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Engaged Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



# SEEDS OF

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4 Editorial Notes

### Country Reports

- 6 Burma: Healing through Peace Building Training in Myanmar *Jill Jameson*  
8 India-Lanka: Indian Buddhist Leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar *Senaka Weeraratna*  
9 Siam: Thai Buddhism in the Next Decade *Phra Paisal Visalo*  
12 Siam: Violence Against LGBTQ in Thai Buddhism *Kulavir Prapapornpipat*  
14 South Korea: Peace of Gangjung Village on Jeju Island  
16 Sri Lanka: Restorative Justice for Lankan Tamils *Peter Schalk*

### INEB

- 18 Letter from the Secretariat Office  
20 INEB 2012 Calendar  
22 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Sri Lanka  
23 Documentary Arts Asia  
24 A World without Suffering *David Loy*  
27 The U.N. Happiness Project *Timothy W. Ryback*  
29 Sri Lanka: Buddhism among Tamils *Peter Schalk*

### Sulak Sivaraksa

- 32 Introducing Sulak Sivaraksa *Benjamin Bogin*  
33 The Revolution in Siam  
36 The Power of Giving  
37 Suggestions on the Amendment of Article 112

### Articles

- 41 Life in the Grand Palace *MR Pimsai Svasti Amranand*  
46 Coming Home to the Lotus Sutra *Trevor Carolan*

### Obituaries

- 48 Margaret Smith Ungphakorn *Giles Ungphakorn*  
48 Mom Luang Boonlua Debyasuvan *Chetana Nagavajara*

### 50 Letters

### 56 Book Reviews

### 58 Recommended Readings

\* 24<sup>th</sup> June 2012 is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first revolution in Siam.

# PEACE

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#### **The goals of INEB are to:**

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

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## Prince Damrong Rajanubhab's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary

21<sup>st</sup> June 2012

Prince Damrong Rajanubhab was the first Thai to be recognized by UNSECO as one of the world's great personalities. He was widely credited as the father of the modern Thai provincial administration and of Thai historiography. He was also a leading intellectual of his times.

A son of King Mongkut (King Rama IV) with a lesser royal wife, Prince Damrong ultimately became the trusted right-hand man of his brother, King Chulalongkorn. He was largely responsible for King Chulalongkorn's administrative reform program during his time at the helm of the Ministry of the North, which eventually became the Ministry of Interior.

Prince Damrong devoted his life to serve Country, Religion and Monarchy. He was a staunch defender of Siamese absolutism. Although he believed that members of the royal family were superior to the common people and deserved to rule because of the merits they had done in previous lives, he also stressed that the high-born should maintain their exclusive social status and personal dignity by leading simple, frugal, humble, honest and responsible lives. In particular, the king should be the epitome of these values in order to be well-loved by the people. To a large extent, the prince himself was also an embodiment of these traits.

At the same time, Prince Damrong emphasized that all civil servants, whether the high or the low born, must not be arrogant and domineering. They should be generous and respectful of different local customs and traditions.

In a nutshell, Prince Damrong sought to promote, constitute and defend the 'distinct' characteristics of Thai national identity based on autonomy, non-domination or non-exploitation, and cooperation and compromise.

As historian, Prince Damrong was blinded by absolutist prejudices. In fact, he did not express any fault with absolutism or the royal family. He was thus more of a hagiographer than historian.

When King Chulalongkorn passed away in 1910, Prince Damrong's relationship with King Vajiravudh was tense. King Rama VI appeared to be highly envious of the prince. The latter eventually resigned from his official position. The elderly prince returned to the center of power during the reign of King Rama VII.

However, he was already behind his times. Still attached to the good old days of the Fifth Reign, he could not understand the wind of change that was about to happen. After the 1932 Revolution, which ended absolutism in Siam, Prince Damrong was exiled to Penang. He was allowed to return home a decade later during the Eighth Reign. He met Pridi Banomyong, the Regent to the King, and admitted that the time of absolutism was over. He then asked Pridi to help take good care of the country.



## Editorial Notes

The teaching of the Buddha is to help people in this very life as well as preparing his followers for the next life and beyond—to Nirvana or the ultimate peace and true happiness beyond description. However many schools of Buddhism tend to prepare the faithful only for the next world, rather than encouraging them to confront social injustice and environmental degradation. Hence great monasteries in China were mostly situated in remote mountain areas—ideal for mindfulness practices with no social concern—at least after the Tang dynasty. Korea seemed to have followed this tradition until World War II. Despite the fact that Japan had conquered that country, the Korean patriarchs still asked their Buddhist compatriots to pray for the Emperor of Japan. This alienated a great number of young patriots who became Christians. They partly relied on Western missionaries to protect them in the fight against Japanese imperialism. So now South Korea has more Christians than Buddhists numerically as well as qualitatively involved in worldly affairs.

Traditionally, Japanese priests too engaged themselves more with funeral services than with social welfare or social change in their country.

Since France colonized Vietnam for more than one century, the French authority in that country encouraged the Vietnamese Catholics to get along with the imperial power, while the majority of the Buddhists sought refuge in solitude, avoiding confrontation with imperial masters. Even after the Americans replaced the French in the Vietnam War, traditional Vietnamese Buddhists were on the whole very inactive. They did not concern themselves with the dreadful political, economic or social and cultural conditions in the country.

Thanks to Thich Nhat Hanh who coined the term “Engaged Buddhism” that aroused Vietnamese Buddhists to awaken from escapism and to engage in social activities in Vietnam. His movement for the nonviolent *third way* between communism and Americanism started too late to spare Vietnam from the situation between the devil and the deep blue sea. Yet his voice abroad, together with concerned Christians in the West helped to carry his message of nonviolent action for social change. Even Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. proposed Thich Nhat Hanh’s name for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Buddhist refusal to participate in social activities was not confined to the East. When the Buddhist Society was founded in Britain in 1924, its objectives were expressed clearly that Western Buddhists should concentrate on meditation practices taught by any school of Buddhism. They were however recommended not to be involved with social activism or to take a political stand. The argument was that Christianity went wrong when it got involved in social and political platforms, contributing to the loss of its spiritual heritage. Indeed a number of Western Buddhist felt comfortable with practicing only mindfulness without confronting the suffering in the world—thus avoiding the Four Noble Truths entirely.

The First Truth is that one should confront and be aware of suffering—personal, social and environmental. The Second Truth asks us to locate the causes of suffering, which are linked to greed, hatred and delusion. These causes of suffering are now expressed clearly in capitalism/consumerism; militarism or the concentration of absolute power; and the mainstream mass media and education institutions, which focus on the head without moral or spiritual concerns. The Third Truth is the cessation of suffering through the Fourth Truth, i.e. the Noble Eightfold Path, which essentially means not to exploit oneself and others (*sila*), through deep meditation in order to be aware of the self and learn to criticize the self which is not real (*smadhi*), and then one would reach real understanding or wisdom (*pañña*), or seeing things as they really are.

A number of Western Buddhists are from the middle or even the upper class in society. If they are not aware that their way of life contributes to global poverty—i.e., through the social structure which is violent and unjust—then they are deluding themselves.

Luckily a number of Western Buddhists have stood up from their meditation cushions and are actively engaging in nonviolent social change. Here the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in the USA and the Engaged Buddhist movement in Europe are two good examples. Moreover, there is the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, which has been in operation for a quarter of a century now.

Modern lay Japanese movements like the Rishokoseikei have also been very active in social welfare in Japan and abroad. (Some Japanese Buddhists have now moved toward social change, challenging the government non-violently with compassion).

*This Precious Life: Buddhist Tsunami Relief and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Post 3/11 Japan* is a book that is deeply concerned about social welfare as well as social change. And this is not the only one. Bruce Rich's *To Uphold the World: The Message of Ashoka and Kautilya for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is another. Not to mention the editor's *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

Besides, the Gross National Happiness events at the UN in New York recently as well as the international conference on the Economics of Happiness in Berkeley early this year are to be taken note seriously.

A few years ago, the Saffron Revolution in Burma was not taken seriously by the mainstream mass media. But we must admit that it has helped to change Burma to be less autocratic and more democratic.

Tibet is still struggling with nonviolent Buddhist activism vis-à-vis the Chinese Communist dictatorship. But in China itself, truth could not be suppressed effectively any more than the cry for freedom, which is much more widespread than during the Maoist era.

Although Lui Xaobo, the first Chinese to receive the Noble Peace Prize in 2010 is still in jail in China, his book, *No Hatred: No Enemy* is very powerful—not unlike *Freedom from Fear* by Daw Aung Sang Kyi when she received the Noble Peace Prize in absentia in 1991.

One of these days the Han Chinese will have their freedom of expression and a real democratic regime. Then the Tibetans too will be free from imperial bondage.

One cannot claim that every liberation movement is linked with Engaged Buddhism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. But this century needs to go ahead with *Satyagraha* (the power of truthfulness) and *ahimsa*, radical nonviolence.

The abovementioned terms were not only from Mahatma Gandhi, but also from Gautama the Buddha 2600 years ago. Indeed, equality, fraternity and liberty did not originate from the time of the French Revolution, which did not uphold non-violence. Rather, the ideas and practices started originally from the Buddha when he established the *Sangha*, the ideal society that served as the alternative to the mainstream 2600 years ago.

## Burma: Healing through Peace Building Training in Myanmar

Optimism and hope for the future in Burma have risen dramatically over the last year. This has culminated in celebrating the recent by-elections and a seat in parliament for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and forty two other members of the National League for Democracy (NLD). But whilst there have been reforms over the last year, such as the release of some political prisoners and relaxation of media censorship, the civil war has continued in Kachin State, with 75,000 displaced people.

The seeds for democratic change were sown during the 2007 Saffron Revolution led by thousands of monks. The first elections—neither free nor fair—took place in 2010, after which Daw Suu was released from almost 20 years under house arrest. From the start of the new parliament a year ago, President Thein Sein has reached out to Daw Suu and to ethnic leaders in attempts to broker peace, whilst also having to placate the military.

Following the announcement of the NLD wins, Daw Suu spoke of the need for ongoing democratic change, and yet she, like many others, feel this is the start of a new era. There can be no going back! National reconciliation has long been a priority for Daw Suu and the NLD, to find peaceful resolution of conflicts with ethnic minorities. However, the legacy of fifty years of military dictatorship, violence, war, exploitation of natural resources, human rights violations, increas-

ing poverty, and neglect of health and education (especially in the ethnic minority areas), has been deep human suffering. Change will be slow, and many people are deeply wounded, but there are now opportunities to facilitate the healing process.

Last November 2011, Hozan Alan Senauke and Jill Jameson from the INEB Burma Working Group, visited Myanmar to facilitate workshops and trainings through our *kalyanamitra* in the INEB network. Trainings focussed on peace building and conflict transformation and were timely for helping to bridge difference in Burma and heal the wounds of repression and violence. Two local organisations requested that Alan and Jill return to Myanmar to deepen this training.

In February 2012, the focus for three different trainings was to more widely introduce a culture of peace with peace-building skills training. Recently released political prisoners were given priority as there are few training opportunities for these people and it was felt there was a great need to offer support and healing in this way for people in transition back to civil society.

1. The first training over five days was held near Bago, in a monastery and village two hours north of Yangon. With security still an issue, we appreciated the protection and environment in this place, the support of the abbot and two excellent translators/ co-facilitators. There were twenty participants, nine of

whom were recently released political prisoners and almost all had worked in civil society. Many worked in their communities or organisations—mostly as volunteers, such as trainers in citizen rights and voter education, working for candidates in the forthcoming by-election, work on human rights and land rights and organising youth book-reading clubs. The most recently released political prisoners (released in the previous month) were in transition and were still trying to find their way and to catch up on changes during their incarceration.

The purpose of the training was for participants to deepen their understanding of the root causes of conflict, to explore what gets in the way of harmonious relationships, and using and developing tools to deal with these issues. In this process, it was anticipated that they would deepen trust through sharing and strengthen their interpersonal and training skills to become more effective in civil society and in their own particular organizational capacities.

A key question explored by participants was what did peace look like from their own experience, and what were the resources they already have? From small group discussions, it was agreed that a peaceful Myanmar would fulfil basic needs of its citizens, with opportunities for a good and simple life for all, would value justice and equality and have non-violent means to resolve conflict. There would be freedom

from fear and want, mutual respect, unity and love.

The conflict mapping exercise gave participants an opportunity to share their stories in a supportive environment, and to deepen understanding of each issue, its causes and its complexity through sharing and group discussion. The issue of civil war in Kachin State was mapped, showing the major conflict between Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Myanmar military since June 2011, as well as the many visible and invisible parties. What is needed now, said one person focussing on Kachin, is community participation, and he was now planning to return to Kachin State to offer peace-building training to communities. He himself is not from Kachin, and this reflects a growing trend of people from majority Bamar areas reaching out to work with and across difference, towards equality, social justice and peace.

#### Review and recommendations from the first training:

From small group discussions, the following points were made:

- Due to the historical divisions between Bamar and Ethnic nationalities, some behaviour should be avoided, for example, a Bamar cultural show where ethnic groups have no chance to promote their own culture. There is a need to respect the culture and customs of all ethnic groups;
- Development assistance and more scholarships were needed in ethnic areas;
- Need to promote peace-building skills across the country and include training of trainers;
- There have been different opportunities to access higher education between the children of the authorities and others, and

there should now be a move towards equality;

- It was recommended there be sovereignty for Bamar and Ethnic States, with divisions of power, resources and economy, education and culture. General Aung San had wanted equality between the hills people and those from the plains, but General Ne Win claimed a federation was not suitable for Burma, with a danger to unity, so he imposed power over the Ethnic Nationalities.

- The Government of Myanmar should give the right to manage their natural resources to Ethnic States;

2. The second training of three days was held in Yangon. There were initially 14 participants coming from a wide range of student generations—from 1962 to 2012. They included two former political prisoners from '96 and '07, as well as a range of political parties—NLD, the Democratic Party and the National Democratic Front (including the founder of the NDF) a breakaway from the NLD before the 2010 elections. There was also a wide age range, and the older participants were reluctant to share in small groups and instead wanted to hear examples of peace and reconciliation in other countries. Also in the first couple of hours a journalist—unbeknown to me—had entered and sat in for 20 minutes. Such situations, and a further one where one of the temporary translators was accused of being a spy, were rich ground for deepening our understandings around conflict! Some participants dropped out with these events—as well as some of those who were busy with forthcoming elections—and more joined. The training was flexible, responding to needs as

they arose. We spent time listening to the stories of two of the former political prisoners—both of whom were musicians, so we also sang and listened to lots of songs, such as *We are the World*: 'We are the world united by love so strong', and the following:

'For all the humans who are suffering,

May there be freedom from suffering and poverty,

To give your heart for those people. And to work hand in hand'.

The two recently released former political prisoners said that now they have no fears or hatred and feel OK during day time, but at night, they are 'often back in prison'. They don't know the public bus routes, and still have to ask for support from their parents as they are still involved in politics. In asking about their needs, they both said they needed assistance for healing the trauma of prison, and also they needed education and training in capacity building, having missed opportunities for these whilst in prison. In asking them what helped the process of healing, they identified sharing their stories, singing songs, opportunities to attend trainings, and work as volunteers.

3. The third training over two days was held in Yangon for between 24 and 30 participants. This was organised by a small local organisation, Badei Dha Moe where a small group of people work as volunteers on issues such as land rights. Most of the participants were students, many of whom are trying to revive the student union movement. There was also one former political prisoner and others linked with former political prisoners, NLD Youth and Com-

munity Based Organisations (CBO's). Several participants from our first training came back to help and support this training.

We explored conflicts in the family—with, for example, roots in poverty, poor education and fear—and in organisations—with roots in lack of trust, discrimination and in the system, following 50 years of military dictatorship.

Key issues arising from the three trainings:

\* Peace building training provided opportunities for both inner healing and for healing in their communities and organisations, through finding inner peace, sharing their stories, working with and across difference, understanding the root causes of conflict, learning tools and skills to work with and transform conflict, expanding their volunteer work in their communities, and in celebrating life.

\* Conflict mapping was found to be a useful tool and framework for sharing one's

story, for understanding the context and broader issues from one's own and others' perspectives. It is a useful tool for mediation, and for exploring the broader and common issues and conflicts in Myanmar, such as organisational conflict, land confiscation and civil war.

\* Increased reaching out to other ethnic nationalities by participants from Yangon, with vision of equality for all, whilst acknowledging that the educational needs were greater in the 'hills' areas.

\* The process of healing will be long term after the impact of 50 years of military dictatorship and the internalisation of oppression.

\* Discrimination towards former political prisoners. They are often rejected by their families, feared by their communities and they are walking a fine line in continuing political activities, knowing they are being 'shadowed'.

\* In asking former political

prisoners what helped in their healing, they identified sharing their stories, singing songs, opportunities to attend trainings and opportunities for work, even as volunteers.

It was said by many of the participants in all three peace building trainings that this training was simple and practical and can be shared in their communities. Most plan to share this training with their friends and communities, and they would like more opportunities for similar training in the future. About one third said they would like to become trainers. For most, the opportunity for training—and one which was free—was of great benefit, they said, for the new skills learnt and deeper understandings, and perhaps most of all, for opportunities for healing.

*Jill Jameson, April 2012*  
Hozan Alan Senauke  
and Jill Jameson are on the  
Advisory Committee of INEB.



## India-Lanka: Indian Buddhist Leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Deserves to Be Honored with a Commemorative Postage Stamp in Sri Lanka

As a leading Buddhist country in the world, the Buddhists of this country should seriously consider requesting the Government of Sri Lanka to issue a commemorative postage stamp in honour of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, for the great work he had done for his people and the cause of Buddhism in India.

There are nearly 250 million Dalits in India which is virtually



1/4<sup>th</sup> of the Indian population.

Sri Lanka should befriend these people.

Buddhism can cement ties between Indian Dalits and Sri Lanka.

Mayawati, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, is a staunch Buddhist. She heads the Bahujan Samaj Party, which represents the Bahujans or Dalits, the weakest strata of Indian society. This is her

fourth term as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. She is an icon for millions of India's Dalits. She is sometimes referred to as Behen-ji (sister).

With a population of over 200 million people, Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state, as well as the world's most populous subnational entity.

Uttar Pradesh (UP) is the second largest state-economy in India, with a GDP of \$103.5 billion in 2009. The annual per capita GDP of the state was \$1586 in 2009. It contributed 8.34% to India's total GDP in the financial year 2010.

UP also has several sites important to Buddhism: the Chaukhandi Stupa marks the

spot where the Buddha met his first disciples, while the Dhamek Stupa in Sarnath commemorates the Buddha's first sermon. Further, the town of Kushinagar is where the Buddha attained Maha Parinirvana.

Sri Lanka should invite Mayawati to visit Sri Lanka and in turn seek the strengthening of economic and religio-cultural ties between Uttar Pradesh and Sri Lanka, the Buddhist World must give her recognition outside India.

The example of Ambedkar embracing Buddhism should be given the widest publicity in the North and East (as Gamini Gunawardena has suggested) to motivate the so-called low caste

Tamils in these areas and the Hill Country of Sri Lanka to pursue a similar path.

Buddhism teaches equality. This was Dr. Ambedkar's message to his fellow Dalits.

Indian Dalits who are Buddhists (in the absence of Dr. Ambedkar) may well spread that message among Tamils in Sri Lanka who feel persecuted and oppressed by members of the higher profile Tamil castes.

Dr. Ambedkar's inspiring legacy may well play a bigger role in Sri Lanka's efforts at reconciliation between various communities.

Senaka Weeraratna,  
Asian Tribune.



## Siam: Thai Buddhism in the Next Decade

Ten years ago, some observers raised doubts over the widespread meditation retreat among the middle-class whether it was just a passing fad. What we witness today has shown that the meditation retreats continue to grow, steadily expanding into all sectors of the middle class.

It is the same with other interests in dharma such as attending dharma talks and reciting prayers. Dharma books have become in vogue and many of them have become best-sellers. Dharma CDs and other forms of dharma media have also become very popular.

All these factors point to a certain prospect that the current awakening of dharma interests among the middle class will remain a marked phenomenon in Thai Buddhism in the next decade.



To start with, meditation retreats will continue to grow and become one of the principal forms of "practicing religion" in Thailand. Dharma books will also continue to be one of few book genres that will be in demand.

However, this phenomenon will be taking place amid a great

diversity of religious beliefs and practices beyond the predominant Thai Theravada Buddhism. We will witness greater influence from the Mahayana and Vajrayana streams of Buddhism among the practitioners. Even in Thai Theravada Buddhism we will also see greater diversity in the tradition as a result of different interpretations and focuses.

In Thai Theravada Buddhism, some groups will focus on the strict upholding of religious precepts and disciplines. Some will stress on meditation practice. Some will practice concentration meditation, others *vipassana* or insight meditation. Some will focus on the cultivation of mindfulness, others on prayer recitation and traditional merit-making. Even in meditation, both the *samatha* (concentration) and *vipassana* (insight)

meditation will be divided into many different branches of practices.

This religious diversity will be taking place in parallel with the growth of lay Buddhism. The lay Buddhists will be playing greater roles in religion and we are seeing the emergence of new Buddhism with lay people as core leaders instead of monks. More lay groups will organize their own meditation groups led by lay teachers outside temples. Even in religious rites, we will also see more lay Buddhists organizing their own rituals performed by their group leaders instead of monks.

Many factors contribute to this lay Buddhism phenomenon. Firstly, the suffering of the middle class.

Many in the middle class are successful professionally, but they have found that success does not make them happier. On the contrary, their suffering increases, both from work stress and from worsening inter-personal relationships. They have found that money cannot alleviate their suffering, so they turn to dharma.

A greater number of people are also seeking refuge in dharma after they have experienced work failure or tragic incidents in their lives such as the loss of loved ones or being inflicted with illnesses such as cancer. The 1997 economic crisis also played a part in pushing people in distress to start practicing dharma.

Our country might not experience the crisis of such magnitude again. Yet, our society and the cut-throat economic system which focuses on competition and winning will inevitably produce many losers. This group of people need healing for their minds.

Moreover, the next decade will see not only increasing economic and political uncertainties but also risks from all sorts of natural disaster will be much higher. The result is more worries, more stress, more suffering for the people. It is natural then that many of them will turn to dharma or religion for spiritual security.

Secondly, nostalgia for Thai identity.

Thais are nostalgic for the lost or imagined Thai culture as a result of rapid social and cultural changes caused by the influx of western influences and accelerated by the forces of globalisation. They then began to take an interest in Buddhism and meditation as a means to strengthen their Thai identity.

Thirdly, increasing social diversity.

The multiplicity in society has been mushrooming following the socio-economic diversity generated by globalisation. People nowadays do not only have diverse professions and ways of life, they also have multifarious tastes and needs. When they are interested in Buddhism, they do not only choose to subscribe to the schools of thoughts and practices that fit their likings, they also adapt those beliefs and practices to respond to their different needs. Moreover, they also bring beliefs from other religious streams into the mix. Therefore, there is a tendency that there will be a great diversity in the beliefs and practices of Buddhism among the practitioners.

Fourthly, the decreasing influence of the clergy.

Following the clergy's declining clout, their roles will be limited to only rites and rituals, and less relevant to people's lives. As monastic misconducts con-

tinue to be more publicly exposed, the cleric elders will fail to win back public faith. Consequently, the middle class who are interested in Buddhism have to turn to one another. This process is eased by greater opportunities today for the lay people to study Buddhism by themselves. For example, the *Tripitaka* and other important scriptures have become more readily available. So have books, CDs, web sites, dharma TV programmes and meditation course led by lay meditation teachers.

Although the interests in Buddhism among the middle class will continue to grow in the next decade, this does not mean the growth of Buddhism itself. This lay Buddhism phenomenon is taking place amid a myriad of social malaises that are ever intensifying, which reflects the overall declining morality of people in society. Crime, murder, theft, rape, corruption, domestic violence, abandoned infants, children and the elderly—these social problems do not only show society's collective failure to instill morality among the populace, they also reflect the declining influence of Buddhism in society as a whole.

Actually, even among those keen in Buddhism, the tendency is that their practice and observance will be individualistic. The main purpose is to respond to their own needs without paying attention to society or other people. Many people turn to Buddhism to cope with stress and to seek inner calm. They then are not interested in taking part in public activities to help others, for fear that their peace of mind will be affected.

Many of these people are devoted to making merit with monks in order to accumulate

the *boon* or merit which will help them to have prosperity in this present life or to have happiness in the next life. Meanwhile, they overlook the down-trodden, believing that helping them will give them less merit than helping their monks.

Of late, there have also been new misunderstandings about *karma*. For example, the belief that if we help save someone's life, that will enrage that person's *jao kam nai wen* or vengeful spirits who will then be intent on avenging us. Or the belief that sharing our merits with others in our prayers will erode our stock of merits. These beliefs actually go against the Buddhist teachings. Yet, they have become widespread. And they will become even more so in the next decade. Here are the reasons:

**Individualism.** The practice of Buddhism marked by individualism is the result of the way Buddhism has been promulgated in Thailand in the past several decades. It is the fruit of the reform of Thai Buddhism a century ago which has eroded the social dimension of Buddhism.

Consequently, the practice has come to primarily focus on the development of one's meditation. (Helping other persons or society has become secondary. Overlooked, even.) When the value of individualism has become a widespread phenomenon in modern Thai society through capitalism and consumerism, people then have become even more focused on self interests. In this system, one's needs come first. When they turn to dharma practice, then it is aimed for personal happiness on a very superficial level. The practice is not really aimed to reduce greed, mental defilements and attach-

ment to the ego. The generosity, the willingness to help others or work for the common good then is lacking. This is one of the reasons why social problems have not declined at all when more Thais actually turn to dharma practice.

In the same vein, when the goal of dharma practice is not to attain a deep and thorough understanding of one's mind until one sees the attachment to self and ego, then it becomes very easy to get lost in that attachment of perceived goodness or one's image as a good, moral person. Conceit grows. As a result, we frown upon whoever thinks or practices differently from us, or judge them as bad people. This is why many dharma practitioners supported the May violence last year. This is also why more widespread dharma practice does not mean that violence in Thai society will decrease in the next decade.

Another distinct characteristic of popular Thai Buddhism in the next decade is the teachings that are concise, easy-to-understand and to practice, with promise of fast results. This comes from the modern mentality and way of life which focuses on speed, convenience and tangible results. These teachings will explain the complexity of the modern world in an easy to understand way, so much so that it becomes superficial. They will not demand too much sacrifice and difficulties from the followers. Just donate and put one's mind in the right place without changing one's way of life or give up selfishness. These teachings will be highly popular. They also share the common traits in their ability to respond to the followers' worldly needs such as wealth, social status and fame.

(One centre attracts the public with this slogan "life saved, diseases cured, wealth, and fame"). An important part of this trend is the widespread consumerism, which does not only commodify religion and dharma teachings, making them easy and fast to consume, but also shapes the public's belief that money is an important tool to attain worldly happiness and success.

In parallel with this phenomenon is the flourishing of commercialized Buddhism, or the commercialization of superstition, to be exact. We will see the market expansion of amulets and charms believed to bring quick wealth without having to invest effort or perseverance. These talismans may be related to Buddhism, come from other cults, or be mixed with one another until it is impossible to identify what is Buddhist, animistic, or Brahministic. Although the *Jatukam Ramatep* amulets have already lost their popularity, the next decade will certainly see new products to give people hope and consolation amid the uncertainties in life and in the world at large. Dependency on these talismans will remain the mainstream belief and practice, which reflect the religious understanding of the majority of the Thai people.

Such phenomenon may be cause of worry for the learned in Buddhism who view them as a violation of the Buddha's teaching. But it is difficult to foresee the clergy taking any action to create proper understanding. The clergy is very weak and will become even weaker in the next decade. The number of monks and novices will drastically decrease. The knowledge of monks and novices will also likely to decline as a result education fail-

ure of the clergy dating back several decades. And there is no sign for any improvement. That is not all. The monks' overall behaviors cannot restore public faith in the clergy, because they themselves are caught in the trap of consumerism. Monks then cannot provide spiritual leadership or wisdom for Thai society. Worse, they play an important part in the growth of animism business. This will continue to happen amid neglect and inertia from the Ecclesiastic Council as ever before, which is why monastic misconducts and scandals continue unabated.

What has already happened and will happen more in the next decade is the proliferation of independent faith groups and cults in the clergy which teach and practice differently. Even though they might violate the teaching of the Buddha, the clergy cannot do much about it. The widespread use of connections in the clergy on every level will further aggravate the situation, preventing the clergy from being the refuge for the public.

In this scenario, the Buddhist group that will play an

important role in the next decade is the Dhammakaya Temple. It has a very strong organization with a corp of 3,000 monks who have been through intense training. Moreover, it is backed with gigantic funding and a nationwide network of monks and lay supporters. The temple also enjoys good relationship with many elders in the Ecclesiastic Council. Its influence at the top, in the middle, and at the grassroots levels combined with its ownership of modern communications media will have a significant impact on the beliefs and practices of a large number of Buddhists in the next decade.

One last point is the increasing role of women. In the past two decades, women have been playing more roles in Thai Buddhism, not only as supporters of monks but also as an important force in Lay Buddhism. Their roles in the realms of higher education and practice have helped Thai Buddhism to be relevant to the way of life of people in modern society. One of the consequences is the emergence of female ordination. The ordination of Bhikkhunis and Sama-

neris might not be welcomed by the clergy and many conservative Buddhists in the past decade. But I believe that the number of Bhikkhunis will certainly grow in the next decade. It will be difficult for the clergy to stop it. And despite how hard it tries, the opposition will not receive substantial support from the public.

The number of Thai Bhikkhunis in the next decade will not be enough to create serious concerns to the elders. There will not be any strong Bhikkhuni clergy in the near future. Still, female ordination will provide an alternative to many women.

However, Bhikkhuni ordination will remain an important debate in the next decade. So will the question of Buddhism as the national religion. This reflects the decline of Buddhism in Thailand which is rooted in the weaknesses within the Thai Buddhist society rather than based on outside threats from other religions and negligence of the government.

*Phra Paisal Visalo,  
Bangkok Post,  
7 February 2012*

## Siam:

### Violence Against LGBTQ in Thai Buddhism

*The issue of whether LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) people can attain enlightenment currently draws a lot of attention in many Buddhist societies, due to discrimination against the LGBTQ community. In Thai society, which seems to be one of the most tolerant societies in terms of sexual diversity, many conservative Buddhist scholars, such as Dr. Sanong Vora-Urai, still believe LGBTQ people cannot attain*

*enlightenment, reasoning that their sexual orientation is the result of sexual misconducts in their past lives. He also believed that LGBTQ are not allowed to be ordained. Discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community has barred them from spiritual development in the Buddhist context. This paper is an attempt to answer these questions in a different way and will discuss gender, sexualities, and the ultimate goal of Buddhism.*

Thailand is knowingly one of the most tolerant countries in terms of sexual diversity. Violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ) have not been significant. In the religious context of Thai Buddhism, however, prejudices against LGBTQ still exist. A conservative Buddhist scholar Dr. Sanong Vora-Urai gave an interview that was published in *Secret*, a popular Thai magazine regarding life-

styles and dharma. In the article named “Gay and Dharma”, Dr. Sanong expressed many prejudices against LGBTQ as follows:

1. LGBTQ people cannot attain enlightenment and so they are not allowed to be ordained.

2. LGBTQ is sexual deviation resulting from sexual misdeeds in past lives.

3. Same-sex love is a kind of *Silabbataparāmāsa*.

4. LGBTQ people were born because of the misdeeds of their parents.

When I first read this interview, I was surprised about his views and explanations. As a feminist Buddhist scholar, I would like to offer a different perspective on the above issues respectively.

**- LGBTQ people cannot attain enlightenment and so they are not allowed to be ordained.**

This belief derives from a *vinaya* rule saying that *hermaphrodites*, people who have both the male and female organs of generation, are not allowed to be ordained. According to Buddhism, being hermaphrodite is believed to be the result of bad karma in their past lives. Dr. Sanong assumed LGBTQ people fall under this rule. However, LGBTQ people in general are not hermaphrodites. They are either men or women who have normal genital organs. The difference they have is they do not conform to the heterosexual norms of societies.

**- LGBTQ is sexual deviation resulting from sexual misdeeds in past lives.**

According to the *Tripitaka*, the possible consequences of sexual misdeeds are (1) sinfulness; (2) inability to sleep well; (3) being gossiped about, and (4) being born in hell. There is no

such explanation in the Buddhist text. When Dr. Sanong explained the cause of being LGBTQ, he quoted a story of a bhikkhuni named Isidasi who committed sexual misconduct when she was a man in one of her past lives. The consequence of that was that she was abandoned by men three times in her last life in the Buddha’s time. I found his example irrelevant and had nothing to do with LGBTQ.

**- Same-sex love is a kind of *Siabbataparāmāsa***

According to Buddhist definition, *Silabbataparāmāsa* is an indulgence in wrongful rites and ceremonies such as the worship of unusual trees or animals. There isn’t any relation between *Silabbataparāmāsa* and LGBTQ.

**- LGBTQ people were born because of the misdeeds of their parents**

This kind of belief is against the law of Karma, one of the Buddhist key concepts. The law of Karma insists on individual responsibility and the reality of a future life. In this regard, how could one person do an evil deed but another person bear its result? Some may argue that there is a collective Karma of a family but this belief is controversial and needs more explanation.

Although none of Dr. Sanong’s explanations is found in the *Tripitaka* or any Buddhist primary texts, these explanations seem to be acceptable in Thai Buddhist society. As a result, many Thai LGBTQ people have been discriminated against such as not being allowed to be ordained or accepted to practice dharma in some temples or meditation centers. If they want to be accepted, they must try to conceal their sexualities and behave as typical men or women. When people can not be them-

selves, they feel that their identities are not acceptable and this is not healthy in terms of the practice of dharma. In this regard, discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community has barred them from spiritual development in the Thai Buddhist context. Also it could be considered as a form of spiritual violence. Generally speaking, Dr. Sanong’s views are representative of mainstream beliefs towards LGBTQ in Thai Buddhism.

In my MA thesis titled “Thoughts and Ethics of Sexuality in Theravada Buddhism (2002)”, I researched on the causes and effects of gender and sexualities. According to my research findings, to be born as male or female depends on the individual’s powerful Karma, either bad or good. For example, if a man committed sexual misconduct, was promiscuous, or abandoned his partner, he might be born as a woman in the next life who would be cheated on or abandoned by her partners. As for good powerful Karma, a person might vow to be born as an opposite sex in order to learn from and experience life as this the particular sex. Some might vow to transform into the opposite sex in order to complete some mission such as *Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva* who transformed to be *Guan-Yin* Goddess in Chinese Buddhism.

If one has no such powerful Karma, sex will depend on the cultivated and accumulated sexual characteristics of the individual. Although the mind is free from physiological sex, it can incorporate certain sexual characteristics or “gender”. For example, a person who was born as a woman in many consecutive lives might have strong female characteristics even if she did

something that led her to be born as a man. Therefore, it is very possible for people to be self-conflicted in terms of sexuality when physiological sex or body does not match the accumulated sexual characteristics or inner feelings.

Solutions to the discrimination against LGBTQ need actions and cooperation from both the general society and LGBTQ themselves. Thai Buddhists should not cling to gender and/or sexualities, which are worldly values. Rather they should focus on action with intention. If ordination is good, whoever does it should get support no matter they are straight or LGBTQ. According to Buddhist belief, as long as LGBTQ people are not hermaphrodites or handicapped by birth, they are all capable of attaining enlightenment.

LGBTQ people should also have the right understanding regarding Buddhist ordination. In the Theravada tradition like Thailand's, gender and sexualities of people should be discarded

after the ordination, no matter they are straight or LGBTQ. Monks and nuns should not involve in any form of sexual matters and try their best to attain enlightenment. **As long as they follow the *vinaya* and practice *dharma*, they should be respected regardless of their gender or sexualities.**

In general, Dr. Sanong's worldview towards gender and sexuality is quite rigid and seems permanent. According to the Buddha's teachings, everything is impermanent and thus gender and sexualities are no exceptions. Buddhists should not forget that the ultimate goal of Buddhism is *nirvana*. It is the state of emptiness that goes beyond all kinds of dualism: good-bad, merit-sin, light-dark, yin-yang, masculine-feminine, man-woman, including straight- LGBTQ!

At this point, one might ask what the ethics of having a relationship is. I would say as long as you are not promiscuous and/or violate the person with whom you are in a relationship that is

ethical. It does not matter that your partner is of the same or opposite sex as long as both of you are honest and respect each other. In an ideal relationship, one should be able to support the other person's morale and having a relationship should aim for the spiritual development of both of them. This might sound ideal but I believe it is possible.

When straight people say LGBTQ could not attain enlightenment, it's just like right-handed people (which is majority of society) saying that left-handed people could not be successful in their lives. This is not only irrational but could even cause discrimination or violence against other people. In any society, the majority should not generalize for others and civilized people should respect differences. I am hopeful this paper could be a "full stop(.)" for this kind of action.

*Kulavir Prapapornpipat,*  
Adjunct Lecturer at Webster  
University Thailand Campus.



## South Korea: Peace of Gangjung Village on Jeju Island

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists

A Plea to the Buddhists Worldwide!

Please help protect the

**Peace of Gangjung Village on Jeju Island, South Korea**

by stopping the village from being a military base

March 25, 2012

**W**e, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), along with other Buddhists in the world who practice the Buddha's golden teaching against any killing, demand in unity to

immediately discontinue the destruction at Gurumbi Rocks in the Gangjung Village of Jeju, South Korea, and the indiscreet administrative moves to build a naval base that started on March

19<sup>th</sup> 2012.

The Gurumbi Rocks of Gangjung Village on South Korea's southernmost island of Jeju are volcanic rocks in a unique coastal region. They form an exceptional



rocky swamp where fresh water comes from deep inside the volcanic mountain island. Housing numerous rare species, the area has been renowned worldwide "for its supreme ecological value, and thus has won the triple crown of the world's three most prestigious titles endowed by UNESCO and one more space: a World Natural Heritage, a World Geological Park, and a Human and Biosphere Reserve. It was also designated in 2004 as an Absolute Preservation Zone, a title given to the area with the most extraordinary scenic beauty on Jeju Island.

However, the South Korean government has decided to build a naval base in this highly prized ecological region, ignoring due procedures such as residential agreements and mandatory environmental analysis, while also illegitimately depriving the region of the prestigious title of Absolute Preservation Zone. Moreover, when 94% of the residents resisted having the naval base built in the area, the government forcefully expropriated their land and started construction with blasting on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

During the process, the government broke up the residential community, disrupted peaceful family gatherings, and arrested hundreds of dissidents indiscriminately. What is more shocking

about the Lee Myungbak Administration is that they have not given a second thought to using violent measures to stop non-violent peace activists from supporting residential efforts to preserve this area.

The naval base, which is being thrust upon the people under the pretext that it is a military base against China's advancement, cannot help but become an outpost of the United States military. Thus, we are heeding and supporting the opposing stance of Buddhist leaders and lay believers belonging to Jogye-jong, South Korea's largest Buddhist order, which has convincingly asserted that the government should not go to war against the residents of Jeju Island in the present only to prevent possible conflict in the far future between China and the United States.

In this interconnected and interdependent world where every being relies on every other being for existence, as symbolized in Indra's Web from the Avatamsaka Sutra, the pain of many others will ultimately become ours. Peace, eventually, should guarantee the sustenance of life now and in the future. We cannot side with the South Korean government's stand for building a military base to make an island of peace, as peace can never be achieved through violent measures. We strongly

call to immediately suspend the construction of the naval base in Gangjung Village and the destruction of Gurumbi Rocks, a precious ecological preservation zone.

- Please send your appeals to the South Korean government and navy:

South Korean Navy : <http://navy.mil.kr/english/main/main.jsp>

Prime Minister's Office: [http://eng.pmo.go.kr/pmo\\_eng/main/](http://eng.pmo.go.kr/pmo_eng/main/)

- Please send supporting mail to the protesters at: [peacefly@hanmail.net](mailto:peacefly@hanmail.net)

[www.kangjung.com](http://www.kangjung.com)  
[www.savejejuisland.org](http://www.savejejuisland.org)  
[www.facebook.com/groups/gangjeong](http://www.facebook.com/groups/gangjeong)  
[www.facebook.com/GJpeaceschool](http://www.facebook.com/GJpeaceschool)

- For further inquiries and support, contact INEB's local South Korean members at: [intnetwork@jungto.org](mailto:intnetwork@jungto.org)

- List & Signature of Support Person or Group Secretariat Office:

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## Sri Lanka: Restorative Justice for Lankan Tamils

In 2010, a *Peoples' Tribunal on Sri Lanka* in Dublin, arranged by the Permanent People's Tribunal in Rome, came to the conclusion that the Government of Sri Lanka can be suspected of having committed crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Lankan Tamils during President Mahinda Rajapakse's time from 2006 onwards. Dr Sulak Sivaraksa participated in the Tribunal and supported the conclusion and also enclosed an open letter to the Lankan Mahasangha to correct its behavior. The Tribunal's conclusion was later supported by other NGO's, above all by the United Nations that demanded an independent examination of the suspected crimes against humanity and war crimes. See the *UN Report of the Secretary General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka* from 31 March, 2011.

On January 12, 2012 a group of visitors from the USA, Canada, Sweden, Ireland, India, and Thailand met at the International Network of Buddhists (INEB) in Bangkok. In a public meeting they discussed about the role of Buddhism in the conflict in Sri Lanka. The history of the conflict was highlighted and the role of Sinhala Buddhism in it.

A documentary pictorial show demonstrated how militarization and sinhalization are combined to occupy the territory of the Tamils. There is a conceptualization which concludes that on whatever piece of land the Buddha allegedly set his foot this land becomes Sinhala-Buddhist territory. At junctions and at military camps Buddha statues and images are set up to claim Tamil territory as belonging to Sinhala Buddhists. Buddhism is reduced to an instrument for land-grab-

bing with the ultimate aim to strengthen the unitary state by homogenization of culture through Buddhism.

Even though the armed struggle is over since May 2009 it continues by other means. Never were reconciliation and the vision of a multicultural state further away.

We have noted that the Sri Lankan Army has prevented Tamils from remembering their dead heroes. The Army has destroyed their cemeteries by bulldozers. We have all seen in genuine documentations how dead bodies of combatants were desecrated. The desecration of bodies and especially bodies of female combatants is a war crime and a crude attack on Tamil culture.

The Sri Lankan Army denies the killing of 40,000 civilians or reduces their number by classifying the dead bodies as "collateral damage".

The Government of Sri Lanka prevents the Tamils from remembering a past that was full of intentions and commitments for the future. Each combatant and civilian was a symbol of hope.

The Government of Sri Lanka fears the history of the Tamils and tries to prevent them from repeating the past by forcing them to forget. Their retrieval of the past throws light over the atrocities of the Government. Therefore, it forces the Tamils to forget by hiding facts, and puts instead "reconciliation" on the agenda. "Reconciliation" is also a kind of expiation of its own guilt.

The Government of Sri Lanka has appointed a Committee for learning lessons from the past. The now published report covers the past. There is a need

for an independent Committee as demanded by the United Nations. Tamils in the Diaspora and in the island, NGOs and the UN have reacted correctly against this policy of amnesia by demanding accountability.

Tamils have collected enough facts that should convince the international community to define the atrocities committed against the Tamils as genocide. An intended genocide is also genocide.

Let us stop here for a special remark.

If we look at all the NGOs and the UN they have in concord come to the conclusion that the Government of Sri Lanka is suspected of being guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes. But they are silent or hesitate to name them genocide. Why is it so? The explanation is that there is a political obstacle. The rejection of the word genocide or the silence can be explained by the fear of the political implications in such a classification. These would be: opening for intervention in Sri Lanka, the entry of a UN military force and perhaps the establishment of a caretaker government.

Let us also highlight another factor. There are still doubts about the classification of the word "genocide". The tribunal in Dublin in 2010 was on the threshold to accept the verdict genocide but withdrew from it in the last moment.

The NGOs and the UN applied a perspective that was never longer than the short history of the Rajapakse Government, sometimes it even comprised only the few last months of the war. Violations appear then as occasional, time limited, depending on personalities, in

short as contingent. This short perspective permits facts to be forgotten and does not highlight the specific nature of the violations as being structural in its repetition. A long perspective will show that there is not only one Mullivaikal, but several in the modern history of the island. The difference is only gradual. There are Tamils who have not only experienced the exodus from Kilinocci to Mullivaikal, but also the exodus from Yalppanam to Kilinocci in 1995. There was another exodus after July 1983 that brought many Tamils to the West and gave way to the first numbers of the present Diaspora. The planning of the attacks proved to lead to the then Ceylon government.

Further back there was another internal exodus in 1958. Tamils in Colombo were evacuated by boats to Yalppanam and many other Tamils from towns in Sinhala areas had to be sent to Tamil areas for their personal safety. Many Tamils, even in the small city of Kurunegala, had to leave their businesses behind them, looted and burnt, to escape with their lives. In 1977 followed yet another pogrom.

The ultimate proof of the plan to make Tamil culture extinct followed in 1981 when the Yalppanam library was burnt down. It contained the heritage of the Tamils in the island. Where books are burnt people are burnt. That happened two years later during the Black July in 1983.

The long perspective shows that these violations are not contingent but fundamental and structural, and reveals a history of repeated pogroms.

These pogroms used to be denominated "riots". Today we cannot hesitate to conclude that they were racialist pogroms. True, of a lower rate than the pogroms against the Armenians and Jews, but the racialist moti-

vation is the same. Tamil houses were plundered and burnt, Tamils were killed, Tamil women raped and murdered for one reason only; they were Tamils. In between these exoduses was a permanent fear of becoming the victims of local pogroms.

It is misleading to focus only on the armed struggle and place its beginning to 1983. When the Government in the 1950s ordered the Sinhala-only-bill, the existing quest for a homeland was reformulated as a demand for Tamil Eelam, now as a separate state. In 1976 Tamil Eelam became the political ultimate aim and written down in the Vattukottai resolution.

We have to embrace this total historical perspective to understand the Tamils when they say that they cannot live together with the Sinhalese. The long perspective makes it clear that the criminality of the Lankan Governments is structural and genocidal, it is continuous. There is no perspective of a change of the Governments. The Sinhala majority parties UNP and SLFP carry both a heavy burden of guilt by mongering of racial hate. By doing so they created a divide instead of reconciliation among the peoples of Sri Lanka. It goes on today.

Tamils have since long known that only the long perspective will reveal the truth about the structural and genocidal policy of the Lankan Governments. The book *Lest we forget*, a translation from Tamil, is a compilation of eye witnessed information written down by a group of experts from the Northeast Secretariat on Human Rights. German and French translations are in the making. It was produced in Kilinocci and dates back to the 1950's.

The title *Lest we forget* hits the point. We cannot allow the Government of Sri Lanka to close

the book, to make us forget. The international community cannot allow itself to draw conclusions based on a shallow knowledge of Sri Lankan political history.

There can be no reconciliation without truth; the truth is that there is a structural-genocidal trend in the policy of Lankan Governments. It makes Tamil Eelam a necessity for the future security of generations of Tamils. Tamil Eelam would be the ultimate fulfillment of restorative justice.

We have to remind the Government of Sri Lanka of what the Buddha said: "There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting".

Too many Sinhalese journalists also have been killed or have had to leave their country for fear of their lives while using their right to freedom of speech to reveal atrocities. Their courage earn respect. Their words must not be silenced and they cannot be left alone in their support for the rights of the Tamils.

The road to security for Tamils also need states to support the UN demand for an *independent* commission. The Sri Lankan Government will bring the Tiger combatants to justice for alleged war crimes, but who will bring the Sri Lankan Government to justice if not the United Nations? It is in our hands to influence our national Governments to vote for such an independent commission at the meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2012 in Geneva. It is also in our hands to replace political Sinhala Buddhism by universal and demilitarized Buddhism as taught by the Buddha and by his follower Dr. Sulak Sivaraksa.

Peter Schalk

## Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

**The New Year's Opportunities** - Year 2012 is considered by the Thai Buddhists as the 2,600 year celebration of the Buddha's enlightenment. On January 2, INEB began the new year with a small group of kalayanamitras who met to explore the revival of Buddhism in India. The meeting was considered to be meaningful by our members who have been involved in reviving Buddhism in India for many decades. Some collaboration has already begun between our partner organizations as many issues and commitments remain to be further discussed before action can be taken. The next meeting of kalayanamitra group will be in Nagaloga, Nagpur, during 24-27 October 2012. If you are interested in being involved in reviving Buddhism in India, please contact the secretariat.

On the evening of January 2, INEB's secretariat celebrated its Executive Chairperson, Mr. Harsha Navaratne's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Sewalanka Foundation also organized a great chanting overnight on his birthday, 30th January. During the celebration we honored the numerous contributions he has made to Buddhism, development and society in general during the past 40 years.

**Inter-religious Conference on Climate Change** - INEB, IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and Sewalanka Foundation will organize an inter-religious conference on climate change during 23-27 September 2012 in Sri Lanka. The conference is one component of a larger programme identified for Asia and other regions on religion and climate change to include: theological work, hard science and action planning at the same time. The conference will focus on connecting Buddhist environmental activists across Asia for the first time while bringing in leaders from other religions to begin a wider process of coordination.

The conference's goal is to increase active participation and knowledge on climate change among the religious leaders and activists. In order to accomplish the goal the conference will focus on creating concrete actions at the three following levels:

- Micro Level - Grassroots linking with the INEB process
- Macro Level - Policy level connection that integrates the perspectives and knowledge of these activities with national, regional and global policy level change
- Introducing a paradigm change.

Please join us for this coming event, for more information visit INEB's webpage — [www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org).

**INEB's 2011 Annual Report** - Numerous activities were coordinated and organized by the INEB secretariat and its network organizations during 2011 which are described in detail in its 2011 Annual Report. INEB's achievements in 2011 took place at three levels: action, networking and operations as highlighted below:

**Action:** The success and positive impact of INEB's work depends on how issues are framed in combination with the particular method used to take action. During 2011 the Young Bodhisattva programme included three components for building future leaders and activists which were the international internship programme, the Socially Engaged Buddhist (SEB) training course and the international youth volunteer workshop. The first cross border peace walk — Dhammayietra — between Thailand and Cambodia took place. Other areas INEB focused on were Buddhist economics; convening an international Buddhist art gathering; creating a Right Livelihood Fund for socially conscious investors and sustainable development through social enterprises; discussing how to assess the needs of women in Buddhism; meeting to examine the need to revive Buddhism in India; and preparing for the climate change conference in 2012.

**Networking:** During 2011 the network activities certainly had a positive impact strengthening the network's effectiveness, as well as renewing existing relationships and forming new ones. The large network group process was guided with the meeting of INEB's Executive Committee and Advisory Council following the biannual conference in Bodhgaya, India. INEB's regional Asian hubs are reaching out effectively within their geographical areas. One good example is that Think Sangha met for the fifth time and also conducted a study tour in India as it experienced the varied ways Buddhism is practiced there. Relationships with Western Buddhists were also strengthened during a meeting of International Collaboration on Three Continents that took place in the Netherlands. The most dynamic and far reaching networking activity was the biannual conference that took place in Bodhgaya, India, which attracted Buddhists from all traditions and other like-minded persons from thirty-one countries.

**Operations:** INEB's leadership team provided more stability and consistent vision during 2011 that positively impacted approaches to implementing programmes. As a network organization INEB's organizational structure is now composed of Patrons, Honorary Advisors, an Advisory Committee and an Executive Committee. The Advisory and Executive Committees convene joint annual meetings. The organizational structure was revised to be more inclusive and representative of INEB's network during the joint meeting of the Executive committee and Advisory Council in October. Specific information regarding the organizational structure is available on INEB's website — [www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org). The Secretariat's office is based in Bangkok, Thailand, where it coordinates network activities with a very small staff under the leadership of the Secretariat. Programme activities and new initiatives are guided by working groups composed of network members and partners. Their outreach and communication efforts through media/public relations and publications have also expanded its scope and effectiveness.

For those who would like to have the full INEB 2011 Report, please contact the secretariat.

Yours in dhamma,

Somboon Chungprampree (Moo)  
Executive Secretary  
[secretariat@inebnetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@inebnetwork.org)  
[www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

P.S. Also, please take advantage of reading *Seeds of Peace* online where most issues including the earliest ones are available for your convenience.



## International Network of Engaged Buddhists

### 2012 CALENDAR

2 January	<b>Reviving Buddhism in India :</b> Preliminary Partners Meeting	INEB Secretariat Office, Bangkok
3 January	<b>BUDDHIST ECONOMICS</b> by Dharmachari Vajraketu, Triratna Buddhist Community, Managing Director of Windhorse Evolution	INEB Secretariat Office, 13.30-16.30
7 January	<b>SEM's 18<sup>th</sup> Public Lecture : The Transformation of Self and World in Sangharakshita's Approach to Engaged Buddhism</b> by Dhammachari Lokamitra Organized by Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), INEB, SNF & BIA	Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives, Bangkok
26-27 January	<b>Workshop "Faith-based Advocacy and the Arms Trade: Asia-Pacific Perspectives"</b> organized by The Gothenburg Process and the Christian Conference of Asia (INEB was invited to participate : Ven. Manjusri from Sewalanka and Somboon Chungprampree from INEB Secretariat attended)	Bangkok Christian Guest House
9-12 February	<b>The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual GREEN FAIR &amp; SYMPOSIUM</b> ● Saturday 10 February 13.30 - Launching Towards Organic Asia (TOA) programme Panel with Dr. Sisalio Svengsuksa (ASDSP; Member of Parliament, Laos); Mrs. Tran Thi Lanh (SPERI, Vietnam); Daycha Siripatra (Khoa Kwan Foundation, Thailand) and others. Organized by Green Market Network (Thailand), School for Wellbeing	Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
15-19 February	<b>CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURES</b> An annual event of the Meeting Rivers programme of Pipal Tree, Bangalore (India) and Dialogues en Humanité, Lyon (France) (INEB has been invited to participate : Ven. Kalupahana from Sewalanka, Prashant Varma from Deer Park Institute & INEB Secretariat)	Bangalore, India
24-26 February	<b>Right Livelihood Fund Workshop</b>	Kuala Lumpur
28 February - 1 March	<b>Right Livelihood : Green Market</b> Organized by LOHAS	Singapore
2 & 4 March	<b>BUDDHIST ECONOMICS : Presentations and Dialogue with David R. Loy</b> ● The Future of Buddhism : leadership, networks and Buddhist Economics ● Launching of the Thai translation of his book <b>Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution</b> Organizers: INEB, School for Wellbeing and Suan Nguen Mee Ma publishers	2 <sup>nd</sup> March at INEB Office, 13.30-16.00  4 <sup>th</sup> March at Suan Mokkh, Bangkok, 10.00-12.30
4-9 March	<b>Network Development : meeting with partners</b> (INEB Secretariat)	Vietnam
20-25 March	<b>World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) :</b> Council Meeting (INEB is a council member)	Curitiba - Paraná—Brazil
29-30 March	<b>Sustainable Community Development Exchange :</b> Partners meeting and planning (Organized by INEB, supported by FK, Norway)	INEB Office, Bangkok

April	<b>Network Development</b> : meeting with partners (INEB Secretariat)	Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan
28-30 May	<b>Environment / Climate Change Ancient Traditions : Modern Solutions</b> UWICE / WWF Religion and Environmental Workshop INEB Partners	Bumthang, Bhutan
6-10 June	<b>Reviving Buddhism in India</b> : teaching and dialogue with H.H. Dalai Lama Organized by Deer Park Institute	Dharamsala, India
20-22 June	<b>Rio+20 Conference : EARTH SUMMIT 2012</b> (INEB partnership with some of the Environmental NGOs)	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
16-27 July	<b>Socially Engaged Buddhism Course : Spirituality in Asia</b>	Bangkok
28 -31 July	<b>FK Exchange : Debriefing and Preparation Course</b> INEB Secretariat	Bangkok
Sept. To be announced	<b>Buddhist Art Gathering &amp; Workshop</b>	Deer Park Institute, India
23-27 September	<b>Environment : Inter-religious Dialogue on CLIMATE CHANGE</b> ● 23-24 Excursion and Study Visit ● 25-27 Conference & Press Release Organized by: INEB, Sewalanka Foundation and IUCN	Galle, Sri Lanka
October To be announced	<b>Reviving Buddhism in India Meeting</b>	Nagpur, India
6-10 November	<b>INEB Annual Executive Meeting and International Engaged Buddhists Forum</b> 6-7 November : <b>INEB Annual Executive Meeting</b> 8-9 November : Study Tours thematized on 1) nuclear power and rural development, 2) suffering and illness in post-industrial society, 3) Japanese Buddhism today: problems and potentials 10 November : <b>Public Symposium</b> Organized by Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists	Tokyo, Japan
November	<b>Symposium on Socially Responsible Investing : Right Livelihood Fund &amp; Buddhist Art Gala</b>	New York City

**Sacred sites and pilgrimage routes**  
are an intrinsic part of spiritual and religious  
traditions that nurture inner awareness and peace.

Yet, urban development, social pressures, modernity and environmental degradation threaten  
the very existence of many sites. With the loss of tradition- and knowledge-bearers, not only is  
the local culture and ecology in peril, but sacred literature associated with the sites, unique oral  
histories and local songs may also be lost.

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- **Education** through the publication of multi-lingual modern-day pilgrimage guides;
- **Environmental stewardship** which promotes conservation and sanitation at sites;
- **Cultural heritage** by promoting the restoration  
and protection of physical sites;
- **Spiritual heritage** by sustaining pilgrims,  
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NEKORPA works at sacred sites  
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## International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Sri Lanka

### Background

The conference organisers have collaborated to convene an inter-religious conference on climate change. The conference is one component of a larger programme identified for Asia and other regions on religion and climate change to include: *theological work, hard science and action planning* at the same time. The conference will focus on connecting Buddhist environmental activists across Asia *for the first time* while bringing in leaders from other religions to begin a wider process of coordination.

The organizers believe that it is imperative to recognize that the current climate crisis is rooted in human values and human behavior. Ever increasing consumption, the belief that more material possessions will lead to greater harmony and happiness, and a lack of mindfulness about the consequences of our actions continue to degrade and destroy the earth. Ultimately, the roots of the climate crisis must be addressed through accountability and responsibility for the values, morals and ethics which underpin the current situation.

### Goal:

**The conference's goal** is to increase active participation and knowledge on climate change among the religious leaders and activists.

In order to accomplish the goal the conference will focus on creating concrete actions at the three following levels:

.. *Micro Level* - Grassroots linking with the INEB process

.. *Macro Level* - Policy level connection that integrates the

perspectives and knowledge of these activities with notional, regional and global policy level change

.. *Introducing a paradigm change*

### Design:

The conference is designed to take place in two parts:

.. Ø *the first part* is a two day field visit from September 23-24 with exposures to areas affected by climate change on the island; and

.. Ø *the second part* is the main conference from September 25-27

*Field-Exposure Visits* will take place on September 23 and 24 when participants can choose a visit based on the different regions in Sri Lanka (e.g. North Central, Northwest, East, Up-country, and South). Field visits will focus on communities affected by climate change, initiatives by religious groups, and inter-religious programs.

### Main Conference

*Day 1* – Notable persons are being invited for the opening and plenary sessions. The afternoon breakout groups will be by religion (and sub-branch of Buddhism) to discuss the role of each religion in addressing climate change through its teachings, ethics and insitutional networks.

*Day 2* – Representatives from each breakout group will share their conclusions with the main group. The afternoon breakout groups will be by key action areas with representatives from each religion in each group. Possible topics may include disaster response and mitigation, education, international conferences, etc. Participants will have an opportunity to share experi-

ences, discuss challenges, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

*Day 3* – Outcomes of days 1 and 2 will be discussed at the workshop before drafting an inter-religious declaration and action plan.

### Themes:

The conference will weave together general themes from faith-based traditions and science. Topics will include: environmental education; materialism and consumerism; natural resource management; grassroots adaptation and mitigation; disaster risk reduction humanitarian aid, and national policy and program advocacy in addition to others.

### Participants:

The core group is estimated to be one hundred (100) persons who will come from Buddhist communities in South, Southeast and East Asia, as well as invitations given to ensure participation by other inter-faith/religious groups. Each country will have a delegation of persons that represents their groups.

### Outcomes:

This conference represents the first step initiated by the organisers in their search for a comprehensive way to address and reverse the negative effects of climate change. The organisers' desired outcome is that the conference will help to establish consultative mechanisms to work strategically and consistently across faith traditions. This can be achieved through actions taken at the three levels — micro, macro and a paradigm shift. The desired outcomes include:

1. Local language resource materials to help religious leaders understand the climate crisis.

2. Opportunities to share tools and strategies on grassroots adaptation and mitigation

3. National and regional workshops to form alliances that can influence policy.

4. Increased representation of Asian religious leaders in international forums.

5. Matching grant funds to support initiatives by religious institutions.

Collaboration and collective action of this nature is essential in order to eventually impact international and national policies that will help shift the paradigm.

#### Registration:

Since the number of partici-

pants will be limited to 100 persons, please register early. The registration deadline is August 31, 2012. The registration form can be downloaded directly from the conference website:

#### Fees:

140 USD September 23-24-exposure trip

320 USD September 25-27-conference registration

**460 USD Total cost** to participate in exposure trips and the conference

*The registration fee includes food and lodging as well as the local transportation for the exposure trips*

#### Payment method:

Payment can be made by bank transfer and online via INEB's website – [www.inebnet.org](http://www.inebnet.org) - through PayPal.

Bank transfer—payment can be made through direct transfer to the below bank account:

Acct Name: **“INEB by Sathirakoses—Nagapradeepa Foundation”**

Account Number: 024-262146-8

Bank Name: Siam Commercial Bank Plc. (Charoen Nakorn Branch)

Bank Address: Soi Charoen Nakorn 22- Klong San, Bangkok 10600 Thailand

Bank Swift Code: SICOTHBK

Date of Payment: \_\_\_\_\_

**Visas:** <http://www.immigration.gov.lk/web/index.php?lang=en>

**Information about Sri Lanka:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri\\_Lanka](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka)



## Documentary Arts Asia

Advancing visual literacy & Supporting documentary artists in Asia



The Documentary Arts Asia Center Chiang Mai officially opened its doors on Saturday night with the start of Greg Constantine's exhibition *Exiled to Nowhere—Burma's Rohingya*. The night was a huge success and it

was great to see so many people turn out and show their support for the organization. A special thanks to Honorary Members John Hulme and Manit Sriwanichpoom for being there and sharing some of their amazing

work with us. It was a massive validation of all the hard work that has gone into the organization and the center to see so many people using the space and engaging with the work on show in our gallery, the resources avail-

able in our library and the films shown in our theater.

So now it is onwards and upwards for Documentary Arts Asia. Greg’s exhibition will run until the end of February, and just before it comes down we will be hosting the first Chiang Mai Documentary Arts Festival ([www.cdaf.asia](http://www.cdaf.asia)) where we’re very honoured to be showing work by the likes of Ami Vitale and Veejay Villafranca amongst many others. As well as our own Documentary Arts Festival, Chiang Mai has the great pleasure of hosting this year’s Foundry Photojournalism Workshop and DAA will be acting as primary local partner during its time here as well as assisting with preparations beforehand and support throughout their stay. Our first Artist in Residence, Sitthixay Dittavong, has arrived and will begin work

on his three-month residency, our program of workshops has started and our library and theater are now open. The new DAA website ([www.documentary-arts-asia.org](http://www.documentary-arts-asia.org)) is online and has full information on all of our activities and access to the first in our series of podcasts, as well as all the information required to benefit from our scholarship and grants programs. And not forgetting our Satellite Center in Laiza, northern Burma, which continues to provide essential training and support for documentary work in the region. For updates on all of our activities please visit the website and sign up for our mailing list or, better still, support our work by becoming a member.

Finally we would like to thank Sulak Sivaraksa and the Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation for all of their sup-

port and belief in what we are doing. The Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation continues to be one of the most respected and active foundations native to Southeast Asia and by acting as our parent foundation allows us the freedom to make the greatest impact possible through our broad range of programs. Their support also allows us to receive tax-deductible charitable donations in Thailand. For information on supporting our work through charitable donations please email to [director@documentary-arts-asia.org](mailto:director@documentary-arts-asia.org).

Many thanks from everyone at DAA for your continued support.

Documentary Arts Asia 12/7 Wualai Road Soi 3, Haiya, Muang, Chiang Mai, Thailand 50100.

phone: +66(0)83-1537763 email: [director@documentary-arts-asia.org](mailto:director@documentary-arts-asia.org)  
[www.documentary-arts-asia.org](http://www.documentary-arts-asia.org)

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## A World without Suffering

Philosopher and Zen teacher David R Loy shares his insights on how Buddhist teachings can help us understand the modern world and pressing global crises and transform our predicament both individually and collectively

What would Lord Buddha do if he lived in this modern world? Ask this question, and it might lead us closer to Buddha’s insights and transformation of modern crises, as Prof David R Loy tries to introduce in his book, *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution* (now in Thai translation).

“We have huge crises, ecological, economic, political and social. I believe Buddhist teachings can help us address these crises—but if they can’t, let’s find something better,” said Loy in his public lecture and book in

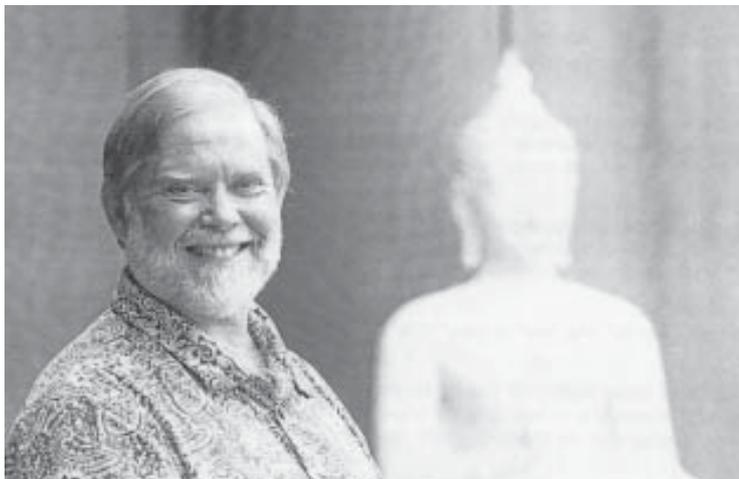


Photo: Yingyong UN-Anongrak

Thai translation launch at Suan Mokh in Bangkok.

Many of the modern crises did not exist during the time of Buddha, yet, there are fundamental Buddhist teachings (2,600 years old) that strike a chord with the modern world.

In fact, after listening to Loy's lecture, one might get the impression of Lord Buddha as a modern man, for what he succinctly taught us to do was to "deconstruct" the sense of self, which is the most fundamental delusion that inflicts suffering on individuals and societies.

"The Lord Buddha said the only thing he had to teach, the only thing he could teach and came to teach was *dukkha* and how to end it, that's all," said the professor of Ethics and Religion and authorised Zen teacher.

*Dukkha*, a Buddhist term commonly translated as "suffering", does not refer simply to "stress", "dissatisfaction", "anxiety" or "inability to live happily for very long". "The fundamental *dukkha* is the feeling of self, that there is a 'me' inside that is separate from the rest of the world; the feeling that I am in here, and the rest of the world is out there."

This sense of being a self that is separate from the world is contained in individuals and perpetuated in collective consciousness and brings us relentless episodes of suffering. For instance, our self-interest and taking advantage of others, including the natural world; our sense of competitiveness in the workplace and the society; our fighting between nation states and among different races, and so forth.

"In Buddhism, there is no such thing as a real self. In fact, nothing is real or substantial," Loy explained. Modern psychol-

ogy and social science scholars now agree that the sense of self is socially and culturally constructed, he added.

"In Buddhism, a sense of self is a bunch of processes—composed of habitual ways of feeling, thinking, remembering, acting, reacting, intending, remembering, and so on. All these mental processes, and the way they work together, create the feeling of self," he explained.

Unaware, through social interactions and languages, we perpetually forge our separated identity, and thanks to modern media, advertising, state propaganda, even institutionalised religions and economic systems, our sense of self—personally and collectively—is fortified.

The more we create the dualistic separation, "I" and "you" or "we" and "others", the more there is suffering.

Nationalism is one such collective structured sense of self that often leads to suffering. "Nationalism is a kind of god of our age. The world is composed of a bunch of little gods that are not responsible to anything greater than themselves, competing among themselves—so often it becomes violent."

The ongoing war on terrorism is a prime example of how the collective sense of separated self justifies the cause for the "good" to defeat the so-called "evil".

"The tragic irony, though, is that attempts to destroy evil creates more evils," Loy continued, adding that the primary concern in Buddhism is not on dualistic struggle between good and evil but an emphasis on non-violence, harmony and the distinction between wisdom and ignorance (delusion).

The "Occupy" movement

which Loy took part in may well elaborate this non-dualistic Buddhist view. "The slogan that read 'we are 99 %' doesn't and shouldn't mean we are against the 1% of people who control the resources of the world. In Buddhist perspective, 100% of people are deluded," he summed.

"It's not that the 1% of people is happy. They have their own delusion, their own sufferings. The idea ultimately is not to defeat them but to make them realise that their 'way' to become happy is not the way either."

The deluded sense of separated self can never be completely comfortable, secure or happy, added Loy, and it is always shadowed by a sense of lacking that we normally are not aware of.

"It is the feeling that there is something wrong with me or something inadequate," he explained further. "Although you are wealthy and healthy, there is still a basic anxiety or 'dis-ease' that keeps gnawing us. We tend to think that our problems are outside ourselves in the world; maybe I don't have a job or my job is not good enough; I don't have a partner or my partner is not good enough. I don't have a car or my car is not good enough."

The whole society feels and maintains this sense of lacking. Our economic and political systems make individualism stronger. "It wants us to secure ourselves, grasping money and stuff," said the professor.

This struggle to be real and to fill up the sense of lacking reflects in our obsession with money, fame, sex and romantic relationships, even war (to justify our meaning of life and virtue as "good").

We are driven to work hard

and earn more money in order to consume even more. We strive to be a somebody. Women, in particular, are taught that their body is not perfect and, thus, have to constantly buy beauty products and services, again and again, and yet they are still dissatisfied with their body.

When it comes to sex and romantic relationships, although Loy argued that Buddhism is not against sex, there is a tendency for modern people to see sex and romantic relationships as a solution to fill their sense of lacking inside. “If we think that when we find the perfect partner, he or she will fulfil us in many ways, that is bad, because you will resent it and face constant frustration,” cautioned the professor.

In a nutshell, a sense of lacking is like a never-ending black hole that can never be filled by any means. But it is to be understood, which is why meditation is helpful.

“When we are meditating, we have these thoughts, memories, feelings, desires—they come into our mind. In meditating, we don’t hold on to them, we don’t act according to them. Instead, we let them go. By letting them go, the sense of self is deconstructed.” Loy quoted a great Zen master, Dogen, of saying “when we let go of self, it is to realise your intimacy, your oneness and non-duality with all things in the world”.

This is where something greater than our ego self appears. “When we see the world in a non-dualistic way, ‘I’ is not separated from the rest of the world, then what is best for me, is best for the world, too. There is no self-interest motivation. That’s where profound change comes about,” he said.

Nowadays, the hype of meditation among the middle class might in a way stray from this essence.

“Buddhism can be a kind of self-help guide to help one cope with difficult life. Middle-class people who have a busy life, they meditate to de-stress and find peace of mind. That’s not bad in itself, however, they miss the deeper point of Buddhism.”

### Three Poisons of The Mind

The sense of lacking is linked to the three poisons of the mind. This brings Loy to mention about the Buddhist perspective on karma in his book.

The Lord Buddha’s take on karma, even during his time, is revolutionary. He did not see it as preconditionings or an emphasis on several rebirths. Instead, for the professor, Buddha’s perspective on karma has much to do with our motivation or intention (cetana) in our actions.

“If you want to change the quality of your life, the way you experience the world and the world experiences you, there is a very simple way to do that. Not necessarily easy, but very simple: Transform your intentions that motivate the way you relate to other people.

“If you are motivated by greed, ill will, delusion, you are going to create problems for yourself and others. But if you can change that, instead of greed, generosity; instead of ill will, loving kindness; instead of delusion, wisdom, especially wisdom that realises our interdependence that we are all part of each other.

“If you can transform your motivation in this way, the quality of your life, how you experience the world, how the world responds to you, will change

dramatically.”

This is the great revolution of understanding karma. How can this notion revolutionise us and help us transform modern crises?

“We have to see that all three poisons are not only in individual minds, but they are institutionalised in the society as well.” Greed, the feeling that “we never have enough” can describe our economic system, he pointed out.

“Today, consumers never consume enough, corporations are never profitable enough, they want more share value, more market shares. Gross domestic product is never big enough. And we have this obsession with economic growth.”

The economic need or greed, to continue growing, conflicts with the limitation of the biosphere and the world cannot tolerate that.

Aggression or ill will can be seen in the huge funding and investment in military as well as our supportive nods to wars.

The third poison, delusion, can be seen best in the media. In the US, and possibly many parts of the world, the media belongs to large corporations, whose main goal is to make profit, not to inform or educate people on important life issues like climate change.

“They want to keep us deluded. They want to keep us as consumers, to continue buying, working hard to earn money so that we can buy such and such. They want us to believe that the meaning of life is to make money and consume.”

Buddhism places emphasis on personal transformation. But that is not to say we have to transform ourselves first before contributing to the world. In fact, according to Loy, this happens

at the same time.

“Before we try to change other people, we better make sure that we transform ourselves, to change the kind of person we are, and bring that kind of person into the institution and the society.

“If we are motivated by generosity, loving kindness and wisdom, this will have some impact on others. When we work on self-transformation, we will experience people differently and they will relate to us differently, too.”

Gradually and slowly, our collective existence will change. Loy also suggested that we rethink the Bodhisatva path. ‘The Bodhisatva is not a he or

she who is reborn again and again to help people attain enlightenment. They are ones who see that the world is full of suffering and then ask themselves what they can do to help. ‘How I can serve and then bring forth my skills and possibilities into the world?’ That is the Bodhisatva path in the modern world.”

Already, we have seen many people across the world, in groups and networks, who try to create jobs that are meaningful to them and the society. Also, the professor observed that there is a strong Buddhist presence in the major Occupy centres.

Modern times, though

inflicted by crises, also show new hopes and possibilities. It is an interesting transitional time for a change in consciousness, said Loy.

Economic and political systems, motivated by greed and controlled by the old consciousness are challenged by the new consciousness, which Buddhism is a part of.

“There’s kind of a race between education [waking up and understanding] and catastrophe. Both of them are racing and accelerating faster/more than they used to. But who is going to win? I don’t know,” he smiled.

*Bangkok Post,*  
13 March 2012

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## The U.N. Happiness Project

**N**ext Monday, the United Nations will implement Resolution 65/309, adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in July 2011, placing “happiness” on the global agenda.

“Conscious that the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal” and “recognizing that the gross domestic product [...] does not adequately reflect the happiness and well-being of people,” Resolution 65/309 empowers the Kingdom of Bhutan to convene a high-level meeting on happiness as part of next week’s 66<sup>th</sup> session of the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

An impressive array of luminaries will be speaking for this remote Himalayan kingdom. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales will open the meeting via a prerecorded video missive. The Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz will speak on “happiness indicators,” as will the economist Jeffrey Sachs. The Bhutanese



*Courtesy of Jean Timsit*

prime minister will represent King Jigme Khesar Namgyel, the reigning Dragon King of the Bhutanese House of Wangchuck. (The kingdom became a constitutional monarchy in 2007.)

For the 32-year-old Dragon King—Bhutan means “land of

dragons” in the local Dzongkha language—U.N. Resolution 65/309 represents a global public relations triumph and the realization of a hereditary ambition, initiated by his grandfather 40 years ago, to establish Gross National Happiness (G.N.H.) as

an alternate model to Gross National Product (G.N.P.) as a measure of national progress.

“A family should have a good house, have sufficient land if one is a farmer, and have a modest level of labor-saving devices to save precious time used up by excessive physical work,” explains Karma Ura, a leading public intellectual and artist who serves both as adviser to the king at home and as a G.N.H. ambassador abroad.

He has designed the country’s bank notes, denominated in the local currency known as ngultrum or nu, which is tied to the Indian rupee. He has promoted Gross National Happiness at the European Commission in Brussels and will do so again on Monday at the United Nations in New York.

For his services, Karma Ura received a knighthood from the king, which includes the ancient honorific title, dasho, and a sword that Ura bears as proudly as his G.N.H. patriotism. The “true forms of wealth,” he says, are being blessed with a “ravishing environment,” “vibrant health,” “strong communal relationships” and “meaning in life and freedom to free time.”

As a nation, Bhutan makes good on the Dasho Karma Ura formula. Landlocked in the Himalayan highlands between the dual economic juggernauts India and China, the kingdom is among the poorest and least developed countries in the world.

With a population under 800,000, the average income is about \$110 per month. Most Bhutanese do not earn enough money to pay taxes, which are only levied on annual incomes in excess of 100,000 ngultrum, or about \$2,000. Despite these limitations, Business Week has

ranked Bhutan the “happiest” nation in Asia and the eighth happiest in the world.

“The Bhutanese have combined Buddhist spirituality and barefoot economics into a unique model that a lot of other nations can learn from,” observes Jean Timsit, a Paris-based lawyer and artist who provided the funding to publish a handbook on “operationalization of Gross National Happiness,” based on a conference held in Bhutan in 2004. The 750-page tome helped define G.N.H. and leverage it onto the global agenda.

To date, there have also been G.N.H. conferences in Thailand, Canada, the Netherlands and Brazil. According to Timsit, these activities provided the impetus for President Nicolas Sarkozy of France to commission Stiglitz, along with the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen and the French economist Jean-Paul Fitoussi, to conduct a study of the “of economic performance and social progress” that included diverse G.N.H. indicators, ranging from walking to reading to the frequency of love making.

“The kind of civilization we build depends on the way we do our accounts quite simply because it changes the value we put on things,” Sarkozy notes in his preface to the report. “And I am not just speaking about market value.”

On Monday, the Bhutanese model for G.N.H. will be showcased on the United Nations agenda in accordance with Resolution 65/309. “The 2<sup>nd</sup> April High Level Meeting is intended as a landmark step towards adoption of a new global sustainability-based economic paradigm for human happiness and well-being of all life forms to replace the current dysfunctional system that

is based on the unsustainable premise of limitless growth on a finite planet,” the Bhutan government Web site asserts.

With the current international crises over Syria and Iran, not to mention ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to name but a few, the Bhutanese agenda may not attract as much attention as it may deserve.

“I believe that while Gross National Happiness is inherently Bhutanese, its ideas may have a positive relevance to any nation, peoples or communities—wherever they may be,” King Jigme Khesar Namgyel observed in the preface to the G.N.H. handbook back in 2004, while he was still crown prince.

While Americans may well stake their own nationalist claim to having pioneered the notion of “happiness” as a “self-evident truth” and “inalienable right,” dating back to Thomas Jefferson’s 1776 Declaration of Independence, the Dragon King puts a distinctly Bhutanese point on the matter.

“There cannot be enduring peace, prosperity, equality and brotherhood in this world if our aims are so separate and divergent,” he says, “if we do not accept that in the end we are people, all alike, sharing the earth among ourselves and also with other sentient beings, all of whom have an equal role and stake in the state of this planet and its players.” The Dragon King has spoken. Perhaps it is time for the world to listen.

Timothy W. Ryback is deputy secretary general of the Académie Diplomatique Internationale in Paris.

*The New York Times*,  
28 March 2012

## Sri Lanka: Buddhism among Tamils—A Conference at the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in Bangkok, 9-12 January, 2012.

Dr. Sulak Sivarakasa from INEB and Professor Peter Schalk from Uppsala University, Sweden, decided in 2011 to organise a conference in Bangkok on the theme, *Buddhism among Tamils*, on 8-13 January, 2012. It was sponsored by Dr. Sulak Sivarakasa, the Swedish Council of Science, and the Faculty of Theology at Uppsala University.

Dr. Sulak Sivarakasa of Bangkok is an eminent international exponent of socially engaged Buddhism and arguably Thailand's most prominent social critic and activist. He has founded rural development projects, as well as many non-governmental organizations dedicated to exploring alternative models of sustainable, traditionally-rooted, and ethically and spiritually-based development. Dr. Sivarakasa is the founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. Periodically, he has been persecuted for his social activism. In 1976, following a coup and the deaths of hundreds of students, he was forced to stay in exile for two years, during which time he was visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, Cornell, and Toronto. In 1984, he was again forced to go into exile and was not exonerated until his successful trial in 1993. Dr. Sivarakasa was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in both 1993 and 1994. He received the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, in 1995. He



*Professor Joseph Chandrakanthan, Professor Anne Monius, Professor (em) Alvapillai Veluppillai, Dr Jude Lal Fernando, Professor (em) Peter Schalk, and Dr Dayalan Duraisamy in front of Wat Arun, 11 January, 2012.*

taught at Swarthmore College in autumn 2002 and Harvard University in spring of 2003. He has visited Professor Peter Schalk in Uppsala regularly over the years giving lectures. His webpage is [http://www.sulak-sivarakasa.org/en/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=67](http://www.sulak-sivarakasa.org/en/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=67).

Peter Schalk was appointed in 1983 by the Government of Sweden as full professor for a chair in the History of Religions, in particular in Hinduism and Buddhism, placed in Uppsala at the Faculty of Arts. The chair was shifted to the Faculty of Theology in 1994. He retired from service on 1 January 2012.

His main areas of research in 2009-2012 are the religious

expressions of social-economic conflict in present-day South Asia, especially the concepts of martyrdom in a cross-cultural perspective and with a focus on secular concepts as promoted by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE). Earlier he worked on Buddhist ritual in the Sinhala-Pali tradition, especially on *pirit* and *bana*, on Buddhism among speakers of Tamil in the pre-colonial period in Tamilakam and Ilam, on Caivam of Tamil speakers in the European exile, on the Vaddo (Väddas) of Lanka, and on the semantic history of the toponym Ilam.

### **Content of the Conference**

The content of the conference explored in distinct, con-

crete terms the literature, tracts, inscriptions, archaeological finds, architecture, sculpture and painting, and activities of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in southern South Asia from the pre-colonial period through the contemporary period in dialogue and conflict with Tamil Saivism, Jainism, Vaisnavism and worldly powers. These confrontations gave Buddhism among Tamils a special profile, but also marginalised the religion on the religious map in Southern South Asia. Buddhaghosa's heirs failed in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century to make Pali Buddhism acceptable in Tamilakam. Buddhism among Tamils never achieved the position, status and form of canonical Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese or Tibetan Buddhism. Among the Tamils we find several categories of Buddhism including Saiva/Vaisnava and Buddhist syncretism. Tamil refers not only to a language, but also to the religion known as Caivam, and to a territory like Tamilakam. In Ilam, in the territory of Tamil speakers existed Buddhist traditions transmitted in both Tamil and Sinhala in harmony and conflict.

In the history of the European study of South Asian Buddhism—stemming back to the mid-nineteenth century—the Tamil-speaking Buddhist communities of southern India and Sri Lanka have been relatively under-studied, but provide an important link in dialogue and confrontation between the diverse Buddhist landscapes of greater India and the largely Theravada communities of Sri Lanka. Buddhism has been instrumentalised as a liberating force from the caste system within the Tamil Dalit movement and also as a creative force of a new Buddhist identity in Sri Lanka as alternative to Sinhala Buddhism. The problem for Buddhists among Tamils in Sri Lanka today is that

that their historical tradition is questioned by Caivas and Sinhala Buddhists. Each conference paper will contribute to a clearer understanding of the role of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in textual, literary and political cultures, as emissaries of Buddhism among Tamils in past and present.

In Bangkok not only pre-colonial Buddhism among Tamils was taken up but also Buddhism during the colonial and post-colonial period, like the Buddhism of Periyar, the Ambedkar movement in Yalppanam in the 1950s, and the expansion of Sinhala Buddhism into areas of Tamil speakers.

### **Importance of the Conference for the Area of Research**

As above, the field of Buddhist Studies—in Europe and the Americas—has largely ignored the traditions, activities, and cultural products of Tamil-speaking Buddhists in southern India and Sri Lanka. This conference, building on previous work done by the applicant, seeks to expand the range of the conversation from South Indian and Sri Lankan specialists to scholars of southern Asian “Buddhisms” in Southeast Asia. So much of Tamil-speaking religious and literary culture—whether in India or Sri Lanka—is linked in as-yet little understood ways to the various regions of Southeast Asia, including Thailand (the site of the conference). The goal of the conference is to foster critical inter-regional dialogue on topics concerning the transmission, cultures, and contacts among various forms of southern Asian “Buddhisms”.

### **Venue in Bangkok**

Why Bangkok? There are three reasons.

1. Dr. Sulak Sivaraksa, liv-

ing in Bangkok, has shown a deep interest for Buddhism among Tamils as part of his own concept of socially engaged Buddhism. He has invited the research group of six scholars to stay in Bangkok and to finance local transport, board and lodging during the whole period and organise some of the excursions. The expenses for the whole conference can therefore be radically reduced.

2. In Bangkok there is an important sculpture in Wat Benchamabopitr that once stood in Vallipuram in the district Yalppanam. It was gifted to the King of Thailand in 1902. The sculpture provides very important evidence of Buddhism among Tamils because it shows a connection to Amaravati and not to Anuradhapura (*See Buddhism among Tamils...*, vol 1, pp. 211-224). A special examination of the statue was made.

3. The connection between Thailand and Sri Lanka has been very intensive in the past and the present, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when an extensive exchange took place between the two national Buddhist sanghas.

### **The Participants**

There were six authors of papers, one who organised local transport, board, and lodging in Bangkok (Sivaraksa), and one who organised the travelling (Schalk) to and from Bangkok. They constituted an inner circle of seven persons. The outer circle consisted of intellectuals in Bangkok, Thais and non-Thais, who were to participate in the conference.

On January 9-12 all six papers were discussed, interrupted only by an excursion to Wat Benchamabopitr. Each author was given 90 minutes for presentation and discussion of his paper.

1. Professor Joseph Chan-

drakanthan is Associate Professor, Centre for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, and a Catholic priest. Professor Chandrakanthan has held major academic appointments including, Head of the Department of Christian and Islamic Civilizations, University of Jaffna (1980-1986); Professor of Biblical Studies and Ethics, Concordia University (1996-1999). He has presented papers at a number of national and international conferences and published ten books and over 50 articles in issues related Christian Theology, Ethics, Human Rights and inter-religious spirituality. His paper in Bangkok had the title "Religious Conversion as a Form of Protest: Tamil Sub-nationalisms and the Ambedkar-Model. Buddhist Conversions in Post Colonial Jaffna."

2. Dr. Dayalan Duraisamy is Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India.. He is the author of many outstanding works in archaeology, especially on temple architecture in South India. He contributed to the volume *Buddhism among Tamils...*, vol 2, pp. 559-568 with the paper "Recent Finds of Buddhist Artifacts and Architecture in Tamilakam". His paper in Bangkok has the title "Excavations at Kanahanhalli: A Unique Buddhist Site in South India."

3. Dr. Jude Lal Fernando is a post-doctoral research fellow and lecturer in Buddhist-Christian dialogue at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin. His dissertation was on *Dynamics of Essentialist Representations of Nationhood and the Politics of Interpretation:*

*The Role of Religion in the Making and Unmaking of the Sri Lankan Nation-State*. Dublin: Irish School of Ecumenics, 2008. His paper in Bangkok has the title "Expansion of Sinhala Buddhism into the Tamil Region: Religio-Military Dimensions of Post-War Lanka." Dr. Fernando had collected documentary pictures of the Sinhalaisation of the Tamil area in Ilam after the defeat of the LTTE by military forces. They used Buddha-images that were planted triumphantly in Tamil areas of conquest.

4. Professor Anne Monius, Professor of South Asian Religions, belongs to the Harvard Divinity School. She is a historian of religion specializing in the religious traditions of India. Her research interests lie in examining the practices and products of literary culture to reconstruct the history of religions in South Asia. Her first book, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism: Literary Culture and Religious Community in Tamil-Speaking South India*, examines the two extant Buddhist texts composed in Tamil; her current research project, "Singing the Lives of Siva's Saints: History, Aesthetics, and Religious Identity in Tamil-Speaking South India," considers the role of aesthetics and moral vision in the articulation of a distinctly Hindu religious identity in twelfth-century South India. Both works point to a larger research focus on the ways in which aesthetics and ethics define religious identity and community in South Asia, as well as to the creative and productive encounters among

competing sectarian religious communities. Future research projects will explore the relationship of Hindu devotional and philosophical literature in Tamil to its Sanskritic forebears, as well as consider the transmission of South Indian strands of Buddhism and Hinduism to Southeast Asia. Her paper in Bangkok has the title "Further Thoughts on the *Viracoliyam* and Peruntevanar's Commentarial Project."

5. Professor Dr. Peter Schalk's article in Bangkok had the title "The Buddha Image among IlamTamils." It focused the Buddha-image from Vallipuram in Sri Lanka, now at Wat Benchamabopitr, where the whole group of scholars made a detailed study of the Vallipuram Buddha statue, guided by Dr. Dayalan Duraisamy from the Archaeological Survey of India.

6. Professor (em.) Dr. Alvappillai Veluppillai was a chairholder of Tamil at the University of Jaffna and came to Sweden in 1990 where he stayed till 2000. His fields are Tamil historical linguistics, history of Tamil literature and religions and analysis of Tamil inscriptions. He taught Tamil and History of religions at Uppsala University, Faculty of Theology, that honoured him by a PhD h.c. in 1995. He is a Swedish national. He contributed heavily to *Buddhism among Tamils...* and to *A Buddhist Woman's Path...* His contribution in Bangkok is "History of Research of Buddhism among Tamils."

Dr. Sivaraksa functioned as chairman.

### Publication

The result of the conference in Bangkok will be published in Sweden, in *Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Historia Religionum*, preliminary in 2012. It connects the present studies with earlier studies published by Uppsala University.

## Introducing Sulak Sivaraksa

Hello and welcome. My name is Benjamin Bogin. I teach Buddhist Studies in the Theology Department here at Georgetown and it is my great honor today to introduce Achan Sulak Sivaraksa. First, I would like to thank the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs for co-sponsoring this lecture. In particular, I am grateful to Professor Katherine Marshall, whose long friendship with Sulak Sivaraksa helped make this visit possible. I would also like to thank the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, founded by Sulak Sivaraksa, for their co-sponsorship of the event and, in particular, Executive Committee member Matteo Pistono, for his tireless efforts in arranging the logistics for Sulak's travel.

In the world of Engaged Buddhism, Sulak Sivaraksa stands alongside figures such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, as teachers who have expressed the Buddhist dharma in terms that apply directly to the contemporary world. In doing so, he has earned both global admiration (receiving the Right Livelihood Award, the Niwano Peace Prize, and numerous other international honors) and political censure (including arrests, imprisonment, and exile). In Sulak's extensive lectures and writings (he has published over a hundred books in English and Thai), we see a Buddhism that is about much more than stress-reduction or feeling good. By connecting the ancient Buddhist principle of non-violence with a sophisticated understanding of the *structural violence* that maintains cycles of suffering for the world's impoverished and oppressed, Sulak



articulates a vision of social activism and change deeply rooted in traditional teachings. Today he will discuss this vision in his lecture on "Buddhist Economics in the Age of Globalization."

As a member of the Georgetown faculty, I am also delighted to welcome a guest who embodies so many of the ideals at the core of our educational mission. In his essay, "A Very Simple Magic," Sulak addresses the failure of educational institutions in his reflections on ignorance, one of the three root causes of suffering. He writes, "Students are taught not to think holistically, but to compartmentalize their thinking, to memorize, and to abide by the existing norms." At our best, I would like to think that our Jesuit traditions of educating the whole person, *cura personalis*, and developing women and men for others are commitments that respond to these very problems.

Finally, as a professor of Buddhist Studies, I feel compelled to include one reference to a Buddhist sutta. As students in my classes know very well, I often find the stories that frame the Buddha's discourses more interesting and enlightening than the statements of the discourses themselves. I would like to share one story and one verse of the discourse that it frames as a last

word of introduction. In the *Alavaka Sutta*, we read that the Buddha once stayed in a dwelling that was haunted by a particular demon. This demon went up to the Buddha and said, "Get out of here." The Buddha replied, "Very well, friend," and went out. The demon then demanded, "Come in!" The Buddha replied, "Very well, friend," and entered. A second time, the demon said, "Get out." A second time the Buddha replied, "Very well, friend," and went out. This almost comic exchange was repeated (in the way of so much Buddhist literature) until finally, the fourth time, the Buddha said, "No, friend, I will not go out. Do what you will." This little episode strikes me as a perfect example of the approach to nonviolence that Achan Sulak has set forth in his books and exemplified in his life work. The Buddha willingly agrees to the demons request a few times, but when it becomes clear that a senseless pattern is developing, the Buddha refuses to cooperate. His encounter with the demon begins with an attempt to understand the demon's wishes and to accommodate them but when it becomes clear that the demon will persist unreasonably, the Buddha stands up for what is right. Still, he does not attack or disparage the demon, he forcefully declares that he is no longer going to participate in this cycle, but welcomes the demon to do as he will. This is the kind of active, dynamic, nonviolent approach to dealing with adversaries that is at the heart of socially engaged Buddhism.

After the Buddha makes his stand, the demon threatens him, saying, "I will ask you a question,

recluse. If you can't answer me, I will confound your mind or rip open your heart or, grabbing you by the feet, fling you across the Ganges." The Buddha responds, "My friend, I see no one in the universe who could possess my mind or rip open my heart or, grabbing me by the feet, hurl me across the Ganges. But nevertheless, ask me what you wish."

[Alavaka:]

What wealth is the highest a person may gain?

What, when well-practiced, brings happiness?

What taste excels all other tastes?

Living in what way is one's life called the best?

[The Buddha:]

Conviction is the highest wealth a person may gain.

Dhamma, when well-practiced, brings happiness.

Truth, indeed, excels all other tastes.

Living with wisdom, one's life is called best.

This verse is in many ways a perfect description of Sulak Sivaraksa, a man rich with the wealth of conviction, who has found happiness in his practice of dhamma, who has tasted truth in its innumerable flavors, and whose life of wisdom and compassionate action we may surely call, best.

Benjamin Bogin  
April 12, 2012

## The Revolution in Siam

Pridi Banomyong coined the term *apiwat* to refer to revolution. He wanted it to replace *patiwat*, the original word for revolution, which was invented by Prince Narathip Pongprapan of the Royal Institute. Later when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat used *patiwat* to also mean *coup d'etat*, the term began to lose its revolutionary appeal.

Revolution implies a sudden change in contradistinction to evolution, which points toward gradualism and reformism. King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) made this clear in his 1927 "Foreword" to the publication of King Chulalongkorn's famous speech on administrative reform. King Prajadhipok said that revolution was akin to *Phlik Phaen Din*, which literally means 'turning over the land.' He claimed that King Chulalongkorn had initiated this revolutionary process in Siam. However, King Prajadhipok also interestingly asserted that this revolution in Siam was made through gradual changes or reforms. It is worth quoting King

Prajadhipok's words at length:

The change from the old system of administration through the establishment of the 12 ministries must be considered a major change, which can be called in ordinary speech *Phlik Phaen Din*, or if we use English the word must be 'Revolution', not 'Evolution.'

Very few countries indeed have been able to succeed in carrying out a major change like this peacefully without unrest—in fact one can almost say none. Japan also underwent a *Phlik Phaen Din* change in administration, but not peacefully as in the case of Siam; there had to be disturbances in the country, such as the Satsuma Rebellion.

That Siam was able to undergo 'Revolution' in the system of administration without the shedding of a single drop of blood must be considered miraculous and extremely fortunate for the country. A change like this

is likely to affect adversely the interests of some groups, and thus it is extremely difficult to carry out peacefully.

That this change was successfully and peacefully carried out in Siam was because our 'Revolution' was initiated by the king, and a king who both ranked above all his contemporaries in ability and also had a noble character which inspired loyalty in persons of every rank who came into contact with him.

King Chulalongkorn both saw the future clearly and knew the past well. He considered his programs very carefully, selecting with great wisdom from both Thai and foreign methods of administration. He carried out the changes in the administrative system in a series of gradual steps completely appropriate to the situation and appropriate in timing—not too slow, and not too fast.

We who are members

of the royal family and loyal officials, remembering constantly the beneficence of King Chulalongkorn, should determine in so far as possible to follow in his footsteps, and should try to see the future but should also look back to the traditions and principles of the past. These two things are not too difficult—the hard part is to choose the proper timing, neither too late nor too soon. This is extremely difficult, and requires not only intelligence but good luck as well. But if we work honestly and to the best of our ability we can say that we have tried to do our duty to the limit of our strength.

Two important points were stressed in this “Foreword.” One is the necessity of trying to see the future at the same time as looking backwards to traditions and past principles. Proper timing is vital. Luck also plays an important role in this difficult task. It seemed that King Prajadhipok ultimately failed to initiate appropriate changes “in time” and that he ran out of luck. Five years after the publication of the “Foreword” the People’s Party carried out a *Phlik Phaen Din* change in Siam, and the king was caught unawares.

Two, King Chulalongkorn’s speech on administrative reform, which was given in 1888, was essentially a response to various political demands, which the king had previously turned down. For instance, members of the royal family and Thai officials in London had called for a constitution that clearly limited the absolutist power of the monarch along the lines of the Meiji Constitution. And of course there were Tianwan’s demands for Parliament and Constitution that

would enable the highest and the lowest born to govern together.

Looking back we can see that reforms initiated during the reign of King Rama V were really intended to strengthen the forces of absolutism vis-à-vis the nobles or aristocrats. There had been a tug of war between these two sides since the latter part of the Third Reign. The lower classes were essentially internally excluded. They would get only what the upper classes were willing to give them. They were treated as stupid and gullible.

Verbal demands for democracy during Chulalongkorn’s time were transformed into concrete actions early in the Sixth Reign. But the first revolutionaries were caught before they could hatch their plot. This first attempt at revolution took place in 1912—one century ago. The second attempt was in 1932 but we still have yet to fully achieve its democratic promises.

The 1932 revolutionaries called their act an administrative change, which was similar to the term used by King Chulalongkorn. But this was really a *Phlik Phaen Din* change as conceived by King Prajadhipok. Why? Because the 1932 constitution stated that “The supreme power in the country belongs to the people.” In other words, the monarch no longer held supreme power. The monarch no longer had power over life and death and was no longer above the law. Put differently, King Prajadhipok was called upon to make the constitution into law because he no longer had absolute power. He was now merely the necessary rubber stamp. The king however added the word “provisional” to the constitution as a kind of bargaining and consented to the drafting of the “permanent” constitution. Nevertheless, the king

also tried to create a myth that he alone had graciously granted and promulgated the constitution. This myth eventually became reality as a monument of King Rama VII now stood in front of the Thai parliament—while a revolutionary democrat like Pridi was demonized and had to spend the bulk of his life in exile.

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As mentioned above the word *apiwat* means revolution. Although King Prajadhipok used the word “revolution” in English he did not refer to the French Revolution, which was understandably despised and feared by Thai absolutism. Thus the first announcement of the People’s Party delivered on 24 June 1932 stated:

The People’s Party has no wish to snatch the throne. Hence it invites this king to retain the position. But he must be under the law of the constitution for the governing the country, and cannot do anything independently without the approval of the assembly of the people’s representatives... If the king replies with a refusal or does not reply within the time set... it will be regarded as treason to the nation, and it will be necessary for the country to have a republican form of government, that is, the head of state will be an ordinary person appointed by parliament to hold the position for a fixed term. By this method the people can hope to be looked after in the best way. Everyone will have employment, because our country is a country which has very abundant conditions. When we have seized the money which those of royal blood amass from

farming on the backs of the people, and use these many hundreds of millions for nurturing the country, the country will certainly flourish. The government which the People's Party will set up will draw up projects based on principle, and not act like a blind man as the government which has the king above the law has done.

The democracy referred to in this announcement meant republicanism. And the ideology of the French Revolution was captured by the three great causes: equality, fraternity and liberty.

B. R. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution, was born into the Untouchable caste and subsequently converted to Buddhism. He claimed that the Sangha established by the Buddha was a democratic community. In other words, this was a form of democracy 2000 years before the French Revolution. He also contended that the Sangha served as an alternative model of democracy for Indian society at the time. Why? The ordained enter the Sangha as equals. Solidarity keeps the Sangha members alive. And members of the Sangha work for liberty—defined as emancipation from greed, hatred and delusion.

We know that Pridi invited Buddhadasa Bhikkhu to his Regent residence for a long conversation during the reign of King Rama VIII. Perhaps they were also envisioning ways to democratize Siam along the lines of the Sangha.

Democracy is often misconceived as a voting procedure to choose political representatives, and the person or party with the majority of votes will get the right to govern. This appears to

be the dominant form of democracy today, and it can be found in many states claiming to be democracies, ranging from Britain to the US, Singapore to Thailand. This form of democracy has brought both benefits and harms.

In theory, democracy is a form of government of the people, by the people and for the people. The state promises that its citizens will have full rights and freedom befitting their dignity. The state promises to protect its citizens from various kinds of harm or danger. State power will be accountable, and no one will be granted with undue privilege or the right to exercise arbitrary power.

In reality, *apiwat* or revolution is the substance of democracy. Most leading states in the world that claimed to be democratic do not possess substantive democracy. They don't have solidarity. Equality is even harder to find in them. And liberty is often reduced to a matter of making false and forced choices or selecting consumer goods.

The 1932 Revolution failed in part because the government did not accept Pridi's Outline Economic Plan of 1933. This Economic Plan aimed to achieve economic equality in the country. Why is economic equality important? George Orwell once gave a precise and convincing answer to this question:

Economic inequality makes democracy impossible. It is not of much value to discuss methods of making Parliaments more representative, or private citizens more public-spirited, or laws more just, or liberty more secure, unless one starts by asking where the real seat of power lies. If the economic structure of any society is unjust,

its laws and its political system will necessarily perpetuate that injustice. No tinkering with juridical forms, not even that panacea, "education", will ever make much difference.

In sum, in order to revolutionize Siam democracy must be understood in a substantive sense. At least it must entail the following:

- 1) Freedom from dictatorship: This not only means freedom from military government or political remnants of absolutism but also from capitalism—its agents, structures, ideology, etc.
- 2) Social solidarity: In the past, Siamese society had accepted or tolerated differences. But we were led astray by modernization and then globalization. It's not too late to rejuvenate this virtue.
- 3) The rule of law: no one must be above the law, and the legal system must be transparent and accountable.

These three basic points are fundamental to any good governance, regardless of political regime. More substantively, democracy is about:

- 4) Equality: Everyone should be treated equally. The weak, the poor, the minority, etc. must not be oppressed and looked down upon. Rather they should be seen as equals, and conditions or factors that create inequality should be removed. The rich must bear extra social responsibility to help keep everyone afloat.
- 5) Local wisdom: Sometimes local wisdom provides the right answer or

question much more than modern sciences.  
6) Reason: The people must learn to cultivate and develop the use of reason. A person need not have any special knowledge.

But his or her voice must not be silenced by the more intelligent person.  
7) Education: Knowledge must not be compartmentalized. Rather, it must lead to the harmonization

of the head and the heart. Education must also foster a critical or 'rebellious' spirit in the people.

*Dhurakij Bundit University  
9 March 2012*



## The Power of Giving

When Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachorn was in power there was a national motto that went as follows: "Work is money. Money is work. Both bring happiness." Of course, we should ask to what extent this saying is true. But at that time no one dared to question it. Today, the period of political dictatorship is officially over. (But it may return if Thaksin Shinawatra is back in power.) In any case, capitalism and consumerism have almost completely dominated Thai society. The motto thus still rings absolutely true to many in mainstream Thai society.

TV Burabha is a mainstream medium. It has to necessarily and inevitably serve capitalism and consumerism. But TV Burabha's annual event of recognizing or honoring the deeds of worthy individuals, especially those who are courageous, selfless, and inspirational to others to serve fellow human beings, is a praiseworthy practice.

Many of us who are workers in contemporary society often rely only on the head but rarely the heart in daily life. More specifically, we lack the dimension of mental training or study. We forget that words or actions that come from the heart are full of compassion and loving-kindness. The heart that is at one with the head will guide intelligence to serve the Good, paving

the way for the creation of many wonderful things.

If we use only the head then our actions tend to be inclined toward arrogance and violence. The common and the ordinary will be sacrificed in our quest for success.

Those of us who are humble and not interested in personal aggrandizement may conclude that work in the service of money leads to suffering more than happiness. Needless to say, work can bring happiness even when money is not involved. Prince Sithiporn Kritakara once said to Puey Ungphakorn that "money is illusion. Rice and fish are real." We can also add that more important than food for the body is food for the heart. Our breath keeps us alive. We should learn to breathe properly—that is, transcending greed, hatred and delusion. We should cultivate mindfulness regarding breathing. This will fill the heart with happiness, which isn't exploitative of others and abusive to the self. In short, this is moral conduct or the training of the body and mind to be mindful. This will help nurture wisdom and selflessness.

What I've just mentioned can be found in both Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism. They both refer to the teacher who is within us. This teacher guides and warns us. With moral con-

science as our teacher examining the things that we say and do becomes a process of self-learning. Externally, there are also many teachers. In particular, the lives of the poor are the best teacher for us. At the same time, the words and actions of the rich and powerful teach us about hypocrisy, mediocrity, brutality and moral cowardice.

Living mindfully, we will be ready to cope with our changing emotions. If we learn how to train the mind to be strong we will be able to (re)act appropriately and mindfully no matter how bad a situation is. We will be able to act and speak with moral courage.

Hopefully, those who are listening to me with an open heart might find what I've said beneficial. The cultivation of mindfulness however must be supplemented with *dana* or generosity. The more generosity is rooted in selflessness, the more powerful it will be to overcome injustice.

Material giving is a way of building happiness for others, especially when it's done wholeheartedly and without an eye for any return—from gratitude to a place in heaven. This kind of giving often brings more happiness than taking or receiving. We can begin by giving away things that we don't really need or want, things that we have in excess, and so on. Then we can proceed to

give away things to which we are attached; for instance, our prized possessions, objects that we seemingly couldn't live without, etc. The more we are able to do this, the more we have off-loaded these things, the less burden the self has to carry or bear. This will increase happiness in life. However, it may be difficult for many of us living in a capitalist society to grasp this point.

While important material giving is not as valuable as the giving of dhamma. This isn't simply about the publishing of dhamma books or the donation of the *Tripitaka*. This would still be considered a form of material giving. Giving the dhamma means giving the truth. This is especially vital in our authoritarian society that denies even the most basic truths.

Truth giving however often comes with great personal risk. This is particularly true with it concerns the powers that be. But the giver of truth is happier doing so than possessing things, consuming sex, or climbing the social ladder—i.e., the things that are pre-occupying most people in the mainstream. Look at Gandhi's *satyagraha*. Look at Burmese monks during the Saffron Revolution who were cracked down by the military junta. Look at Tibetan monks who are 'happily' in prison cultivating compassion and loving-kindness. Happiness based on

truth is abstract and immaterial. It is not linked to self-attachment or carnal desire. Hence it is pure.

Truth giving is higher or more sublime than material giving. It isn't about the correct recital of enshrined doctrines, theories or scriptures. Rather it must come from a heart which had encountered the truth before, especially the truth of suffering. In contemporary society, suffering is linked to structural violence and injustice and capitalism. We will not be able to see the truth of suffering if the head is detached from the heart. This is the problem of compartmentalized knowledge that Buddhadasa Bhikkhu had repeatedly pointed out. And if we are unable to see the truth of suffering in contemporary society, we'll not be able to eradicate the root causes of suffering.

Wisdom is knowledge that is extensive, profound and real. This knowledge comes from morality or moral conduct; that is, the practice of not violating the self and others. Wisdom is the combination of this knowledge with mindfulness. Mindfulness means that one's thought is guided and trained by the mind, leading to the reduction of self-attachment. And then love and loving-kindness are added to make wisdom. Gandhi's *satyagraha* was made up wisdom and loving-kindness. It was a powerful force that brought down the British empire.

Likewise, Tibetan monks will be able to bring down the Chinese empire through wisdom and loving-kindness.

Lastly, we must not forget another kind of giving: forgiving. The capacity to forgive is the most sublime form of happiness. When we no longer have fear, we are ready to forgive sincerely, whole-heartedly and freely. We will be truly courageous. This courage is a force derived from wisdom and loving-kindness thus enabling the courageous person to overcome self-attachment.

Soon it will be the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the great revolution in Siam. May the essence of democracy return to the country quickly. Democracy is not only about having regular elections and the political party with the greatest number of votes getting to form the government. Democracy is not only a matter of form or procedure. For democracy to be substantial the ruling elites must openly listen to criticisms and the citizens must have the courage to struggle against the injustices committed by the ruling class. There must be accountability and answerability on the part of the ruling elites. The marginalized must be respected and recognized. And nature must be respected. If these things can be done society will return to its normal condition.

Thammasat University  
3 February 2012,



## Suggestions on the Amendment of Article 112

On the auspicious occasion of the King's 7<sup>th</sup> cycle birthday anniversary, an English book was published to recognize His

Majesty's various accomplishments and highlight the role of the monarchy in the country. The book was entitled *King Bhumibol Adulyadej, a Life's*

*Work: Thailand's Monarchy in Perspective*. Former Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun was chair of advisory board to the

book's editorial team. Other luminous advisors included individuals who are close to the royal court such as M.R. Putrie Viravaidhya, His Majesty's Deputy Principal Private Secretary.

Pages 306-314 of the book dealt with the issue of lese majeste. Of particular concern is the King's view on this matter. This was made clear in a royal speech that was delivered on the eve of his birthday anniversary in 2005. In the speech, the King emphasized that (1) a monarch is an ordinary human being who can and should be criticized; (2) pending lese majeste cases must be put to an end and individuals imprisoned on this charge should be released; and 3) the use of the lese majeste law would ultimately hurt rather than benefit the monarchy.

The King also clarified the meaning of the English saying "The King can do no wrong." This saying implies that the King is not an ordinary human being. But as an ordinary human being "the King can do wrong" and therefore can be criticized: "If someone offers criticisms suggesting that the King is wrong, then I would like to be informed of their opinion. If I am not, that could be problematic.... If we hold that the King cannot be criticized or violated, then the King ends up in a difficult situation." The King further pointed out that if it is legally prohibited to criticize the monarch and individuals are imprisoned for committing the crime of lese majeste "the monarch would have to bear the negative consequences." It is worth quoting His Majesty thus: "If they get sent to prison, I pardon them. If they don't go to prison, I won't sue them, because those who violate

the King and are punished are not the ones who are in trouble. It would be the King who was in trouble. It is strange, but the lawyers like to send people to prison (for allegedly violating the King)." The King was also concerned about how the international community would view this matter.

On page 313, Anand Panyarachun's opinion, which was made during an interview with foreign journalists, was also reproduced:

The King never said anything to me, but my own personal view is that I do not like the law. Yet, I think you have to understand that in this country the King is held in a certain position which is inviolable. I am sure the King does not mind whether the law exists or not, but the Thai people will never, never tolerate criticism of the King. That is their feeling. Sometimes I wonder about the Thai people, that they are more Catholic than the Pope. I always believe that the Thais are more royalist than the King.

From 2005-2010, the country's Courts of Appeal found the accused guilty in 410 cases of lese majeste. Eleven more cases are pending in the Supreme Court. In 2006, only 30 cases of lese majeste reached the Courts of First Instance. In 2010, however, the number jumped to 478 cases—an increase by 1,500 per cent!

According to Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index Thailand was ranked 59 in 2004. In 2010, it fell to 153-out of 178 countries.

## II

It is unfortunate that many political parties have expressed

their opposition to amending Article 112 despite the fact that the law is highly problematical.

It violates the people's freedom and rights as well as jeopardizes the monarchy. The King's opinion on this issue should be clear by now. However, it isn't clear why these political parties are taking this stance. Are they trying to be more "royalist than the King"? Or are they completely devoid of moral courage?

We must not forget that Article 112 was also a byproduct of the 6 October 1976 political crisis. Why? Because Tanin Kraivixien who became premier after this terrible *coup d'etat* also amended the said Article, stipulating that the minimum punishment be 3 to 15 years imprisonment. Although we claim to be a democracy and that our government had ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there has been no serious attempt to alter the amendment made to Article 112 by a dictatorial government. We've paid little to no interest to the opinion of the King on this matter. Yet, we always claim that we are his loyal subjects.

The event of 14 October 1973 put the country back on the track of democratization, which was reversed three years later. After 6 October 1976, the country returned to the embrace of dictatorship, citing the pretext of the necessity of struggling against communism. Today, the communist threat no longer exists. And if we claim to be a constitutional monarchy, we must use the law and the judicial system to enable the monarchy to exist with dignity under the Constitution. The monarch and members of the royal family must not have any special privileges outside of the law. The law must grant justice

to all. Everyone and anyone can be subjected to criticism. In particular, this will help ensure the accountability and answerability of important public figures.

Elevating the monarch to the status of *devaraja* (divine ruler) is not a part of the Buddhist tradition. Well before the 1932 Revolution that toppled absolutism and established constitutional monarchy, King Chulalongkorn stated in 1873 as follows<sup>1</sup>:

In other major powers, in other great capitals of the world, in other kingdoms in East Asia, such as in China, Yuan (Vietnam), Japan, and in West Asia, such as India—these countries once enshrined the practice of prostration, commanding the subordinates to prostrate before their superiors (*chaonai*) and the nobles, just like what is currently experienced by Siam. But now, those countries have abolished the prostration practice. The reason behind this is that they acknowledged the necessity of rebuilding a more equal relationship between different groups in society—no more class oppression. Since the abolition, those countries have become more prosperous. In Siam, the practice of prostration reaffirms the existence of oppression which is unjust. Furthermore, there are other practices that must be abolished or at least reduced in their degree of strictness. But to eliminate all the practices at once will be impossible. The process has to be gradual and timely.

At the end of the process, Siam will re-emerge as a much more prosperous kingdom.

Additionally, King Chulalongkorn stated:

The practice of prostration in Siam is severely oppressive. The subordinates have been forced to prostrate in order to elevate the dignity of the *phu yai*. I do not see how the practice of prostration will render any benefit to Siam. The subordinates find the performance of prostration a harsh physical practice. They have to go down on their knees for a long time until their business with the *phu yai* ends. They will then be allowed to stand up and retreat. This kind of practice is the source of oppression. Therefore, I want to abolish it.

The *Royal Siamese Government Gazette* in 1873 summarized King Chulalongkorn's wish thus:

From now on, Siamese are permitted to stand up before the dignitaries. To display an act of respect, the Siamese may take a bow instead. Taking a bow will be regarded as a new form of paying respect. The dignitaries may first question the reason behind the abolition of prostration practice. They may ask: How will the change assist in developing Siam? They must know now that the abolition of this practice is indeed to show the world that Siam rejects any oppressive and unjust practice. Power-

ful countries which have been successful in refraining from oppressing their own peoples are now enjoying prosperity. Henceforth, members of the royal family and senior and junior bureaucrats who wish to have an audience with the King at his residence, or in public places, please adopt this new recommended practice as instructed by the King. His Majesty the King has assigned Than Chao Phraya Srisuriyawongse, his Regent, to enact this new practice for the Siamese kingdom.

It is clear that King Chulalongkorn wanted Siam to be governed according to the standard of civilization. But when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat came to power via a *coup d'état*, which was called a revolution, King Rama V's intention was brushed aside. This act was as harmful to the people as well as the monarchy as Tanin Kraivixien's notorious amendment.

### III

If we want to preserve the monarchy and make this institution compatible with democracy, we must amend Article 112. The basic rights of Thai citizens must be safeguarded. Their basic and legitimate rights must not be deprived to maintain the privilege of the monarchy. Remember that the Thai monarchy exists for the happiness of all Thais and the common good. The ways of the Thai monarchy must also be compatible with international or universal norms....

Adopting an international perspective means examining to

<sup>1</sup> The three quotes below have been translated into English by Pavin Chachavalpongpun. See his "Chulalongkorn abolished prostration." Available at <http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2011/05/14/chulalongkorn-abolished-prostration/>.

what extent the Thai monarchy is democratized. Apparently, monarchies in the “Arab” are more oppressive to their peoples. On the other hand, monarchies in Europe are widely respected. It seemed that the more they have minimized their privileges and the more they are open to criticism, the more stable they have become.

As for amending Article 112, there have been a lot of suggestions, especially from the Nittirat Group. We don’t have to agree with everything this Group has proposed. But we must closely listen to their suggestions and reasons with respect. We shouldn’t silence them, accusing them of trying to abolish the monarchy. No one can topple the monarchy but the monarchy itself—or the oligarchs who have nothing but disdain for the majority of the people.

Suffice it for me to raise two examples: 1) Nepal, in which leading members of the monarchy destroyed the institution; and 2) Bhutan, in which the monarch deliberately transformed the kingdom from absolutism to constitutional monarchy.

In my view, if Article 112 is to be maintained, the penalty must be reduced. The minimum jail term must be abolished, while the maximum reduced to three years imprisonment. The whole process of charging someone with lese majeste must also be made a lot stricter. It’s literally free for all now; and the police must automatically press charge. Rather, every accusation must be carefully scrutinized. This will help lessen the burden on both the people and the police. The Nittirat Group has suggested that the Office of His Majesty’s Principal Private Secretary be in charge of screening lese majeste

charges. I find this to be a plausible suggestion given that there are a lot of legal experts in the Office.

## V

Amending Article 112 will constitute a right step in the right direction, judging from the situation locally and internationally. However, consideration must also be paid to the whole judicial system. Are our attorneys too corrupt and indifferent to the plight of the accused? What about our police officers? Are they really law enforcers? Why are there very few lawyers who work to protect the rights and interests of the marginalized and oppressed? And our judges, while capable and knowledgeable, are they too prejudicial and stuck in the ivory tower? Are they really impervious to structural violence and injustices? The agents of the judicial system must learn to cultivate critical self-reflection. They too must be criticized because criticism will serve as their external voice of conscience.

We must further ask whether or not the monarchy is at the apex of a society that is also unjust and violent structurally. When thinking about transforming the monarchy to make it compatible with contemporary society and world, we must consider to what extent Thai-ness has to imply uniqueness, particularism or exceptionalism. If Thai-ness always refers to something unique and exceptional, then it can be used to justify or legitimate all kinds of reactionary projects. As mentioned above, King Chulalongkorn didn’t seem to think that Siam should deem itself as absolutely unique and swim against the currents of international norms and practices. Thus, is resisting the amendment of Article 112

akin to being more royalist than the King? Conversely, insisting that everything be in accordance with globalization can also be unthinking and oppressive.

In sum, in a constitutional monarchy, the head of state is different from the head of government. The head of state performs three essential functions: 1) carrying out official duties such as opening parliament sessions, appointing the prime minister, approving (or disapproving) bills adopted by the Parliament, etc. (these duties must be done in a subtle and proper manner); 2) carrying out ceremonial duties and social activities; and 3) serving as (a unifying) symbol of the nation. If the monarch isn’t neutral or isn’t accepted by the ruling elites and masses, then he or she will not be able to undertake this function. Lavishing the monarch with endless praises does not necessarily mean that he or she is the real symbol of the nation. It could simply be a sign of unwillingness to say that the emperor is really naked.

In *The English Constitution* Bagehot emphasizes the difference between “efficient” and “dignified” elements. The former entails the capacity to govern, to implement policies, and so on. This seems to be the role of the prime minister. On the other hand, the “dignified” element works to cultivate the dignity of and solidarity among the people—despite their innumerable differences. If the monarchy undergoes reforms, the monarch will be in a better position to perform this role than the prime minister or president.

*The National Assembly,*  
20 January 2012

## Life in The Grand Palace

A dazzle of gold and a blaze of colours — that's your first impression of the Grand Palace as you come down the avenue of ugly dull buildings. It is a splendid mass of pagodas, towers, halls and chapels with triple roofs ending in flourishes of serpents' tails. The temple bells glint from the eaves below roofs covered with blue and orange, green and yellow tiles. The buildings look like blown up toys. The black spires seem remote and unreal as fairy tales and dreams. High white walls surround the city for it is indeed a little city of its own.

As you drive through the enormous red teak gates you notice they are not perpendicular. All the gates and doorways lean inwards for added strength. The Ministry of Finance and other government institutions have their offices here in this outer courtyard. You walk across the stone covered court through another great gate into the middle of the courtyard. To the left is the Amarin Winichai Hall, a large white building decorated with broken glass and china and carved marble doorways. Inside here you can see the ornate gold throne on which the King sits for his coronation. To the right you see a tall building in another courtyard with a large Garuda (mythical bird), with wings spread out, at the base of a beautiful black roof. But in the middle behind a lawn bordered with clipped trees you see with a slight shock a sickly green and pink building with three umbrella-like spires. It looks like a Westerner wearing a Thai dancer's head-dress. The building is plainly European except for the roof.



The older buildings were put up in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century when Bangkok was founded but this last one was built by King Chulalongkorn, Anna's pupil.

The story goes that the King had been thrilled by Victorian and European art after his visit to Europe and so commissioned an English architect to design a new throne hall. Work started and the building had reached the second storey when they remembered that it was propitious and therefore imperative for a Thai king to live under a *prasad* (a spire rising from an umbrella-like structure). In fact, in the old days kings had a palace for each season — cool, hot and rainy — and each palace had a *prasad*. So they decided that the conventional European roof in the design should not be used and three traditional Thai ones placed on top. This is one of the many compromises that the King made in Westernizing his country.

On the left of the extraordinary throne hall is another gate guarded by two large Chinese stone dogs and a lone sentry. This is the gate into the Inner Court where the King's wives and children used to live. No boy over

13 was allowed in there — not even the King's sons — they had to live in the houses in the middle of the court. Now no one is allowed in without special permission from the King.

I wanted very much to see inside or at least to know what life inside was like in the days of King Chulalongkorn [Rama V]. So I went to see Princess Chongchitra.

Of my father's cousins she is one of my favourites. She is 80 years old and tiny, very thin and has twinkling eyes full of mischief. Her wrinkles are kind and happy ones. Her memory is fantastic, so visits with her are always fun. She was wearing a grey wrap-over skirt we call *pahsin*, it was mid-calf length and her over-b blouse was loose with long sleeves with white flowers on a background of grey. In the old days they used to wear *jungkrabane* — a long length of cloth tied in such a way that the result was like a divided skirt. On top they would wind a scarf over their bosoms and if they went out they put on a blouse. For special occasions the blouses would be European in style such as worn by the ladies in Edwardian England. They wore a different colour for each day but the scarf and blouse would always be a different colour from the *jungkrabane*.

"I was born," she said, "in my father's house [in 1886]. No one is allowed to be born in the Palace except the King's own children. It was thought to be the abode of the angels. And so no one was allowed to die either. Why, I remember once one of the ladies had a heart attack — or perhaps it was a cerebral

haemorrhage — but anyway, she died before they could carry her out and there was such a fuss. We had to have the Brahmans in to perform all kinds of purification rites and to exorcise her spirit.

“When I was about nine years old I was taken to the cremation of the Crown Prince and there I saw Princess Suddhadibya, who was very beautiful, and I developed a crush on her. She was one of the King’s daughters and I was determined to go and live with her but I didn’t until three years later after my tonsure ceremony. This is the cutting of the topknot at the age of puberty for boys and girls. When children were small their heads were shaved and only a little tuft of hair was left on top and tied into a knot and fixed with a pretty pin. The topknot was cut when the child was 11 or 12. Nearly everyone did it. Ordinary families just had monks to the house. Food and gifts were presented to the monks who then chanted prayers and one of them gave a sermon. The children would have to sit and listen quietly, clean, and dressed as nicely as the family could afford. They were given valuable presents afterwards. Then the topknot was shaved off by one of the senior members of the family. The hair was then allowed to grow again.

“My tonsure ceremony was quite grand because the King cut my topknot. There were about five or six of us all done on the same day. We were beautifully dressed for it — gold brocade, gold and diamond necklaces, bracelets, anklets and a jewelled decoration round the topknot. The jewels were so heavy they had to carry me. I couldn’t move. I felt absolutely gorgeous.

“Before I went into the Palace I had to go to school. The



*The funeral remains of Prince Damrong being collected by Princess Chongchitra for enshrinement in the Hor Phra Nak in the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in 1944.*

school was under the supervision of the Department of Education. This was at the time of the modernization of our country. It was a very new thing. My father was what would now be the Minister of the Interior. The school was run by three English women who were helped by three Siamese girls. The Englishwomen were brought out by the department and most of them married well here. They married the many foreign advisers from Europe and America who were nearly all bachelors in those days. Queen Saovabha herself chose the Siamese teachers and sent them to study in England. They were all very intelligent but they were people of no consequence. It was unheard of in those days for a girl of good family to go abroad to study. It was ruinous for a family’s reputation. It was as shameful for a family as a daughter going on the stage in the days of Queen Victoria. Girls in those days stayed at home and suitable marriages were arranged for

them.

“I remember a cousin of mine. She was a very, very clever girl and unknown to everyone she sat for the King’s scholarship examination and won it — until they found out it was a girl and so they gave it to one of the men. So and...she was wasted. If only she’d been born now.

“I didn’t like the school. The teachers were very strict. We had to do everything ourselves and we even had to clean out the bird house where the English teachers kept their pigeons. Disgusting! We had to wear white nightgowns at night, which was not nice because one’s friends looked like ghosts walking about at night. We learned all the usual things like arithmetic and history, and all the tuition was given in English except when they taught the Siamese language. We had to take turns to sit at the teacher’s table to practice our English conversation. We also learned to cook and to sew.

“At first we had very good teachers from England with degrees and all. They stayed only two years because the climate was bad for them. I was very fond of the first two headmistresses we had. But the last one I didn’t like at all. She was a widow who had been in India for some years. She was very strict and was always sending us to bed if we were naughty. She didn’t like the Chinese servants and sacked them. She replaced them with Indians. The other English teacher smelt very bad. It was awful. We just got naughtier and naughtier until the headmistress couldn’t stand us any more and sent for the supervisor — an Englishman who was in charge of finding these teachers for the school.

“I was sent to see him and

he said, 'I'm sorry you are so naughty, Princess.' So I said, 'I'm sorry too. I wouldn't be this naughty if you'd got us better teachers.' So he asked what my complaints were. I had plenty. One was that the teachers had eaten all the pigeons that the previous ones had kept as pets. It was wrong to kill, I said. And then a much more serious complaint — that the drinking water tasted bad and smelt bad and we feared an outbreak of cholera. Well, to make a long story short the school was closed down, the teachers sent back and all the children sent home. My father was furious with me and in despair sent me into the Palace where they hoped that I would learn to become a lady. This was what usually happened to girls. When they were old enough, instead of going to school they went into the Palace. They were sent to live with a relation, not necessarily one of the King's wives or daughters but even one of their serving women would do, so that they could see how things were done. Naturally the higher you were the more you saw and learned.

"I was very excited because I was to live with that beautiful princess, HRH Princess Sudhadibya, but when I got 'Inside' I found the discipline much more strict than in school. Immediate obedience was required. There were prying eyes everywhere to see and tell tales about you. The slightest misdemeanour meant the sharp bamboo cane. All the children were beaten, including the King's children. Often the children would be whipped, not because they had done anything wrong, but to spite some other grown-up. I mean, supposing that someone had told my princess that I had been rude to her and

my princess didn't believe it but because she disliked that person and was annoyed at having her tell tales about me, I would be whipped in front of that person to make her feel bad.

"Life was very hard. You had to watch your step the whole time. But I learnt a lot of things. I learnt to cook really well. I became so good that my services were in demand every day. You see, there was intense rivalry among the King's wives, as was natural, and as the King was fond of his food they tried to outdo each other in concocting tempting dishes for him. Each person would watch jealously to see what the King ate and what he said was good.

"It was a great honour to be one of the King's wives. Many a girl was presented to His Majesty by her parents in the hope that she would be able to get them lucrative posts or bring land and money into the family by bearing a royal child. King Mongkut [Rama IV] certainly asked for the daughters of rich and powerful men as a guarantee of their fathers' loyalty. His son did the same. More often the King's own wives would find new ones for him. They would surround themselves with pretty ladies-in-waiting so that if the King showed a liking for one of them, they could gain favour by presenting her to him. Of course the girls didn't have to go if they didn't want to. But in fact, as far as I know, only one girl ever said no to the King. She's still alive so I won't tell you her name. She was very beautiful. Her father was one of the princes of the North. She was adopted by a childless couple who took her abroad with them. When she came back she became one of the ladies of Queen Saovabha. The

King saw her and asked for her. Nothing happened at first and some weeks went by because no propitious day could be found. It was the same as getting married: Gifts of gold and jewellery had to be given to the girl and to the parents on an auspicious day, just as we have to do now when you get married. Finally the day came, she prostrated herself and said in English, 'I love and respect you as a King. I beg to be excused.' The King was so dumbfounded and impressed that he let her go home untouched, and allowed her and her family to keep the presents which were among the most expensive ever given by the King. The usual amount of gold was 400 baht, but the Princess of Chiang Mai and this girl were given 2,000 baht because it was felt that as daughters of princes of the northern states — which had been more or less independent until only recently — they ought to be treated as the daughters of sovereign states.

"I don't know how many wives King Chulalongkorn had. Once, when he visited Italy, he was asked this question by the Queen of Italy and his reply to her was, 'Had I met you first perhaps I would have had only one.' The King of course knew how many he had because each wife was given a sum of money for personal expenses every year. He also gave them anniversary presents. I have seen betel nut boxes presented on 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> anniversaries.

"In theory the King could make any of his wives a queen. But in practice his queens were the daughters of kings. They were called Somdet Phra Raja Devi. From these he promoted the mother of the Crown Prince who was the eldest son. The

Crown Prince's mother was called Somdet Phra Boroma Rajinee. Then when he was away in Europe he appointed his favourite queen as regent and she received the top title of Somdet Phra Boroma Rajinee Nart. Other wives might have titles such as Phranang. Most of the wives were usually called Chao Chom Manda if they had children. It was plain Chao Chom if they had no children and no physical proof of the King's favour. Then the lowest of all came the Chao Chom of the Yellow Room. You see, the King's wives had to present themselves to him every day. Usually they were present at one of his meals. But the Yellow Room was a sort of passage through which the King walked from his office to his quarters, and the wives not in favour — and so not required to be present at meal times — had to wait for him there. It was a dreadful thing to be known as one of the ladies of the Yellow Room.

The highlights of the day were the King's meals. After his dinner at eight he worked all night. Then at dawn before he went to bed he had breakfast of rice soup. When he woke at about one or two in the afternoon he had his lunch. All his children had to come to him then. He would sit on the floor with a small table in front of him. The wives would sit in a line starting from the door and ending at his table. The dishes of food would be passed from one woman to another until it reached the King. He liked European, as well as Thai food. The Thai dishes might include a clear soup with pieces of meat and vegetables, a curry of chicken or fish, fried meat balls made of spiced pork and crab, fried sugar peas, fried fish, raw vegetables and *nam prik* (a sharp, pungent

sauce for the fish and vegetables). The rice was served in a separate bowl. For dessert he would have at least three or four different sweets made of coconut milk and palm sugar, tapioca flour or glutinous rice, elegant meringue boats, fruit and a liquid sweet. The liquid sweet might be something simple like oranges in syrup scented with jasmine or something exotic like 'ladies' finger nails', which are made of dough rolled into round little fingers two inches long with pointed ends and boiled in coconut milk and served with grated coconut, ground roasted sesame seeds mixed with sugar and a little salt.

"The King always said such nice things to people. After eating one of my special *nam prik* he said, 'You have prolonged my life. The *nam prik* was so good. 'He challenged me to make the same *nam prik* again for the following day because he said that only expert cooks could make the same sauce perfectly every time. I don't want to boast but I did reproduce it again and again.

"Life in the Palace was very dull. Apart from the crazes we had for bicycling and photography and playing croquet, there wasn't much amusement. Physically it was very uncomfortable. There were thousands of women and children inside the palace, living in hundreds of buildings of various sizes made of brick or wood according to the importance and standing of the owner of the house. There was no running water or sewage system. The refuse and waste matter had to be carried out in buckets. In spite of this everyone was very clean. We washed many times a day in water scented by floating jasmine in it. We kept ourselves cool by covering ourselves with

kaolin mixed into a paste with Siamese scent.

"It's not hard to make scented water because you just float any sweet-smelling flowers that you like in it such as jasmine. We had huge jars of scented water, deliciously cold. Making scent was harder and many people had their own secret formulas. The secret was to get the right blend of flower oils, musk and the smoke of leaves or scented candles. We call perfume *nam ob* which means smoked water. We used to start with alcohol or flower water. The flower water had to be boiled. Then we put the best *pimsen* into it — that's the stuff they put into smelling salts — and let it stay like that for a few days. Then we took some neem leaves and toasted them and put them into the liquid. Neem leaves come from a sprawling plant, rather dull looking, and people grow them just for making scent. They are delicate plants and only certain people can handle them. If you have what they call 'hot hands' and you pick these leaves, the plants shrivel up and die. Usually anyone who grows them will not let any outsider touch them for fear of these 'hot hands'. Neem leaves give a distinct smell to Siamese scent. Then you can add whatever oils you like — rose, sandalwood, ylang-ylang, lemongrass and so on. These oils came from India. The scent was made in great brass jars with tight fitting lids. The scented candles were lit and stuck on to the inside of the lid and the flame blown out. The lid was then firmly put on and the smoke left to penetrate the water inside. Our clothes were folded away into cupboards and boxes filled with flowers and smoked in the same way.

"There were gardens inside the Palace but only small ones,

and with the high white walls you couldn't help feeling shut in. So it was wonderful for us when the King started to go for picnics in Dusit Park. He wanted to get out into the open spaces. He loved gardening and I remember many times when we had to stand about with lanterns at 9 o'clock at night because the King hadn't finished planting his trees. He planted whole woods. Later he built summer houses in the park so that he could spend a few nights among the trees. These houses became very large, and finally he built a palace for each of his queen and then smaller ones in the garden for the current favourites.

"In the hot season there were trips up river to the summer palace at Bang Pa-In. These were enormous fun. We went by boat — it took about half a day to get there. The King's boat led the procession followed by his kitchen boat. His meals were transferred into a smaller boat and rowed over to him. Except for a few of the women and the pages needed on the journey, most of the staff went by train to prepare the rooms for the King and his wives, the children and all the other princes and princesses like me.

"The King liked to tour the country and these journeys were made by boat since it was more comfortable than going by train and we had no roads but a whole network of excellent canals and rivers. I was included in the royal party on one of these expeditions. It was on the trip to Phitsanulok in the north. It was the first time the King had made an inspection of the northern provinces. One of the governors earned a very high decoration for himself because of the preparations he had made for the King.

"The governor had land-

scaped a garden on the banks of the river. He had built little bamboo huts by the river. When the King's boat arrived the governor had it moored, and a little bridge with bamboo screens was fixed leading from the boat to the bamboo hut. In the bamboo hut was a water closet. It was the first one introduced into the country and caused great excitement and, as I said before, won the governor a very high decoration for initiative and forethought.

"The King died in 1910 at one of the palaces in the park. He was nursed by Queen Saovabha and his favourites. We were all heartbroken and shaved our heads and went into mourning. White was the colour of mourning in those days. His body was taken back to the Palace for lying in state in the middle of the night. The procession was very impressive. It was led by wailing pipe music. It was in the middle of the night because the proper arrangements couldn't be made in time — it was 43 years since a King had died and it was some time before they could find some old men who remembered. Thousands of people lined the road, holding candles and joss sticks and it suddenly became very cold.

"It was very sad in the Palace after King Chulalongkorn's death because his successor was unmarried and would not live Inside. He preferred his palace in the park, so for us Inside, it was like a world without a sun. Life was all monotony. No King's meals to prepare; nothing to do for him. We, who had talked about what the King did, what he said, what he liked and what he disliked, now had nothing to talk about.

"Some of the wives who had relations outside went home

to them. Some of the King's children who had money built houses outside the Palace. Queen Saovabha herself lived at one of the palaces where there was a model farm. One by one the houses became empty. I stayed on with my Princess until she died in 1923.

"Now the Inner Palace is like a deserted city. The stone roads and paths are still there. Most of the houses are still there. I can show you where I lived. The ones that were beyond repair have been torn down and trees and lawns have taken their place. The present King allows the old retainers to live on in the houses they used to live in. Their children and grandchildren will go on doing so, I suppose, if they have nowhere else to go. The shophouses built over a hundred years ago are still there. They are two storeyed but seem so small to me now that I am used to bigger buildings. They are a bit like the old Chinese shophouses you see in Singapore. They are made of stone and look as if they need a lot of repairs. Bananas, papayas, and tamarinds grow out through the roofs of some of the buildings not yet torn down. The last of King Chulalongkorn's wives still lives there in the house he built for her. She was 16 when he died.

"It was a hard life but it taught one the qualities of fortitude, courage and unselfish service which seem to be forgotten today. All you young people think of now are freedom and pleasure. Oh well, it's your life. I've had mine...I can't complain."

And with a beaming smile she treated me to the same delicious *nam prik* that the King had had.

M.R. Pimsai Amranand  
*Bangkok Post*, January 3, 2012

## Coming Home to the Lotus Sutra

Recently I journeyed to India to gather an anthology of contemporary short stories from South Asia for college readers. I'd been wanting to visit Mother India again for a while and my wife Kwangshik could come, so it was a welcome prospect. Organically, the cue-cards slipped into place.

Oddly, as our departure neared, reports of political instability throughout South Asia flashed on the news and I grew apprehensive. Kwangshik brought a bag of fortune cookies home one evening though, and immediately we began receiving more positive signals: "You are Heading in the Right Direction", "You and Your Partner Will Soon Experience Great Happiness", "You Are Heading for a Land of Sunshine and Fun." Things were looking up.

An article I came across incited my attention. Writing on Korean Buddhism, Robert Buswell reported that travel has always been "an integral part of Buddhism since its very inception." Devotion and missionary pilgrimage, he suggests, evolve directly from India's old indigenous *śramana* tradition of itinerant wandering. "Initiation into that ascetic life was termed a 'going forth', he says. "We might today call this a 'setting out' on a journey of personal discovery..."<sup>i</sup> This was reaffirming. In fact, my journey did have a higher purpose: I had old dharma business to look into.

Kolkata can often feel like

a city verging on eco-cide—unbreathable air, grinding traffic. We headed for Ballygunge to stay with old friends. Outside our taxi window sweepers toiled eternally in the dust. New office blocks already looked worn in the heat. Soon the first hovels appeared, then ditches, rooting pigs, the tropical stinks...No suffering, no enlightenment.

What I wanted most to see here was the little temple at Dakuria Lake where, nearly 40 years ago as a young trekker, I first encountered Buddhism in a living way. Staying with the same Bengali friends we were visiting now, I'd set off wandering one morning and heard a voice from behind me ask, "Do you know the way to the Japan Temple?"

Turning, I saw a monk clad in an amber robe, travelling on foot to the holy places of the Buddha Life—shaved-head, flip-flop sandals, thin shoulder-sack and a walking stick. He'd walked like this from southern Thailand, through Burma, and civil war-ravaged Bangladesh. Originally German, he'd discovered the dharma from books while mining opals in the Australian outback after WW II. He'd take vows at a Thai forest *wat*.

I didn't know the Japan temple, but said I'd enjoy helping him find it. We strolled together and were joined in turn by a retired scholar of Pali. I listened to them conversing in English—my first dharma teachers. At

dusk the Pali *babu* bid fare-well; then we heard a booming across a lake. The monk's ears picked up at the sound and we stepped lively, arriving upon a little white and red temple where the monk hoped to stay.

"Follow me," he whispered. I copied what he did. We entered up the temple steps, bowed to a Buddha image on a small altar, and took places on the floor among a group of worshippers, mostly women, in fading light. I wondered why the monks were Japanese, but their repetitive chant was transfixing and over and over a thundering dharma drum left the whole temple ringing as the monks hammered away like *taiko* masters. *Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo...* No one seemed to mind my being there, and little by little as my confidence grew it was easy to merge with the devotees around me—*Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo...* Darkness fell long before I left with a silent nod to the wandering monk, my head and heart ringing. Without my looking for it, something had rooted in my life.

I never forgot the small temple or the Lotus Sutra, but they say you can't go home again.

Passing the roadside sweepers I recalled that Indian Buddhists these days are largely Ambedkarite, from the Dalit community long stigmatized through caste restrictions. Fed up with untouchability, they converted in millions under Dr.

<sup>i</sup> "Korean Buddhist Journeys to Lands Worldly and Otherworldly", by Robert Buswell, Jr., appears in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.68, No. 4.

*The Lotus Singers: Short Stories from Contemporary South Asia*, is published by Cheng & Tsui, Boston.

Ambedkar in the 1940s and '50s. The mass conversions breathed life into India's dormant Buddhism; however, the new converts were short of proper teachers. Tibetans lent a hand. So did Japanese Nichiren monks devoted to the Lotus Sutra, establishing their small Calcutta temple in the 1950s—my first dharma home. The lake area, renamed, is now called Rabindra Sarovar.

Urban Bengalis find tranquility in their contained, neighborhood worlds. Our friends welcomed us to the shady alleys of Ballygunge. Upstairs, in a cool interior hung a remarkable painting in Ellora Cave-style of the *Padma-pani*, 'the Buddha Holds the Lotus in His Hand'. Large and gentle, it's a purely Indian image. Our old friend, Uma, created this—the *Jewel in the Lotus*.

At dinner we caught up on old times. On the table sat a green bottle: "Druk Mustard Sauce—Product of Bhutan." I studied the label, reflecting that even the little Shangri-la of Gross National Happiness has export considerations nowadays. Outside, distant pujas were underway—someone blew a conch, then the chants and metallic jangling of triangles rose from little Hindu temples. The alley below was empty, serene in moonlight.

Tall buildings surround the Japan Temple these days but we found it. My heart fluttered a little at the sight—an oasis in a crowded city, still gleaming white and red-trimmed within a walled garden compound. After nearly 40 years, I was back like the prodigal son. A monk was having tea with visitors from Japan when we arrived, and luckily spoke some English. Master Asai smiled at my

situation.

He led us to the prayer hall. The sense of grace was just the same: its calm interior redolent of incense, the altar and simple Buddha image as unchanged as I remembered. The great, weathered drum was there with its lettering like a magical incantation. I looked at my wife and saw that she felt it too. We walked about the altar slowly, made our bows, rang the singing bowl three times, burned incense, and made our offering.

We heard the mantra then, *Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo...* Master Asai chanting. We joined him in the prayer and the chant grew louder with three voices now. Soon, a new wave of devotees behind us took it up and I saw the Japanese visitors had joined us. Six voices and we chanted in unison, over and over, *Na-Mu Myo-Ho Ren-Ge Kyo...*

Master Asai deepened and threw his voice like a sounding whale. It brought us strength and we continued. The gardener, a sun-darkened man, entered and took his seat at the drum, balancing his wooden tipper-sticks in hand...*Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo...* Then the dharma drum began its thunder. For decades I've carried its heavy rhythm in my head and again it all came surging back as the drum-strokes grew in power and our chanting rolled in, wave on wave. *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo...* More incense filled the hall, the temple dome became a bell and we were ringing within it...*NA MU MYO HO REN GE KYO...*

Two uniformed school-girls appeared from the shadows. Others from the neighbourhood arrived, gathering around us,

chanting like that first time long ago. *Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo, Na Mu Myo Ho Ren Ge Kyo...* We chanted and our bodies swayed with these new dharma friends; the mighty drum pealed out the dharma, deep in the heart of the Lotus Sutra—*NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO... NA-MU-MYO-HO-REN-GE-KYO...* The tears came then and I saw them rolling down Master Asai as well; he'd taken up a small drum himself and was striking it with tremendous spirit. We were all in it together, deep in the heart of the Lotus Sutra like a golden rejoicing arising from the dust of the world.

Our sacred space is where we can find ourselves again and again, Joseph Campbell says. India is always a tough journey but we departed the Japan Temple that day with renewed love for the dharma, and for its Lotus teaching firmly anchored in the mud of this dusty world.

In the end, my book *The Lotus Singers* got done too. Back home, it takes a while to process these things. In a letter to a friend I wrote, "One scorching hot morning where we stayed a while in southern Goa, in a market street near an old Portuguese church, a band of weathered, barefoot women walked our way dressed in dazzling colors—radiant yellow and orange saris, golden ornaments hanging from ears and nose, bangles and anklets jingling like medieval gypsies. They looked at us as in a dream, and passed by like a piece of vivid weather. Then stillness once again. This Lotus World..."

*Trevor Carolan*  
Kolkata-Vancouver

## Margaret Smith Ungphakorn (1919-2012)

Margaret Smith (Ungphakorn) was a socialist, a feminist and a pacifist. She met my father at the London School of Economics during the Second World War. Previously, her teachers at St Paul's Girls' School encouraged her to become a feminist. Her room-mate at university was a close associate of George Lansbury, the socialist MP for Poplar. Margaret's mother was a Quaker and a pacifist, but



Margaret was an atheist and against all forms of superstition.

Margaret moved out to Thailand after the war and we all lived in a beautiful wooden

house with a wonderful garden. She was totally opposed to all forms of dictatorship and the role of the military in Thailand. She had no time for any monarchies. She loved to read and took a keen interest in political and social issues. She practiced social work in London and Bangkok.

Giles Ungphakorn



## Mom Luang Boonlua Debyasuvan\*

Mom Luang Boonlua Debyasuvan, whose centenary celebration has been officially recognized by UNESCO, was a distinguished teacher, educationist, critic, scholar, writer and poet. Born on 13 December 1911 into a family of intellectuals and artists, she imbibed the cultural richness of her social and familial milieu that accounted for her prowess as a thinker and artist. Her father, Chao Phya Deves Wongwiwat, served as a minister under King Chulalongkorn and more or less acted as His Majesty's confidant. Not blind loyalty was demanded by the great King of his officials, but an honest critical attitude. A tale told to her by her father, retold by her to her friends, colleagues and pupils, who go on retelling it to many, runs as follows:

*King Chulalongkorn repeatedly reminded his ministers and public servants of their duties towards the Crown in the following terms:*



*"If I have done something wrong and you dare not tell me the truth, it means that you are not loyal to me."*

Happy was the land that had such a king!

M.L. Boonlua always lived up to that principle of honest criticism, and she herself tolerated criticism, even from younger colleagues and pupils. She was the embodiment of a "critical culture" that contemporary Thailand has been thirsting for.

It was as a critic that she will always be remembered. In those

days of literary conservatism, M.L. Boonlua began to write criticism of contemporary literary works with the seriousness that one usually associates with the literary canon. She championed a great innovator and visionary like the poet Angkarn Kalayanaphong, while purists were still pointing their fingers at his breach of traditional prosody. On the basis of lecture notes for courses that she taught at the newly founded second campus of Silpakorn University in Nakorn Pathom, she launched what is now considered as a breakthrough in Thai literary history with a long article published in the *Festschrift Wan Waithayakorn* (1971) entitled, "The Turning Point of Thai Literature", in which she appropriated a rightful place for contemporary literature. The kind of innovative approach adopted for contemporary literature was then transferred to the study of classical literature in the mono-

\* Silkwork, Chiangmai, will soon publish the biography, *A Civilized Woman: M.L. Bunlua Thepyasuvan and the Thai Twentieth Century* by Susan Kepner.

graph, *Analysis of Thai Literature* (1974), in which a traditional work like *Khun Chang Khun Phaen* was reread with a critical eye, resulting in the verdict that it reflects the general lack of discipline typical of Thai society, and that even the irascible ruling monarch is incapable of acting sensibly.

On the creative front, M.L. Boonlua also distinguished herself as a novelist, although her fictions may not enjoy the same level of popularity as those of her elder sister, M. L. Bupha, (usually known under her penname of "Dok Mai Sod".) M. L. Boonlua critically looks at Thai society as a very complex web of relationships that defies simplistic treatment, and it must be admitted that readers at home with less intellectually and psychologically demanding novels do find her works a little intimidating.

As an educationist, she was respected by colleagues both at home and abroad. Her involve-

ment in the development of the SEAMEO Regional Language Centre was well appreciated. At home, she served as the founding director of the Supervisory Unit of the Ministry of Education. Besides, she was instrumental in the school curricular reform of 1978 which introduced a number of innovations that have had a long-lasting effect. At the tertiary level, she almost singlehandedly drafted the first curriculum of the Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, that reflected her faith in a "liberal education". Her professional honesty was legendary: one particular case is worth mentioning. Although she had served as Deputy Director of the Pre-university School of Chulalongkorn University, (known as "Triam Udom Suksa"), she proposed that the school be turned into a normal secondary school, for a two-year structure, in her opinion, merely served the function of a coaching school and ran counter to the sound edu-

cational philosophy of promoting socialization and character formation. Alas, nobody has paid attention to her criticism!

In her autobiography, written upon her retirement at the age of 60, with the provocative title *Success and Failure* (1971) M. L. Boonlua evaluated her own professional career very critically. Some readers may disagree with her that what she regarded as failure might actually have been her success, and *vice versa*. But her final verdict on Thai society in the last chapter will never fail to give us pause. She maintained that in terms technical and professional abilities, her younger contemporaries had made great advances, but they were miles behind her and her father's generations in terms of integrity and readiness to make sacrifices for the fatherland.

This is a voice of conscience to which we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be constantly listening.

Chetana Nagavajara

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April 11, 2555

Dear Mr. Sivaraksa:

I wish to share with you the linked article just published in the Cornell International Law Journal, "Cutting the Gordian Knot: How and Why the United Nations Should Vest the International Court of Justice with Referral Jurisdiction".

In this article I argue that the United Nations General Assembly should give the International Court of Justice what I call *Referral Jurisdiction*. This new form of jurisdiction would allow states to secure advisory judgments in their disputes with fellow states, regardless of whether those states had consented to the Court's jurisdiction. I make the case that Referral Jurisdiction is politically achievable, that it would improve compliance with international law and that it would strengthen the International Court of Justice.

As my colleagues and I are embarking on a political initiative to promote Referral Jurisdiction (see: [www.icjproject.org](http://www.icjproject.org)), I would be very interested in any thoughts about the article or the advancement of Referral Jurisdiction you might have. Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew Strauss

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April 12, 2555

Dear Sulak,

First of all, apologies that it has taken so long for me to write to thank you for participating in our conference. I really appreciate the fact that you took time out of your busy schedule and that you traveled half the world at your great age! Your message was very important and a great inspiration, and I'm sure you could see how enthusiastically your words were received.

We got the most amazing responses from participants... many of whom said this was the best conference that they had ever attended! What made it special was the bridging of voices from all over the globe — a sharing of thoughts and perspectives that created a truly memorable event and strengthened the convictions of many individuals who are working to create a new economy and liberate themselves from the global consumer culture.

I was sorry that you couldn't join the Monday meeting. Bringing the voices from the North (urban, industrialized) and the South (more rural, decentralized) together, is at the heart of ISEC's work and this can be hard to do. The different perspectives can make it extremely difficult for everyone to be on the same agenda. Generally the South prefers a more holistic approach where issues and ideas emerge slowly and organically, whereas Northerners tend to prefer a clearer, more narrow and goal-oriented agenda, at a more rapid pace. Regardless, many of the conversations that took place that day were valuable and thought-provoking and I am pleased that some of us are beginning to form an International Alliance for Localisation.

I'm so late with this letter because things have been exceptionally busy. We had several more post-conference meetings and then it was off to numerous intensive days of meetings on East coast, including the Gross National Happiness meeting at the UN - which was very inspiring; a long catch-up with Noam Chomsky, which was quite emotional for me (I hadn't seen him for about 10 years). I also had lunch with Chris Hedges and one of the main organizers of Occupy. I loved Chris who is happy to collaborate — great integrity and depth of experience...

Once again, I want to say how much I appreciated your help and support. I hope to stay in touch and would love to find ways of collaborating further.

With warmest good wishes and big hugs,  
Helena Nobert Hodge

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Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa

I am Noriaki Fujimori, a minister of Higashi Hongwanji temple in Hawaii. I used to attend INEB conference with Ryowa Suzuki-san and Teruo Maruyama-san long time ago. I have attended a forest tour led by Phra Pra Chack forest monk. I am living Hawaii and taking care of a temple in Hawaii.

Anyway, the reason I am contacting you is that a Higashi Hongwanji temple in Sao Paulo Brazil would like to invite

you to be a guest speaker on Aug. 25 & 26, 2012. There is an anniversary event for the temple. I know that you are a super busy person. Is it possible to go to Brazil on Aug 25 & 26, 2012? If possible, I would like to email you more detail about the event. So, would you please let me know whether you can make it or not?

In addition, I do not yet to send my membership fee and some articles which I have written about your activities.

Noriaki Fujimori with aloha & gassho

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Hamburg, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2012

Dear Ajahn Sulak.

It was a lucky event that I received a 'Seeds of Peace' issue (vol. 27 no.3) today when I picked up mail from my former accomodation here in Hamburg, Germany. Somebody at Suan Nguen must have been so kind to send it to me.

I was fortunate to be able to stay at Suan Nguen in 2009 for several months as a volunteer and to teach English to the office staff. I became friends with many people and enjoyed my stay a lot. The last time I was able to visit Siam was in May 2010. That time I could only stay for a couple of days since I was about to return home to Germany from my employment with an airline company in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

In June 2010 I returned to my hometown of Kiel in northern Germany with the firm plan to keep studying the Thai language, something I had started during my stay in Bangkok at Thammasat University. At the University of Hamburg I found a place to do so. Since November 2010 I've been studying Thai script and language. I've made progress in my ability to read and understand spoken Thai. My conversational skills are still quite limited to my mind.

That is the rough outline of the past two years. Ever since I returned home I nurtured the dream of coming back to Siam one day, a country that left the greatest impression in my heart and mind. Since then my ambitions to come to Siam were restricted by time and the fact that I had to pay rent for my accomodation and study fees here in Hamburg.

At the same time my personal outlook on life here in Germany didn't change to the good. After being away from Europe for two years from 2008 until 2010 it was strange to settle down in Germany again. My dream to stay connected to Siam as far away as I am here in Europe has proved to be quite difficult for me. In order to keep my faith I joined regular meetings of the Buddhist Community Hamburg (BGH) which has a long history as one of the first Buddhist groups in Germany. Listening to lectures and discussing 'Dhamma' in a group has kept my spirit alive. Nonetheless I felt as if I had reached a dead-end. My will and spirit to live in a highly industrialized and urbanized society has weakened to a great extent.

I try my best to entangle my thoughts that I used to perceive as highly dissatisfactory and distressful. At the same time I looked at different options to give my life a new perspective and I still do. My dream would be to live in Siam constantly but up to now I haven't found a way to realize this plan. When I read the newest issue of 'Seeds of Peace' I made up my mind to write an open letter to you. I know that you might have other things to do than giving advice to a young man who hasn't figured out how to live a meaningful life himself. Despite of that I wanted to write this letter to show appreciation for your social engagement and to ask for any ideas in what field a could possibly get engaged to be able to live in Siam.

In the meantime I would be happy to make further contributions for the 'Seeds of Peace' magazine if time permits. In case you should have any ideas or thoughts that you would want to share with me I would be delighted about your response.

Sincerely

Jan Matthias Trapp

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22<sup>nd</sup> March 2012

Dear Sulak,

Thank you for your letter. It is always good to hear from you and I hope you and your family are in good health and good spirits. I am sorry it has taken me a while to reply. As you know I have been away in China. During my visit I was giving lectures at Sichuan Fine Art Institute and Chongqing University which was the purpose of my visit. Whilst

I was in Chongqing I stayed with a Chinese family who looked after me very well and I met many people as you can imagine were nice and friendly. However Chongqing is like nowhere else I have been. Such an industrial city as if people are preparing for war in the sense that its people are all trying to get rich quick and instead from an environmental point of view they are heading over a cliff. Or more likely they do not know exactly where they are going and are caught up in the fog of industrial activity. Overall I found my visit to China interesting and my lectures were well received.

On the way back I stayed on a remote island on the outskirts of Hong Kong and had the good fortune to stay at an old school friend's home and was guided around by his father who gave me an insider's view of Hong Kong.

Upon my return I have been in London and Devon. My brother Jacob has moved back home and seems more settled now than he did when he first returned. My father is doing pretty well considering how his life has changed since his stroke. We have some very nice visitors that cheer him up and my father has lots of friends that are in and out of the house. My mother is as energetic as ever and never ceases to amaze me where she gets her energy from and despite everything she still has time to do her drawing into the evenings after days that are full.

It would be lovely to see you before too long. In the meantime I wish you and your family my very best wishes and you a very happy birthday.

Nathaniel Lane



Dear Ajarn Sulak,

Thank you for your letter and the New Year Card! And also thank you for the new edition of *Seeds of Peace*, which arrived here almost at the same time!

I was already worrying, you might not be well, and could not send cards this year, but now I am happy to see that you maintain your path.

It would be good to see you!

I am busy with my usual things. Next Sunday evening I will give a piano recital in Berlin.

Until a few days ago, we did not have a real winter, but now, suddenly it became very cold. It is impossible to stay outside for a longer period of time. In this moment it is 9.30 in the morning, and we have -15 ° celsius with clear sky and sun. I feel like in Tibet.

I tried to call Barbara Baumann, but still could not reach her.

I send my love, my warmest regards and best wishes to you!

Bernd Sander



My Dear Sulak

How delightful it was to hear from you and to have your lovely card which made me wish to visit Thailand very much! I trust you and your family are well amidst the turmoil of our days. My wife Henrietta sends messages of affection and hopes you will visit us again one of these days.

I much enjoyed your card and the verses from the Dhammapada. Today in London the sun is shining and the sky is blue and I was thinking how little all this beauty cares for the tumult of men and how little we can change it.

I am happy that you felt my review of your book was fair and acceptable to you and of course I am delighted that you should choose to reproduce it for whatever purpose you choose. I enjoyed your book very much and keep it on my desk to remind me to breathe and to release my attachments. Like so much in life it is a question of practice and a certain diligence and as one gets older that all seems to be more important.

I am happy to report that Temenos is well and continues to flourish in small part. I have decided to stand down as the Chairman as I felt someone else should take up the post but I continue to serve on its Council and take a particular interest in its Sufi studies which I have come to trust and like very much.

So this note is just to wish you well Sulak and hope in your turbulent world you continue to go peacefully amongst the crowd and to wish you and your family content in this coming year. Again I express my hope we shall meet again.

With our love and all good wishes

Sir Nick Pearson

January 17, 2555

Dear Sulak,

We have finished the Western festive season and started with the year 2012! According to what we get to read here, some people in Siam are seriously in trouble because of offending some royal laws. Are you in trouble because of the old accusations? Now we are approaching the Chinese New Year, the year of the Dragon! We wish you all the best, first of all health, happiness and strength to stay on and to overcome the suffering of life. By the way, I am missing your "New Year Card 2012"! I have collected those wonderful artistic greetings since 1999! I would be happy and thankful if you could help me to add the latest edition 2012.

Marielle has invited me to join the next annual meeting of Projects of Hope 2012. Are you planning to come? That could be a wonderful occasion to see each other in the enlightened atmosphere at Lake Constance! I could carry the deep red Vatican wine of San Pedro! What do you think about this idea?

Hope you are fine! Greetings to you and your family,

yours — Inge & Wolfgang Schmidt

Dear Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa

Thank you very much for your lovely card.

How are you and your family?

I have been truly honored to meet you and your family in Kyoto last year.

My younger daughter, Sayaka is going to be in her second year majoring in environmental bio-science at Kobe College and my older daughter, Azusa is going to graduate from Kyoto Notre Dame University in March.

Mayumi has been enjoying her time with her Korean friend translating a Korean book of ecology into Japanese.

I enjoy playing with little children whose parents are my nephews. They call me "TerryG" (meaning grandpa Terry)

To wish you a joyful 2012

Sincerely,

Terry & Mayumi Futaba

December 29, 2554

Dear Sulak,

I hope you are well! We haven't met for quite some while. Today I'm writing to you because I need your help.

I'm currently editing a four volumes anthology on "Buddhism and Religious Diversity" for the Routledge Critical Concepts Series. It will be published as a set of 4 reprinted hardback volumes, with approximately 1,600 pages (86 articles) in total, the price around £650 and the print run will be approx. 175 copies. So it is more or less only produced for use by research libraries.

In this collection, I would like to include

1) David Chappell, "Six Buddhist Attitudes Toward Other Religions", in: S.Sivaraksa (ed.), *Radical Conservatism. Buddhism in the Contemporary World*. Articles in Honour of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's 84<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development 1990, pp. 443-458.

2) Phra Paisan Visalo, *On the Path toward Peace and Justice: Challenges Confronting Buddhists and Muslims*, in: *Seeds of Peace* 22.3 (2006)15-20.

3) Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, *Christianity and Buddhism*, Bangkok 1967, pp. 8-20; 22-25; 95-107

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With all good wishes for New Year,

Perry Schmidt-Leukel

26 January 2012

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

The arrival of the latest issue of *Seeds of Peace* illuminated my day. Congratulations on your being awarded the Niwano Peace Prize, honoring your dedication to global inter-religious dialogue and engagement. Violence is all around us, be it in the form of inequalities, discrimination or crime, such as that committed against Tibetans. Please find enclosed my cheque of \$ 200 to help contribute to your enlightening work.

It has been a privilege and honor to get to know you.

With warmest wishes for you and your family.

Jean - Luis Armand  
France



Back in Bangkok, after my journey to Bodhgaya, I could breathe a bit more easily.

The voyage was very tiring and nothing was gained in advance, but it was essential to do it and I came back feeling relieved that I had done so. Because it all worked out for the best, which was not at all sure before the event. The first thing was to get a ticket and arrive at the beginning of the afternoon of 5 January. After that, since I had no hotel reservation, my first task was to find a roof over my head in this dusty little town, suddenly invaded by 300,000 pilgrims. Most hotels and guesthouses had already been booked since several months. The new director of the hotel where we usually stayed claimed to have no knowledge of a promise of a room, which had been given to me during a telephone conversation from Bangkok, and frankly, he did not want to know. The manager of a Tibetan hotel, who was also a friend, said that he had been ill and that he had only just seen an e-mail sent fifteen days earlier. He assured me however that he had found a lodging a bit further out and asked one of his staff to accompany me without delay, but once we arrived at the destination I was told that the room was already occupied.



In the meantime, I met up with the sister of the Dalai Lama who asked me to come to her hotel to fetch the bag of Claude's ashes, which a Tibetan friend in Geneva had accepted to transport directly to her. I had immediately to go to the Dalai Lama's office with this precious bag in my rucksack and give it to his secretary, because the following morning at dawn His Holiness was going to carry out a ceremony at the foot of the tree of Bodhi where the Buddha reached enlightenment, and he would bless Claude's ashes before dispersing them.

After having knocked on doors of hotels or guest houses in vain, I was contacted by a Canadian friend who had made a film on the forcing of Tibetan nomads being made sedentary, and he gave me a rendezvous for dinner with an American friend who had unearthed a room for the night in a modest guest house where she was staying, a good half an hour from Bodhgaya in a rickshaw. To get there, there was no other choice of transport, all the more because cars were forbidden access to the town. We arrived at the lodging at 10 pm, passing through rice fields and sleeping hamlets in the Indian countryside. The driver of the rickshaw had lot of trouble to get through the muddy paths, and was constantly interrupted by the sudden appearance and barking of wandering dogs. The cows were dozing, a few recumbent camels chewed the cud, and some pigs squelched about in the rubbish. At the end of a bumpy lane we arrived at our destination; four or five haphazard buildings, still under construction.

After taking off my shoes, the owner of the guesthouse took me to the first floor and my room; a cube of cement, narrow and dusty, with no window, and just a basic bed and a blanket, without any chair or table to put my things on. And not even a towel. On the off chance, I had brought one with me. The toilets were on the floor above, and the sink of the kitchen a little further on was at my disposition to wash in. Before I went to bed, another guest loaned me some soap to wash with, and in an empty bedroom I unearthed an apology for a thin mattress and an extra blanket.

Two blankets however were not sufficient to protect me from the bitter cold that beset me a large part of the night. However, the next day was another day.

On 6 January at dawn the Dalai Lama went to the foot of the tree of Bodhi, and already dozens of thousands of pilgrims had invaded the surroundings, having been precipitated into the park as soon as it opened at 4 am. It was during this initiation ceremony of Kalachakra that His Holiness blessed Claude's ashes, and dispersed a handful at the foot of the tree, where the historic Buddha found enlightenment. His Holiness received me at 4 pm at the end of his teaching, which had again taken place at the beginning of the afternoon in the immense tent at the place reserved for the

Kalachakra, and He spoke to me of the course of events of his homage to Claude.

He explained that first of all he meditated on Claude at the beginning of the day, and evoked her memory in his morning meditation. For Him, she was a close and real friend. He remembered her strong personality, and her constant commitment to Buddhism and Tibet. He also remembered her smile, her detachment and her good heart.

The Dalai Lama again recalled that he had blessed her ashes before dispersing a handful at the foot of the tree of Bodhi, and that he had kept a part to take with him to Dharamsala, India, where he lives, and which is also the seat of the Tibetan Government in Exile. Lastly, he confided to me that in his meditation he arrived at the conclusion that Claude will be reincarnated in Tibet, and that there was no doubt about it.

Before I left, I showed him some photos of the dispersion of some of Claude's ashes last September at Lake Manrosovar near Mount Kailash in Tibet.

He thought that it was also a happy initiative, and he saw an auspicious sign in the rainbow. In this way, he said, Claude is in Bodhgaya where Buddhism was born, and also in Tibet, which she loved so much.

That evening, I preferred to remain alone, and joined in with the crowd of pilgrims who walked around the tree of Bodhi, and I sat down close to it to pray. Before starting off for home, I once again stopped at the hotel of the father of one of my Indian friends working in Japan, who was visiting Bodhgaya, and he offered to give me a bed for the night in an office, but I preferred to go back to my makeshift shelter, this time equipped with a good blanket my friend loaned me, which helped me to spend the night a little better protected against the cold.

The next day, 7 January, I was surprised to learn that a room was available for me in the most luxurious hotel of the region, the Royal Residency, with a special price. It was on the way to the airport, where all the VIPS stayed, starting with Richard Gere, Prime Ministers of Indian states passing through, the new young Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government in Exile, film makers, all sorts of moneyed bourgeois and even the elegant and beautiful Miss Tibet. I did not of course miss this golden opportunity, and I hurried to fetch my modest luggage in a rickshaw, which took me a good hour through deepest and unchanging India, above all in Bihar, which remains one of the poorest states.

Between the two lodgings, it was the difference between day and night, from the most modest possible to enormous luxury. I took advantage of being able to have a shower before returning to the teaching.

On Sunday, before going to the airport, I first returned on foot to the foot of the holy tree and was caught up in a crowd movement, people pushing in first one direction and then another, so much that for a moment I was afraid I would miss the plane. But no, I had enough time to return to the ceremony of Kalachakra where the Heads of the various Tibetan Buddhist schools and other religious dignitaries made offerings to the Dalai Lama. After having said goodbye to several friends, the secretary of the Dalai Lama took me behind His throne to enable me to discover the Mandala, this diagram made of grains of sand, a graphic representation of the world made by monks during the ceremony, which would be dispersed in a river when finished.

This journey to Bodhgaya was a good lesson in Buddhism. Sometimes my nerves were strained to the maximum, and I felt strong emotions. But I had to hang on in there, persevere and not give up. I believe I did what I had to do. There we are, you know almost everything, even if I got a bit lost in the details.

Jean-Claude Bahrer

15/09/11

Dear Sulak,

During the last few days my secretary has been reading to me extracts from the three issues of *Seeds of Peace*, which you were so kind as to send me. The articles are very interesting. I particularly appreciated the articles on the futuristic monk, on the Dalai Lama, and on the civil war in Sri Lanka. The last of these served to remind me that many years ago I published a review of Walpola Rahula's book *The Heritage of the Bikkhu* entitled 'Religion-Nationalism in Sri Lanka'. I think you would find the review of interest. Unfortunately the book in which it subsequently appeared is now out of print, and I am therefore having to send you a copy of the article.

A few days ago there was an item on the radio about a Thai orchestra that was performing at a London theatre. I was glad to know that there was this kind of cultural contact between Siam and this country. Unfortunately, there is very little news about Siam (or Thailand) in our media.

I am taking out a subscription to *Seeds of Peace*, as a small expression of my moral support for the noble work you are doing.

With best wishes,

Sangharakshita

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

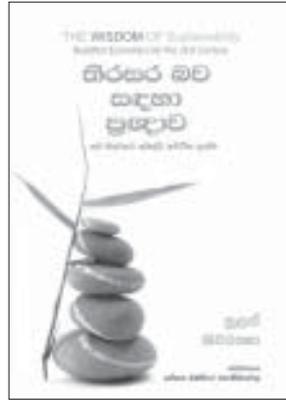
**Combining a detailed dissection of our unsustainable economy with an introduction to Buddhism, Sulak Sivaraksa's economic vision provides an alternative to globalisation.**

In the wake of the global economic crisis, with a population of nearly seven billion and the pressure on commodities that has brought about, you could be forgiven for taking a gloomy view of the future. While ensuring access to food is a clear necessity, providing a first-world lifestyle for all these billions of people seems a little farfetched. Even if an ideal lifestyle isn't pie-in-the-sky, how can it be funded? Can globalisation provide it? Does world agriculture have the capacity to provide the raw materials? The answer to all these questions is that no one really knows for sure. Despite these concerns, the World Bank and the IMF continue to finance initiatives aimed at reducing poverty through industrialisation and modernisation. But according to Sulak Sivaraksa, there is an alternative.

Sivaraksa's economic theory involves a fusion of Buddhist principles and a return to focus on small-scale economies. With this method, he contends, we can eradicate poverty and restore the cultural values that have been lost. Having spent his life split between living as a Buddhist in Thailand and as an academic in the West, Sivaraksa, twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and a winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize, is perfectly placed to dissect the impact of globalisation.

*The Wisdom of Sustainability* is a sort of self-help book for

\* *The Chinese edition has just been published*



the global economy, outlining the failures and inequalities of our current practices as well as providing feasible alternatives. A convincing and damning argument is built up against the World Bank's current policy based on financing modernisation across the globe, which is leaving developing countries dependent on industrialised ones. Focusing in particular on his Thai homeland, and more generally on South East Asia, Sivaraksa eloquently lays out his case for change, providing detailed examples of countries in which globalisation has failed to reduce poverty and has instead created a gulf between rich and poor.

Damning though some of its indictments of World Bank policy are, not everything is doom and gloom and it provides the global economy with a number of alternative methods for eradicating poverty and building a sustainable world. These require the restructuring of the current governmental and economic institutions to more closely align them with Buddhist principles and remove prejudice and inequality in the process. While switching between detailing the failures of the 'in-

dustrial North' and outlining his alternative policies, Sivaraksa also introduces Buddhism and its guiding principles, and explains how they can be applied to the global financial system.

Much of what Sivaraksa suggests is perfectly plausible, although some of it seems a little impractical. Suggesting that governments focus on Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than Gross National Product (GNP), Sivaraksa calls for scientists, economists and spiritual leaders to develop measures of GNH and even provides potential indicators of happiness, including environmental integrity, to get them started. Silly though this might sound, happiness measures are already being adopted by a number of Western governments, including Denmark, France and the UK. Other suggestions are more immediately practical and are something we could all strive for. The three Buddhist evils are greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and ignorance (*moha*) and Sivaraksa believes we need to remove these evils from our personal affairs and our institutions to enable social change. Thankfully, *The Wisdom of Sustainability* has a cure in mind: 'If people everywhere respect each other, it would form a strong moral force to overcome greed, hatred, and ignorance,' writes Sivaraksa. One can only hope that he's right.

*The Wisdom of Sustainability* is an engaging and informative read. The argument made opposing the World Bank and our current 'economy of globalisation' is compelling and it is hard to ignore the way that progress and development have

failed to benefit the citizens of the 'agricultural South'. While it may be unrealistic to expect the entire world, especially the small groups who control powerful

institutions, to convert to Buddhism; adopting Buddhist principles such as removing greed, hatred and ignorance from our lives and institutions, shouldn't

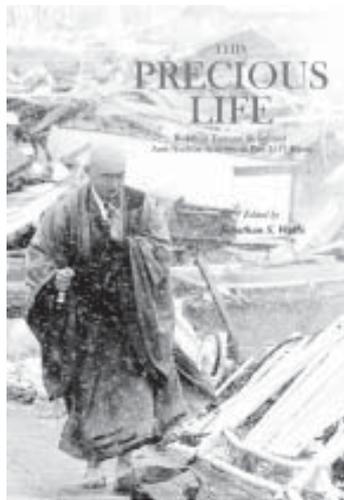
be beyond our capabilities.

William McLennan  
24<sup>th</sup> March, 2011

**This Precious Life  
Buddhist Tsunami Relief and  
Anti-Nuclear Activism in Post 3/11 Japan**

Edited by Jonathan S. Watts

The tragic triple disaster of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown that occurred in northern Japan on March 11, 2011 hit a nation already in crisis; both economically and spiritually. *This Precious Life* takes us through the unfolding events of 2011 documenting efforts by Japanese Buddhist priests, temples, and organizations to respond to both the sudden disaster of the tsunami and the ongoing disaster of the nuclear power plants. While Japanese Buddhism has been struggling to recover its meaning for people in this highly modernized nation, the past year has shown its great



ability to serve people in times of crisis and trauma. Meanwhile, Japanese Buddhism is slowly

starting to take on the nuclear issue and deeper structural problems that face the nation. *This Precious Life* is filled with many moving stories from this epoch making year; provides a variety of critiques of both Japanese society and Japanese Buddhism; and presents the work of a small group of Buddhist visionaries already working to create the new Japan of post 3/11.

TO ORDER (US\$10; 208 pages):  
In Asia, through the INEB Office in Bangkok  
In Japan, from the publisher: [ogigaya@gmail.com](mailto:ogigaya@gmail.com)  
In the West, from Amazon.com

**A Tale of Aceh**

by Danny Campbell

(Suksit Siam) Bangkok 2012, Euro.10

Danny Campbell's latest short story/novella? entitled *A Tale of Aceh* gives an insightful perspective into one GAM (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka - Free Aceh Movement) soldier's struggle for freedom. Hasan Bangkaru recalls the moment as a child when he became a rebel after his uncle was killed with no provocation except to frighten the villagers. His odyssey takes place in the Sumatran forest where 'extraordinary life' revolves around human beings,



wild animals and witnessing meaningless death.

Campbell appeals to the senses with his recurring themes

and images of the steamy equatorial heat, decay and death contrasted against the vibrant plant and animal life and how humans survive amidst volatile conflicted landscape. Hasan escaped certain death during an ambush only to realize afterwards that 'his trouble was just beginning.' The flesh wound in his shoulder forced him to seek shelter in an unsuspecting place within the forest canopy. Hasan's unlikely nurse helped him become more

stable before leaving the refuge the canopy provided. As a frightened youth hiding among the trees he yearned ‘for a normality he had never known.’

Campbell poignantly por-

trays how the innocent are caught in the cycle of violence and become its victims. This cycle is no respecter of human or animal beings. Hasan is impacted by all the misery he has encountered

which he finds to be ‘an arbitrary and cruel joke.’ He learned to suppress these feelings in order to stay alive.

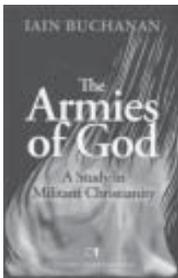
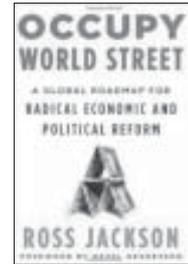
Rita Litwiller



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 Edited by David Suzuki, Keibo Oiwa  
 Published by Fulcrum Publishing; (July 23, 1999)

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 Foreword by Hazel Henderson  
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Edited by Darwis Khudori  
 Published by ICRP: Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace



**Das neue SympathieMagazin  
 "Thailand verstehen"**  
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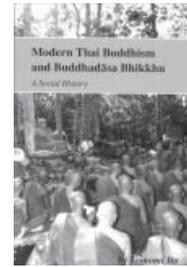
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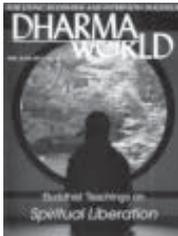
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 Published by The Nippon Foundation in January 2012

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 Published by Wat Thai Buddhagaya Bodh-Gaya Bihar,  
 India 2008

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# CLIMATE *Inter-Religious Dialogue on* CHANGE

**Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka  
September 23-27, 2012**

*First Period:* September 23–24  
Exposures to areas affected by climate change  
on the island.

*Second Period:* September 25–27  
The main conference.

The conference will weave together general themes from faith-based traditions and science. Topics will include: environmental education; materialism and consumerism; natural resource management; grassroots adaptation and mitigation; disaster risk reduction humanitarian aid; and national policy and program advocacy in addition to others.

*Registration:* Since the number of participants will be limited to 100 persons, please register early. *The registration deadline is August 31, 2012.* The registration form can be downloaded directly from the conference website: [www.inebnetwork.org](http://www.inebnetwork.org)

*Fees:*

140 USD September 23 – 24 : exposure trip

320 USD September 25 – 27 : conference registration

**460 USD Total** cost to participate in exposure trips  
and the conference

*The registration fee includes food and lodging as well as the local transportation for the exposure trips.*

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