the reins, maintaining high energy throughout and displaying extraordinary patience, displayed some of the finest facilitating skills I have yet encountered.

One of the keys to the creation of a group spirit was the use of a wide variety of games and such, used to focus our energies at the beginning of every session. This was critical, as it got the group involved in playful, often physical interaction, often with song or nonsense syllables, thereby effectively transcending the multiple language barriers and allowing a genuine camaraderie between people who would only be able to hold a conversation through one, or even two, intermediaries. Indeed, some of these songs and games are what has

stuck most with many of the participants, who still remember and laugh about them a month later, and may well do so for many a month to come.

Also important to the group's sense of full participation in the process were nightly reflection sessions, during which the day's events were discussed, possibly criticized, and in which participants, had the opportunity to affect the course of the workshop in the coming days. This was particularly relevant, as it backs up the core message of the subject matter; since the concepts of theatre being dealt with involve including the community in all levels of creation and ensuring community ownership of the production, it is only appropriate that the participants had an equivalent guiding role in the workshop.

The meat of each day's sessions was basically divided into two parts: presentation of information, background material, and discussion; and practical exercises. The latter included skits and role-playing, usually in small groups. For example, one such exercise was dialogue between

two parties, in which the group was split in two, with each group collectively deciding the lines, responses, reactions, and characterization, of one of the parties. This was done using a personal issue - girlfriend arriving late for a date with her boyfriend, and also using a social issue - a confrontation between field labour and management, both times with both educational and highly entertaining results. Another example is an early preparatory attempt at group process - with, perhaps, limited success, although highly entertaining nevertheless. We were again divided into two groups, one of which developed a skit demonstrating family breakdown, sexism, abuse, alcoholism, and a variety of other social problems resulting from consumerism's attack on Asian society; the other presenting an amusing mime - centered on one man's frustrated need to sneeze - demonstrating the absurdity of the mindless herd mentality which consumerism both creates and feeds upon.

Generally, however, these skits and practical exercises were used not only as preparation for



**Moo Ban Dek
Kids Enacting
A Play About the
Yadana Pipeline**

the development of a final piece (presented at the Spirituality & Consumerism seminar on December 9th), but to support and illustrate the topics presented and discussed that day. The main emphasis, of course, was on theatre as a tool for social change and community development. It is necessary, for community theatre to be truly successful, to break down the actors/audience dichotomy; merely walking into a community and acting out their problems and your idea of the solution is not enough. For a community to really feel involved and personally engaged, for a piece to really have social impact, the community must be involved, not merely as spectators, but as creators, affecting every stage of the creative act: deciding on a theme, developing a script, acting, directing... One of the primary reasons for this, aside from increasing the relevance of the subject matter and its impact, is that by involving the community in every stage of the process, they will be able to repeat it. Rather than providing an hour's food for thought from the outside, the community is provided with a new tool - as the saying goes, Give a man a fish and he eats for a day; teach him to fish, and he eats forever.

The concept of the ideal community production was discussed, as well as conflict - the nature of conflict, approaches to conflict resolution, and theatre's role in that resolution. Again, it is of utmost importance that the conflict not only be relevant to the community, but be identified by the community members themselves, and not preached to them by the outsider, if the work is to have maximum effect. An example was given that one goes into a given community to work

on the issue of AIDS, and reduction of risk in such areas as prostitution and drug use; but the community instead pinpoints unemployment as the central problem, with prostitution and drug use as direct consequences of the unemployment problem. Thus, the work is immediately of enormously greater relevance to the community. Also critical is not to provide "answers", not to present a piece in which the problem is acted out, followed by the supposed "solution" to that problem. Rather, the focus here is on theatre as a tool to explore the problem in question. Community members can get involved, can role play different sides of conflict, can act out different approaches to resolution, and thereby get to know themselves, the other parties, and the issue better; performance becomes a mirror through which people can see themselves, their social situation, and the problems they encounter, in a fresh and stimulating way.

The central issue discussed, then, was that of ownership. For theatre to be an effective social tool, both process and production must be owned by the community itself, and the community members must feel that ownership. Thus, much discussion was directed at tools and methods to ensure ownership of the production.

Finally, the group was required to put into practice, so to speak, all that had been learned, and use these new-found ideas of community process to create a short piece to be presented to the larger group at the seminar. This was a difficult process, and, I think, illuminating as to some of the difficulties that may be encountered when trying to put theory into practice. However, again thanks in large part to the patience

and diligence of the facilitators, a piece was, in fact, moulded - from agreement on a central issue, to work in smaller groups to develop the theme, to a final conception. The piece attempted to stay true to the theme of the conference, i.e. consumerism, and showed, in a half-mimed symbolic form, a traditional society lured away by the seductions of consumerism, and turned to a robotic industrialization; the eventual breakdown of this industry, and a turning to the forest for alternatives; clash between the modern world and the wildlife of the natural environment; with an eventual mystic, tribal acceptance, reuniting, and rebirth. While fifteen minutes doesn't allow for much elaboration, the message was still fairly clear; and while the piece may not be destined for theatrical fame, yet it was an illustration of the process and concepts in question, and was indeed the fruits of community effort.

On the whole, the street theatre workshop was a highly positive experience for all involved, both for the knowledge learned, the new tools developed, and, perhaps more importantly, the ties made, the bonds formed, and the time and experiences shared. Certainly, in terms of social activism and community work, new doors have been opened and greater insight gained for all the participants; and I hope that those of you who were not present might yet be inspired to explore the path of community theatre, as a potential and powerful tool.

James Andean is a Canadian volunteer who has spent four months at the Wongsanit Ashram working with several projects of the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute.

A Workshop: Self Reliance at the Grassroots: Local Production for Local Consumption

The Self Reliance Workshop participants at the Wongsanit Ashram found themselves joining others in the planting of the Peace Pole on December 14th at 9 a.m. Friends from many countries said prayers as the pole was planted next to banana plants in a corner of the Ashram.

The Self Reliance workshop was one of the follow up to the Spirituality and Consumerism Seminar. There were about thirty persons from South & South East Asian countries working with rural grassroots organizations who gathered to learn from each other. The team of five facilitators mirrored the variety in age and experience of the group. Jane Rasbash, the overall organizer from Scotland lives in Thailand; Ouyporn Khaonkaew, an experiential nonviolent trainer helps with the empowerment of women is from Thailand; Betty Cabazares an experienced trainer with a radical Christian perspective is from the Philippines; Anjana Shakya with extensive background of work with community groups and a real concern about becoming dependent on donor organizations is from Nepal; and myself, Lillian Willoughby who has spent many years pioneering with nonviolent experiential training for activities is from the United States.

The workshop as one model of experiential learning moved along very well. We tapped the knowledge within the group as a self reliant community would. People shared their stories and raised their questions. Through

drama role play and small groups everyone had a chance to participate and express themselves. The translating seemed to go very well in the small groups that worked together on other tasks of the workshop such as the evening program and keeping the space where we met in good shape.

Although the format had been worked out in advance, changes were made as it became clear we needed to help meet more fully the participants' expectations and the needs as they evolved.

The first day was a time for everyone to get to know each other through sharing how they had moved towards self reliance in their own lives. There was also a session using art to work with one's creativity. The second day participants continued sharing stories with graphic accounts of situations in the Philippines, Nepal and Sri Lanka that brought to the fore the issues of dependency on donors, the plight of indigenous people and natural healing rather than commercial medicines. The afternoon tackled the issues of self reliance and gender. A discussion on non-monetary economies and local exchange gave everyone food for thought and seemed particularly relevant to participants from Burma and Thailand whose own currencies are becoming weaker and weaker. On the third day we continued the experience sharing with a Karen friend from Burma working on community forest protection, a Thai involved with the Forum of the Poor and a Cambodian working to raise

awareness and people's participation. In the afternoon the group had a discussion on the ethics of the market society and some of the problems around the use of money. The final day the group wrote out cards with key words that had come up during the four days and tried to work out the links. It seemed that many areas connected to each other in a diverse range of ways.

One of the experiences that helped draw out the reasons a community becomes less & less self reliant was the village game. People developed their ideal community with large sheets of paper & crayons as the medium. After a lot of talk back and forth order came out of the chaos and each person was drawing something for the ideal community. They even began to talk about local currency and solar power. Ouyporn asked the group if they liked what they created, if they felt it was self reliant. Then, she asked them to come live in the community they had created. People sat on the sheets of paper and felt they were living there. In came the outside force in the form of help first trying to win their friendship by giving a free computer to the school and motorcycle to a young man. The outside person married one of the women and one thing led to another and the paper village was crumbled and thrown away.

At this point the people were asked how they felt and they said: annoyed, sad, lost, isolated, things were happening too fast etc., This led to a long list of the kind of

outside forces that contribute to the breakdown of community from tourism and hunger to foreign debt to attitudes and laws relating to land use and ownership.

Some of the stories people told that I remember:

In Sri Lanka, Anita worked with women who had formed associations and she was able to pass on information to the women about, for instance, drug from pharmaceutical companies and local alternatives. Thus the women could choose. Also, new drinks were coming in, the traditional drinks were being replaced. The women discussed this and possible alternatives and decided since the hibiscus was found all over the country they would make a hibiscus drink to serve at every village meeting. Thus they began to educate people on the benefits of the hibiscus drink and how multinationals were taking their money away from them. This process led now to Health Resource Centers where information was passed on and a People's Plan for Health was presented to the minister of Health.

From the Philippines, Raffi Nabre is working with the Urban poor who come in from the countryside because of conflicts which are encouraged by the government between Muslims & Christians. So they used the Interfaith Dialogue idea and the group formed KAMBAYABAYA (Christian & Muslim Urban Poor Organization for Freedom and Democracy). This led to running candidates for elections which they won and they continue organizing. They are now working with Alim who is a chieftain working with his own people who are being exploited by outside traders. They have organized multi-purpose cooperatives

which forced outsiders to lower their prices. A cooperative manager was killed and others are being hunted so they've slowed down their initiative because they do not want violence. However, they are not discouraged but are looking at other ways to work with their problem.

One story about gender relationships comes from Burma telling that many ethnic groups are fighting against the government. This means the villagers are having to provide for both sides. In one area, all the men refused to be the village headman. The women felt they needed a leader so some women come forward to be leaders. When the government men demanded liquor, the women didn't have it to give them as the women didn't drink. Also the women couldn't be used as porters because they had young children. We would really like to know more about how this story is being worked out now.

Frankie Abreau from Burma tells of how he is working within the system. He takes to heart the terms "community forestry is sustainable management/control of forest resources by local users for their own benefit." He helps villagers come together to talk & socialize and learn about and understand the traditional shifting cultivation methods.

As you've guessed the stories go on and on. We do hope the full stories can be written and published in the newsletter, as they tell a lot about how people are really coping with the idea of being self reliant.

One evening, small groups were asked to discuss and act out stories of how they had become or moved towards self reliance. One group acted out a situation in the Philippines where the villagers were harassed by both govern-

ment and rebel group until they managed to speak with both and initiate a more peaceful situation. Kachin friends in our group recognized this experience well and a feeling of solidarity arose. The small dramas had few words and this method of communication went some way towards crossing the language barriers.

On the last day the session was held under the pine trees at the edge of Ashram. Key words naming the factors that undermine self reliance in rural communities were identified and written on cards and a large sheet of paper was spread on the pine needles and the group arranged them and added to them in any way that made sense. An example of the words used and brought up included human & civil rights, negative effects of science & technology, consumerism, displacement, fall of communism, foreign companies, migration, tourism, religious institutions, military policies, hunger, pollution, capitalist policies, economic policies, globalization, media, market forces etc. etc. The group first tried to put them in a very linear order but soon ran into problems as it was clear that there were many inter-related factors and they could not be ranked in a neat format. A circular form evolved with many links between each card and a lively debate arose as the group worked out connections. The next activity was to think of ways to counter the identified difficulties, then place them in a way that made sense on the sheets of paper on the ground. Everyone joined in writing out the cards many of which reflected their own activities at the grass roots such as literacy classes, training women in self reliance, alternative education, use of drama/video social action work,

capability training seminars, awareness raising, inclusion of women in all fields, organic gardening, consultations with POs & NGOs and appropriate technology.

One person strongly emphasized "Local Production for Local consumption" and everyone quickly agreed that this be the unofficial theme of the workshop and a message to take home to communities. This stimulated a discussion on what was appropriate local produce and what was imposed from outside that continued over the lunch table. The group then went on to work on plans for concrete action in their

respective areas. Most left with a resolution to raise awareness on self reliance and to link present activities with those of other groups in the area to work together for a more sustainable future.

Personally, I found the workshop very rewarding and an example of how people from many countries, many backgrounds and different ages, can really share deeply and learn together. Yes, and that we can together work through misunderstandings and learn and grow from them; and that people with differences and limitations can find ways of contributing in a

workshop of only three and one-half days with persons they don't know or haven't known for very long. Also, I wish I could have included everyone's name and story. And lastly, I thank everyone for the opportunity to be part of the Self Reliance Workshop.

Lillian Willoughby has been a long time Quaker activist currently residing in New Jersey. She has been actively involved in the Movement for the New Society. This article has been written with big help from Jane Rashash.

NATURAL CHILDHOOD

and the International Workshop on 'Alternative Education'
in Moo Ban Dek, 14-17 December 1997.

Educators from ten Asian countries, Africa, Europe, and N. America met in Moo Ban Dek, Kanchanaburi, following the 'Alternatives to Consumerism' gathering in Buddhamonthon, 8-12 December.

Education is a joyful experience and engages thinking, feeling and willing. Working in the garden, swimming and singing, or preparing an 'Action Plan', all are aspects of education. The education process is shared by children, adults and elders. In early childhood we learn unconsciously through imitation. When emerging will-forces meet the will of the other, conflicts arise. From 3-5 years onwards imagination begins to allow the will to flow out through the activity of play. And from the 5th year onwards, thinking starts leading

the will into directed activity.

For adults seeking to explore, support and strengthen 'alternative education', the thinking process alone is not enough to direct activity. A holistic approach to education emphasizes the importance of indigenous wisdom and contemporary spirituality as guiding forces for co-operative action towards a sustainable and just world. The question "what is a holistic approach?" was not only addressed in rational terms, but experimented by experience throughout the workshop.

Usually the morning session of the workshop after breakfast starts with a lecture. The first day however ~ following a heart-warming BaiJii welcoming ceremony, full of dance and movement, the previous evening ~ is

dedicated to a guided tour through Moo Ban Dek Children's Village School. The participants experience how education and community culture go well together: the children can 'shop' classes in arts and crafts and the houses where they and their teachers live in company, all have their individual character. Living, learning and teaching here is a challenging adventure.

In a brain-storm session during the afternoon, the 40-50 workshop participants introduce themselves and their work by suggesting living themes for consultation, five small groups are formed. The themes include: 1. Education for underprivileged children 2. Environmental education 3. Curriculum development 4. Peace education and

5. A holistic approach to education.

In the morning session of the second day Pipob Dhongchai gives an overview of the current changes of the educational system in Thailand. The title of his lecture is: 'The Case Against Mainstream Education'.

In the late afternoon, after work in small groups, the workshop programme proceeds with community service. A welcome opportunity for Mr. Upawansa from Sri Lanka to demonstrate in the Moo Ban Dek gardens the abundance of principles he applies in his inspiring organic farm project in Sri Lanka.

The evening starts with a slide show presented by Rajani Dhongchai. The colourful pictures illustrate the philosophy of Moo Ban Dek as an educational community, founded by Rajani and Pipob in 1979. A unique element certainly is the School Council: all children and adults participate on equal basis in the decision making process, fully realizing democracy at the institutional scale.

Subsequently, Ajan Sulak Sivaraksa in his evening lecture exemplifies how contemporary Buddhism (within the context of religious diversity and co-operation) can inspire educational development in Thailand. The adoption of the new Constitution in conjunction with the present economic crisis, if well understood, creates a historic momentum for fundamental change. This will culminate in the commemoration of Mr. Pridi Banomyong, organizer of the Thai Free Movement during World War II and founder of Thammasat University, on 11th May 2000. During the gathering on 'Alternatives to Consumerism' in Budhamonthon, both the threats

of consumerist mono-culture as well as the opportunities for alternative lifestyles, and innovative application of 'skillful means' were explained from a diversity of philosophical and professional perspectives. With the 'Spirit in Education Movement' (SEM) Ajan Sulak and his friends created an appropriate body to explore these opportunities in the field of education. The new SEM building at Moo Ban Dek provides beautiful though simple space for continuous exchange between committed people in adult and children's education.

Buddhism is concerned with 'being as one is' while western education stresses 'becoming'. The next morning John B. Thomson delivers his presentation. John is the author and editor of 'Natural Childhood - a practical guide to the first seven years'. He was a teacher in Waldorf education and a long time teachers' trainer at Emerson College, U.K. ~ an adult center for training and research based on the work of Rudolf Steiner. This European philosopher initiated alternative streams in education, agriculture, medical science, economy, arts, architecture and social work. 'Waldorf' is the name of the German factory where the first experimental school started in 1919. In his presentation John described how the alternatives in a variety of professional fields emerged as a reaction to World War I (1914-1918) and the industrialization of the western world transferred to other parts of the world by means of violent oppression and exploitation. The aim of alternatives to these trends being not to escape the industrial world, but to transform it from within.

This 'political' introduction

to the principles and practices of Waldorf education is essential, according to John, in order to clarify that 'Waldorf' will develop differently in every political or cultural context from where it is initiated. It should not be a neutral stream characterized by 'methodology' only, however important, but should be understood as a transformative force in society at large.

Some of the methodological principles, as touched upon in John's lecture, and outlined by him and other authors in the now famous book 'Natural Childhood' are: the main teacher stays with the children throughout the period of 7 - 14 years and teaches in thematic morning-blocs; not in dispersed subjects. The themes are carefully selected according to the stages of development of the child. Thematic teaching encompasses story telling (based on mythical sources from cultural evolution and world history), an artistic approach to writing and maths, as well as independent accomplishment of creative study reports by the children, and group work based on social and manual skills. Limited use of pre-programmed textbooks.

The role of the main teacher is complemented by arts, crafts and language teachers in the second part of the day. The school day should be short enough to allow intensive family life (including artistic activities and celebrations) and non-formal education among friends, without a heavy burden of homework.

Essential is the breathing in - breathing out' process between the contrasting activities of direct, precise, open observation of phenomena and distant reflection on meaning, context and purpose.

The teaching profession

should be understood as an art in itself.

After lunch the speech on 'gender' and 'peace' in education by Stella Tamang (Nepal; member of the Executive Committee of INEB, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists) initially seemed a quiet event, tuned by her knowledgeable and modest style of presentation. Suddenly the gathering, following a challenging remark on gender, burst, a tropical rain storm on a hot afternoon alike, into a clash of anger, laughter, excitement and alert! Especially in rural areas and urban slums, education depends very much on the efforts of women, while the terms and conditions are set by male dominated structures. Often teachers work as volunteers without any or with very little salaries.

Volunteerism is an important contribution to bringing about alternatives parallel to the formal 'labour market'. The role of volunteers in alternative education was also exemplified by participants like Dang Xa (Vietnam), a university teacher working with street children next to his job, Sarah Heyes (U.K.) of Voluntary Service Overseas, (VSO) as well as Eddy Sisolak and Ellen Cowhey, both from Maryknoll (USA).

In the course of the 4 day workshop, the community service and work in small groups evolved into an open learning situation for all, in which freedom was enjoyed. Interaction with the Moo Ban Dek community led to unexpected results like a series of remarkable batik 'paintings'. Another interesting feature was the photo display depicting the work of Joseph Antony and his colleagues with indigenous tribes in the Himalaya

foothills near Dehra Dun, India.

The last morning of the workshop was devoted to a panel discussion chaired by George Willoughby (USA), a Quaker, senior educator and peace activist. Members of the panel were John May (Ireland), Christine Wandera (Kenya), Gauri Kulkarni (India), Nyoman Sadra (Indonesia), Rajani Dhongchai (Thailand) and Stella Tamang (Nepal). John May, a professor in ecumenical studies at Trinity College, Dublin, criticized the university system and the 'arms of specialists' trained not to think about fundamental problems. One of the important contemporary challenges is to crack open the unawareness of 'structural violence', imposed by big institutions without morality. He pleaded for "alternative universities".

Wandera (Kenya) dramatized in her charming style the contrast between authoritarian and free education. Gauri from India emphasized the importance of activating the senses, feelings and unbiased observation simultaneously. Central questions in education are 'who am I?', 'what do I want?' and 'how am I going to do it?'. Sadra (Indonesia) told the participants that he experienced 'learning by doing' as very effective. He considered his grandfather as his most meaningful teacher. He guided Sadra as a young child in the garden work, explaining him the universe. It is very hard to break away from the mainstream education system, because even the young pupils are already programmed according to its authoritarian character. Mainstream education claims to replace traditional wisdom, which is seen as ineffective in modern society. Sadra told the participants that he will contemplate

on the real nature of education. Maybe informal vocational education will be the best approach to offer an alternative within the Indonesian context.

Rajani Dhongchai explained that she remembered from her period as a mainstream teacher, before she founded Moo Ban Dek with Pipob, that nobody believed in freedom. From her present experience in Moo Ban Dek she learned that it is essential to practice freedom in education within the context of community life. It does not work out well when freedom leads to detachment, or even alienation, from the community. The involvement in the protests against the Yadana pipeline is one way to express civil responsibility. It is a deep wish of Moo Ban Dek to establish a temple in order to re-integrate temple- and school- education. Together with the crafts workshops and the adult education this could become a "university for the teachers". This may also be a response to the problem that teachers tend to stay an average period of 2 years only in Moo Ban Dek. Teachers could come back and go out for new experiences in a meaningful pattern.

The panel was concluded by George Willoughby. He stated that educating children is tough, but educating adults is even tougher. Teachers are in the first place expected to demonstrate loyalty to the system which produced them. George, his wife Lillian and friends therefore decided to create their own small scale alternative institutions for adult education in several places in order to resist the mainstream non-violently.

The participants closed off the 4 day workshop by reviewing the work done in the small groups in order to formulate an

'Action Plan'. A steering committee was given the mandate to work out the conclusions and initiate action. Here follow the highlights of the group work:

Education for underprivileged children

- make use of local (human) resources
- provide teacher training in small communities; work this out by "mobile units" (national and international; including street theater etc.)
- alternative education in small communities will only work in the framework of 'a holistic approach' to community development (material and cultural village and regional infra-structure)
- decentralisation - shift from urban dominance towards rural based community culture and economy; new partnerships between rural producers and urban consumers, fundamentally valuing rural efforts and lifestyle.

Environmental education

- keep all channels open: art, biology, farming, science, technology, religion, indigenous knowledge and wisdom, contemporary spirituality, activism
- teach 'problem solving methods' at all ages
- share experiences and undertake networking (including with existing organizations)
 - case studies
 - workshops
 - newsletter/E- mail
 - audio-visual communication
- make an environmental education curriculum and handbook (based on case studies)
- share theoretical development ('holistic approach').

Methodology and curriculum development

- explore the question of conscious and un/sub-conscious learning; de-conditioning the mind in order to explore new paradigms
- study the development of children and adults according to the characteristics of their age and the nature of 'Self'
- incorporate in a 'holistic approach to education' balance between head, heart and hands; the senses; and the elements of nature
- encourage children and alternative teachers to be authentic (counterbalance inferiority/superiority complexes inherent in mainstream education)
- strengthen transformative capacities, ability to creatively engage in change and innovation value learning through participation in culture; including appropriate traditional and indigenous wisdom
- start from - what we are - what we know - what we have
- provide access to genuine freedom, in combination with self-discipline and self-restraint; exercise unbiased perception and reflection
- critical assessment of education as an economic factor (in calculating social, environmental and cultural costs).

Peace and conflict

- teach non-violence as a way of life
- experiment multi-faith worship and nurture appreciation of each other's culture (including dialogue with the mainstream)
- assemble and create resource material on the variety of religions in their historical and cultural contexts, related to contemporary questions
- understand a healthy, just

economy as an important condition for peace; organise a workshop on 'alternative business' and 'business ethics'

- elaborate the concept of an 'alternative university' ('Spirit in Education Movement'): integrate basic, vocational and scientific learning along village culture pattern; network with likeminded initiatives (e.g.: Naropa - USA, Gandhigram - India, Santi Asoke - Thailand, Schumacher College and Emerson College - Europe).

Concept of 'holistic approach'

- study and research (alternative "think tank" ~ or: "think pond") is needed in order to give the concept of 'holism' more depth and clarity
- be truthful to our own limitations; we should not pretend knowledge or wisdom
- include Human Rights (and responsibilities) in this 'holistic approach'; include Children's rights and rights of Nature
- be aware of the unique momentum of the new Constitution (and Education Bill) in Thailand.

The realisation of this 'Action Plan' will in the first place rely on local efforts. The international dimension can be a significant empowering 'added value'. It will be a long term common effort. Some issues however, as felt among the workshop participants, are ready for implementation in the 'here and now'. This was the case with the subject submitted by the group on peace education: "experiment multi-faith worship".

Guided by Murray Rogers, a senior spiritual counsel now living in Yotiniketan Community (Canada), a small group of workshop participants presented texts from each others' religious traditions.

'Natural Childhood ~ a prac-

tical guide to the first seven years', written by John Thomson and five co-authors, can become an effective resource book for the future work in line with the 'Action Plan' formulated during the international workshop. Part 6 of 'Natural Childhood', titled 'Education and Schooling' is written by professor Roland Meighan (University of Nottingham, England). In Chapter 22: 'Choices in education' he describes one example of 'alternative education' which may be extremely relevant for the approach to education as indicated by the workshop group on 'Education for underprivileged children'. If we really wish to involve local human resources in remote

village education, schools will have to become flexible institutes, supplementary to the 'learning by doing' as it can only be provided by local farmers, crafts(wo-)men and elders. Schools in this view become supporting institutes for home schooling or 'independent study programmes' (ISPs). "Each ISP varies because it is the result of a negotiation between a specially trained member of staff and a family (or community). The programme that emerges states how much time will be spent learning in school and how much learning at home or elsewhere. It is an agreement about what learning is to be attempted in each setting, and how it is to be

monitored. The responsibilities of all parties (students, family, community and school), are written into a contract, which is reviewed periodically." (Natural Childhood; page 330).

The 'Spirit in Education Movement', its new building at Moo Ban Dek and the persons who met each other in the 'Alternative Education' workshop in December 1997, following the gathering on 'Alternatives to Consumerism' at Buddhamonthon, offer the ingredients for an exciting programme of activities in the years to come.

Hans van Willenswaard comes from the Netherlands. He coordinated the international workshop on Alternative Education.

Yadana Pipeline Walks and Tree Ordination

It was my second day in Thailand from the USA and I was off to the jungle in the Kanchanaburi region of Thailand, where I was to participate in a protest concerning the Yadana pipeline. My home is Boulder, Colorado and I had come to Thailand to get involved with Ajan Sulak, with an intention to learn more about engaged Buddhism. This walk would be my first opportunity to get involved and see Buddhists in action for a cause.

The Yadana Pipeline is being constructed to transport natural gas into Thailand. The pipeline originates off the coast of south west Burma and cuts its way inland across Burma into Thailand. We would be going near to where the Pipeline would be coming out of Burma into Thailand. The Burmese military government has been working tirelessly to get their section done, which is almost complete. Thus the protest is focused on this area of Thailand where the pipeline will be joined together from the Thai side and

the Burmese side into pristine jungle.

There are many issues surrounding the Yadana Pipeline project, ranging from human rights violation by the Burmese government, to environmental destruction on both sides of the border. My own focus around the pipeline has mainly been in relation to the human rights violations said to be happening in Burma. Since learning of the situation in Burma, I have made efforts to help, namely to boycott Total Gas who is financially supporting the Burmese government by funding the Pipeline project. Total's part has been that of a supporter, in that they have supplied funding for the construction of the pipeline, which will indirectly support the military regime in Burma which has been said to be committing human rights violations in order to maintain control in Burma. Now, the pipeline is nearly finished in Burma and construction is beginning to pick up pace

in Thailand, the focus is shifting.

During the first part of my journey to the Kanchanaburi jungle, I met up with a group of Americans and two Thai women, whom I would then travel with to the Pipeline. The second part was a three-hour van ride across Thailand to Moo Ban Dek children's school, where we had dinner and left our extra luggage and then continued for nearly three hours more. Late that night we arrived at a monastery where we slept. We were the first to arrive followed by about seventy to eighty Thai activists of all ages. We all slept on the monastery's open air hardwood deck, where I imagine, over a hundred people could sit in meditation together.

During our ride we were informed of the current situation concerning the Pipeline: The current focus in Thailand has been on the environmental impact of the construction of the Pipeline in the Kanchanaburi region. This area of the jungle that we would be going to was an undisturbed



Protest Organizers and Participants from ATC Gathering at the Pipeline site

region where rare species live such as the wild elephant, the Kiti bat (believed to be the smallest bat in the world), and the Rajini crab. Many feel that the lives of these creatures are threatened by the proposed path of the Pipeline in this region. This is also the home of one of the last pristine watersheds left in Thailand.

At the first light of dawn, people began moving about getting ready for a day of walking in the jungle. People were talking about this as being an interfaith walk, where we would all pray for the forest and partake in ritual together. A number of rituals would be performed from six different traditions. The rituals would be centered around a main tree that would be ordained by a Thai monk. The ordination, I have to say, was very intriguing to me and I believe to many of the other activists. In America, it has been at times common practice for an activist to chain him/herself to a tree or in some way create a personally physical barrier between the trees and person cutting

the trees. But here, we performed a religious ceremony stating that this tree had been ordained and that it should not be cut down. I have learned that it is one of the gravest sins to kill a monk and in a sense, this is what would be happening if these trees were cut down. One might imagine that this would then be enough to stop the Pipeline from coming into this area, but the people said it was not a guarantee. Many talked about the ordination as a symbolic act that was meant to show the people who were constructing the Pipeline and every one else, that these trees were seen as protectors by other people and were not to be cut down. I picked up on a subtle message that this action of ordination was directly connected to the sanga of monks, which for me was cause for deeper consideration.

Before we left the monastery we spoke of this vision of the interfaith walk together and it was decided that, that is what should be done. At that time I found out that there were supposed to be

nine monks from Tibet joining us but things got politically tied up for them and they were unable to make it on time. I began to feel that a lot of energy had been put into making this walk happen and that it was much more than a simple interfaith walk where a few trees would be ordained. At this point I realized I needed to remember that I was in a completely new environment and that my preconceived ideas would only get in the way of me seeing clearly what was happening, and I needed to be with each step to see what was truly happening.

We then began our journey together by taking the dirt road that passed in front of the monastery. This road in fact was a road that was being used by the Petroleum Authority of Thailand to construct the Pipeline. We travelled this road by truck for about two miles. At one point, we passed a crew of workers widening the road so that heavy equipment could get through to the Pipeline site. After passing the work crew we made six crossings of one



Way for Pipeline, close to the Burmese Border

river, three by truck and three on foot, none had bridges. It was clear that if the construction crew was to proceed, the river would be adversely affected. My mind ran wild thinking of how the construction workers would deal with the river crossings, but my mind quickly came back to my body as my feet entered the cool water that flowed through the jungle.

About an hour after we began walking, we gathered in an area high above the river. Here we would wait for all the people to gather and then proceed on to our ritual site. This area in which we stopped was defined by low lying foliage that proceeded through the jungle in what looked to be a road way. It was then revealed that this area was the planned route of the pipeline and on closer examination one could see that within the low lying foliage there where bamboo poles with red flags stuck in the jungle floor to indicate the route of the Pipeline. These poles indicated the width of the path and the trees within the poles had been marked with red spray paint to indicate their fate. We all gathered in this area for a short spell, then continued on the path of the Pipeline towards Burma, letting the red

flagged bamboo be our guide.

My heart felt heavy, I had seen many trees with the red mark and I had felt the life force of the jungle and to imagine or know that this area was going to be disturbed in such a strong way weighed on my conscience. For I cannot deny my part in such a Pipeline. I had not known so clearly that my lifestyle was so demanding of others. The natural gas that was to flow through the Pipeline was to feed the energy needs of Bangkok and I cannot separate myself from that, for it is the same all across the world that modern energy consumption creates demands on others, seen and unseen. I also cannot separate myself from the jungle so it hurts to see what was to happen. I breathed into the sadness and pain and remembered what was also going to happen: a tree which is a part of my larger self was to be ordained a monk.

Our lone monk soon arrived into the shade of the trees. His assistants made an altar next to the grandfather tree of the grove. This altar was to serve in the act of the ordination. People quickly gathered near the tree and silence was asked for. Upon the altar sat a Buddha and around the Buddha was wrapped a string that was

held in the hands of the monk and then wrapped around the tree. The string represented the transmission from the Buddha to the monk to the new monk. The monk then recited a sutra from the Pali cannon (the buddha's teachings) that completed the transmission and the tree was ordained. Silence again was shared amongst the people, this time the silence had a tingle to it.

We then proceeded on with the other offerings by the other represented traditions. Amongst us there was: a

Christian minister, a Jew, a Celt, a Native American and a Sufi. Each was given an opportunity to express their prayers for this land. I found the expressions to be as diverse as the foliage that surrounded us all throughout the day which then culminated within the grove of elder trees. As we concluded with this part again silence penetrated the jungle. We were then given saffron robes to wrap around the nearby trees. Some trees needed as many as four robes to encircle their width. We were able to wrap five other trees with the robes we had. The effect was already showing in the faces of the people and heard in the laughter of the jungle. The walk down was filled with hope and joy.

By the time I finished this article a group of people have placed themselves on the dirt road in front of the construction crew, between the second and third river crossing. They have set up camp and refuse to move until the decision has been made to reroute the Pipeline and to preserve this jungle for all who live in her and all who breathe the air of the mother earth.

Namkha Todd Ansted is a graduate from Naropa Institute interested in engaged Buddhism.

Dharma Walks: Expressing Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples

December 17, 1997. 6 a.m. A group of some 15 people are sitting around a fire along the banks of the Mae Jhum Noi river deep in the forests of Chiang Rai, where they had camped the night before. They look serene. They are being led into an insight meditation by Phra Paisan Visalo whose tranquil voice competes with the incessant babbling of the water. Soon they will be sitting down on a verdant carpet of large banana leaves to a nourishing breakfast of hand-milled rice and banana flower freshly cooked in bamboo shafts by a group of locals. Indigenous savvy at its finest, very sustaining and highly sustainable!

* * *

In the month of December, immediately following the Alternatives to Consumerism seminar, three groups embarked upon three solidarity walks, each in a different province of Thailand - Kanchanaburi, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. The intention of these groups was to raise political awareness around the problems and challenges confronted by the indigenous peoples of Thailand in the face of this all-permeating amorphous juggernaut we know as globalization. Each of these groups was to trek through the jungles to visit far-flung indigenous communities, stay in their homes, talk with them, share their meals, experience their culture, visit their community forests - in short, witness firsthand the wisdom, joys and tribulations of these sustainable cultures on the threshold of overwhelming

change; all this while maintaining a deep sense of spirituality and mindfulness for the people visited, the forest, each other and self. A daunting task for the uninitiated, one might say, to be accomplished in all of 10 days; OR, an enriching experience contributing hopefully towards an ongoing process in the struggle for cultural survival and indigenous knowledge.

This article will focus on the Chiang Rai walk which I was fortunate to be part of along with 17 others from different countries, beliefs, backgrounds and with astoundingly rich experiences. Getting to know my fellow walkers a little was a learning experience in itself. Leadership revolved gracefully around the group under the wise, yet invisible guidance of Rabia and Phra Paisan Visalo. And of course, being blessed before departure by none other than Ven. Somdech Maha Ghosananda himself, the Cambodian spiritual walk leader par excellence, seemed to put us on the right track.

Upon arrival in Chiang Rai town, we were taken under the wing of the Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF), a local NGO which works closely with the tribal communities of the Lisu, Lahu and the Akha peoples in the primary watershed area of the Mae Salong and Mae Chan rivers on the Thai-Burma border. HADF plays the role of a capacity builder: it provides the villagers with primary and non formal education, enables farmers to develop a system of sustainable highland agriculture by support-

ing traditional practices such as rotational planting, terrace cultivation and the use of indigenous seeds, aids opium addicts through a programme of treatment, economic rehabilitation and preventative measures, and supports these ancient cultures to keep their heritage alive. Our guide and connection to the villagers was Tuenjai Deetes a.k.a. Daeng, who is the driving force behind HADF and who was one among 25 women in the world honoured with the Global 500 award from the United Nations in 1992 for environmental conservation.

The villages we visited fell along a continuum of modernity. For example, Ja Boo Sri seemed untouched by any elements of the modern world whatsoever, with no electricity, running water in individual households or road access; whereas Ar Bare had television sets, boomboxes with CD players, refrigerators and motorcycles. The problems however, seemed to be the same. We learned through our after-dinner group discussions with the villagers - which, for those interested in the details were conducted impressively in three languages through consecutive translations in English-Thai-Akha/Lisu/Lahu - that the main concern was loss of cultural heritage. Compulsory education imposed by the Thai government prevented the children from participating in and learning about Akha traditions. The Akha are a very ceremonious people, the year being punctuated with rituals nearly every week. Being a completely oral culture, they were afraid of losing their



stories and traditions if not picked up uninterrupted by the following generation, as had been the case hitherto.

There were other problems mentioned. Opium addiction had affected a few households in most of the villages we visited. In Ar Lare, 36 villagers out of a total of 209 were addicts. This was also the same village, where my roommate and I were invited to partake of the pleasure by the family we were staying with. We politely declined, just in case you were wondering. The average daily per person opium budget was 50 Baht; the average daily per person salary was also 50 Baht, we were told. Yet another problem concerned the ecology of these villages. Logging companies threatened the forests of some of these communities, forests which were the local dispensary: in one village, some 250 medicinal

plants were used by the village herbalist for therapeutic purposes.

Then there were instances of memorable highlights, those totally unchoreographed magical sequences of spontaneous interplay. One such magical moment happened on day 5 in Ar Lare village. Our group was unwinding after a day's trek in the demanding hills; some were doing neck-rub or foot-massage exchanges. A group of kids had gathered around what had turned into a popular spectator sport. It just took one bold 6-year old to step through the invisible barriers; much to everyone's amazement and amusement, he began massaging the masseur, thereby setting up a 3-tier massage system: receiver, masseur and "metamasseur". Encouraged by our laughter, the other kids followed suit. Soon there was a bevy of frolicking Akha kids,

kneading the sore muscles of any of the weary visitors they could lay their tiny hands on. A moment worth capturing in the mind's camera for future replay!

We seemed to be learning many things. These were truly self-reliant communities which consumed very little, cared for each other, shared their bounties with other villagers and respected the land they lived on and ate from. Most importantly, they were happy as indicated by their proud response; when asked what message they would like us to take back home, they replied they were happy, having fun, growing their own food; they could not afford to go abroad to tell others about their happiness, so we can take this message for them.

Some persons in our group mentioned conducting ecotours in these villages. There were many western travellers, they said, who



standing outside the gates of the Prime Minister's office, in the midst of the urban jungle of Bangkok. They look purposeful. Their common concerns about the plight of indigenous communities they have visited are being expressed through a spokesperson whose voice is being obliterated by the vulgar roar of the notorious Bangkok traffic.

were eager to do some meaningful travelling. Surely, something could be arranged whereby well-meaning wanderers could spend some time in these villages working alongside the villagers helping them with the planting or harvesting, and learning from their sustainable ways. I couldn't help feeling a twinge of nervousness at the idea. No doubt the travellers would benefit from the indigenous knowledge and feel good about their contribution. But the thought of these hitherto hermetic cultures being invaded by a constant stream of travellers, however well meaning, throughout the year would certainly impact the villages, perhaps adversely. Some of these travellers might have different ideas about development; someone with business skills might see a potential market for something, a rice-mill factory, say; who knows? It made it all the more clear to me how vulnerable these communities were. A project from any enterprising individual concerning indigenous peoples needs a very careful impact assessment.

So the questions some of us had persistently on our minds were what these communities gained from our visit and whether such a visit, however good the intentions may be, could actually have harmful repercussions. A conversation with Phra Phaisan helped clarify some concerns. No matter how hard we may try, such a contact will always bring forth feelings of material inferiority in the villagers as we arrive with our backpacks and shoes and swiss army knives. But the fact that farangs from faraway places are interested in their culture and in learning from their simple ways of life is a validation of their values and gives them a boost of cultural confidence. However, the single-most important long-term benefit such a visit could potentially provide is by raising awareness, nationally and internationally about the preservation of these ethnic minorities, here or anywhere in the world.

* * *

*December 22, 1997. 11 a.m.
A group of some 40 people are*

However, they have been given an audience by the PM's representative as also by a handful of journalists and photographers present. The group hands in a letter.(see below) The following day, a couple of Thai and English newspapers print photographs and a write-up of the event. Has some more awareness been raised through all this? Will policies follow eventually to address the issues raised? Will it be considered too insignificant an issue as compared to the gargantuan economic turmoil the country is experiencing? Or, will some wise people in power realize the interconnectedness between ecological fragility, cultural sensitivity, individual spirituality and economic stability. One day, I hope. They have to, nay, they will be forced to listen to the growing voices of civil societies the world over.

Zarina Mulla is a CUSO co-perant with Spirit in Education Movement. She works and lives at Ashram Wongsanit

Letter to the Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai

22 December 1997

Dear Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai,

We are a group of 70 people from 12 nations, including Native American and Karen people, India, Burma, Korea, Canada, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, U.S.A. and Thailand. We have traveled to Thailand to learn from and to support the indigenous people of this country. For the past 10 days we have visited Karen, Lisu, Lahu and Akha villages in the north and west, where we have been welcomed into the homes of the people, worked in their fields, participated in their ceremonies, listened to their songs and stories, and witnessed how they live sustainably with the forest and each other.

We have seen how the knowledge of the indigenous people of Thailand, their ways of life, religions and wisdom are among this country's greatest treasures, and are an important part of the world's heritage. The modern industrialized world has much to learn from these people's sustainable and respectful ways of living with the land. However, pressures of resource appropriation from national and transnational corporations, and from patterns of development and tourism which are not sensitive to traditional ways of life, threaten to destroy these communities.

Therefore, in recognition of Thailand's unique heritage and responsibility we urge you to continue to:

1. Empower and support Thailand's indigenous communities to continue living on their lands;
2. Develop clear policies and laws to protect the rights of indigenous people over their bio-resources and local knowledge so that they are not exploited for the sole profit of national and transnational corporations;
3. Create policies and educational curricula that foster the cultural and spiritual heritage of indigenous communities which are currently endangered by the compulsory schooling system, media, consumer culture and pressure of religious conversion;
4. Encourage the cooperation of government officials, academics, scientists, NGOs, business people, consumer groups and the media to support and link the wisdom of indigenous people to the modern world for the benefit of all.

This is an opportunity for you and for Thailand to lead the world in promoting moral and just policies regarding indigenous peoples, and for showing respect for their valuable contributions to the world's need to learn how to live sustainably and peacefully.

Sincerely,

[Signatures attached]

INDIVIDUAL STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

"I feel that these village communities have been happy with their own religions for many centuries. We should not impose our own religion - specifically some form of nationalized Buddhism - on them."

-Phra Phaisan Visalo

Wat Pamahavan, Chayaphume, Thailand

"I recognize in the villagers' simple and cooperative way of life a model for sustainable community living that we in the West have lost in our desire for industrial development."

-Linnaea Lombard, Ph.D.

Director, Threshold Foundation, USA

"In all my studies and travel I have never found such profound wisdom as the Karen way of living in harmony with each other and the land. They know how to preserve the forest."

-The Rev. Lowel Brooke

Unitarian-Universalist Minister, USA

"The villagers have many answers for those who have questions about the future of the world."

-Somsiri Yimmuang
S.E.M., Bangkok

"I feel the Karen's peaceful way of life radiates health through the land they know and tend. If these people cannot claim a right to live in their place, I don't believe any of us can."

-Hanah La Barre
Environmental teacher, USA

"I work with the Kondh tribe in Orrissa, India. In the last 15 years they have organized themselves to save their forests and lifestyle. The hill tribes of northern Thailand are on a similar path. Instead of diminishing their strength we should consider them pioneers on the frontier of a new, alternative society. They are our teachers."

-Bijaya Kumar Baboo
Orrissa, India

"I saw that roads, electricity and media seem to bring benefits at first, but eventually pave the way for exploitation of both land and people. I recognized how much we in the West have been impacted by these very same forces and how much we have lost. Surely these technologies can be harnessed in an appropriate way that promotes human well-being while leaving their cultures and lands intact."

-Vicki Robin
President, New Road Map Foundation, USA

"In northern Thailand I see clearly how the global push for a modern "television life" is destroying the diversity and uniqueness of the hill tribe cultures and of my own culture in the U.S. as well."

-Dr. Richard Paine

"Staying with the Karen people made me see that they should be recognized as the main preservers of the forest. Therefore they should be given the right to stay on their land and given the rights of Thai citizens."

-Peter Lievense
The Netherlands

"There are many students in the United States who would value the opportunity to visit and learn from the hill tribe people."

-Renee Yates
Theology student, USA

"The Karen in Sangklaburi sanctuary have lived there for hundreds of years, but still the forest is green and full of wildlife. The stream is still flowing fast, the water is still clear and full of fish. This is proof that the Karen live in balance with nature and the forest has not been destroyed by their presence. Please allow the Karen to live as they have for centuries."

-Saw Yu
Thai Karen, Wongsanit Ashram

"It was amazing for me to see generations of knowledge at work when the Karen were in the forest or gathered in the village. The balance and dynamics between their society and their environment has lessons for us all."

-Andrew Nugent-Head
Association for Traditional Studies, USA

"I have observed that the rotating crop farming method practiced by the Karen people for thousands of years has proven to protect, not to destroy, their environment."

-Michael Adamson
Mangrove Action Project

Applying Gandhi for Alternatives to Consumerism

Lecture delivered by Sulak Sivaraksa on January 30 1998, the 50th death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi.

It is with no false modesty that I feel unworthy of the great honour of having been invited to deliver the Annual Gandhi Peace Foundation Lecture on the 50th anniversary of the Mahatma's martyrdom. I will try my utmost to demonstrate that his examples and vision can be very appropriately applied today in overcoming globalization and establishing an alternative to consumerism.

I think Vandana Shiva was right when she said colonialism, development and globalization are synonymous, although they have consequences of differing levels of severity.

The colonial masters were very skillful in creating the image of empire as a valuable system, whereby the Europeans had the right to rule other parts of the world for the benefit of the natives, who could not run their own countries or maintain justice and peace. It was the so-called aristocrats of Europe, or those who aspired to the upper classes, who accepted the "burden" of providing, outside of their countries, western administration, education and technology for various parts of the empire, so that the natives would be "civilized" in the European sense of the word. As Disraeli said, the East is a career. In the case of the British Empire, all natives were treated as British subjects, and English training was provided for those fortunate enough to have access to education. The clever men - never the women - could even study Latin and Greek. The Indian Civil Service (ICS) was created as a system of education and adminis-



tration so that the British subjects could feel superior to the non ICS. On top of that, the privileged natives could even go to Britain, to enter public schools, and for further education at Oxbridge, or to be called to the Bar, in order to become "English gentlemen" at heart, despite their brown or black appearances.

Both Gandhi and Nehru were no doubt greatly influenced by their British education. Had Gandhi not been shocked by the rough, ungentlemanly treatment by the Whites in South Africa, his faith in the British Empire might never have really been shaken. I am afraid Nehru never received this kind of psychological shock, despite the fact that he fought for Indian independence and was imprisoned many times. As a result, he ran independent India similar to the manner in which his English contemporaries from Cambridge ran the British Empire—with a sense of fairness to his beloved Indians, however, remaining an aristocrat, estab-

lishing—unintentionally perhaps—a dynasty of three generations, insisting on centralization and the advancement of technology, along with democracy along the lines of Westminster, leaning towards the ideology of the Labour Party. Nehru's role in the non-aligned world could really be seen as that of head of another empire, or another commonwealth, with Nehru as the uncrowned monarch.

Had Nehru followed in Gandhi's footsteps, in the latter's concepts of decentralization in the form of village republics and of an alternative to western civilization and technology, India would really have been a shining example in today's world.

It is not too late, however, to look back to Gandhi and learn from him, from his thoughts, his works, his action, and his lifestyle. I think this could contribute positively, not only to the battle against colonialism, and neo-colonialism in the name of national development, but also to the creation of alternative societies against globalization and its demonic religion or ideology, consumerism.

Ashish Nandi stated clearly in *The Intimate Enemy* that Gandhi's victory over the British Empire was due largely to the extent to which his genuine spiritual and moral commitment appealed to the hearts and pricked the conscience of religious leaders in the west, with their ideal that one should serve the universal God of truth, sacrifice, love, compassion and equality, and not the tribal God of the empire, where

the white men had special privilege over the natives.

Indeed, Gandhi was able to apply the best of Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity to his life-style and his movement with satyagraha and ahimsa. His genuine respect for Islam and Sikhism, as well, was so profound that he was endeared to all those seeking the essence of any spiritual tradition.

Satish Kumar rightly maintains that Gandhi felt that, to create a new way of life or restore the proper way of life, we need three elements—vision, nonviolent resistance and alternative practice.

Without vision, meaning is lost. Contemporary intellectuals often lack this depth of vision; besides, intellectuals are now so secular and profane that their moral behaviour is usually dubious - most are even violent. Intellectuals—are good at analyzing what is wrong, and how we can put it right—usually by social engineering : intellectuals or technocrats only use their heads, not their hearts, to solve problems.

For Gandhi, however, a deep ocean of vision and values was essential, to build a new way of life, which must be rooted in culture and civilization, in local wisdom, and in a spiritual environment.

Maurice Ash, son-in-law of Leonard Elmhirst who was once Secretary to Tagore, calls in question the west's trail of flawed knowledges, of which a hopeless search for God is characteristic. If we are to step back from the brink of environmental catastrophes, we must attempt the re-empowerment of the local, or the village republics, so to speak. Only thus could interconnectedness be restored as a prevailing characteristic of our lives; only thus could there really be a positive future. This is the same as the essence of Buddhist teaching, as seen in the

law of interdependent origination, which can be applied to society.

Had Prince Siddhartha remained in the palace, in the city, there would be no Buddhism; indeed the Buddha was born under a tree, was awakened under a tree, preached his first sermon in the grove, and called his monasteries "groves". He spent most of his time underneath trees, in the groves or in the forest; he even passed away under twin trees.

Thich Nhat Hanh explains interconnectedness in this way, "In one sheet of paper, we see everything else, the cloud, the forest, the logger. I am, therefore you are. You are, therefore I am. We inter-are."

Buddhist teachings provide a means of evaluating the nature and direction of global development. The approach is significant in that it entails a consideration of the extent to which social and economic policies tend to contribute to or diminish human suffering. This aspect is often obscured by the quest for modernization and westernization.

Had Gandhi remained in the city, he would have remained an urban intellectual, like many of his contemporaries. He went out to the poor, to live in the villages, to establish ashrams as alternatives. This is what provided the deep ocean of vision and values which was essential in order to build a new way of life for the multitude.

In this desire for a new way of life, an alternative to the prevailing one, Gandhi resisted the status quo. He not only denounced imported British clothes, but called upon people to bring out all their British-made clothes and burn them. This was resistance against the global, exploitative economics of the British empire. He also boycotted English education, which was brainwashing the natives to

admire the British establishment, and teaching them to become clerks or employees, to respect their superiors, without any spiritual dimension or critical awareness of the unjust structural violence of the empire.

While resisting the most powerful empire of the day, Gandhi also started constructive programmes for his people. Not only should people burn British clothes, he said, but they should start using the spinning wheel, to make their own khadi. Not only should people refuse British education, but he provided alternative schooling for them, as well as alternative food and medicine. Indeed, the spinning wheel became the symbol of home economics and home rule.

It required genius to reduce things to this degree of simplicity, practicality and straight-forwardness. Spinning your own clothes meant alternative economics of self reliance, for every household and every village.

Had he lived longer, his dream might have been fulfilled - his village republics might have become a reality: "In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never ascending circles. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. It will be an oceanic circle whose center will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the village ready to perish for the circle of villages till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are an integral part."

The British empire used education and colonial administration, as well as the judicial system, to mask their ulterior motive of oppression and capitalistic exploitation. We are now con-

fronted with a new form of empire, configured by the transnational corporations. This empire is dependent upon the media to disguise its true purpose, and to promote the fiction that development is good and that globalization is beneficial to all, which is in fact, a lie.

The G-7 group of industrialized countries, which has now enlarged to eight, is not itself a new empire, but rather a rich man's club and an oppressor's club, which is designed to serve the interests of the transnational corporations. The mainstream media is an instrument of their policies, and is effectively manipulated by the corporate interests. It is very clear how the media is captivated by luxurious or violent events and led to focus on the top politicians, who serve the rich and the powerful.

David Korten was right when he entitled his book, When Corporations Rule the World, and Bishop Desmond Tutu rightly said about the book, that it is a "searing indictment of an unjust international economic order." Yet the big industrialized countries are supporting this unjust economic order, as their leaders support the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization. These are linked to the transnational corporations, and together they harm our environment, our mother Earth, and our people - not only the indigenous peoples and other poor people in the South, but even the labourers and the middle classes in the North are being increasingly exploited.

In Kirkpatrick Sales' book about the Luddites, Rebel Against the Future, he says that the industrial revolution in England during the last century destroyed the British farmers for the benefit of the landlords and industrialists, for the growth of

capitalism and the expansion of the empire; not to mention the fact that craftsmen were forced to become labourers. He says that the new empire of globalization, run by the trans-national corporations and their megatechnology and computers, will make most members of the middle classes jobless within two decades.

However, I can see no sign of the G-7 confronting this dilemma. Russia was invited to join the club not because it is rich economically, but because it is rich in natural resources. With the elimination of the communist or socialist ideology as opposition to the capitalist ideology of transnational corporations, globalization will allow the transnationals to plunder more of these natural resources.

The consequences of this destruction of the environment will first be felt by the indigenous peoples, in the form of the destruction of their livelihood and dignity. The middle class will also ultimately face destruction in deference to the profit motive, a further sacrifice at the altar of money and technology.

We should also learn from Gandhi, especially his deep spiritual commitment to truth, Satyagraha, his deep vision, non-violent resistance, and practice of an alternative lifestyle. In this way, we would achieve wholeness of life, and maintain the sanctity of the natural order.

For the corporations, natural resources are only a source of economic gain; when one area has been exhausted, they will move on to another. The people are relevant only to the extent that they serve to generate income, either as labourers or consumers. For spiritual people and those who follow the essence of Gandhi's teaching, money is less important; of greater significance, for them and for us, is to be self-

reliant; to have home economics; to live happily, with dignity, with a sense of the sacred, with a spiritual dimension to our lives, and in harmony with the earth; with reverence for our ancestors, respect for our communities, and with a commitment to the generations to come.

Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us not to avoid contact with suffering or close your eyes before suffering; not to lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world; to find a way to be with those who are suffering, using all means at our disposal, including personal contact and visits, images, sounds, by such means to awaken ourselves and others to the reality of suffering in the world.

Science used to stand in opposition to the established religion. Indeed, Scientism was subconsciously manipulated by many western scientists in the name of objective experiments and observation, in search for knowledge, which was materialistic, compartmental and unethical. But there is now a new scientific approach to the living universe, which produces a new kind of scientist, who is humble and relies upon the heart as well as the head. This science links beautifully with the best in spiritual endeavour, and can help us appreciate the wholeness of being.

I hope that we are together in this venture. By learning from Gandhi and applying his examples appropriately we can have a new movement against globalization by the transnational corporations, and towards reliance on local culture and communities. This is essential if we are to live happily together, with wisdom, understanding, and love.

Sulak Sivaraksa is a leading social activist in Thailand

Heavenly Abodes and Human Development

Pope John Paul VI. Memorial Lecture

In *Heavenly Abodes and Human Development* Aung San Suu Kyi considers the Buddhist philosophy of the “heavenly abodes” - the divine states of mind of “loving kindness” (*metta*), “compassion” (*karuna*), “sympathetic joy” (*mudita*) and “equanimity” (*upekkha*). Drawing parallels with Christian thinking, she explains how these values are at the heart of successful development work. The lecture was delivered by her husband Dr. Michael Aris on 3 November 1997 at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, London.

Let me begin by saying that I shall be exploring those Buddhist values which I consider to be crucial for peace and healthy human development from the point of view of an ordinary, imperfect human being with an ordinary, average knowledge of the religion into which she was born. I am not an authority on either Buddhism or development, but I am strongly concerned with the problems of human existence which fall within the realm of both subjects. In a nutshell, I shall be speaking not as an expert but as a concerned participant in the process of human development.

What do we mean by development? There was a time when development was measured purely in economic terms, but such is no longer the case. Now it is recognised that genuine development includes socio-political factors. Dare I suggest that true development should also comprise cultivation?

Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, known as one of Asia's leading social thinkers, describes the “spirit of Buddhist development” as one “where the inner strength must be cultivated, along with compassion and loving kindness”. He sees the goals of Buddhist development as “equality, love, freedom and liberation” and goes on to say that:

...the means for achieving these

lie within the grasp of any community - from a village to a nation - once its members begin the process of reducing selfishness. To do so, two realisations are necessary: an inner realisation concerning greed, hatred and delusion, and an outer realisation concerning the impact these tendencies have on society and the planet.

The qualities mentioned, both positive and negative, are not exclusive to Buddhist societies. It can be said that behind the materialism of developed countries lie greed, hatred and delusion. But there is also much of inner strength, compassion, loving kindness and strong support for equality and freedom to be found in those countries. The work that CAFOD is doing right across the globe is proof that Christian development values are not so very different from Buddhist ones.

Buddhists speak of the four “heavenly abodes” or divine states of mind: *metta* (loving kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), and *upekkha* (equanimity). A wise colleague once remarked to me that *upekkha* is well-nigh impossible for most ordinary beings; therefore we should concentrate on cultivating loving kindness and compassion, and sympathetic joy would naturally follow. Perhaps it might be well to mention

here that *upekkha* means much more than mere equanimity in the conventional sense. It stands for a perfectly balanced state of the mind and emotions, and balance between faith and intelligence, between energy and concentration, between wisdom and compassion. It is non-preferential, without inclination towards excess in any direction. It is therefore understandable why *upekkha* is beyond the attainment of ordinary human beings with just ordinary capacities for controlling their minds and emotions. The other heavenly abodes, however, are well within our reach and germane to the ideal type of development, whether termed Christian or Buddhist.

The first of the heavenly abodes, *metta*, loving kindness, plays a crucial part in the process of human development. While Buddhists speak of *metta*, Christians speak of Christian love. Both refer to disinterested love, a love that seeks to give and to serve, rather than to take and demand. Inherent in the concept of this kind of love is understanding, sympathy, forgiveness and courage. A Father Damien or a Mother Teresa give tender care, for “the love of Christ”, to those whom humanity in general find physically repugnant, because Jesus had shown love and kindness towards the rejects of society,

the lepers and the insane, the sick and the lame.

The Lord Buddha too set examples for the practical application of loving kindness. Once when the Lord Buddha and his cousin Ananda came across a sick monk lying in his own filth they washed him and tended him. Then the Lord Buddha called the other monks together, admonished them for neglecting their sick brethren and taught them that it was more important to care for the sick than to tend to him, the Buddha himself. At another time the Lord Buddha, in the face of the protests of his entourage, caused a young woman who had gone mad with grief to be brought before him that he might teach her how to achieve inner peace. Such episodes demonstrate that the impulse of loving kindness lies behind what might be termed humanitarian labour.

Development projects should essentially be humanitarian labour on varying scales. Whether it is distributing milk powder to malnourished children or building a mega-dam, it should be done with people in mind, people who need the balm of loving kindness to withstand the rigours of human existence. Projects undertaken for the sake of upping statistics or for love of grandiosity or praise, rather than for the love of live human beings with bodies that can be hurt, minds that can be damaged and hearts that can be bruised, seldom succeed in fostering the kind of development that enhances the quality of life.

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama is surely one of the leading authorities on, and practitioners of, loving kindness in our world today. He teaches us that:

...we are not lacking in terms of the development of science and technology; still, we lack some-

thing here in the heart - real inner warm feeling. A good heart is needed ... The problems human society is facing in terms of economic development, the crisis of energy, the tension between the poor and rich nations; and many geopolitical problems can be solved if we understand each others' fundamental humanity, respect each others' rights, share each others' problems and sufferings, and then make joint effort ... Things and events depend heavily on motivation. A real sense of appreciation of humanity, compassion and love are the key points. If we develop a good heart, then whether the field is science, agriculture, or politics, since motivation is so very important, these will all improve.

One might say then that true human development includes the development of loving kindness. In speaking of charitable institutions and charitable works today, it is too often forgotten that the root of the word "charity" is the Latin "*carus*", "dear", that in fact charity means love. Most appropriately, in the Burmese-language version of the Holy Bible, "charity" is translated as *metta*. Might not the words of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians be seen as a guide to the best kind of development for all human beings, whatever their religion?

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not;

charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

... Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away

... And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

No amount of money or technical expertise or scientific knowledge or industry or vision can make up for lack of love. There is nothing patronising or self-satisfied about true charity, nothing callous or unthinking. Where there is love, there can be neither complacency nor indifference to the effect of one's actions. Development planning and projects arising out of love will be based on "the wish that other human beings should enjoy internal and external safety, mental and physical happiness, and ease of well-being", not on a desire for professional satisfaction or kudos. That is why, as true charity "never faileth", development that is directed by loving kindness can seldom fail to help those really in need.

CAFOD's clarion declaration that it is "on the side of people in need" instantly creates a bond between us. Once during my years of house arrest, one of the people who were - shall we say, "taking care of me"? - said in an accusing tone that I was always "on the side of the people". Yes, I said, that was so, because I would always stand by those who were weaker; they were the ones who needed support. But, came the query, what if the weaker side were in the wrong? In that case, I replied, I would try to correct

them with *metta*. The only response to this was a somewhat pained smile. But later I asked myself what one would do if *metta* did not succeed in correcting those who were weak but quite patently in the wrong. The conclusion at which I arrived was that one would have to work at perfecting one's *metta* because perfect *metta* cannot fail.

... What about self-sacrifice which demands that one puts others before oneself? The work of relief and development agencies often involves a certain degree of self-sacrifice. This is where compassion, the second of the heavenly abodes, comes in... It is one of the two aspects of *bodhicitta*, "the thought of enlightenment"...

There is a solid core of common sense to Buddhist teachings. That is why compassion is but one aspect of *bodhicitta*; the other aspect is wisdom. Compassion must be balanced by wisdom and wisdom must be balanced by compassion. This balance is essential that there might be harmony and that one might be able to make correct decisions for the general good. There are a number of Buddhist stories that illustrate the need for a healthy balance between compassion and wisdom. Of these stories, the following is one that I find most appealing.

Once there lived a dragon at the foot of the Himalayas, a fierce dragon king that breathed fire and smoke and reduced creatures to ashes with his incendiary glare. He was not unnaturally the terror of all who dwelled in the region. One day while the dragon was in one of his less amicable moods, a *bodhisattva* came by. The dragon king proceeded to give a fine display of his propensity for violence, no doubt imagining that

he would succeed in terrifying the holy one (not that the dragon understood anything of holiness) before reducing him to ashes. To his surprise, the *bodhisattva* showed no fear or apprehension but instead gave him a brief sermon on the joys of non-violence and compassion. The dragon king was instantly converted to the path of non-violence and decided that he would never again harm any being under any circumstances.

Now in an ideal world, that should be the happy end of the story. But ours is not an ideal world; it is a world conditioned by impermanence, suffering and the unresponsiveness of objects to one's wishes. When it dawned on the children who lived within the vicinity of the dragon's lair that the fire breathing monster had ceased to bristle with pyrotechnic ferocity, they began to approach it cautiously. Their confidence grew until they felt bold enough to touch the dragon king. On finding how docile and patient the dragon had become, the children handled it more roughly. Eventually the children got into the habit of ill-treating the dragon, making life a misery for him. When the *bodhisattva* came by again, the dragon king complained of how unhappy he had been since following the path of non-violence. The *bodhisattva* replied that this had come about because the dragon had not balanced compassion with wisdom: when the children became unruly, he should show his fire to stop them from proceeding to cruel acts. The dragon king's failure to balance compassion with wisdom had been harmful both to himself and to the children, who had been turned into little bullies by his excessive forbearance.

Where there is loving kindness and compassion, sympathetic

joy naturally follows. The fruit of successful development projects should be the greater happiness of the beneficiaries and the reward for those who planned and implemented the projects should be *mudita* that rejoices in the good fortune of others, free from envy or ill will.

Fundamental to the kind of development that enhances the quality of life is justice. Some might hold that justice is of such importance it should come before loving kindness and compassion which have more to do with individual emotions than with the maintenance of peace and harmony in society. But if there is true loving kindness that regards all beings with equal benevolence, and there is compassion balanced by wisdom, justice will surely not be lacking. And it will be the best kind of justice, that which is tempered by gentle mercy.

It is because justice is so essential for peace and harmony that the defense of basic human rights has to be part of any programme for true development. As a political dissident in an authoritarian state, I have been deeply involved in the struggle for human rights because I believe that respect for the inherent dignity of man is the key to genuine progress for any nation. And what is development about if it is not about progress? The acknowledgment by United Nations agencies and programmes of the centrality of people to development has broadened and deepened to include social, political, ethical and moral factors.

Concepts of development are more meaningfully divided into "people centred" and "government centred", than into "western" or "eastern". The United Nations Development Pro-

gramme holds that:

... [Development] must be woven around people, not people around development - and it should empower individuals and groups rather than disempower them. And development cooperation should focus directly on people, not just on nation states.

This view would be supported by all those who believe in the basic human right of peoples to participate fully in the social, political and economic processes within their country. It is a view based on the idea of the democratic foundation of development - development of the people, for the people, by the people. It is the antithesis of the idea that development should be defined and directed by governments. In spite of the new approach to development, the tendency to set it in terms of sprawling cities and rampant consumerism remains strong and has to be resisted by those for whom people matter more than blueprints and statistics. Sulak Sivaraksa suggests that a truly developed city may not perhaps be

... distinguished by a multitude of skyscrapers, but by the values attendant on its growth; simplicity, comfort and respect for the community of life around it. People would enjoy a simpler, healthier and less costly diet,

lower on the food chain and without toxic additives or wasteful packaging. Animals would no longer be annihilated at the rate of 500,000 per hour merely to be an option on every menu. A new work ethic could be to enjoy our work and to work in harmony with others, as opposed to having a miserable time doing it.

Mr. Sulak's views on development would find many supporters in the west. On the other hand there will be authoritarian governments in the east which would not accept that simplicity, comfort and respect for the environment should take precedence over such superficial signs of development as the sprouting of multi-storied buildings and the proliferation of automobiles regardless of the detrimental effects on the quality of life. There are peoples in the east as in the west who think the worth of a society is measured by its material wealth and by impressive figures of growth, ignoring the injustices and the pain that might lie behind them. Then there are those who believe that development must be measured in terms of human happiness, of peace within the community and of harmony with the environment. And so we come back to loving kindness and compassion.

All barriers of race and

religion can be overcome when people work together on common endeavours based on love and compassion. Together we can help to develop a happier, better world where greed and ill will and selfishness are minimized. This is not impractical idealism; it is a down-to-earth recognition of our greatest needs. Sometimes it takes courage to grapple with the difficulties that lie in the path of development. Unpopular decisions may have to be made, prejudices overcome. It may become necessary to defy despotic governments, to stand by the downtrodden and the underprivileged in the face of oppression and injustice.

Paradise on earth is a concept which is outmoded and few people believe in it any more. But we can certainly seek to make our planet a better, happier home for all of us by constructing the heavenly abodes of love and compassion in our hearts. Beginning with this inner development we can go on to the development of the external world with courage and wisdom.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the leader of the National League for Democracy, the opposition to the military junta in Burma.

The Story of Pho: The Monk who Ordained Trees

I first met Pho Prachak at the Bangkok Airport. He picked me up in an old hatchback truck and took me to Ashram Wongsanit to a conference on Alternatives to Consumerism. As the Thai social critic Sulak Sivaraksa has said,

"Consumerism is the new religion, and it is eating the world." I was looking forward to this conference, but hadn't expected to be picked up by a famous ex-monk. Phra Prachak, who now goes by Pho (pronounced "paw") was the

Buddhist monk who ordained trees to stop the destruction of a rain forest. Once a powerful and charismatic leader, now he was dressed like a Thai farmer, his demeanor gruff but humble. During the hour-long drive to the

ashram he told me his story. As a young man from a rural village he got into a fight with a friend who owed him money. The friend shot him twice: in his rear and through his jaw. He thought he would die, and vowed to become a monk if he lived.

He did live - he points to his rear: "Bullet still there.", he says, and lifts up his chin to show me a scar I can't see in the dark of the truck - and when he recovered, he fulfilled his vow to become a monk for seven days: this is an accepted ritual in Thailand, which brings both good Karma and honor to one's family. But after seven days he decided to remain a monk. Searching for peace was better than fighting over money, so he went to the forest to practice *Tudong*. *Tudong* literally means "to wander and meditate". It is a spiritual exercise: to have no plans, no targets, make no calculations, and to accept circumstances as they come. It usually means to live in the forest and meditate continuously. It is a rigorous contemplative training to destroy the ego. Pho Prachak stayed in the forests for twenty years. "The forest makes your heart gentle.", he says. "You become one with it. You are open and so your anger leaves. No place for greed or anger there." Over time Pho Prachak became a peaceful monk with deep insights into Buddhist teachings. His reputation spread, and soon he had a following. Then he settled outside a forest village. In Thailand a village will care for a temple and the temple provides religious and social services. The villagers built Pho Prachak a temple and asked him to help stop the government's local deforestation projects that were threatening their way of life.

It was a naive request. How could a simple monk stop the government? Pho Prachak didn't know what to do. He had lived in



Tree Ordination

the forest for twenty years, and had never engaged in political action. He knew that those who destroyed the forest did so out of greed and ignorance. They didn't understand that the forest was important to everyone, and that there were consequences to destroying it. But how could he convince them? Then he had an idea. He and the villagers went to where the lumberjacks would work the next morning, and ordained all of the trees: they wrapped saffron monk's robes around their trunks and blessed them. And it worked. In Buddhist countries killing an ordained being is seen as a sure ticket to hell, and the lumberjacks would have nothing to do with it. The deforestation stopped. Pho Prachak was a hero and became famous overnight. His action was powerful because it used a sacred religious ritual and relied on the accepted ethical code. It prevented what now had to be seen as violent action, when before it was just "chopping down trees". It made everyone see the forest as the holy place it always had been. It also instantly educated whoever heard about it. Such brilliant success was too dangerous to the government. Powerful players of the lumber industry - the illegal

lumber Mafia, the government, and seven other governments - had invested in the deforestation. There was no way such power and money would let simple people without power or money get in their way. Pho Prachak's movement was crushed. The police harassed him and the villagers. He was accused of trumped up charges such as "deforestation" (he took down a dead tree for which he had permission to do) and "encroachment on the forest", which was necessary to be able to protect it against the timber companies. A campaign against him was launched through the newspapers, and the Buddhist Sangha (state church) threatened to disrobe him. His support was split by charging villagers who followed him with imaginary crimes, and "doing favors", such as building roads, for villages who turned against him. "I built many good roads there.", Pho joked. The attacks against Pho Prachak increased.

A grenade was thrown into his temple killing a monk. Then he was arrested, beaten, and thrown in jail. He escaped, sparking a manhunt that involved hundreds of government troops. This was to catch a man who had wrapped orange cloth around

trees. He was guilty of committing the most dangerous crime against the government: for a moment he had dispelled apathy. After a long chase Pho Prachak disrobed and turned himself in. He had wanted to save the forest. Living in the forest had made him human, and for him saving it was saving the world. But he was paralyzed. He thought that by disrobing he had called a truce. But the government needed him crushed and humiliated. By tricking him into disrobing he lost his stature. By forcing him to live in Bangkok to fight charges he lost his community and home. By publicly charging him with crimes against the forest he was painted as a fraud. At age fifty nine, Pho wants to return to the forest as a monk and live out the rest of his life in peace. Although he will most likely loose in his cases with the government, the hearings have been prolonged. Pho is intentionally forced into an isolated urban life, without the forest he knows, fighting faceless inhuman corporate and government forces that he doesn't understand. We went to his old temple complex, abandoned for years, now swallowed by the forest. One of his small temples on the forest's border is used by the government as "a forest protection office". The irony is not lost on the villagers, who are happy to see Pho. They say there are no monks here now, and less trees. Everyone is frightened. Pho's act was a heroic effort to stop greed by showing what it does. Action through education. He is also the tragic example of how big greed is. According to Buddhism, greed is one of the three mental afflictions that make us suffer. Greed is an evil puppeteer and we are helpless puppets. In Thailand greed manifests itself in many ways. Bangkok has more Mercedes and more prostitutes

per capita than any city in the world. It has the worst air pollution and the highest incidents of AIDS in Asia. The traffic is the world's worst, and the rivers that people swam in a few years ago are toxic. Whole villages have lost their girls to prostitution fueled by domestic and international business men who for a hundred dollars buy a virgin for the night. The bill pays for the virgin's father's heroine addiction. How will he pay for it the next month? Heroin addiction creates apathy, and it should be no surprise that the government doesn't address this nationwide crisis. In fact, they actively suppress those who show human concern. They say there is no environmental problem, no AIDS epidemic, and negligible prostitution. With apathy, greed wins. It's easy to see why Pho Prachak had to loose. After an hour drive Pho and I reach Ashram Wongsanit, the alternative living community hosting the Alternatives to Consumerism conference. Though we are far from Bangkok, the city's problems are here as well. We are surrounded by former farmland, sold off - because of the immense rat population created by Bangkok's overpopulation. "Bangkok is the right place for this meeting.", someone says; "We're starting in the belly of the beast." The next day at the conference we discuss the problems of consumerism and the people who work to create alternatives. The ideas are grounded in such thinkers as E. F. Schumacher, Mahatma Gandhi, Ivan Illich, as well as indigenous and other religious traditions. The work being done is inspiring, but the problems are vast. Pho is nowhere to be found. His work is often cited at such conferences, but he himself doesn't think in intellectual terms - he just did what made sense. He tried to help the villagers and teach the gov-

ernment. Even then he didn't have much to say at a conference. Now he feels he has nothing to say. But he still wants to take part, so he helps in the kitchen, and picks people up at the airport. For me this is nothing short of a blessing. Our ride together, hearing his story, is a precious learning experience. I promise myself I will try to tell his story to the world. Each morning of the conference I meet with Pho at 4 am to meditate for two hours. Sometimes afterwards we talk. There are questions I can't ask: what is it like to think you have beaten the giant only to be made powerless; to be a hero, and then have everything taken away; when did you realize there never was a chance of success? I have other questions: what if they had understood their opponent and been organized to fight? What if he had an astute politician as an ally? You have to be astute and rich and ambitious to have things your way and to "live simply", which may mean it's impossible to live simply like this anymore. Though he is sure of his Buddhist practice, he seems unsure of his political actions. Now his life is confused and hard. Luckily he has friends who pay his legal fees and give him a place to stay at the Ashram. When he questions his actions, his friends support him and assure him he acted nobly. It seems Pho will be cleared of the charges against him, but who knows when, or how long he can afford lawyer's fees. He says that when he is cleared he will become a monk again, and go back to the forest. "But this time", he says, "I go deep inside. No cause trouble. I go in and no one will ever see me again."

Matt Weiner has been active with the Temple of Understanding in New York City and the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka. Currently he is attending the Harvard Divinity School.

Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue with Buddhism

What do Buddhism and ecology have to say to each other? This was the question which a group of Buddhist practitioners and scholars together with ecologists proposed to explore at a conference held in New Delhi, Oct 2/4 1993. The conference was held under the auspices of the Tibet house and on the occasion of Gandhiji's birthday. The Essays and presentations delivered by the attendees of the conference have been collected into a book published jointly by the Tibet House and Satguru Publications.

In the foreword by the Dalai Lama, he lays out why he feels that Buddhism has something to say about ecology. Reminiscing about his childhood education in Tibet he explains how the idea that all beings want happiness translates into a sense of "universal responsibility for both mankind and nature." Within this framework of the imperative to treat both sentient beings and nature with respect he goes on to describe how this is approached in Tibetan Buddhism. Two primary ideas emerge which will be expounded throughout the essays contained in the book. One is the importance of understanding how the mind works, how negative thoughts and emotions (inner pollution) translate into outer pollution, and the remedy to this cycle of pollution begins with a thorough examination of the inner landscape of the human experience. He relates the idea of *pratityasamutpada* (conditioned co-arising, interdependence) to its corollary, the unity of all things. Both science and the teachings of

the Buddha tell us of the fundamental unity of all things.

In the relationship of these two - the "inner landscape", its pollution and remedies, and the "outer landscape", its destruction and restoration, is found the primary focus of the dialogue between Buddhism and Ecology.

The book itself is divided into two parts, "*Desire and Development*" in the suffering world and "*Compassionate Engagement*". Briefly, I will look at some of the points raised in each section.

Part One is more philosophical, it elucidates the transfer of terminology between Buddhism and ecology. It explores the notion that pollution is both an inner and outer phenomenon.

Ramachandra Ghandi tells us that, etymologically, ecology is the science of home. But what is home to a Buddhist, a renunciant? Home is not any contrived or compounded Thing - not an idea, not a house or a country. If ecology strives to help us put our home in order, we must understand clearly what is our home. As the earth was witness to the Buddha's enlightenment, and to our own impermanence - she is our true home, the only space that holds everything without distinction. This is a point of departure for ecology. We should recognize our home as ultimately just the common ground upon which we all sit.

Radha Burnier extends this by pointing out the amazing ignorance required to deny our interconnectedness in the face of all that comprises the world for

many of us: The Internet, global travel, satellites. Yet we still see ourselves as disconnected from nature and from each other. How is this possible? Sandhong Rinpoche, a Tibetan scholar and a monk states somewhat humorously how we see crisis and challenges (even ecological ones) in a rather skewed way: "*The un-enlightened mind is always in crisis*", he says, "*The greater challenge as I see it is the one which lies within us: The crisis of the human mind.*" (pp.14/15). We seem to be developing a Buddhist view of ecology which encourages us to start at ground zero, within ourselves, to find the root of the outer destruction we see around us.

Next we come to the concept of non-self. In the Buddhist view, the root of all suffering and ignorance begins with the view of the self as a solid, unchanging thing, a territory to be protected at all costs. So we go out and try to protect the self. In so doing, we wreck havoc. If the root of the tree is poison, then whatever grows from it will be poisonous. If we can come from a ground free of passion, aggression and ignorance, our actions bear fruit that is positive. If concern for one's self is not an appropriate basis for ecological outreach, then what is? The answer, at least for Buddhism, is compassion, in the sense of a genuine concern for all beings. Also, we must respond to our own passion, aggression and ignorance before we attempt to label and confront those in the landscape around us. As R.F. Thurman suggests in his essay:

"We could tell people that the destruction of the environment is immoral but it doesn't help necessarily... Instead, imagine what it would take to turn modern society to the idea that our purpose on earth is to unfold our understanding of how to conquer our self-centeredness." (p.58) Conquering self-centeredness is, in effect, enlightenment. "If our planet is to survive this environmental crisis, it will come down to people becoming enlightened." (p.58) So how is Buddhism poised to approach ecology? Hopefully by producing understanding. We need to address the real roots of the problem, to plant the seeds of relief, nourish them with education and produce a "machinery of constructive and positive attitude that will match the overwhelming machinery of destruction." (p.59)

Part two of this book, titled "*Compassionate Engagement*", deals with the question of where do we go from here? After all, we are not all enlightened at the moment. Yet still it is clear that something has to be done. So how do we take some of the Buddhist approach to ecology - and apply it in the world? First, we might cultivate awareness of our own actions and their effects. Many of the conference attendees point

out the irony of discussing ecology while sitting on dead trees, in an air-conditioned room, and so on. Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna mentions that the Buddha held all of his meetings under trees, not on their dead remains. In fact, all of the major events of the Buddha's life took place under trees. He speaks of his own experience in the Himalayan Region. First he vitriolically describes the plunder of his home region, then goes on into the four steps to be taken which honor the truth of the situation, and the right of people not to be taken advantage of: a) revive community control over land, forests and water, especially to make local communities self-sufficient; b) do not destroy the landscape; c) keep biodiversity intact. These three points sum up the general sense of the second part of the book. Each of the authors presents their view of the concrete steps that might be taken, reflecting their view of how to treat the earth. As such, no summary could adequately reflect the range of views given in Part Two, but several themes arise over and again in the course of these essays. Over-centralized government is faulted as distant to real issues of sustainability for people who live in contact with nature. Ecology is described in various

fashions as a religious responsibility - extending throughout the world's religious traditions. Spirituality, too, is a facet of ecology which mandates participation in a larger world and creates awareness of responsibility. Finally, three realms of study and participation emerge in Buddhism's dialogue with ecology: Education, economics, and action!

Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue with Buddhism is a highly informative and provocative book. Its format as a collection of essays allows the personal experience and feelings of many different persons to be heard. Though at times a bit scholarly, anyone can appreciate the honest presentation of the others' experiences and ideas. I believe that anyone who reads this book will find something especially relevant to their own experience and be inspired to take action. To look within themselves, to act in their community or to begin to relate their own experience of Buddhism or ecology to those around them.

Edited by Martin Julia. Tibet House, New Delhi, 1997

Chris Walker is a graduate student at Naropa Institute.

Recommended Readings

Hiram W. Woodward Jr.
The Sacred Sculpture of Thailand
River Books Co. Ltd.

This is the best introduction I've seen to the subject in a coffee-table format. It examines the history of Buddhist art and the development of the different styles of Buddha statuary in this country, starting in the 7th century (Dvaravati era) and continuing through the period of Khmer influence (Phimai, Lop Buri), and the kingdoms of Sukhothai and Lanna, to the end of the Ayutthaya period in the 18th century. There are also comprehensive chapters on the way Buddha images are designed and venerated and on the development of bronze-casting techniques in the region. The 280-odd illustrations are of Buddha images from the private collection of Alexander Griswold, and American historian who came to Thailand to study Buddha images

after World War II, and from The Walaters Art Gallery in the United States. The book can be ordered directly by phoning 225 9574 or 224 6686.

Review by Manote Tripathi, printed in The Nation, January 4, 1998.

Other books you may want to add to your reading lists:

Earth Prayers. ed. by Elizabeth Roberts & Elias Amidon
Honoring the Earth: A Journal of New Earth Prayers. ed. by Elizabeth Roberts & Elias Amidon
Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics by Hazel Henderson
The Politics of the Solar Age: Alternatives to Economics by Hazel Henderson
Building a Win-Win World: Life Beyond Global Economic Warfare by Hazel Henderson
Environmental Awareness in Developing Countries: The Cases of China and Thailand
A Lifelong Quest for Peace: A Dialogue by Luis Pauling & Daisaku Ikeda
Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement by Andrew Rowell
Turning Away from Technology: A New Vision for the 21st Century
Sacred Pleasure: Sex, Myth & Politics of the Body - New Paths to Power and Love by Riane Eisler
Teachings on Love by Thich Nhat Hanh
Stepping into Freedom: An Introduction to Buddhist Monastic Training by Thich Nhat Hanh
Media & Politics in Transition: Cultural Identity in the Age of Globalization ed. by Jan Servaes & Ricco Lie
A Few Facts About Buddhism by Gunnar Gallmo
Burning All Illusions by David Edwards
China in Tibet - 1997 Annual Report on Human Rights Violations in Tibet. Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy
Human Rights Yearbook 1996 - Burma Report Human Rights Documentation Unit, NCGUB
Real Life at Moo Ban Dek: The Coming of Age of an Alternative Education Community by Rajani and Pipob Dhongchai

Sulak Sivaraksa's Spring 1998 Schedule

13 January	The King's Story interviewed for BBC television in London, UK
19-21 January	The North-South Round Table HUMAN RIGHT: A POSITIVE AGENDA FOR DONORS in Berlin, Germany
18-31 January	Lecturer on "Buddhist Economics" at Schumacher College, Dartington, UK
27 January	Lecturer at Sharpham College, Totnes, UK
30 January	GANDHI MEMORIAL LECTURE on "Applying Gandhi as an Alternative to Consumerism" at the Gandhi Peace Foundation, India
17-19 February	The meeting on key members of nine major religions of the world and the World Bank at the Lambeth Palace, London, UK
21-31 March	Lenten Campaign with CCFD, France
11-14 March	With Forum of the Poor in Laos
16-18 April	University of Notre Dame, USA
30 April - 3 May	Buddhist Christian dialogue in Indiana, USA

Dear ATC Participant,

Happy New Year. We hope that 1998 finds you all safe and well having all had peaceful journeys home. We are all busy working now back at the beautiful Ashram after our temporary move to Sulak's office in Bangkok. It's still hot here. The Secretariat has had to say a fond farewell to Jane who has moved on to other things. We would like to say a big thankyou for all her hard work and she will be greatly missed. She has been urged by her successors to stay available as an advisor so she is not disappearing completely.

Now at the Secretariat is the trinity. Michael Todd Ansted, Caroline McCloy and Pairoj Poompradit. We hope that we will be able to carry on the fine work done so far. This Seeds of Peace issue will, among other things serve as a preliminary report of the ATC activities. We propose a more detailed report to be available later in the year. Also planned is the proposal for future activities; comments and suggestions will be gratefully received. It was suggested by many of the interest groups that a newsletter would be well received. Please write to let us know if this is still the case and how we might make this possible. Contributions, both in material and resources are extremely welcome. If you have any information you would like to share with other network members, we would be happy to help make this happen.

With regards to the many proposals suggested at the meeting, again we invite you to contribute and we would be most grateful for any information regarding funding for Alternatives to Consumerism activities, especially for those in Southern countries where financial resources are limited. The ATC Secretariat is also happy to receive information regarding projects relevant to our work so that we may facilitate the exchange of information at grassroots level.

We are currently updating our database of information and we are dependent on you to help us keep it up to date. Please feel free to write to us about your work. We hope to be able to help even if we can just lend a listening ear.

We thank you for all your support and help in making the 1997 Conference happen...And yes! It is getting hotter!

Hope to hear from you soon!

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Kalayanamitra Council

18 December 1997

To the Chairman of the International Monetary Fund
Washington, DC

Dear Sir,

Please send to the Kalayanamitra Council as soon as possible all relevant details of the IMF guidelines on the conditions under which countries are eligible for IMF assistance. As a coalition of environmental organizations, we are particularly concerned about the ecological and social damage which is being caused by a number of official as well as illegal projects and activities in Thailand. We understand that IMF assistance was denied to Cambodia because of that country's irresponsible approach to the environment. We would therefore like to study your guidelines relating to environmental policy.

We are concerned that a number of projects in Thailand are directly and indirectly damaging to the environment. We will not give any details in this first letter, but for your interest, the projects in question include:

- 1) The gas pipeline passing through prime forest to bring gas from Burma via Kanchanaburi (Southwest Thailand)
On two recent occasions monks ordained trees along the pipeline route in order to protect the forest, in the presence of an international gathering,
- 2) The destruction of the Dongyai forest in Buriram (Northeastern Thailand)
Monks also ordained trees in this case. Unfortunately, the leading monk was forced to disrobe and was charged with five offenses.

Yours sincerely

Sulak Sivaraksa
President, Kalayanamitra Council

For the Children of the World

From: Nobel Peace Prize Laureates

To: Heads of States of all member countries of the General Assembly of the United Nations

Today, in every single country throughout the world, there are many children silently suffering the effects and consequences of violence.

This violence takes many different forms: between children on the streets, at school, in family life and in the community. There is physical violence, psychological violence, socio-economic violence, environmental violence and political violence. Many children - too many children - live a "culture of violence".

We wish to contribute to reduce their suffering. We believe that each child can discover, by himself, that violence is not inevitable. We can offer hope, not only to the children of the world, but to all of humanity, by beginning to create, and build, a new **Culture of Non-Violence**.

For this reason, we address this solemn appeal to all Heads of States, of all member countries of the General Assembly of the United Nations, for the U.N. General assembly to declare:

- That the first decade of the new millennium, the years 2000-2010, be declared the "Decade for a **Culture of Non-Violence**";
- That at the start of the decade the year 2000 be declared the "Year of Education for Non-Violence";
- That non-violence be taught at every level in our societies during this decade, to make the children of the world aware of the real, practical meaning and benefits of non-violence in their daily lives, in order to reduce the violence, and consequent suffering, perpetrated against them and humanity in general.

Together, we can build a new culture of non-violence for humankind which will give hope to all humanity, and in particular, to the children of our world.

With deepest respect.

The Nobel Peace Prize Laureates

Mrs. Mairead Maguire Corrigan
Mother Teresa
Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi
The 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso)
M. Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev
M. Shimon Peres
M. Elie Wiesel
Mgr. Desmond Mpilo Tutu

Mr. Adolfo Perez Esquivel
Mgr. Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo
Mr. Jose Ramos Horta
Mr. Norman Borlaug
Mr. Oscar Arias Sanchez
M. Frederik Willem de Klerk
Mrs. Betty Williams
M. Lech Walesa

World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP)

5 December 1997

Dear Esteemed Mr. Sivaraksa,

Please accept my warmest good wishes and indeed the good wishes of all of the World Conference on Religion and Peace as you take the important initiative of your meeting.

You have been a long-term friend and leader in WCRP. Your courage and forethought have assisted not only your wonderful Buddhist colleagues and those they serve, but indeed the wider community of religious persons cooperating in today's world.

All of the members of WCRP are hopeful indeed that your important conference can provide to us clear guidance on the ways in which we may collaborate in the near future.

Please accept my deepest solidarity and the good wishes of all of your friends in WCRP, as you proceed in your important initiative.

With every good wish, I remain

Sincerely yours

Dr. William F. Vendley
Secretary General

Pacific Civil Society Forum

January 9, 1998

Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa,

We have received your call for support for Thai activists working on stopping construction of the Yadana Gas Pipeline. We highly appreciate your concern about the environment and are willing to join your party.

However, we would like to have further details on the situation in Thailand and the activities performed by your parties before taking actions. First of all, we wish to receive detailed information about the process of the Yadana Gas Pipeline construction. Without understanding the situation from the beginning, it is difficult for us to set up a plan for actions of our party. In addition, we would like to ask you for an article about the situation in Thailand for APCSF Newsletter, which is a quarterly newspaper issued by the Asia Pacific Civil Society Forum. We wish to put your article on the Spring edition which will be issued in the late February. It is considered that a persuasive and detailed article would attract other potential supporters. If you are interested, please send your article within 400 letters until January 31, 1998.

Your cooperation will be appreciated and we promise you that APCSF and AICSM (Asian Institute of Civil Society Movement) will fully support your position. Thank you for reading this letter.

Sincerely

Hyekyung Kim Research Director
AICSM Editor, APCSF

Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre (Regd.)

13 Dec 1997

Dear Ajan Sulak Sivaraksa,

I am awfully sorry for not being able to attend the conference in Thailand, though I was too keen to meet you all. I just returned from tour of Taiwan and Singapore. Gratefully thanks for your kind initiative for donating set of Tripitaka in Pali and Thai, this would be of great precious and pious treasure for our library.

We would be sending soon a set of photographs of Prince Mahidol Memorial Library, Devachan, and a brief write up. The Library is a Center of attraction for Western tourists, Buddhis and local Research Scholars and a pride treasure of our Center. We gratefully thank you all philanthropic donors and noble motivator of the noble venture.

It would be my pleasure if you could attend personally the historic Bhikkhuni Ordination Ceremony at Bodhgaya in Feb 98 and grace the occasion.

We have opened a small office in Delhi, we will be very grateful if you can send the books to our Delhi office by sea mail. I will be in Delhi office for a month.

Yours in Dhamma

Bhikkhu Sanghasena, President