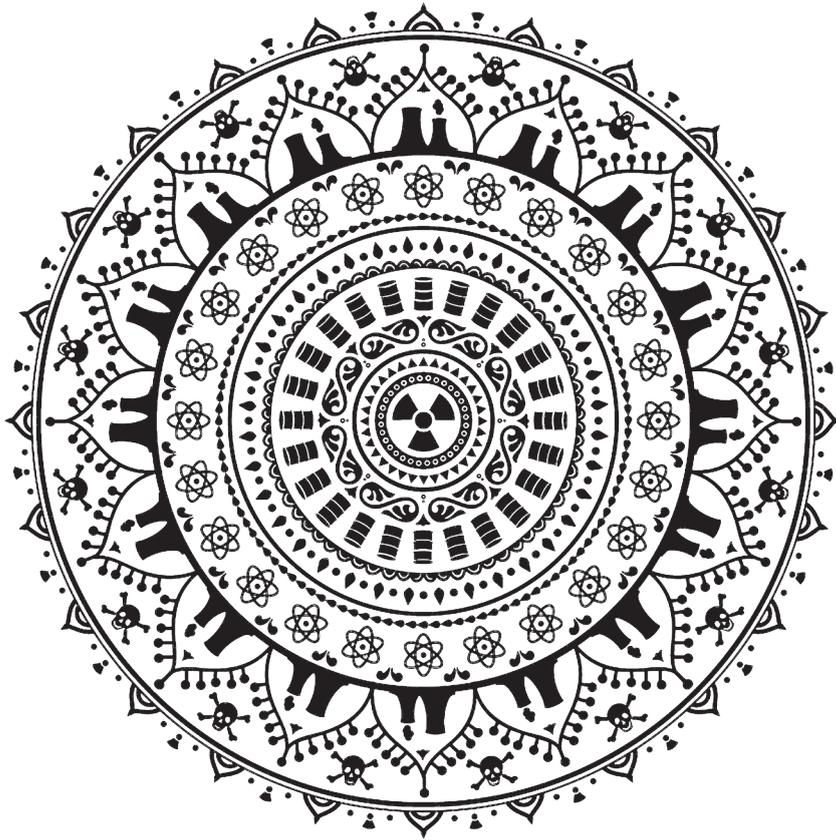


# SEEDS OF PEACE

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Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation

The 50th Anniversary of  
the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF)

Publisher  
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF  
ENGAGED BUDDHISTS (INEB)

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and the organizations under SNF including  
the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)  
and the School for Wellbeing Studies  
and Research.

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## Editorial Note

### Hello INEB Friends,

This issue marks the 50th year since the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) was founded by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and “has served as one of the bastions of knowledge and critical and alternative thinking in Thai society.” As Surasee Kosolnawin, our dear friend and SNF Chairman, writes, “SNF has continuously carried out numerous activities and projects even in periods of political turmoil.” It has promoted activities that are often widely accessible, deeply humane, and avant garde. Truth, Beauty, and Goodness serve as its north star.”

We recognize that SNF’s contributions to building a vibrant civil society throughout Siam are reaching second and third generations of people at all levels beginning at the grassroots. Its constancy and commitment has been passed from generation to generation. *Seeds of Peace* provides information about many activities that take place through SNF’s organizations and projects. We celebrate with SNF as we continue “to swim against the mainstream and join hands in solidarity with others in the struggle for social justice.”

Gene Sharp, one of the leaders of nonviolence passed away in January. His unwavering contribution to nonviolent approaches to end violent conflict have been used in many countries around the world and transferred from generation to generation. Sharp wrote *From Dictatorship to Democracy* as a guide to nonviolent struggle after visiting Burma in the early 1990s and has inspired many social activists, thinkers and others throughout the region. His book, which has been translated into 34 languages, continues to provide the blueprint for inspiring nonviolent action.

INEB’s strategic 10 year roadmap has eleven specific areas of engagement which are in various stages of development and implementation. This issue includes the INEB Institute’s School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS) and Awakening Leadership Training (ALT).

The School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS) has completed its third year. Some of its 14 students described their personal growth experiences in the article. SENS continues to incorporate new lessons learned into the entire curriculum to provide the best possible learning experience for the participants and faculty. The demand to develop and adapt the course also expands its use and application in more contexts and countries throughout the region.

The Awakening Leadership Training (ALT) Program is also in its third year, and will take place over six months beginning in September 2018 and ending in March 2019. This year’s theme, *Towards a New Paradigm of Holistic Sustainability*, is based on empowering and deepening ecovillage design education. The learning will weave inner transformation and societal understanding with techniques for community building and effective mindful leadership. It provides space for dialogue, reflection and contemplation on the deep questions facing humanity and our planet. Participants are welcome to enroll for individual courses or the entire program.

Father Michael Lapsley, an Anglican priest from South Africa, spoke in Yangon on Redeeming the Past. He described his healing journey surviving the explosion of a letter bomb and how it contributed to a movement of redemption and restorative justice reaching far beyond individual circumstances. The Institute for Healing of Memories in South Africa was established with Father Lapsley’s support and provides a space for people from South Africa to tell their stories in workshops as they work through their trauma.

Our good friend Jane Rasbash quotes Father Lapsley, “Our lives are like rivers, a traumatic event happens and the river goes to a whirlpool. Healing commences when the river flows.” The article talks about how healing has taken place in various countries using different approaches, and that leadership with moral vision is needed at all levels. Father Lapsley also was the guest speaker for the 24th Annual Spirit in Education Movement public lecture at Thammasat University on February 3.

Please read the country reports and articles that provide insightful perspectives into unfolding situations throughout the Southeast Asia region and beyond.

We are looking forward to new experiences and learning as the roadmap evolves. Next issue we will share progress in the Asian Network of Buddhists for Child Protection and Empowering the Bhikkhuni Sangha, as well as others.

## The 50th Anniversary of the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF)

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Arguably, the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) has served as one of the bastions of knowledge and critical and alternative thinking in Thai society. It was founded in honor of two Thai sages, and has gradually grown due to the work and dedication of numerous people—intellectuals, writers, artists, academics, conservationists, historians, archaeologists, social activists, youth who started new social and conservation movements, etc. They have served as co-creators and representatives of SNF’s spirit and objectives. For five decades, SNF has continuously carried out numerous activities and projects, even in periods of political turmoil. It has promoted activities that are often widely accessible, deeply humane, and avant-garde. Truth, Beauty, and Goodness serve as its north star. Superficially, it may seem that SNF has only been doing charity work and advocating piecemeal reforms. However, it cannot be denied that at the practical level, SNF activities do touch on profound, structural issues such as the ecological crisis and the future of Thai society. It has also cultivated critical and alternative thinking as evident in, for example, the idea of socially engaged spirituality or engaged Buddhism.

The above mentioned qualities are the hallmarks of SNF, and they are readily apparent throughout the five decades of its existence. SNF’s board members and staff have always come from different generations. Together, they have organized

activities both locally and internationally. All these can be found in the book, *Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation at 50*. It shows that SNF has always been ahead of the curve, so to speak.

Reading *Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation at 50*, we get the feeling that we are a part of SNF since its founding. More precisely, this book not only provides biographical sketches of key figures in SNF, but also a rich oral history told from multiple perspectives. For example, we get to read powerful and moving testimonies of individuals who were involved with SNF during the events leading to 14 October 1973, 6 October 1976, and so on. These are stories of kindred spirits as well as of successes and failures, which are a part of SNF’s experience, knowledge, and learning process. As such, it is interesting to speculate how SNF will move ahead in the next 50 years.

In sum, this book provides a rich history of SNF and enables us to know about numerous people who are our kalyanamitta (i.e., virtuous companions). It enables the reader to mine through the foundation’s memory and accumulated knowledge pertaining to social movements and alternative thoughts and ideas. After all, SNF is not part of the so-called “Poverty Inc.” Hopefully, the reader will be inspired to critique and swim against the mainstream, and join hands in solidarity with others in the struggle for social justice.

**Surasee Kosolnawin**

Chairman of SNF

Burma:

# End the Buddhist Terror in Myanmar Now

*Hozan Alan Senauke*

(RNS) — Last week I returned from refugee camps in Bangladesh where 700,000 Rohingya people have fled Myanmar — a country where Buddhism is the state religion — crossing into precarious exile in southern Bangladesh.

One Rohingya refugee we spoke with said:

“We came here just to take shelter and we are thankful to be given shelter. But camp life is not home. We stay here as refugees. We want what normal people

have. We are looking for a normal standard of life.”

The Rohingyas are a Muslim ethnic minority, who have lived in Myanmar’s western Rakhine state for many generations. The roots of this conflict are complex and arguable. But the sheer scale of Rohingya suffering goes beyond all argument and justification.

What I saw of the camps was a seemingly endless, sprawling, dusty tangle of tents fashioned from bamboo strips and plastic

sheets. There are open sewers running in thick streams beside the dirt pathways. The refugees, among them huge numbers of children, are everywhere.

I heard stories of their villages burning just miles away in Myanmar. I was told of unimaginable violence, of mass rape and murder, of soldiers throwing babies into the flames.

Satellite imagery shows the devastation of villages in Myanmar, but nothing can convey the realities of frightened and broken people, bereft of families, land and livelihood. The Rohingya people I met speak of this as the “Buddhist terror,” an unholy alliance of the Myanmar army, monks and Rakhine Buddhists.

The terrible irony is that a decade ago, the world’s Buddhists witnessed Myanmar’s “Saffron Revolution.”

Monks and nuns courageously faced down the military’s guns and bayonets, chanting the Metta Sutta, the Buddha’s ancient verse of lovingkindness, which includes this verse: “... as a mother at the risk of her life watches over and protects her only child, so with a boundless mind should one cherish all living things, suffusing love over the entire world ...”

Today, ultranationalist monks — members of Ma Ba Tha, the Association for Protection of Race and Religion — stand behind the military and urge them on, sometimes participating in the violence themselves. The power of this organization and of the conflation of religious, military and governmental institutions is such that concerned monks and ordinary citizens fear for their lives if they speak out.



Rohingya Muslims, who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh, carry an elderly woman in a basket and walk toward a refugee camp in Shah Porir Dwip, Bangladesh, on Sept. 14, 2017. AP Photo/Dar Yasin

# Country Reports



This combination of two satellite images provided by DigitalGlobe — Dec. 2, 2017, top image; and Feb. 19, 2018, bottom image — displaying the village of Thit Tone Nar Gwa Son, about 30 miles north of Maungdaw, Rakhine state, Myanmar, shows the predominantly Rohingya village and hamlets that have been completely leveled by authorities in recent weeks, far more than previously reported. While Myanmar’s government claims it’s simply trying to rebuild a devastated region, the operation has raised deep concern among human rights advocates, who say the government is destroying what amounts to scores of crime scenes before any credible investigation takes place. (DigitalGlobe via AP)

In March, the U.N. special rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, told the U.N. Human Rights Council, “I am becoming more convinced that the crimes committed bear the hallmarks of genocide.” The U.N.’s definition of genocide, simply put, calls out acts committed with an “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”

The crisis in Myanmar and in Bangladesh continues to unfold. An estimated \$1 billion is necessary for infrastructure, medicine, food and clothing over the next several months. Monsoon rains are coming soon, threatening to turn barren hillside camps into a morass of mud and sewage.

Material aid is a pressing need. This must come from sympathetic governments, nongovernmental organizations and ordinary people. Along with aid, we must urge our governments and international bodies to take up all possible nonviolent methods — sanctions, boycotts, letters, vigils and all kinds of moral pressure — to persuade and compel the government of Myanmar to change its policies of oppression.

This is vital, not just for the Rohingya people, but for other ethnic minorities in Myanmar — the Kachin, Shan, Karen and others —

who likewise face murder and scorched earth. The Rohingyas and these minorities want the same things: safety and freedom from violence, citizenship and legal rights in a multiethnic Myanmar, and justice — accountability in an international tribunal for the perpetrators of atrocities.

Let the U.S. Congress, U.N. officials and Myanmar’s religious and governmental authorities know that the terror must end now.

.....  
(Hozan Alan Senauke is a threatening to turn barren hillside camps into a morass of mud and sewage. He advocates for engaged Buddhism as founder of the Clear View Project and the Buddhist Humanitarian Project. The views in this commentary do not necessarily reflect those of Religion News Service.)

.....

Burma:

# Finding Gold in the Mud

Nyo Me



Men build a mud house in the Tamarind Valley, Hmawbi township, Yangon on March 8, 2018. Shin Moe Myint/The Myanmar Times

Why do people choose to live an alternative lifestyle in bio-degradable houses outside of Yangon?

Does your house melt?" is a question Naw Aung hears quite often. He and his family are living in a mud house in the Tamarind Valley.

It doesn't sound like a stupid question. During the rains, landslides happen. Floods kill many every year. But Naw Aung has a good answer: living in a mud

house is like living in an ant-hill, it is robust, it never melts and it often host industrious people.

Naw Aung is not alone. According to U Thet Naing, whose hobby is to collect information about mud houses (Giai Sustainable Management Institute), there are over 100 mud houses scattered around the country. All regions have some, except Rakhine and Chin State.

Mud houses present

certain advantages. They are cold in summer and warm in winter. They are eco-friendly and are rather cheap.

Since the beginning of March, the Mud House Lover Network, an association of enthusiastic mud-house builders, offers trainings to learn how to build your own mud-house. This weekend he joined a session in the Tamarind Valley to see if an urban hack could build one.

In Yangon especially, he feels houses are not fit to their environment and their residents. Take the number of air-conditioners and fans installed everywhere, he says.

Building a mud house is not just building a house; it is adopting a way of living, he adds. "I found out that it is a whole philosophy." In fact, opting for a mud house means relocating, there are no permits issued for mud houses in downtown Yangon.

U Thet Naing, a mud house enthusiast says that it would be a mistake to see people opting for such a lifestyle as poor and pushed to live in mud houses by necessity. "I don't see it this way. I assume that a person who lives closer to nature is actually richer," he says.

Spending some time with the mud house residents is like spending time

" Sometimes I think that modern homes are disconnected from human needs.

"

Mung Shaung Aung, a participant from Kachin.

in a happy community. It opens up a lot of existential questions. "Does development mean improving infrastructures or people having access to healthy food?" asks U Naw Aung who has his own plot of land behind the garden – he grows carrots, pumpkins and gourds – but no weeds. Healthy people have healthy mental status, he says. People who are at one with nature are also non-violent, he argues.

"People call us fools. But who is the fool? The one eating healthy food or the one consuming junk food?," asked educator U Thet Naing who lives in Tamarind Valley during the weekends.

It takes a pinch of eccentricity to live in mud houses. One must not be afraid of swimming against the current, "Many people follow the trend, we won't. We choose to live the lifestyle that fits us."

Daw Naw Chaw Chaw Than said that she lost most



Razi, a participant to the training organised by the Mud House Lover Network, explains what it feels like to handle mud. Shin Moe Myint/The Myanmar Times



Inside a kid's mud-bedroom. Shin Moe Myint/The Myanmar Times

“  
We choose  
to live the  
lifestyle  
that fits us  
”

U Thet Naing, Member of the Gai Sustainable Management Institute”

of her friends when she moved into a mud house with her husband. People told them they were fools. But she does not regret anything. “In cities, there is no space for children to run and play. Everything is covered with concrete and it is not okay for her,” she says pointing at her daughter who was born with a

condition known as cerebral palsy.

After eight years spent in nature, her 12-year-old daughter is happy and seems to be doing just fine.

Most mud houses have electricity and are powered thanks to solar panels. Naw Aung and his wife are experimenting with for cooking using natural gas emanating from manure.

Mud houses are also a very cheap way of living. Owning a house in Myanmar isn't easy. Mung Shaung Aung, our Kachin mud house builder says that his wife's aunty received K3,000,000 as a pension after having worked 30 years. She lives in a city and struggles to make ends meet.

The cost of a mud house is only about K2,000,000 and it can be built within five days.

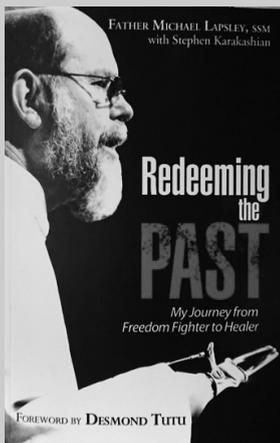
builder (Mud House Lover Network) who trained the participants says that demand is soaring. He has about 10 projects going on and another four waiting. He says most trainee taking the classes go on to build their own house afterwards. He is convinced he passes on the taste for mud.

“The feeling of touching concrete and mud is very different. It is difficult to explain,” says Ko Sithu. At first I thought it was a lot of chat, but during the training that I attended something happened. I started to emphasize with the builders.

Two participants that I met said they had made up their minds and would live in a mud house. While I would not make the same choice, I would not throw mud at them.

Ko Sithu, a mud house .....

Recommended Reading



Redeeming the Past  
My Journey from  
Freedom Fighter to Healer

Author: Fr. Michael Lapsley  
Publisher: Orbis Books

India:

# Converting to Buddhism as a Form of Political Protest

Krithika Varagur

SHIRASGAON, India—More than 500 low-caste Hindus filled the Veera Maidan, an open field at the edge of a dusty Maharashtra village, on a recent Sunday night. Neighbors openly gawked from porches as the throngs of people filed in, many dressed in symbolic white saris and kurtas. Under floodlights, they chanted: “I shall have no faith in Rama and Krishna who are believed to be incarnations of God nor shall I worship them. ... I do not and shall not believe that Lord Buddha was the incarnation of Vishnu. ... I shall hereafter lead my life according to the principles and teachings of the Buddha.” Instantly, there were 500 new Buddhists in India.

The converts had been Dalits, those from India’s lowest Hindu castes, formerly known as “untouchables.” They joined Ambedkarite Buddhism, a movement founded a half-century ago by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, a Columbia University-educated lawyer who drafted India’s constitution. Ambedkar was born a Dalit, and he saw the Buddha as a radical social reformer who created an outlet from the rigid Hindu caste system. Today, as inter-caste tensions rise under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose party is

affiliated with right-wing Hindu nationalists, low-caste Indians are continuing to find the appeal in Ambedkar’s message.

Dalits make up nearly 20 percent of the Indian population—and many of them are angry at Modi’s government. Last week, hundreds of thousands of them flooded the streets nationwide, protesting ongoing discrimination against them. But their mistreatment within society was rampant even before Modi’s

BJP took power in 2014. Between 2007 and 2017, crime against Dalits increased by 66 percent and the rape of Dalit women doubled, according to the National Crime Record Bureau. And now Dalit anger—which manifests in regular protests, strikes, and social media furor—stands to make a major impact on India’s national elections next year.

Perhaps that’s why Modi is trying to win them over—not only as voters, but also as potential party

members. The prime minister has been sending Buddhist monks out on the campaign trail and has even attracted some Buddhist politicians to his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He’s also been publicly praising Ambedkar.

In 1954, Ambedkar wrote a “blueprint” for the spread of Indian Buddhism in which he recommended printing a compact “Buddhist Gospel” like the Bible and “a ceremony like Baptism” for converts. In 1955, he founded the Buddhist Society of India. In 1956, he publicly converted to Buddhism alongside half a million others. Six weeks later, however, he died.

One of his descendants, Rajratna Ambedkar, became the Society’s president three years ago. In response to growing demand, he has vigorously rebooted its program of mass conversions. “Almost every day now, mass Buddhist conversions are taking place across India,” he told me. After helping convert 500 people in Shirasgaon last month, for instance, he woke up early the next morning to drive to the city of Surat, where he converted another 500 people that night.

Still, in a country of over 1.2 billion people, the number of registered Indian Buddhists remains tiny at about 8.4 million. About



Low-caste Indians are leaving Hinduism en masse—partly to stick it to their prime minister.



A woman participates in a conversion ceremony in India (Krithika Varagur)

87 percent of them are Ambedkarites or converts, and the rest are ethnic Buddhists in the Himalayan provinces or Tibetan refugees who followed the Dalai Lama to India. But accurate statistics on Buddhist converts are hard to find because many are not registered as such on the census.

“Often the [census] surveyor doesn’t even ask about religion once he hears a Hindu-sounding name,” said Shiv Shankar Das, a former researcher at Jawaharlal Nehru University who has studied the neo-Buddhist movement. Modern Ambedkarites hope to change this: “We are trying to convince the Indian government that we are not Dalits anymore, not part and parcel of Hinduism,” said Rajratna Ambedkar.

Ambedkarite Buddhism is an increasingly popular option for dissatisfied Dalits, because converting from Hinduism to Islam or

Christianity is now illegal in several states. Buddhism is considered a “sub-sect” of Hinduism in Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which is a useful loophole for conversion—and a hindrance, because it’s a major reason why the Hindu establishment doesn’t fully recognize Buddhist identity today. Over the course of Indian history, Buddhism has been uneasily absorbed into the Hindu fold, with some arguing that Buddha was really an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. This is a fiercely contested notion, one that converts to Ambedkarite Buddhism specifically pledge to reject.

In its focus on caste-based inequality, Ambedkarite Buddhism shares concerns of the historical Buddha, the prince whose groundbreaking rejection of Hindu castes, the Vedas, and Vedic rituals spurred his philosophical journey. But Ambedkaritism diverg-

es from the mainstream Buddhist schools, like Theravada and Mahayana, which have developed over the past two millennia. Ambedkar summarily dismissed everything from the Four Noble Truths to meditation to the doctrine of rebirth, deeming them non-canonical interpretations that arose after the Buddha’s lifetime.

Contemporary Ambedkarite institutions, like the Nagaloka Center in Nagpur, focus instead on training social activists.

The attitude can veer into outright dismissal of the mainstream schools. “Buddhism in places like [the Himalayan regions of] Dharamsala and Ladakh is superstitious Buddhism, not real Buddhism,” said Prashik Anand, a small-business owner and Ambedkarite in Nagpur. “The Buddha was more concerned with people’s suffering, not things like painting and meditation, which are mostly useless.” (It’s worth noting that the mainstream Mahayana school also emphasizes alleviating the suffering of others.)

“There is a social aspect

to Ambedkarite Buddhism,” said Mangesh Dahiwale, a veteran Dalit rights activist in Pune. “It’s not just an emancipatory path for individuals. We think it doesn’t make sense for you to become Buddhist alone when your society is downtrodden,” he said. This contrasts with Buddhism’s popular consumption in the West, which is often oriented around individualist concepts like personal fulfillment and peace of mind.

The activist spirit is central to the Ambedkarite revival. Consider two recent alarming incidents of caste violence: In Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, at least 25 Dalit houses were burned and one person was killed when communal tensions boiled over in May 2017. And in Una, Gujarat, four Dalits were publicly flogged for skinning a dead cow in 2016. Both communities used Buddhism as a tool of protest. In a striking gesture, Saharanpur Dalits drowned their Hindu idols in a canal after the incident, and 180 families converted to Buddhism. All four of the Una victims plan to convert to Buddhism on April 14.

Conversion is even becoming a political weapon. A famous Dalit politician and member of parliament known simply as Mayawati has threatened to convert to

Buddhism with her many followers if BJP members “don’t change their disrespectful, casteist, and communal behavior towards the Dalits.”

The strength of the movement may have spooked Modi’s BJP, which has pushed back by courting the Dalit Buddhist vote in sundry ways. In 2016, the party deployed Buddhist monks to rally votes in regional elections, although that effort was met with scorn and protests in at least some districts. The prominent Dalit politician Udit Raj, who converted in 2001, is now a BJP member of parliament. So is Swami Prasad Maurya in Uttar Pradesh.

The BJP faces a catch-22, said Dahiwale, because the strongly Hindu party doesn’t want to acknowledge that the religion is losing any followers. “Buddhism has become a force in itself, but the government can’t oppose it directly, because Buddhism is one of India’s greatest cultural exports,” he said.

It’s unclear whether the BJP’s Buddhist politicians feel any special affinity for the party. Raj told me frankly that he decided to join the BJP in 2014 because its fortunes seemed to be rising. “I floated for 12 years as an independent, and then I thought I should reach out

to a larger party. After Modi was elected, I thought a Modi ‘wave’ was coming, and I felt his party could help me win a slot in parliament to serve my people,” said Raj. In 2014, Raj said, he attended a meeting in Nagpur run by 22 state leaders and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a controversial Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer group that birthed the BJP. They collectively agreed that he would join the party.

Both the RSS and the Ambedkarite Buddhist movement arose from, and are still based in, Nagpur. Nowadays in that city, RSS members in their signature black, boat-shaped “Gandhi caps” share the streets with robed Ambedkarite monks. The RSS includes a dedicated group for outreach to Dalit Buddhists. The group’s president claimed last year that it has no political agenda, but mainstream Ambedkarites say that it actually pushes the controversial notion that Buddhism is a sect of Hinduism in a bid to win Dalit Buddhist votes for the BJP.

“The RSS has monks—fake monks,” said Santosh Raut, an Ambedkarite university professor in Hyderabad. “A few months ago I went to Bodhgaya [the holy city where the Buddha attained enlightenment] and met a few monks, clearly

from the RSS, who were saying how Buddha was the ninth avatar [or reincarnation] of Vishnu,” he said. “It was not very convincing.”

Even though Ambedkarite Buddhism is undergoing a major resurgence, the national influence of RSS remains in full force through the ruling BJP. As the 2019 presidential election approaches, neither is likely to lose any momentum, which suggests more strained interactions to come.

“To co-opt Buddhist votes or Dalit votes, the RSS will definitely ramp it up next year,” said Raut. “But, ironically, it is their actions that are driving so many people to Buddhism in the first place.”

.....

Siam:

# Buddhism As National Religion Would Fuel Extremism

*Pravit Rojanaphruk, Kaosod English, 20 March 2018.*

BANGKOK — A Buddhist scholar and foreign correspondent both warn in recent books of the rising spectre of Buddhist nationalism in Thailand.

Buddhist scholar Suraphot Thaweesak recently warned that a bid to enshrine Buddhism as the national religion would increase the kind of extremism that French journalist Arnaud Dubus writes about in his recently released book

“Buddhism and Politics in Thailand.”

“They think the state must protect Buddhism. It’s difficult to make them see other points. We have to invite them to think about the teachings of Buddhism, that the Buddha talks about cessation of suffering,” Suraphot said, adding that establishing a national religion would spark more conflict with Thais of other faiths.

### Rising Islamophobia in Thailand is Irrational and Dangerous

Dubus' evidence of growing Buddhist extremism includes calls to burn down mosques in the predominantly Muslim-Malay Deep South, where soldiers have ordained as monks, equipped with both alms bowls and heavy weapons.

The short volume gives a broad look at how Dubus believes state-sanctioned and centralized Buddhism has failed to adapt to new realities after a century of being co-opted by the state.

Dubus, who's lived in Thailand for three decades, writes that the new constitution, passed by referen-

dum in 2016, contains disturbing passages that afford special status to Buddhism.

Under Article 67, "the state shall promote and support education in and propagation of the principles of Thevarada Buddhism [...] and shall establish measures and mechanisms to prevent the desecration of Buddhism in any form. The state shall also encourage the participation of all Buddhists in the application of such measures and mechanisms," the book says.

Dubus says in his book that, "Buddhism was this time clearly put at a level superior to other religions."

"One indication of the Muslim discomfort was the very high number of 'no'

votes to the draft charter in the southern provinces during the August 7, 2016, referendum as well as the high number of defaced and spoiled ballots," he wrote.

Dubus notes in his book, a discussion of which the writer joined last month at Alliance Francaise, that the draft charter went even further by dropping traditional language calling for "religious harmony."

It soon must have dawned on the junta that something was amiss, however, Dubus wrote. "The military junta apparently realized, when analysing the referendum results, that something was amiss, and that there was a high risk of increasing discontent

among the Muslims," he says in the book. "Thus on August 22, barely two weeks after the referendum, Prayuth Chan-ocha issued an order under section 44 of the interim charter – which gives him absolute power for the good of national security – trying to correct the effect of section 67 of the draft charter."

A panel was subsequently established to "prevent acts which threaten Buddhism and other religions" and "promote good understanding and harmony among followers of all religions."

Buddhist meditation trainer Vichak Panich, who's well known for espousing a liberal view in his

A banner opposing construction of mosques in Bueng Kan province's Phon Charoen district, posted to a Thai Facebook page that is a clearinghouse of anti-Muslim sentiments.

Photo: No Mosques in Bueng Kan / Facebook



Controversial hardline monk Apichart Punjanatho participates in a ceremony expelling him from the monkhood at Bangkok's Wat Benchamabophit in September 2017.

Photo: Center for the Protection of Buddhism in Thailand / Facebook



online videos, expressed similar concerns, but said the hardliners are likely to be in the minority.

Vichak said it's hard to convince such people to reconsider their thinking, however.

"We may have to ask what kind of Buddhism they want to promote," he said.

For Najib Ibn Ahmad, a 50-year-old Muslim from Narathiwat province, hope for the future rests on the younger generation of Buddhists. Najib, an independent researcher on local Thai-Malay culture, predicts if Buddhist extremists fail to establish Buddhism as the national religion in the next decade, the younger Thai Buddhists who inherit society are likely to be more open-minded.

The current situation doesn't bode well, however. Najib said that while the state talks about a pluralistic culture, there exists persistent attempts to declare Thailand as officially Buddhist as Cambodia has done. "Things will become more extreme if it becomes law. I am worried."

Asked how he might soothe the fears that Buddhism is under threat and needs to be enshrined in the constitution as the national religion, Najib said it's beyond his ability.

"It's a belief, and beliefs

are not knowledge. Buddhism has survived for 2,500 years, just like Islam has thrived for 1,400 years. There exists dynamics, and if it decays, there will be people who will revive it. I don't have the skills to convince them, but the media can make them better informed."

Najib said the continued use of Buddhist temple grounds as camping sites for small military units deployed in the restive Deep South, where a separatist insurgency has killed thousands since 2004, makes local Thai-Malay Muslims feel the monks have become part of the military apparatus.

Another state action that has exacerbated the already tense situation in the southernmost provinces are so-called "military monks." These are soldiers who are ordained and keep their weapons while officiating as monks.

It, according to Dubus, "reinforces this conflation between Buddhist religion and nationalist politics in the eyes of Thai Malay Muslims."

Dubus however fails to provide details on the number of these military monks or interviews with any of them.

There is also the rather popular monk preaching anti-Islam sentiments on-

line. Back in October 2015, Phra Maha Apichat put out a call via Facebook for Buddhists "to burn a mosque for every Buddhist monk killed in the south."

Apparently, that stance was too much for the state. Last year, the monk was brought to Bangkok to be disrobed and forced to lie low.

This doesn't mean the hostility he espoused or supported has gone away.

In a dark scenario painted by Dubus at the end of the book, he concludes that overall, it's difficult to see a positive future for Thai Buddhism. Dubus fears that

Thai Buddhism could continue to go down "the slope of nationalism and politicization," wherein Buddhism becomes the national religion and serves as "a springboard for the most conservative version of Buddhism to become dominant."

Suraphot meanwhile proposes the secularization of Buddhism:

"The solution is to separate religion from the state, and to questions the relationship between the state and religion. The state must be impartial among religions."

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## Civil Rights Group Calls for Arrest of CIA Deputy Director Gina Haspel for Allowing Waterboarding of Prisoner in Thailand

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*Frank Jordans, Chiangrai Times - 7 June 2017*

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A civil rights group is asking German authorities to issue an arrest warrant for the recently appointed deputy director of the CIA over claims that she oversaw the torture of terrorism sus-

pects 15 years ago.

The non-profit European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights submitted a legal brief to German federal prosecutors Tuesday, alleging that Gina



Two CIA contractors, psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, as the only people authorised to have contact with Zubaydah during that time and claims they were answerable to Ms Haspel.

Haspel allowed the waterboarding of prisoners at a secret US detention centre in Thailand. The prosecutor's office confirmed Wednesday that the complaint had been received and was being reviewed.

Advocates describe waterboarding as a form of "enhanced interrogation." Critics say it amounts to torture, because prisoners are made to feel they are drowning.

Ms Haspel was the first female career CIA officer selected to be deputy director in February.

The submission by the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights — seen by The Associated Press — centres mainly on the case of Abu Zubaydah, a Saudi citizen and senior al-Qaeda member who was among scores

of Islamic extremists detained worldwide in the wake of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks.

Drawing on media reports and congressional testimony, attorneys for the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights allege that Zubaydah was waterboarded 83 times in August 2002, while Ms Haspel was in charge of a detention facility in Thailand, known as Cat's Eye base or Detention Site Green.

The submission identifies two CIA contractors, psychologists James Mitchell and Bruce Jessen, as the only people authorised to have contact with Zubaydah during that time, and claims they were answerable to Ms Haspel.

The American Civil Liberties Union is currently

suing Mr Mitchell and Mr Jessen on behalf of three men who say they were tortured using techniques the psychologists designed. A US Senate investigation in 2014 found their interrogation techniques produced no useful intelligence in the so-called war on terror, but some former intelligence officials say the techniques have produced valuable intelligence.

"For the purposes of determining criminal liability, what is most relevant is the fact that as head of the secret prison in Thailand, Gina Haspel followed each day of Abu Zubaydah's torture from Aug 4 to 23, 2002, and she alone had the responsibility to end this torture but failed to do so," the submission to German prosecutors states. It also cites the case of Abd al Ra-

him al-Nashiri, the alleged mastermind of the USS Cole bombing in 2000, who was waterboarded at Cat's Eye base in November 2002.

Both men are now held at the US detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In a separate legal proceeding, Europe's top human rights court ruled in 2014 that Poland had violated the rights of Zubaydah and al-Nashiri by allowing the CIA to secretly imprison them on Polish soil from 2002-2003 and facilitate conditions under which they were tortured.

The ruling by the European Court of Human Rights marked the first time any court has passed judgment on the rendition programme launched by US President George W. Bush after 9/11.

Civil rights groups have

## Country Reports

tried to prosecute several senior US officials implicated in the torture programme, including former CIA director George Tenet, former US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, top CIA legal counsel John Rizzo and Geoffrey Miller, the former commander of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre.

Tuesday's submission naming Ms Haspel is the first in Germany against a high-ranking official still in service with the CIA. The agency declined to com-

ment on the German group's legal efforts to have Ms Haspel arrested.

A spokeswoman for Germany's federal prosecutors office said a preliminary investigation into the torture allegations was opened in late 2014, following the partial release of the US Senate report.

"We are grateful for all information that sheds light on the allegations," Frauke Koehler told The Associated Press, adding that the latest evidence would be re-viewed as a matter of

course.

While German prosecutors can investigate serious crimes committed outside the country, there has to be a link of some kind to Germany — such as the victim or the suspect being in the country — for them to open a formal criminal probe.

The only case with a clear link to Germany that's been prosecuted so far is that of Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen of Lebanese descent, who said he was tortured at a CIA-run pris-

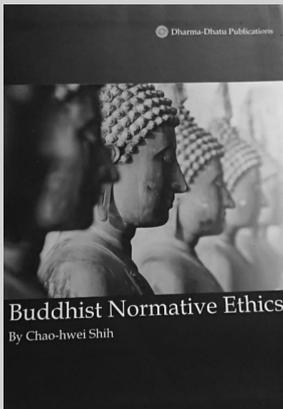
on in Afghanistan.

The group argues in the current suit that the renditions in question are part of the broader US programme with multiple links to Germany.

Munich prosecutors issued arrest warrants in 2007 for 13 CIA agents involved in the operation, but the German government has refused to seek their extradition.

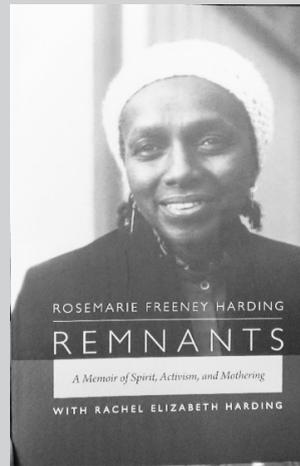
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## Recommended Reading



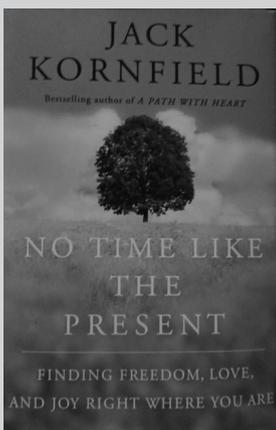
Buddhist Normative Ethics

Author: Chao - hwei Shih  
 Publisher: Dharma -  
 Dhatu Publications



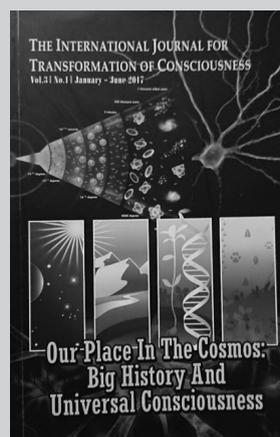
Rosemarie Freeney Harding  
 REMNANTS  
 A Memoir of Spirit, Activism,  
 and Mothering

Author: Rachel Elizabeth  
 Harding  
 Publisher: Duke University  
 Press Books



NO TIME LIKE  
 THE PRESENT

Author: Jack Kornfield  
 Publisher: Atria Books



Our Place In The Cosmos:  
 Big History And Universal  
 Consciousness

Editor in Chief: Prof. Dr. Mathew  
 Chandrankunnel  
 Publisher: Boy Town

## Awakening Leadership Training Program



### ***Towards A New Paradigm of Holistic Sustainability***

2nd September 2018 - 15th March 2019

Empowering & Deepening  
Ecovillage Design Education

The second Awakening Leadership Training took place 3 September 2017 – 25 January 2018, a collaborative effort with INEB, SEM, Eco-Transition Asia, and Gaia Education. It took place at various locations in Thailand, including Wongsanit Ashram, Nong Tao community, and an exposure visit to traditional Moken fishing communities in Southern Thailand. The course expanded content from Gaia Education's EDE (ecovillage design education) curriculum, with increased emphasis on self cultivation and social transformation. Fourteen students completed the full journey, with over 116 more joining various modules.

#### **The five areas of learning were:**

- Interpersonal Dynamics: Power Sharing and Compassion (Social Dimension EDE)
- Self-discovery, Healing and Cultural Integrity (Worldview Dimension EDE)
- Ecology & Design (Ecological dimension plus Design in EDE)
- Eco-Political Economy (Economics Dimension of EDE)
- Skilful means for Social Transformation (Including Training of Trainers)



'I learnt that science and local wisdom align with each other. Most young people in my town only believe in science, and unconsciously we ignore the wisdom of our elders. Now I trust more deeply how natural history and local wisdom complement each other.'

Chen Xi China

Whilst delving deeply into the four dimensions of sustainability, the participants took a journey grounded in critical self awareness. Different forms of mindfulness and reflection were embedded in the daily rhythms of the programme. From this they learnt to be present, to understand themselves as a way to understand others, and vice versa, and they gained the confidence and grounding to find their way forward. They had time to spend in nature, to explore their own inner healing, and practice diverse forms of inner inquiry. This all helped to bring awareness to a sense of interconnectedness, and the potential of many paths. They learnt together and from each other, strengthened by their diverse cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Through time together, they built their own caring community

'We can see climate change, limited resources, we are pushing things too fast, too extreme. On the other side we have regeneration. It's been empowering to see viable alternatives. Design was powerful, when we look at design it's not just about structures and buildings, but it's all embedded into ecology and social systems.'

Phill UK

'What contributed was that it was a safe space. And two things bring safety: diversity of opinion, and how the facilitator deals with conflict, so I could be heard and still be loved in spite of my opinion.'

Doreen US/Taiwan

of good friends, and had the time and space to practice the possibilities that community can offer, and experience its potential to transform society.

## Awakening Leadership Training Program

<http://www.awakeningleadership.net>

<http://www.facebook.com/AwakeningLeadershipINEB/>

[Email: blt.ineb@gmail.com](mailto:blt.ineb@gmail.com)

Apply Now

# School of English for Engaged Social Service

## Voices of Students in Our 2018 Program



The School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS) is a place for learning English as a tool for leadership, self-cultivation, and social transformation. It is a three-month course that takes place annually from January to April at the Wongsanit Ashram near Bangkok.

### Leadership

It is very difficult to set a life direction or to lead others if you are doubtful or unsure of your own voice, of your own value, or of your own place in the world. Mindful and compassionate leadership is urgently needed in the world at this time, yet many of us are, in fact, doubtful.

In SENS, we recognize that this doubt is widespread, for many reasons. It is a doubt that can be especially deep for women, for members of minority ethnic groups, or oppressed nationalities, or for those who grew up in challenging circumstances. Yet we know on principle and from experience that every human being who receives the necessary support has the potential for profound leadership. What is that necessary support?

Two kinds of support we try to provide in the SENS program are:

1. We do everything we can to appreciate the beauty and goodness of each participant in the course, as they are now, blemishes and all. We do this by appreciating them verbally, by soliciting their stories and opinions, and by listening to them with genuine

respect and thoughtful attention. We de-emphasize critique, because everyone has been criticized and corrected so much that they become overly watchful of what they do, fearful that they won't do something right... or worse, that they could never be right enough. We think our students, like all of us, need to be reminded of what is already right. Once they know we genuinely see their goodness and beauty, it is quite easy for them to accept suggestions, critiques, and corrections when needed.

2. We also make an effort to get to know each of the participants in the course well enough to know what kind of support each one specifically needs. We try to keep track of their personal growth throughout the course, so that they can overcome even very personal and subtle but persistent obstacles.

In trying to do these two things, we often fall short, and we sometimes fail completely, though that is rare. The important thing is that we also succeed. And we have become consistently better at learning how to support both individual participants and the group as a whole.

As evidence of those successes, we include here some of the reflections and goals that students shared at the 2018 SENS graduation ceremony held on April 4, 2018, generously hosted by Dr. Pichai at his Maenam

Resort in Nakhon Chaisri. Students crafted their own statements, but they received help with English phrasing, and their final statements have been edited for clarity.

We are limited by space in this issue, but we hope to offer more of our students' voices, and share more about what we learned this year, in upcoming issues. If you are inspired by what you read here, you may help in one of three ways: 1) by spreading the word about the SENS program; or 2) by donating to the SENS Scholarship Fund: <http://inebinstitute.org/donation/>. Next year's course runs from January 6 to April 3, 2019. You can apply at <http://inebinstitute.org/apply/>

## Excerpts from Statements by SENS Students:

1. "For the benefit of all sentient beings." In our Korean historical DNA, this commitment has been working deeply in our unconscious. .... My goal is to live by this teaching until I die. .... Thanks to this course, SENS, I've met engaged Buddhist practitioners, grassroots movement leaders, and learned about many social activities in Thailand. It is very hopeful that there are so many social changers—more than I expected. For a long time, I've concentrated on domestic social issues, but now I've changed. I want to work for more international or global issues. SENS gave me a chance to have a wider perspective, and to be confident to communicate with international workers. We are not separated, but connected, so that we can cooperate in many ways. This is my great experience here. Sae Rob Lee – Jungto Society, South Korea

2. I see many new possibilities and learned a lot through this course. Through this program I have learned:

- To be an effective leader, you need to be able to respond to challenges with intelligence, strategy, and sincerity.
- About the socialization and internalization of gender inequality through two wonderful women, Ouyporn and Ginger.
- How important it is to have Kalyanamitra in one's life.
- When people have the same values, they naturally come together in unison in some ways.
- The importance of listening to what other people have to say.

- How climate change impacts everything and everyone's life, and that even our civilization is at stake. This student has asked to not be identified.

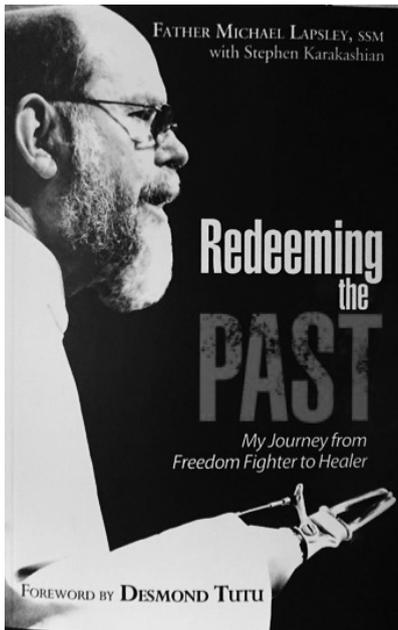
3. As an adult, I haven't shared my feelings with my parents that much. But learning counseling has encouraged me to share more with them and also to listen to them. Before this course, I didn't have proper goals for my life, I just tried my best wherever I was or whatever I was doing. But now I see the value of identifying my goals and the steps I need to be able to reach them. Thet Nwe Soe – Metta Development Foundation, Myanmar.

4. Previously, I stood for my Myanmar people; now I realize I need to stand for all living things. Because we have the same problems and we need to solve them all together. English language is a tool for social change. Therefore, it can be applied to connect to a global network. I decided to set up my goals for after this course as follows:

- To do regular practice for improving my English skills into advanced level in 2018.
- To listen deeply to my friends and community when they need someone to listen.
- To do research about the traditional environmental conservation customs and beliefs of ethnic groups and how to create an environmentally friendly culture in my country. I aim to complete this research within two years.
- To initiate an Eco Campus Movement at universities in my country that will go broader and deeper. Phoo Pwint – Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation, Myanmar.

5. I want to create a space in the countryside where youth can come to learn skills outside of school, and access resources for personal development, including scholarships to study abroad, workshops and trainings, as well as community and network-building. These are not new ideas. But this course gave me the confidence I needed to move forward with them. Thank you to the SENS community and to all of our supporters for giving me the opportunity to learn more English. Samkham Meunsiy – PADETC, Laos.

**Ted Mayer**



## Father Michael Lapsley: Redeeming the Past

*Jane Rasbash*

‘Our lives are like rivers, a traumatic event happens and the river goes to a whirlpool. Healing commences when the river flows.’

How would it feel to have one's hands blown off in an act of retribution? This awful dilemma was faced by Father Michael more than 25 years ago as a sympathetic opposer to Apartheid in South Africa. The Civil Cooperation Bureau, a Government sponsored hit tank, targeted him with a letter bomb hidden between two religious magazines.

A moment in time can change one's life. For Father Michael, an Anglican priest, this disastrous event provided a key to seemingly unfathomable strengths. His groundbreaking journey from trauma to healing contributed to a movement of redemption and restorative justice reaching far beyond individual circumstances.

He became Chaplain of the ‘Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture’ in Cape Town leading to the formation in 1998 of the ‘Institute for Healing of Memories.’ This work has allowed many South Africans tell their stories working through their trauma, gaining acknowledgement and respect, re-drawing damaging patterns of behaviour, and building peace, reconciliation and transformative justice that impacts both inwardly and outwardly.

In February 2018 in Yangon, Myanmar Father Michael shared his story and reflections on redeeming the past at a public event organised by the Metta Development Foundation. He spoke of how victims can become victimisers and after the guns fall silent, sexual violence can play out in private unseen spaces, where victims can turn to self harm with alcohol, drugs and even suicide. He told us that more US soldiers died from suicide than from combat. Unhealed traumas move from generation, to generation and the oppressed carry in their hearts and souls the memory of what was done to their forefathers. Yet those responsible for decades of denial, he cited ‘white America’, have no understanding of the pain of ‘black America’, and that this lens can be used in any conflict division around world.

In the early 1990s in South Africa, there was a generation of survivors of apartheid, damaged by what had been done to people and what people had done to others. There were two huge questions— ‘How to meet the needs of South African people?’ — and ‘How to deal with past?’ Most countries bury

this kind of trauma and go into denial. Many of the conflicts in the world today are in areas where there are unhealed wounds from the past. Father Michael spoke about how to heal this vicious cycle and how healing is necessary at multi-levels of self, community and society. Acknowledgement and respect are seen as crucial first steps in the healing process. Father Michael said his story was acknowledged and given a moral context that supported him towards healing. Mechanisms used to address these issues came out of the truth and reconciliation commission led by Desmond Tu Tu. Thousands came to events where their stories were acknowledged, referenced and recognised. Safe and sacred spaces were created where people could begin to deal with what they had inside. A workshop called 'Healing of Memory' was developed as a step on the journey to healing. These workshops have been ongoing for 20 years, and there have been many invitations to places of trauma including Rwanda after the Genocide, New York after 9/11, and Sri Lanka dealing with the impact and reality of civil war.

Prior to the talk in Yangon Father Michael visited Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs) in Kachin State. This is an ongoing acute conflict situation, and raises the question if it is possible to initiate a healing response if the conflict is ongoing. He acknowledged in Myanmar that there are good reasons to hate, and a first step can be to realise these feelings of hatred are messing us up inside. Once we know this we can commence a healing journey. He referenced Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. When a situation is desperate all our energy goes to meet the primary needs of safety, shelter etc., and in that context healing of memory seems to be a luxury that people cannot afford. However for many IDPs in Kachin, this is not recent as armed conflict and civil injustices have been going on for years. In that instance, a Healing of Memory workshop could be helpful. Father Lapsley spoke of how when basic

needs are met, trauma can get worse. He reminded us how when Nelson Mandela walked free from prison over 28 years ago, there were four awful and violent years before democracy came to South Africa. If Nelson Mandela had come out and said it is time to get the perpetrators of violence, people would have died in the millions. He consciously left all the bad feelings at the prison door and became a great example of a peaceful approach to the inner and outer legacy of apartheid. At his Presidential Inauguration, one of Mandela's prison guards was there as a guest of honour, teaching the nation that enemies can become friends.

There was a short period for questions towards the end of the talk. When asked about forgiveness of brutalities, Father Michael said, 'I never mentioned the word forgiveness.' He did however acknowledge the interplay between the social, media, economic, colonial, psychological and spiritual aspects in society. How in many societies and in the street world, justice is often seen as retribution or revenge. In the process of the 'Healing of Memory' workshops, we must heal ourselves so we can heal our lives and move towards restorative justice, restoring relationships with those who have harmed us. Healing is not an alternative to justice.

When war is over, the root causes are generally not addressed. Society needs to look in to the root causes, and needs leadership that has a moral big picture view, rather than narrow and vested interests. Leadership with a moral vision is required at all levels. Leaders who can encourage people to see healing for all beings without exceptions. Father Michael struck a chord when he said, 'You cannot say human rights is not for any group, if you say this you are not a human rights activist. The person who made the bomb is in greater need of healing than the injured.' He spoke of how child soldiers who are recruited are often the children of the poor, and are then asked to kill each

other. They are given a uniform and a gun, and told it is ok to kill - it is not murder. This will leave a strong imprint of trauma and confused values.

I found the talk very moving and very inspiring, yet later checking with a few Myanmar friends later, I was surprised it had not met their expectations. Perhaps they were looking for a solution regarding the current period of instability in Myanmar, and had strong criticism of Aung San Suu Kyi for not addressing the ongoing hate crime impacting on Rohingya and armed conflict in Kachin. How would Nelson Mandela have dealt with this kind of situation? I wondered if anyone

would raise that question. No one did.

Father Lapsley closed the talk with reminding us that we are all divine, when I attack you, I attack the divine in you and myself. Often we only tell the horror stories of conflict situations, we can choose to tell the stories of compassion and kindness. In Myanmar, stories from all faith traditions can reflect the divine, and challenge hatred. There has to be an interfaith future with tolerance and respect. The choices society makes now will impact on our grandchildren.

S

## 6 weeks to mother's day

My name is Marvin Blunte, and am the director of the film called Six weeks to Mother's Day, which was screened at the CLIFF International Film Festival.

The film is about the curricular offender school at the Thai jungle and its amazing founder.

I wandered by this place a little bit by mistake, I was doing a regional research project, and a colleague of mine said, "Hey, do you want to check out these few different locations?, and I said OK."

The places that I wanted to go were canceled.

The only place that was available for me to check out was this one little school, but it had nothing to do with the topic that I was working on, and I didn't want to go.

But when I got to this school, I realized it was such a special place and very different. Which raised my curiosity.

And then from there, I became more curious about whether to go back to this school and study it. I made a trip the next year and after that I decided to pull a trick on making a film of the school.



Location	Schedule
Bentonville Film Festival Bentonville, Arkansas	May 4, 2018 11:15am. May 5 3:15pm
Newport Beach Film Festival Newport Beach, CA	May 1, 2018. 2:45pm
Cleveland International Film Festival Cleveland, Ohio	April 5, 2018. 7:00pm, April 6 4:50pm, April 7 5:25pm
Miami International Film Festival Miami, FL	March 11, 2018. 3:45pm
DOC NYC New York, NY	Nov 16, 2018. 5:00pm

## Some thoughts on the dismissed royal insult case

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In 2014, two retired lieutenant generals, namely Padoong Niwetwan and Pittaya Wimalin, filed a charge against me at Chana Songkram Metropolitan Police Station. They accused me of committing lese majeste in my talk at an academic conference on the revision and invention of history, which was held at Thammasat University on 5 October 2014. In truth, my talk focused on the past, especially King Naresuan who ruled Ayutthaya between 1590 and 1605. In my talk, I questioned the historical accuracy of Thai official history. For instance, I asked whether King Naresuan struck a fatal blow to Prince Minchit Sra of Burma in the 'epic' elephant battle (as the Thai sources claimed). I encouraged the audience to critically interrogate the Thai historical sources and to consult materials from other archives (such as Myanmar's) in their reconstruction of the past. Also, I defended King Mongkut, who ruled Siam during 1851-1868. I argued that he had discovered the famous Ramkamhaeng stele with the inscription from the Sukhothai period. The stele was authentic. He didn't fabricate it, as many international and Thai experts have alleged.

Initially, the Chana Songkram police investigators were of the opinion that I had actually defended King Mongkut in my talk. But then they proceeded with my indictment. My case was sent to the military prosecutors on 9 October 2017. I was ordered to appear at the military court on 7

December 2017. However, the date was later changed to 17 January 2018. Ultimately, the prosecutors decided to drop all lese majeste charges against me due to insufficient evidence.

My case had received a fair share of attention from international personalities as well as organizations such as PEN International, Amnesty International, and the UN High Commission for Human Rights. Recipients of the Right Livelihood Award had also petitioned the Thai government. Domestically, many groups and individuals had expressed their concerns to the Thai government. They pointed out that if my case was not dropped, the government stood to lose more than gain. However, the government did not budge—as it was stuck in a state of indecisiveness.

I had no choice but to file a royal petition, to depend on royal grace. Subsequently, the King advised the government to drop the lese majeste charges against me.

In a constitutional monarchy, the King possesses the right to offer advice to the government or to support or disapprove of its actions. All these are within the royal prerogatives. Therefore, I feel most grateful to the King's advice to the government pertaining to my lese majeste case.

People who are frustrated in their quest for social justice will find solace in knowing that the King too is interested in it, and that they can depend

on him. However, for most people, it is practically impossible to submit a petition directly to the King. The whole process of filing a royal petition is murky at best.

Needless to say, there is an excessive number of legal cases involving Article 112 of the Criminal Code. King Rama IX had even publicly stated that any lese majeste charge filed was akin to harming him and the monarchy, but to no avail.

Article 112 stipulates that it is illegal to defame, insult, or threaten the King, Queen, heir-apparent, or regent in the present reign only. There's a legal precedent. When a newspaper published an article that was deemed defamatory to King Rama VIII, the police wanted the prosecutor to charge its editor with lese majeste. By the time the case reached the Chief Attorney, the king had suddenly passed away. The Chief Attorney replied that the case had to be dropped because Article 112 was no longer applicable to the late king. Also, he added that if Article 112 could be applied to any past (Thai) monarch, it would be impossible to teach Thai history.

Unfortunately, in one legal case in the Ninth Reign, the Supreme Court sentenced the accused to imprisonment for lese majeste because the latter was perceived to have defamed King Rama IV. The Court reasoned that King Rama IV was the great-grandfather of King Rama IX. In truth, the accused did not defame King Rama IV, the accused merely stated that the people are luckier to be born in the Ninth Reign because if they were born in the Fourth Reign, they might end up as slaves, and life would be more miserable. (Slavery was abolished in the Fifth Reign.)

This case shows that the Supreme Court is not only legally inept but also lacking in compassion. Apropos Article 112, Jitti Tingsapat, a legal expert widely respected in the Thai legal community and former privy councilor, stated that judges must

interpret the law prudently and be ready to give the accused the benefit of the doubt. In other words, Article 112 must not be liberally interpreted to cover the widest possible ground. (We can see this in the case of Veera Musikapong who was sentenced to imprisonment for defaming the Grand Palace.)

Don't the legal experts serving the present military government realize that since King Rama IX had passed away, the individuals who have been imprisoned for defaming him should be set free? If the present government possesses moral courage, it should give freedom to these individuals. This would be an index of its authentic loyalty to the monarchy.

Since there are too many problems with Article 112, if it is not radically revised, it would bring serious trouble to almost anyone in society. For example, I could be charged with lese majeste anytime by anyone yet again. When a person goes to the police station to accuse someone of committing lese majeste, the police would almost immediately accept the charge no matter how groundless it is, because they would rather err on the side of excess with respect to Article 112. At least there should be an independent committee to review the accusation first. This committee should be comprised of legal experts from the Office of His Majesty's Private Secretary or the Ministry of Justice.

I hope that the points that I have raised above will lead to further constructive discussions. Such discussions are befitting a democracy, and would be an appropriate way to honor the King.

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# Valedictory Message

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Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great privilege for me to take part in this wonderful gathering on the invitation of Kalinga International Foundation.

As you are well aware, Kalinga was a significant place for Emperor Ashoka.

Ashoka was the greatest emperor, not only of Asia but also of the world. His vast empire extended from India to Pakistan and Afghanistan. However, his real greatness was not due to the extent of his empire, but to his transformation. And Kalinga was central to it. The battle of Kalinga was Ashoka's last battle. It proved to be a turning point. It was where he changed his heart fundamentally from being *Candasokaraj* ("Ashoka the Fierce", the violent Ashoka) to becoming *Dhammasokaraj* ("Ashoka the Righteous", the nonviolent Ashoka). He became beloved by the gods, *Devanampiyatissa*.

I want to mention only one of Ashoka's great contributions. He sent *Dhammaduta* to Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere. In other words, as a Buddhist, I feel indebted not only to the Buddha, but also to Ashoka. And being a good Buddhist is the most important part of life. As you know, the Buddha reminds us that success in life is not about having power, prestige, and wealth. Rather, it is about having *Kalyanamitta*, or virtuous companions.

When Ananda tells the Buddha that *Kalyanamitta* is only half of the holy life, the latter responds 'No! No! *Kalyanamitta* is the whole of holy life.' *Kalyanamitta* is the one who tells you what you don't want to hear—meaning the truths that make you uncomfortable, embarrassed, anxious, angry, and so on.

In general, we want to be praised. We don't want to hear negative things about ourselves—even if

they are constructive or sincere criticisms. However, it's a mundane fact that we all have negative as well as positive features inside. Only a *Kalyanamitta* will make you aware of your negative features and acts. The Buddha says that *Kalyanamitta* is akin to the external voice of conscience, *Paratoghosa*. As such, a virtuous companion will help one to transform oneself into a better person.

Today, I will speak to you as a *Kalyanamitta*. Perhaps you may not like what you hear. But I am going to say it with sincerity. This meeting is held in India. I come from Southeast Asia. In most parts of Southeast Asia, we are indebted to India for introducing Buddhism, Brahmanism, and many other aspects of Indian culture. For example, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world. Yet, as Abdurrahman Wahid, the former President of Indonesia told me, the country only became Islamic 500 years ago. Prior to that, Indonesia was Buddhist, and before that it was influenced by Brahmanism. The Borobudur is the greatest stupa in Indonesia. If you go to Denpasar, Bali, you can see a big statue of Bhima. Both the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* have great influence in Southeast Asia. Also, you may not be aware that the former capital city of my country was called Ayodhya. It was founded over 700 years ago. We moved the capital to Bangkok approximately 250 years ago. Yet, the official name is still Ayodhya. Moreover, all our kings are Rama. The present King is Rama X. Some of you may know that the late Rama IX, proposed an alternative economic philosophy rooted in Buddhism. As a footnote, the former king of Bhutan also proposed the concept of Gross National Happiness to challenge Gross National Product.

Perhaps today, more than ever, we have to look forward and move beyond the dominant ways of the

world. We need to come up with viable alternatives, especially to capitalism. Appropriately, we have friends here who came from Burma. Some of you may know that the British government sent E. F. Schumacher to Burma over 70 years ago. Initially, Schumacher's task was to help develop Burma in the image of the UK. Fortunately, he turned the purpose of his mission upside down. He contended that it was Britain that had to develop like Burma. And he wrote his famous book on Buddhist economics or *Small is Beautiful*. Right now in London, there is the New Economic Foundation, which aims to realize Buddhist economics in the world. Additionally, there is the World Future Council (WFC), it is comprised of leading people around the world. WFC aims to be the voice of future generations and promotes peace and sustainable development. Jakob von Uexkull launched WFC in 2007. Roughly 50 years ago, he also started the so-called alternative Nobel Prize or Right Livelihood Award. As you know, Right Livelihood is part of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. In a nutshell, all these—and many more—are coming from India, from Buddhism. In other words, we have plenty of intellectual, cultural, and spiritual resources to help build a new world, to help bring about a different future beyond the dominance of capitalism and the West.

So back to Ashoka the Great again. In a fairly recent book, *To Uphold the World: A Call for a New Global Ethic from Ancient India*, Bruce Rich argues that in order to uphold the world, we must go back to Ashoka and Kautilya. People in the West may not be familiar with Kautilya. Kautilya wrote a famous book, *Arthashastra*, which is still very important. Arguably, it is more important than Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Rich says that the whole world today is being controlled subconsciously by Kautilya on how to run things, to cheat, to compete, and so on. But, Rich continues, we need to go back to Ashoka, who provides us with clues on how to transform violence into nonviolence, and hatred into loving-kindness and compassion.

At present, we can also look at the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people. They have been oppressed by the Chinese for over 60 years. The Dalai Lama and his people have come to live in India. Yet, he has consistently reminded us that with love and understanding, not greed and violence, a new future is possible. We must not hate the Chinese. With love and compassion, we will be able to change the world. The Buddha said that if *Metta* prevails, the world will prevail.

In short, I am bringing the message from the Buddha and from Ashoka to this gathering. I hope that this meeting will be able to come up with concrete measures to uphold the world in the 21st century, based on Buddhist teachings on love and compassion.

Lastly, I must say that I am proud to be in India. Mother India is not perfect. She has many shortcomings. But Indians should be proud of their country's ongoing experiment with democracy. Democracy in India is still fragile and threatened by neoliberal capitalism, inequality, right-wing nationalism and populism, environmental devastation, and so on. However, the Indian people must not give up on democracy, and set a good example for all of us in South East Asia.

China wants to catch up with the West. China wants economic prosperity like Singapore. That small land is very rich, but hardly democratic. Also, the Chinese people have suffered so much under the dictatorship of the Communist regime. Globally, China may be able to compete with the USA, but it may not be able to set an example to people worldwide who are engaging in emancipatory struggles.

This is my last message to all of you.

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At the symposium on *Purbasa: East meets East*,  
Bhubaneswar, India, 18 March 2018

## The Naga Arises - the Developing Ambedkarite Movement.

*Dharmachari Lokamitral*

“**T**he battle is in the fullest sense spiritual. There is nothing material or social in it. For ours is a battle not for wealth or for power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality.”

(Dr. Ambedkar - from a speech made at the All-India Depressed Classes Conference)

I came to live and work in India in August 1978 because I saw that here there was the possibility of realising to some extent the Buddhist teaching on the mutuality of self and world that I had learnt from my teacher, Ugyen Sangharakshita. This was expressed by Dr. Ambedkar through his vision of Prabuddha Bharat (enlightened India), an India imbued with the principles of the Dhamma. He was convinced that practice of the Dhamma would give his Scheduled Caste (1) followers the strength to overcome untouchability and bring about lasting, radical, peaceful, social change.

In the 40 years I have been in India, the Ambedkarite movement has developed enormously. There are many markers, but three especially stand out for me. The first took place just as I came out to live in India in August 1978. Soon after arriving, I gave a series of three talks on Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, at the Ahilya Ashram in central Pune. After the second talk, I was asked how one could develop skilful mental states when one's sisters, mothers and daughters were raped, houses burnt and family members murdered. The reference was to the terrible violence that was being perpetrated

on Buddhists by caste Hindus after the government of Maharashtra decided to rename the Marathwada University at Aurangabad after Dr. Ambedkar; they did not want their degree certificates to be polluted by having Dr. Ambedkar's name on them! Wikipedia describes the violence as follows:

Riots affected 1,200 villages in Marathwada, impacting on 25,000 Dalits and causing thousands of them to seek safety in jungles. The terrorised Dalits did not return to their villages in spite of starvation. This violence was allegedly organised by members of the Maratha community and took many forms, including killings, molestation and rape of Dalit women, burning of houses and huts, pillaging of Dalit colonies, forcing Dalits out of villages, polluting drinking water wells, destruction of cattle and refusal to employ. This continued for 67 days.

This led to demonstrations by Buddhists all over Maharashtra. The attitudes of the caste Hindus threatened their very humanity, all that Dr. Ambedkar had achieved for millions of the most oppressed. At that time the Ambedkarite Buddhist movement was largely confined to the ex-Mahar

community in Maharashtra, and a few pockets in the major towns of India (the Congress Party had been successful in isolating them, due to their closeness to Dr. Ambedkar, playing other Dalit against them).

In Maharashtra, there were many stalwarts from the grass roots, but the movement had been factionalised and compromised by its leaders. Relatively few new Buddhists were well educated, and had good government jobs (the private sector was only an option at the lowest levels), and those that did were largely pre-occupied with helping their families and keeping a low profile for fear of being ostracised by caste Hindus. Amongst most Buddhists and Dalits, there was a feeling of bitterness, victimisation and helplessness in the face of the overwhelming obstacles of social deprivation and caste; there was little confidence in the community.

The second marker was the centenary year of Dr. Ambedkar's birth, 1990/1. At this time the Ambedkarite movement seemed to explode all over India; Dalit communities everywhere were realising the significance of Dr. Ambedkar and his work, and many started moving in the direction of the Dhamma. The Nagajuna Institute's (2) student population illustrates this – there have been over 1,200 students staying there for 8 months or more over the last 15 years. They come from 25 of the 29 different Indian states, and from numerous different Scheduled Caste backgrounds (we have some students from non-Scheduled Caste backgrounds as well). There are about 230 million Scheduled Castes in India today, including those who have become Buddhist. Many, if not most, could now become open to Buddhism because of the influence of Dr. Ambedkar, if approached appropriately. There are well over 100 million Scheduled and Nomadic Tribes in India, who increasingly see Dr. Ambedkar as their means to liberation from social deprivation and discrimination, and they are moving with gathering momentum towards Buddhism. At Nagarjuna Institute in November 2017, a Tribal Buddhist Sangha was inaugurated to educate them about Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism. None of this

seemed possible 40 years ago.

The third marker took place on 1st January this year. In the late 70's and early 80's, I used to take the 6 hour bus journey to Aurangabad from Pune quite often. Half an hour out of Pune, near the village of Koregaon, I would notice a rather forlorn pillar just off the road on the right. Later, I was shown a photo of Dr. Ambedkar and a group of people sitting in front of it taken in 1927, including the father of the man who showed it to me. The pillar marks the Battle of Koregaon, which took place on 1st January, 1818, 200 years ago, when 800 British troops defeated 28,000 Maratha forces of the Brahmin Peshwas. The British troops consisted largely of Mahars, the Dalit community that Dr. Ambedkar and most of his first followers in Maharashtra belonged to. At that time, they were considered Untouchables, and yet they had defeated the Peshwas who ruthlessly implemented the most cruel laws of the Manu Smriti regarding Untouchability - perhaps the most brutal social system in the history of the world (Dr. Ambedkar makes the point that Untouchability was worse than slavery!). The Mahars had a martial history they were proud of, and although the British made full use of them for years, they derecognised the Mahar martial status after 1857, (first war of Indian Independence or Indian Mutiny – depending on what part of the world one comes from, although there are also other valid views) because their inclusion in the British army had been one of the reasons for the anti-British feelings, which erupted that year. De-recognition was an attempt to appease caste Hindus, whose religion did not allow them to be in close contact with so-called Untouchables. Dr. Ambedkar managed to get the British government to restore the Mahar Battalion and thus their sense of dignity.

When I first came to Pune, the anniversary of the victory was marked by a few people from Pune. This year, there were five or six hundred thousand people, coming from all over India! They came to celebrate, not violence, but their contribution to the restoration of equality and humanity in Indian

society, the part they played in the defeat of the forces of evil, those who had enforced and perpetuated caste and Untouchability so mercilessly.

This year, for the first time, the gathering was attacked by some caste Hindus. As a result demonstrations took place all over Maharashtra, but these were very different than those that had taken place almost 40 years ago following the renaming of Marathwada University. That was a movement of protest by victims of caste whose claims to humanity were being challenged. On this occasion, the protestors were not victims, but confident in their power and authority and contribution to a more humane India. There were many discussions on the television news channels, which included young, confident and articulate Ambedkarites who could easily stand their own with journalists and intellectuals from all shades of the political spectrum. 40 years ago this was unimaginable.

Today, there are many Buddhists and Ambedkarites who are highly educated, with senior jobs in the government, judiciary, and private sector. There are thousands of articulate intellectuals, activists, writers and artists, among them. They are no longer shy or frightened, but proud to call themselves followers of Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhists! The bitterness is still there, but people are much less crippled by feelings of helplessness. There is instead a spirit of confident, optimistic assertiveness; nothing will stop them from overcoming the attitudes that have dehumanised them for centuries, even though there is still a huge distance to travel. The celebration of the Battle of Koregaon symbolises this change. The conversions to Buddhism have contributed to this, as it empowers people with a sense of human dignity - they no longer have to accept the traditional Hindu designation as lesser humans.

This spirit was apparent at a programme held at the Manuski Centre (3) on 2nd January, the day after the meeting at Koregaon, to launch the book of a friend, a senior civil servant in the central government. There was another senior government

officer and Buddhist activist from Hyderabad, and a few younger extremely knowledgeable and articulate intellectuals and activists speaking. Also present was Rohit Vermula's mother. Rohit was a very bright student in Hyderabad who hanged himself two years ago because of the caste attitudes of the university staff. During the programme, I was remembering those bus rides passing the memorial almost 40 years ago. At that time, we could never have dreamt of such a programme or such speakers. Dr. Ambedkar spoke of the Buddha inaugurating a revolution. "Buddhism was a revolution. Though it began as a religious revolution ...It became a social and political revolution." But, he said, this was followed by a counter revolution – the Brahminical backlash that tightened caste, introduced Untouchability, subjugated women, and developed much of Puranic Hinduism. Dr. Ambedkar himself did no less than to initiate a counter-counter revolution.

The significance of what is happening has been realised by every political party – they all have Dr. Ambedkar's photo on their stage and try to claim his legacy. At the same time, the right wing has been gathering its forces, although at present paying most attention to Muslims and Christians. Clearly they are concerned with the arousing of the Scheduled Caste naga or dragon (the early Buddhists were considered Nagas, and many Scheduled Castes in India still have that as part of their name). Politicians of all persuasions have always tried to "manage", contain or appropriate Dr. Ambedkar and his movement, just as Brahmins tried to contain and appropriate Buddhism hundreds of years earlier in making the Buddha an avatar of Vishnu, and many other ways. The present government has pulled out all stops to woo his followers, but are unlikely to succeed as the Ambedkarites are realising their strength.

On the ground, however, there has been a high increase in the number of hate crimes recorded against Dalits over the last few years, up 70% in the last ten years according to one report (4). These take place all the time, but two years ago, the country was rocked by a video taken in Una, Gujarat, of

four Dalits being beaten by cow vigilantes, the self-appointed saviours of Hinduism. The Dalits were just following their caste duty, skinning cattle that had died naturally. There were many demonstrations throughout Gujarat and elsewhere, but prominent at all these were the five coloured Buddhist flag as well as the Ashok Chakra. The demonstrators wanted not violence but justice, and they wanted to get out of the system that led to this horrific treatment. They have started moving towards Buddhism as this is where, according to Dr. Ambedkar, they would find religion imbued with the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, a religion that would give them basic human dignity. Some came to Nagaloka in October 2016 to formally convert to Buddhism, and more came in 2017. Atrocities happen all over India all the time. The more they happen, the more people move towards Buddhism.

This is the greatness of Dr. Ambedkar. In the last 40 years, India has been shaken by violent religious disturbances, some attracting the extreme discontent of the Scheduled Castes. It has also been at war with the Naxalites (extreme militant Communists), who at one point held sway over a third of India, and even today have a considerable influence. The Naxalites attract the most oppressed – Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. If Dr. Ambedkar had chosen this solution or a religion with more militant fringes, India would have become a blood bath by now. Even though he came from one of the most structurally oppressed of communities, he was never attracted to violence, but to the Buddha who he called the Prince of Peace. And most of his followers have likewise eschewed violence – amazing considering what they have suffered and still suffer.

Today, there may be over 50 million Buddhists in India. Dr. Ambedkar's influence on the whole of the Scheduled Castes (230 million including Buddhists), and an increasing number of Scheduled and Nomadic Tribes (totalling well over 100 million), will result in many more coming to the Dhamma. Some Other Backward

Classes (OBC - erstwhile Sudras) are coming to the Dhamma. At the end of March, I took a retreat near Sankisa (5) organised by Nagarjuna Institute's alumni from the Shakya community (an OBC community). They make up 24 million people in Uttar Pradesh and have started gradually to move to Buddhism at an increasing rate. This is happening in OBC communities all over India. It is not totally ridiculous to think of there being 300 or more million Buddhists in India over the next 50-100 years. It will be many years before we see the full unfolding and impact of Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism, but gradually Buddhism will have an increasing social and political impact on India.

A major drawback is the paucity of trained Dhamma teachers among the newly converted Buddhists. Dr. Ambedkar had called on the Buddhist world to help with Buddhist teaching and the development of Buddhist institutions, but very few responded. Leading Buddhist teachers from the east have preferred to go to the west, or Hong Kong and Singapore, not realising that in India when people get help in the basics of the Dhamma it has a rippling effect through society. It is not just a question of giving. If Buddhists outside India are ready to join hands with their new Indian sisters and brothers in the Dhamma, they will receive so much more. Their lives will change for the better from contact with millions of oppressed people who are trying to change their lives and society through the teaching of the Buddha.

Whether or not Indian Buddhists receive help from their brothers and sisters abroad, the movement will continue to grow. The Ambedkarite Buddhist community is a determined and vigorous colossus, and must be among the most optimistic and positive movements for social change in history. The more it grows, the more people will experience the empowerment Dhamma practice brings, as well as the ocean of equality that is the Sangha. The more people will be able to live lives of true human dignity, the more the old caste barriers will dissolve, and the more they will contribute to the creation of a

true democracy in India. The more they will inspire the world.

“  
We shall go ahead undaunted on the path we have chosen. We have found a new way to live and we shall follow it. This path leads to progress.  
”

Dr. Ambedkar - Conversion speech 1956



Notes:

1. Terminology - this is how I have used the terms, albeit rather loosely – others may use them differently.

i. Ambedkarite - all those inspired by Dr. Ambedkar and who consider themselves part of the movement for radical social change he initiated.

ii. Scheduled Caste – all those from backgrounds that were considered Untouchable in the Hindu religion.

iii. Dalit – Scheduled Castes who have not become Buddhist.

2. The Nagarjuna Institute is a Buddhist college, at Nagaloka, Nagpur, a part of the Triratna Buddhist Community..

3. The Manuski (humanity) Centre in Pune is developing an all-India Network of Social Activists inspired by Dr. Ambedkar’s vision of Prabuddha Bharat (Enlightened India).

4. According to Tavleen Singh Indian Express, 8th April 2018

5. Sankisa is where the Buddha is supposed to have descended from the Tusita Heaven after teaching his mother. It has become the spiritual centre of the Shakya Buddhists.



What are the goals of the campaign?

The goal of the Jai Jagat 2020 campaign is to draw people’s attention to the spaces for change that are available to the millions “at the bottom” so that they are able to participate in their own development.

The goal of the Jai Jagat 2020 campaign is to encourage each person to act to make a change.

The goal of the Jai Jagat 2020 campaign is to support a “bottom up” movement where everyone counts and where no one is left behind.

The goal of the Jai Jagat 2020 campaign is to focus on four substantive issues that include: poverty reduction, social inclusion, environmental reconstruction and peace in interactions with the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The goal of the Jai Jagat 2020 campaign is to intentionally use nonviolent action as the way to achieve greater peace and justice.

“We are on the move”, is one of the main slogans of the Jai Jagat 2020 campaign. Another is “Be the Change you want to see in the world.”

What can you do?

Please take a moment and review the website. It is [www.jaijagat2020.org](http://www.jaijagat2020.org).

Any information you can send in print, photos, videography that may describe local, regional or national activities concerning to the goals of the Jai Jagat is welcome.

Anyone that can volunteer for languages other than English, Hindi, French, German, or Spanish is invited.

Let us know if you are/have sponsored a local event.

Do you wish to participate in one of the marches? If so take a minute to fill in the application online, or the PDF attached. They are currently being planned from Senegal, Sweden, Spain, India, Belgium, and France.

Are you able to send a donation or collect a donation from others?

Information is to be sent to:  
Information & Communication Hub of  
the Jai Jagat 2020

Sambhav Social Service Organization, Gargi House, 93-A, Balwant Nagar, Gandhi Road, Gwalior-474002, Madhya Pradesh, INDIA  
Email: [contact@jaijagat2020.org](mailto:contact@jaijagat2020.org)

# Shunning the Dalai Lama Helps Heal Sino-Indian Relations

*Su Tan, Global Times*

According to reports, Tibetan separatists in India recently cancelled a rally and prayer meeting to be held in New Delhi in celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama fleeing China. This came after the Indian government reportedly told ministers and senior officials not to attend the events because this is a “very sensitive time” for India’s relationship with China.

The note was reportedly sent out at the insistence of Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale, who was once ambassador to China. New Delhi had previously defiantly allowed the Dalai Lama to take provocative moves regardless of severe warnings from Beijing. Although India’s Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement Friday that there was “no change” in the country’s position on the Dalai Lama, keeping officials from celebratory events is a subtle hint that India wanted to improve ties with Beijing.

The year 2018 is important for China and India, after their relations were severely strained last year by multiple disputes, including more than two months of standoff at Doklam. Neither of the two Asian powers wants to see this happen again. They need to enhance communication and properly manage their disputes, a situation in which Tibet is a critical issue.

India has previously tried to play the Tibet card to provoke China, but it didn’t work because China wouldn’t allow it. It brought no benefit to India and merely undermined the interests of both sides. After all these years, India should know how to handle the issue.

For a long time, India has had a mixed mentality toward China. Reluctant to accept the growing influence of its neighbor, India tries to group with other like-minded countries like the US and Japan to curb China and maintain its hegemony in the region.

On the other hand, New Delhi has realized that a strong China brings not just challenges, but also opportunities. China’s successful development can provide useful experiences for India in areas like job creation and industrial upgrading, as well as tangible benefits. China and India have a wide range of areas for cooperation, including trade, cultural exchanges, tourism, and global issues like globalization and climate change. The Belt and Road initiative can also be an important platform to facilitate India’s development.

This year, China and India will see a series of high-level meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to visit China later this year.

To play down the Tibetan separatists’ celebrations and stop playing the Tibet card is a welcome step by New Delhi. It is hoped this approach can continue.

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## 200 Buddhists Gather in New York to Address Urgent Social Crises

*Sam Littlefair*

**B**uddhists came together from across traditions to envision solutions to social ills and to discuss the prospect of a joint Buddhist action movement.



Buddhist monk Bhikkhu Bodhi was part of the organizing team for the conference.

Teachers, practitioners, monastics, and administrators. Young and old. Novice protesters and veteran activists. Buddhists from all walks of life and virtually all major traditions.

They want to join forces.

That was the message yesterday at Union Theological Seminary, in New York City, where 200 Buddhists participated in a first-of-its-kind conference, “Buddhist Action: Morals, Vision, and Justice.”

Greg Snyder, co-founder of Brooklyn Zen Center, helped coordinate the conference and gave opening remarks.

“Why come together as Buddhists?” Snyder asked the crowd. “We’ve been asked to do so. People

from other faiths have asked, how do we bring in Buddhists?”

The idea behind the conference was simple: Buddhists strive to alleviating suffering. Political and social crises cause immense suffering around the world. How can as-of-yet unconnected Buddhists groups work together to help?

The answer to that question is not simple. Unlike many other faith groups, Buddhism has no central authority, and there are differing beliefs about Buddhism’s role in politics and activism. Even among liberal American Buddhists, there is no consensus on the most important issues. Groups might focus on climate, immigration, heritage, justice, incarceration, food security, education,

poverty, misogyny, racism, pollution, or other issues.

Yet, presenters noted, Buddhists do share common fundamental goals — like the promotion of wisdom and the alleviation of suffering. All Buddhists share a dedication to compassionate action, and so Buddhist activism is grounded in love, not hate.

The morning proceeded with presentations by Buddhist activists, teachers, and organizers. Chan Buddhist teacher Rebecca Li generated applause with the statement, “The debate about whether Buddhists should be socially engaged is over.”

“What do we do,” she asked, “when we find disagreement between the Buddhist teachings and our current political situation?”

Zen teacher Rev. angel Kyodo williams gave a rousing speech via Skype, telling the crowd, “We don’t have a personal liberation without a collective liberation.”

Historically, many Buddhist groups have undertaken social projects to alleviate suffering, but those projects are often siloed and apolitical. The conference organizers sought to gather that energy and focus it on the most pressing issues of our time.

So far, Buddhists have largely been absent from national social justice conversations.

“The white middle class occupies a large portion of the power in this community. They were comfortable,” said Snyder.

That was, until things changed on November 8, 2016.

“Middle-class white people were no longer comfortable,” said Snyder. “Historical violence — white supremacy, sexual violence, misogyny — came to the fore. They walked into the Oval Office.” Noting this change in attitude, Buddhist monk Bhikkhu Bodhi started floating the idea of a national Buddhist affairs organization.

“Buddhists often have strong conscientious

commitments on issues of public concern,” Ven. Bodhi said. “But we don’t form together into a group to express a joint position on these vital issues. That struck me as the crying need of our time.” “There’s been a widespread attitude among Buddhists that politics is something to be avoided,” Bhikkhu Bodhi said. “Politics is corrupt, dirty, divisive — but it’s also the field where the great moral issues of our time are being debated. Racism, protection of immigrants, the climate crisis. All these crises come together. If we are to solve these problems, it’s necessary for us to roll up our sleeves and get into the action.”

As the conversations about a national organization evolved over the first half of 2017, it became apparent that creating something on that scale was too ambitious to start out with.

“We decided,” Bhikkhu Bodhi explained, “to go to work at the local level and try to generate a number of nodules around the country, to eventually join together in a coalition. The meeting today is the starting point.”

The idea of a small local meeting ballooned as soon as the event was announced. The organizers expected 100 attendees from the New York area. 350 Buddhists from across the United States registered for the event.

More than 40 coordinators, facilitators, and volunteers came together to make it happen, and Union Theological Seminary — a progressive Christian seminary, which recently launched a Masters of Divinity program in socially engaged Buddhism and interreligious engagement — offered the space. The organizing team included Buddhist monk and scholar Bhikkhu Bodhi, Bob Kolodny of the Buddhist Climate Action Network, Brooklyn Zen Center President Greg Snyder, Buddhist Global Relief outreach coordinator Regina Valdez, New York Insight teacher Sebene Selassie, Strong Economy for All Coalition Executive Director Michael Kink, and Zen priest angel Kyodo williams.



Chan Buddhist teacher Rebecca Li.



Beatrice Anderson, a conference facilitator and the founder of Love Circle Sangha.

The coordinators avoided a top-down organizing structure and identified no predefined outcomes. Facilitators hosted conversations in breakout groups, discussing general themes, and guiding conversation toward practical goals and next steps.

Attendees' various aspirations emerged in conversations throughout the day. Snyder said he hoped the day would be a chance for personal connections to form. Dedunu Suraweera, a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF), said she hoped to see more action and community come from the event. LiZhen Wang, the BPF's network director, said they hoped the day would be a chance to practice relating and organizing. Buddhist teacher Sharon Salzberg hoped to learn more about how activists manifest compassion in the face of suffering.

"I think it's fascinating to meet people who practice very deeply and bring that practice into action — who sit right at the face of suffering and keep going," said Salzberg.

Throughout the day, many participants and organizers expressed enthusiasm for Bhikkhu Bodhi's original idea — a coalition of Buddhist organizations geared toward addressing society's ills.

"I think that Buddhists need to organize locally," said Snyder. "Then those local movements can connect to each other and create a national movement. I would like to see a coalition come out of this. If something like that were to happen nationally, it would be an important move for the moral authority of the religious community, generally. The Buddhist voice is important."

Through the afternoon, participants broke into groups and put their ideas down on chart paper. On one sheet, each group identified overarching principles for the conversation, like playfulness, compassion, receptivity, engagement, and openness to disagreement. Then they discussed the purpose of the meeting. At the fore was the idea of giving Buddhists a more prominent position as a voice of justice, the importance of Buddhists working to alleviate suffering by engaging in social issues and politics, and a need for education about social issues in Buddhist communities.

As participants discussed how to organize such a movement, many focused on creating a network or coalition that would support communities and initiatives already underway. Finally, next steps for creating such a coalition were identified.

## Gratitude to Master Wuyin

*Bhikshuni Changshen, Dharma Drum Mountain*



Ven. Changshen shares her gratitude to Ven. Master Wuyin and the Living Vinaya in the West course, an 18-day training at the Abbey. With a faculty of six nuns from her temple, Ven. Master Wuyin inspired the 49 nuns who came for direct guidance on how to live in the Vinaya, the guidelines for Buddhist monastic communities.

This Living Vinaya in the West course makes me recall the story of the establishment of the Chinese bhikshuni sangha in 4-5th century China. At that time, Chinese nuns wished to establish the bhikshuni sangha—the order of fully ordained nuns—but there were no bhikshunis who could give ordination and teach Vinaya—the Buddha’s guidelines for monastic communities—to the Chinese nuns.

However, there were bhikshunis from the “Lion Kingdom”—that is, Sri Lanka—who traveled by boat to China to give the bhikshuni ordination. As a result, more than 300 Chinese nuns obtained the dual sangha bhikshuni ordination in the Nanlin temple to establish the bhikshuni sangha in China.

Today, in the 21st century, we have a similar story about bhikshunis, yet this time it is not about Chinese nuns, but Western nuns. We have Master Wuyin who, at 77 years old, along with six Luminary International Buddhist Society faculty nuns, took an international flight from Taiwan to Sravasti Abbey in the U.S. to give Vinaya teachings to Western nuns.

Before coming to this course, I knew that I would be participating in an important moment. I knew it was a historical event that would play a key part for the future bhikshuni sangha to flourish in the West.

In this Vinaya course, we learned so much. We are so grateful that we have those wonderful teachers who not only digest the vinaya texts and translate them into English so that we can understand, but also offer their years of lived experience in the sangha, which guides our application of these precepts.

We particularly feel grateful to Master Wuyin, who explained that the precepts are flexible and practical. Your big heart and compassion — as well as your open mind, long view, and the way you taught us — makes the Vinaya that was established 2500 years ago in India apply to contemporary society. You even make the Vinaya more than just a text for people to read, but a living guide that we can practice even in different Buddhist traditions and cultures.

In this nearly three-week course, we all studied hard, because we cherished this rare opportunity to learn the Vinaya and how to apply and adopt it. I think the way we can repay your grace is to practice and study Vinaya. We can apply our knowledge learned from this class to establish and strengthen the bhikshuni sangha for now and for the future.

As Master Wuyin said, a bhikshuni in modern society can do anything. We will work hard to benefit the bhikshuni sangha, and for the Buddhadharma to be sustained forever for the benefit of all sentient beings.



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Ordained and trained at Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan, Bhikshuni Changshen is a visiting professor at Harvard Divinity School. She is currently working on a book on the development of the bhikshuni sangha (community of fully ordained nuns) in the Dharma Drum Mountain organization.

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## Multiculturalism and Social Justice in the Modern Nation-State

*Authors: Lahpai Seng Raw*

*Projects: Myanmar in Focus*



Displaced civilians and migrant workers in Tanai conflict zone, Kachin State, 29 January / Photo credit Hugawng Salum

An ethnocentric state produces a form of fascism in which the state supports the rights and welfare of the dominant ethnic group, but not others. By contrast, a tolerant multicultural state or plural society permits all people, regardless of ethnicity, to be recognised as equal members and thus achieves social justice. This comparison suggests that narrow nationalism is a chief source of the failure of Myanmar to become a modern and successful nation-state.

Framed in the Myanmar context, does the ruling elite maintain the mind-set of those during the ancient Alaungpaya empire? From this perspective, non-Bamar nationalities served as their subordinates. This period in politics dates back to the 15th and 16th centuries, when the nation-state first emerged in Europe as a system of centralized

rule that succeeded in subordinating all other institutions and groups, both temporal and spiritual. Since this time, the continuing practice of the ethnocentric state in terms of social justice has led at times to the absolute neglect of minority people and cultures, feeding resentment and rejection of the central government on the part of marginalized

ethnic groups and fuelling conflict that has, in turn, produced grave human rights' abuses and furthered alienation.

Domination in culture and politics by one nationality group, however, is not an inevitable consequence of modern nation-state formation. The emergence of the nation-state is often connected to the terms of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which weakened the theocratic rule of the Holy Roman Empire, guaranteed a large measure of religious tolerance and gave local princes, particularly in Germany, more sovereignty over their territories. The provisions for religious tolerance included allowing private worship, liberty of conscience and the right of emigration to all religious minorities and dissidents within their domains.

In Myanmar today, within the general picture of ethnic marginalization, the case of Rohingyas is admittedly especially complicated and relates to a legacy of British colonialism. However, an important point is that the current discourse in national politics is characterised by a glaring lack of compassion. In addressing this omission, social justice has a vital role to play. Social justice is a concept of structural compassion that can address the marginalized of society or underdogs by creating a safety net. It is also importantly different from legal justice. The latter concerns fairness in terms of the behaviour of a group or individual from a legal perspective. By contrast, social justice perspectives are broader and look at the arrangement of social structures which ensure that wealth, power and recognition are fairly distributed in society.

The enjoyment of social justice is essential in Myanmar today. Social justice informs perspectives on fairness that address questions about the implications of the types of markets in society, such as whether they are free markets, social markets or a state-controlled market. What are the

implications of approaches to taxation and governance on people's social welfare? Such issues, in turn, raise questions about the level of concentration of power at the state centre and its decentralization. For instance, how much decision-making authority should be shared by regional and local level bodies? These issues also move beyond core issues of governance to look at the media from the perspective of whether it should be private or public. Who controls the education system? Is it private, public, free for all and what are the costs? What kinds of healthcare system are there – for example, public, private or mixed? And how large a gap is acceptable between the “haves” and the “have-nots” in society?

In daily life, social justice frequently concerns issues that go beyond the government. When the trust of citizens in their legal justice system is eroded, one response is to take the law into their own hands and claim it to be social justice. The “Pat Jasan” movement in Kachin State is a recent case in point. It reflects a popular concern among many Kachins about the lack of trust in the Myanmar government to address the social issues associated with drug abuse. Familiarity with the situation in Myitkyina and Putao, for example, would produce a better understanding of community concerns about the illicit cultivation of opium poppy and the growing epidemic of drug use among young people – as well as increased addiction to heroin and the related spread of HIV and Hepatitis B and C.

Ultimately, in a representative democracy, resolution of these challenges should be the responsibility of a national government in ensuring social justice for all. In the interim, local civil society – including faith-based organisations – can and should draw on appropriate traditional practices, working to attain justice for all members of society. This is particularly important in view of the fact

that, in the modern world, social mobility is spreading, and villages, towns and cities increasingly include people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds.

In some ways, the Pat Jasan movement in Myanmar is a community response arising out of a frustration with a very difficult drug addiction problem that does not appear to have immediate or straightforward solutions. However, violence towards opium producers and drug addicts is not an appropriate response and only creates more social problems. In a compassionate society, the concept of social justice also needs to be applied to all in a scourge that has complex social roots.

Pat Jasan leaders therefore have to act with fairness, adhering to proper legal procedures. They should consider setting up their own courts and appoint judges who are respectable and accepted by the public, for example. In fact, this practice is nothing new to us as it is in keeping with the Kachin tradition of socially-accepted justice, outside of formal court systems, that has been used for many decades to solve disputes. In addition, building upon experience, community leaders should learn how to resolve conflicts through civil mediators so that people have less need to go to the police and to court. This is part of recreating a just society and earning legitimacy as a governing body. We need to take advantage of every avenue to strengthen the justice system in our society today.

Another important issue is the utter and continued lack of social and health outreach by the central state to the remote borderlands and ethnic states by successive governments since independence in 1948. Only a year ago, in August 2016, sixty children experienced an untimely death in the Naga area of north Myanmar. Throughout the developing world, children die because they are born in the wrong place – not because of exotic or incurable

diseases. Instead, this suffering comes from commonplace childhood illnesses for which treatments have been available for over a century. In the continued absence of a government capable of delivering routine maternal and child health care to all people, children will continue to die in our country.

As a result of experiences like these, many of us feel that the Myanmar state in general – regardless of the ruling party – has long lacked concern for the broader population and considers many people insignificant. If, however, we had equal power, rights and resources, then our people would get better education, health and other skills to improve the quality of our lives as human beings.

All of these issues draw attention to the critical importance of good governance in our country. Such reform is vital as discussions continue about how to end the long-standing divisions and conflicts in our country. Much of the political focus is about the interests and authority of powerful institutions and stakeholders, but an essential – and very under-examined – issue is the role of “we the people.” Presently, there is little social justice. In Myanmar society, most people have lived their lives until now as citizens who have the “right” to pay arbitrary taxes, the “right” to have their labour conscripted into the projects of military governments, the “right” to struggle to provide for their family’s education and health, and the “right” to be silenced.

Equally concerning, many headlines in Myanmar these days are about “Return.” It has to be asked: return for what? Return under what conditions and for whom? It is the same for Kachin, Karen, Shan and other peoples as much as the displaced communities in Rakhine State. The key need confronting us all is return to “our homeland” where everyone can live with dignity and peace. The

challenge remains to make the Union of Myanmar the home of all its citizens and people. Isn't dignified return at the very heart of social justice? Certainly, dignified return is not just an internationally-defined norm.

Against this challenging backdrop, enjoying or learning a different set of rights does not happen overnight. But, if peace and reform are to come to Myanmar, progress in political rights and social justice has long been vital. Societal momentum is increasing. Here we are already talking about asking the government to allocate more in national health budgets. The next step is to ask for the different states and regions to have their own budgets to allocate and manage. By this "cultural" shift, we are transitioning from passive to active citizenship, which is an absolute prerequisite for democratization and peace. In such a multicultural and conflict-divided country as Myanmar, the long-standing "top-down" approaches by narrow elites have long failed. The challenge now is the spread of social

justice in building peace and national reform, with community and "bottom-up" practices that truly include all people.



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Lahpai Seng Raw is a 2013 Ramon Magsaysay Award winner and co-founder of the Metta Development Foundation and Airavati. She was also a delegate at the 21st Century Panglong Conferences in 2016 and 2017.

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## More Belligerence Won't Solve Our Crisis With North Korea

*Hugh Curran, Special to the BDN*



North Korea's modern history extends back to the Russo-Japanese War, which ended when the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed on Sept. 5, 1905, at the Naval Shipyard in Kittery, Maine. This peace agreement was facilitated by President Theodore Roosevelt, who received a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

The treaty recognized Japan's claims to Korea and much of Manchuria, and established the Japanese military as a force to be reckoned with among Western powers. It also established the U.S. as a major force for peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

The Japanese occupation of Korea lasted until the end of World War II, during which time Japan was ruthless in punishing any signs of dissent. During the war, more than 5 million Korean men were conscripted as laborers, resulting in as many as half a million deaths, and 200,000 as soldiers for

service in Japan's war, while tens of thousands of young women were forced into becoming "comfort women" (prostitutes).

After the war, the Americans assumed control of the south and the Soviets over the north of Korea, with headquarters in Pyongyang. From 1950 to 1953, the Korean War resulted in the deaths of several million Koreans and Chinese, as well as 54,000 Americans. North Korea suffered enormously from the carpet bombing by the American Air Force, killing as much as a quarter of the population. This devastation is deeply embedded in North

Korean consciousness and continues to underlie their view of America.

There is a saying: “There are none so blind as those who will not see, nor none so deaf as those who will not hear,” an expression that is appropriate to the North Korean dilemma. What has brought North Korea to its present heightened state of fear and aggression is based on historical circumstances that American politicians should take into account when considering its present pugnaciousness.

North Korea, with its 25 million people, is being led by a man in his 30s, who, like his father, shows scant regard for human rights and continues to severely punish any internal criticisms of his regime. South Korea, with a population of 50 million, is occupied by American forces with 15 military bases and a \$1 billion military base on Jeju Island still under construction. Compared to the American colossus, North Korea is a minuscule power suffering from U.N. sanctions.

Aid agencies estimate that 18 million North Koreans are experiencing food shortages, and U.N. Assistant Secretary General Miroslav Jenca reports food prices have risen 160 percent since last April. Sanctions are causing enormous harm, but not to the nuclear program. Rather, it is poorer people living in marginal circumstances who are now under serious threat of famine.

The idea that increasing sanctions will force the leaders to abandon their nuclear program has not worked in the past nor will it now. Major powers have large nuclear arsenals, while smaller nuclear powers such as Israel, Pakistan and India are hardly criticized, even as they threaten their neighbors. Yet, North Korea has become part of an “axis of evil,” a view promulgated by former President George W. Bush and taken up by President Donald Trump, which indicates just how deeply entrenched political hypocrisy can be.

The North Korean leadership seems to

believe it needs nuclear weapons as a deterrence to prevent invasion. But more conciliatory measures have been taken in the past to reduce tensions and work toward mutually acceptable agreements.

In the late 1990s, South Korea adopted a “sunshine policy” under former President Kim Dae-jung, whose diplomatic efforts were meant to achieve reconciliation. But the Bush administration undermined those efforts when it declared North Korea a rogue state, resulting in North Korea’s decision to continue to develop their nuclear weapon capabilities. Moon Jae-in, the current South Korean president, has been attempting to revive the “sunshine policy,” knowing that only direct talks could possibly facilitate the freezing of North Korea’s missile program.

There is so much that the U.S. could do to reduce tension, but when the current administration views the world only in terms of competition and dominance, rather than partnership and cooperation, we are all going to suffer the consequences.

Surrounding North Korea with more military bases and warships only exacerbates the paranoia of Pyongyang, which views signs of military buildups as extremely provocative. Working toward reconciliation and practicing patience while taking into account the basis of North Korea’s bellicosity may help provide a way to work out a long-term solution.

It was in this way that President Roosevelt managed his diplomatic efforts that resulted in the Portsmouth agreement in 1905, a process which is still worth emulating.

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Hugh Curran teaches in Peace & Reconciliation Studies at the University of Maine in Orono. Published in Bangor Daily News, February 8, 2018

## Untold Story of Compassionate Action in Myanmar

*Jill Jameson, 26 December 2017*



Peace-building training at Mawbi Monastery

I have just been inside Myanmar. While the army has unleashed extreme violence against the Rohingya population (thousands are reported dead and over half a million have fled), I was struck by the resilience and courage of many people and their organisations inside the country, which are working against hatred and towards democratic change. Their courage, as they counter the legacy of decades of oppression and work towards peace and inter-faith harmony, has gone largely unreported in the mainstream media.

The vast majority of people inside Myanmar have no idea – or do not believe reports – of what is happening in Rakhine State, the homeland of the Rohingya. Increasing restrictions on the country’s media and the imprisonment and “disappearance” of journalists has created an environment in which independent news reporting is severely limited. Large parts of the population rely on Facebook,

which is saturated with false news, hate messages, rumours, and warnings of security threats. So outwardly, denial is high and further accentuated by fear and by Myanmar’s low levels of education, its mostly traditional rote learning methods and by a lack of critical thinking. But at the same time, there has been a growing civil society with a long history of freedom movements and attempts for democratic

change: the '88 student democracy movement, the Saffron revolution in 2007 - led by 100,000 monks chanting loving kindness in response to people's impoverishment - and the election victory in 2015 of the National League for Democracy led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. On this recent trip to the country, I found that the level of activism for peace, tolerance and democracy - although under threat - was undiminished.

I have learnt much from my peace-building training over the years, and from the many civil society organisations and friends working towards healing and democratic change, but this is often not reported on. I acknowledge the extreme complexity and historical factors at play, and that there is a lot more compassionate action beyond the following few glimpses.

Breaking the silence on the Rohingya, one large humanitarian organisation urged its local staff to practice respect for all humanity. They are, in turn, trying to educate other ethnic groups, pointing out that "it could be their turn one day."

All too often, I heard, the current crisis presented as an issue of communal violence and terrorism. But underlying this, as friends told me, is the "political game of the military" and the country's long history of human rights violations.

A question that inevitably comes up is the role of some Buddhist leaders, who have preached hatred and sowed seeds of violence not only among the Rohingya, but in Muslim minority communities elsewhere in the country.

While I was in the country, one prominent monk I spoke with said that the conflict in Myanmar was "ethnic, not Buddhist," and that Buddhist monks were "helping their country, and needed to work together across religions and ethnic groups." He felt this could be helped by setting up dialogues with representatives from the four main religions in the country (Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim). He envisaged these being recorded and shown widely on TV.

He is not alone in seeing the need to address

social prejudice and polarization. Buddhist monks have been active in interfaith work, helping to quell inter-communal violence across Myanmar over the past five years. The death toll would have been much higher if it had not been for their strong stance against violence. During an attack on Muslim shopkeepers and mosques in the city of Meiktila, one monk used his body as a shield to protect and save eighty Muslims. He, like other monks working with Muslim leaders, have helped rebuild and heal these traumatized communities. Another inter-faith group in Mandalay, with representatives from the four main religions, is providing disaster relief, offering a visible role model of tolerance and cooperation.

However, there is another side to Buddhism in Myanmar, which I heard from a civil society organisation (CSO) friend. Buddhism is seen as being in crisis, but this is also an opportunity for change. "The fear of decline is real, and how the root causes are analysed will be important," he said. And this is a time where there is a need for "good friends," and the teachings of the Buddha.

A nun from Yangon told me that the conflict with the Rohingya has led to "feelings of hopelessness and sadness." But, she said "there is a lot to learn as well." What was important she said, was to "understand and to try to de-escalate the conflict, as this was damaging to all."

"We need compassion and promotion of education," said a monk from Mandalay. "Critical thinking is necessary to be able to distinguish right and wrong. Then people can be moved by their hearts instead of by fear."

Commenting on the very complex current situation, a friend said it was "out of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and being a closed country for so long". Further, he said, "people have no time to read, their attention was being used up by daily life for survival." What was needed now was education and to "offer ways forward, to re-create attitudes on life." and this is what he and others have been doing through the Socially Engaged Monastic-based

Schools programs. They have established learning hubs connecting a number of monasteries, with a focus on critical thinking and environmental sustainability, and they offer study tours to Cambodia for example, to see the consequences of oppression from the Pol Pot years. This friend has also translated Bhikkhu Bodhi's book, *The Buddha's Teachings on Social and Communal Harmony Fostering Social Harmony* (originally compiled for peace training in Sri Lanka). This is used in local training programs, as well as other books by Thich Nhat Hanh and the great peace campaigner, Venerable Mahagosananda from Cambodia.

Over the last seven years, I have co-facilitated a range of peace-building trainings with a former saffron revolution monk for a range of monasteries and lay communities. Many of these monasteries were connected with Ma Ba Tha ('purity of race and religion', and now banned). But I found most of these monks to be 'moderates', with few who were extremists. From the training, many have commented on how they liked the participatory methods in fostering friendships, deepening understanding, and helping them better connect with their communities. The training creates opportunities for a range of sensitive issues to be raised for exploration and sharing.

This training has the potential to support the moderate monks and lay people. It offers an environment in which they can speak about their fears, see them in a fresh light, and work towards a more inclusive understanding of their society. Monks speak of the importance of being able to 'speak out' and share —which has not usually been possible. Others say they see ways to reduce their fears through team work and co-operation, by sharing their stories and feelings. Further, in facilitating a process and asking questions, opportunities arise for a range of sensitive issues to be raised for exploration and sharing. Another side of MBT is the considerable range of support they give to their communities. Such 'charity' work would seem to be a form of peace-building, working with

and across difference in some ways.

Some CSOs have been addressing hatred, seeing this as un-Buddhist. I spoke with the courageous leader of one organisation, which had collected 3,000 signatures protesting the use of 'hate speech' by monks in their Dhamma talks – as opposed to Metta - in Yangon, and sent them to the Buddhist leadership council, and to Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor. Another organisation is monitoring hate-speech, especially on Facebook, by checking and following up using a 'dangerous speech framework.' They have a data - base and send findings to journalists to use in reporting, and also to counter hate-speech. Now they are focusing on rumour management and fact checking. Since 2014, they have had a campaign with Pansagar, a music group, and used the image of a flower in the mouth as a symbol for an alternative to hate-speech.

Further work to quell hate and discrimination is demonstrated by an inter-faith harmony group who have drafted an 'inter-faith harmony bill' as a more democratic alternative to the Government's draft 'anti-hate speech and incitements bill.' As part of this work they have organised large forums in both Yangon and Mandalay on 'anti-hate speech and anti-hate crimes.' They are also aiming to work on an anti-discrimination bill.

Violence and oppression in Myanmar are not new, and are not confined to the Rohingya, as seen by the thousands of other refugees such as the Karen, and internally displaced people (IDPs) in Kachin and Shan States, and the numerous reports on human rights violations for many decades. The Army retains its power and causes continued suffering of the most marginalised. But there are organisations and people not caught up in the mass denial and fear of the Rohingya and which are looking for ways forward.

The peace-building training that I've facilitated in the country has been conducted primarily through the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) working with some of

the many CSOs who are working to counter the long legacy of oppression and in a transformative way. One of these CSOs works in the conflict areas or war zones of Kachin, Shan and Karen States – largely unreported conflicts. The core issue is mostly around land confiscation - by the army, ‘cronies,’ or developers. Mapping conflicts and identifying needs and fears of all parties in the conflict, along with building negotiation skills, has been found to be a useful tool for communicating more widely with communities and building the confidence to work with some of the issues. This CSO has also published ‘peace comics.’ These are designed to be more accessible for local communities, using quotations from a wide range of sources. They are now developing a peace-building curriculum for local organisations in conflict zones.

The Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation has programs which include peace education for teachers, peace leadership for youth, interfaith peace-building and intra-faith training for monks and nuns. Their aim for Sangha training is for monks to have a clear vision of what it means to “awaken” and to deliver non-discriminatory messages to their communities.

A community savings bank program, known as “Won Metta,” has been set up in about two hundred Buddhist monasteries in Shan State. It is designed to offer more than financial services. Open to all, it ensures that people from different religions come together monthly for their transactions, and get to know each other. This “indirect peace initiative” is credited with lessening inter-communal tension and violence in the areas it serves.

I heard from other friends that the way of life for most people in Myanmar is non-violent. In the violence, such as in Meiktila - the burning of houses and shops and knocking down of mosques - local people did not join the violence. But discrimination was a problem. There are some groups who are wanting to do humanitarian work in Rakhine State, and some are wanting to build relationships with Rakhine people. Another CSO

friend spoke of the need to mobilise people in such a way as to reach their hearts regarding the Rohingya, using art, poetry and song.

This is a time of transition in Myanmar, with a growing civil society and social movements advocating for democratic change and human rights for all. Huge challenges remain. Wounds from the past are deep. Violence and oppression are not only inflicted on the Rohingya, as seen by the thousands of other refugees such as the Karen, and internally displaced people in Kachin and Shan States. The Army retains its power and causes continued suffering of the most marginalised. It must also be remembered that the country faces the huge challenge of lifting itself out of poverty. It will take much effort and time to heal the deep wounds from the structural violence and the internalisation of oppression.

Soon after the violence and exodus of Rohingya from Northern Rakhine State, an international Buddhist appeal was launched. This called on the Buddhist monastic leaders in Myanmar, ‘to take a strong stand against hate speech and ethnic cleansing.’ These letters were also sent to Buddhist teachers and Sanghas in many parts of the world as an appeal for support to the United Nations High Commission of Refugees in their work for the Rohingya in Bangladesh. At such times, it is important we have ways to be able to respond from our hearts and in practical ways for the relief of suffering, and in support of our brothers and sisters. This compassion in action was reiterated by U Thant from Myanmar, Secretary General of the United Nations in the 1970’s - “Buddhism teaches, above all, a universal compassion to be extended to all living beings, irrespective of their status, race or creed.”



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 Jill Jameson has been facilitating peace-building training for 20 years in Myanmar, and is a member of the Advisory Committee of INEB .

Dear Ajarn Sulak:

We miss you, too. We have been packing for the move to Texas in early April. We had a pipe freeze and flooded the kitchen and living room over the holiday while we were in Siam. Trying to deal with it as my son is taking care of it and has a lot on his plate. Once I retire, you will be hearing from me often. I will try calling you.

I have another book for you. I will send it as soon. It addresses the impunity of all the “powers that be” and their role in self-perpetrating complete control of Siamese society. Much of what you have addressed through your lifetime.

Tyrell Haberkorn. In *Plain Sight: Impunity and Human Rights in Thailand*. New Perspectives in SE Asian Studies. Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 2018.

“Following a 1932 coup d’état in Thailand that ended absolute monarchy and established a constitution, the Thai state that emerged has suppressed political dissent through detention, torture, forced reeducation, disappearances, assassinations, and massacres. In *Plain Sight* shows how these abuses, both hidden and occurring in public view, have become institutionalized through a chronic failure to hold perpetrators accountable. Tyrell Haberkorn’s deeply researched revisionist history of modern Thailand highlights the legal, political, and social mechanisms that have produced such impunity and documents continual and courageous challenges to state domination.”

Review

“Powerfully uncovers and documents many episodes of state intimidation and violence in postwar Thailand. Haberkorn deftly probes the nature and domestic actions of the Thai state and holds it accountable for its own history.” Ben Kiernan, author of *The Pol Pot Regime* and *Vit Nam*

“This stunning new book goes far beyond Thailand’s heartrending experience of serial dictatorship without accountability and state formation grounded on impunity for crime. Haberkorn also compellingly engages Thailand’s place in the rise of human rights movement.

“Required reading for anyone who wants to understand modern Thailand. Haberkorn reveals a state where political violence is normalized as it has established and maintained a narrow royalist and elitist regime.” Kevin Hewison, editor of *Political Change in Thailand*

Yes, I did contact Don Swearer and he said thank you to you for thinking of him. He, however, already has a copy. I am waiting to give it to Sombat when we get together. I just mailed calendars to him and a copy of the “Seeds of Peace.”

I am sorry for not sending the review. It is finished and there are almost three pages. I am finalizing my review, it is difficult. I will send it to you by this weekend.

Once again, I ask your forgiveness for my tardiness in responding to you. It has been five weeks, and I will do better.

Noi and I send our best to you and your family!

**Best regards,**  
Noi and Tom

Dear Sulakjee and the family,

It takes time to recover from the magic spell of Siam forest retreats, china town, Bangkok street food, and the unforgettable generous city with which buddha and his engaged sadhaks treated these city dwellers (full of innumerable cravings and restless wonderings). Mitra and I experienced a sense of rare delight, and a way of life that touched us. Hope all is well with the young charmers at the institute and all of you. The quiet presence of Mrs Sulak continues to linger in our mind, and the dedicated companionship of Khwan remains a pure matter of wonder and joy. She walked everywhere, driving, describing, and making us feel at home.

**Warmly,**

Prabodh and Mitra

Dear Archan Sulak Sivaraksa,

I am very pleased to learn that the charge against you was dropped. I strongly hope you will be gaining your presence of mind and will guide us with your profound wisdom and unbending spirit as usual.

**Respectfully yours,**

Tadashi Takatani  
NPF

Dear Archan Sulak Sivaraksa,

This is a belated message from some of your friends in Japan, congratulating you on your victory in your struggle against the outrageous attack on your using lese majesty as the subterfuge.

We have listened to and read a translation of an interview you gave to Thai journalists after the charge was dropped.

We are moved greatly by your bold advocacy of true democracy, with full freedom of speech and criticism of the authorities, made on behalf of the interests of the unprivileged people. You did all this braving the harsh post-2014 coup situation.

Renewing our respect for your profound wisdom and unbending spirit in the service of the people, we wish you good health for years to come.

**In solidarity**

MUTO,	Ichiyo, (People's Plan Study Group)
ASAMI,	Yasuhito & Takami (Hosei University / Peaceful Beans)
KUMAOKA,	Michiya (Japan Volunteer Center, Advisor)
MUSHAKOJI,	Kinhide (Osaka University of Economics and Law)
NAKAMURA,	Hisashi
NOGUHI,	Yoichi (Former Executive Director of Niwano Peace Foundation)
OHASHI,	Masaaki (Shapla Neer, council Member)
OHASHI,	Seiko (Green Coop Consumer's Union, International Advisor)
OKAMOTO,	Kazuyuki (Writer)
SAITO,	Yuriko (Meiji Gakuin University)
TAKAHASHI,	Hisao
UTSUMI,	Aiko (Osaka University of Economics and Law)

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## George Simson: An appreciation

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*Sulak Sivaraksa*

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George was a pioneer in the field of biography. He contacted quite a number of well-known individuals to write for him. He even edited many articles for the journal BIOGRAPHY. It is a great pity that after his retirement he stopped editing the journal. George built a strong foundation for the journal, and it continues as part of his legacy. George has been my good friend, my Kalayanamitta. He and his wife Marguerite looked after me every time I was a refugee in Hawaii. I often stayed in the lovely library of their cottage.

In the evening, we usually drank whisky together and talked about various topics of our mutual interest.

I really miss you George.

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## Frere Boursin

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19/05/1921 - 03/11/2017

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Frere Claude Marsaud, Provincial de France.  
Translated and abridged by Danny Campbell.

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Rene Boursin surrounded by his students at Assumption College in 1952

Rene Boursin has died aged 96 years, after a religious life of 79 years. Born one of five children to farmer parents, Brother Rene decided to become a monk at a very young age. Aged 11, he entered the juniorate of St Laurent-sur-Sevre. After 4 years there, he asked to enter the postulate at Peruwelz in Belgium. He took his first vows at age 17.

He was directed towards the scholastic school of Mothe-Achard, receiving a training in English, which he learned in two years, gaining a diploma from the London matriculation in 1940.

In 1943, he returned to St Laurent and finished the second part of his baccalaureate. Then he began his career as a teacher at Bretignolles-sur-Mer. In 1947, his superiors asked him to travel to Siam, where, at age 26, he joined a mission.

He acclimatised to the heat and humidity, learning Thai, because at that time English was not widely spoken. For 13 years he served at Assumption College. In 1960, he was sent to Montfort college in Chiang Mai, before returning to Assumption and then to Sriracha.

In 1968, Frere Boursin joined a leper colony in Khon Khaen where he spent 5 years administering charity to sufferers, before returning to teaching, this time at Nakhon Ratchasima. After this period, he spent a period of renovation in Rome, then, 6 years at Port St Louis on the island of Mauritius, where he served at a technical college.

In 1982, he returned to France definitively. It was also a long time since he had been in the land of his birth. He spent his first year back home at Sallertaine, engaging with the Children of the Mekong Association at Valence, before moving to Asnieres in the Paris region, working for the same association at national level.

In 2011, he had to quit the community, going into residence of St Hillaire. He was tired, and ordinary activities were difficult. For the last six years, his life was regulated by health needs. He led a sedentary existence of prayer and contemplation.

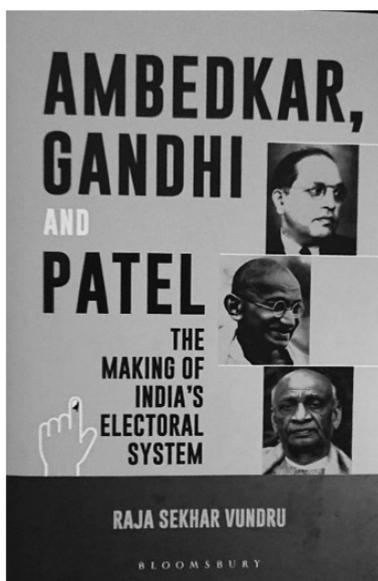
He reained a great reader, interested in topical subjects and the evolution of society. For as

long as he was able to, he spent long hours reading, enriching himself and appreciating the world he lived in. He always remained interested in the people of Siam. After my return there in January 2017, he was delighted when I brought back a plaque commemorating the death of King Bumiphol Adulyadej. He had, like the Thais he lived among, venerated the King for his role in encouraging tolerance among his people.

After a final Summer, he left this world and became closer to God. His road on earth has come to an end, his mission changed. He was a good man, attending to the poor, a man with good manners revealing respect and kindness to others.

Thank you, Brother Rene, for the way you conducted yourself in this life. For the love you shared, for the wisdom and the joy you gave to those you met.

## Recommended Reading

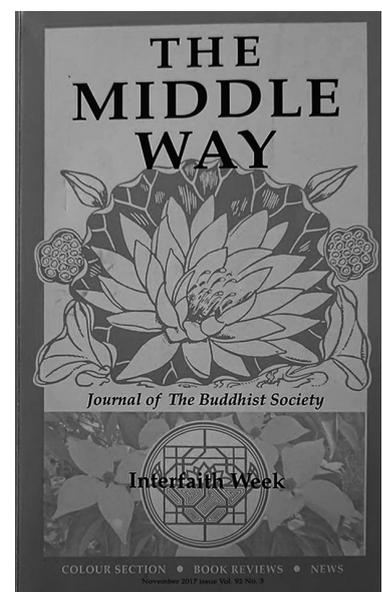


AMVEDKAR, GANDHI  
AND PATEL  
The Making of India's  
Electoral System

Author: Raja Sekhar Vundru  
Publisher: Bloomsbury

The Middle Way  
Journal of The Buddhist Society

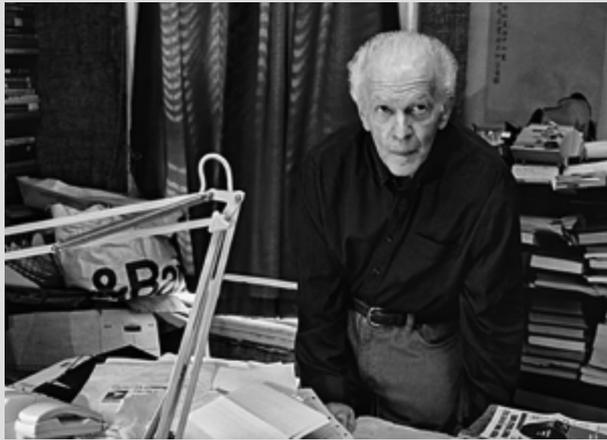
Editor: Dr. Desmond Biddulph CBE



# Gene Sharp

## Godfather of nonviolent revolution dies at 90 years old

*Ruaridh Arrow*



The Albert Einstein Institution has announced that Dr Gene Sharp passed away peacefully on the 28th January at his home in East Boston. He had recently celebrated his 90th Birthday.

Born on the 21st January 1928 to the Reverend Paul Sharp, a traveling minister, and Eva Sharp a school teacher, Gene studied first at Ohio State University where he received his undergraduate and masters degrees in political studies, before moving to New York where he wrote his first book on Gandhi's use of nonviolent action. In 1953, he took a civil resistance position against conscription for the Korean War, and was sentenced to two years incarceration at Danbury Connecticut. Just before his trial, he wrote a compelling letter to Albert Einstein at Princeton, telling him about his position on fighting in Korea and asking if he might write a foreword to his book on Gandhi. Einstein replied immediately offering to provide the foreword and giving permission for his letters to be quoted at the trial.

He wrote, "I earnestly admire you for your moral strength and can only hope, although I really do not know that I would have acted as you did had I found myself in the same situation." Einstein even found time to

write letters of comfort to Gene's mother after the sentence had been passed.

After his release, Gene worked with A.J Muste, America's most famous pacifist, before travelling to London where he became Assistant Editor of Peace News and planned the first Aldermaston march against nuclear weapons in 1958. His leaflets urging the maintenance of nonviolent discipline during the march were the first materials on which Gerald Holtom's iconic peace symbol were printed. He went on to study at the Institute of Ideas in Oslo under Professor Arna Naess and at Oxford University, where he received his Dphil for a thesis which would become his most highly regarded work 'The Politics of Nonviolent Action'.

He was also known for his 198 nonviolent methods, a product of his study of hundreds of years of nonviolent cases in history, which he noted down over decades on small pieces of card tied up with rubber bands. The methods, finally compiled into a single document during his time studying at Oxford University, gave inspiration that the means of nonviolent action extended far beyond just street protests and marches.

During the first Intifada, compilations of Gene's work on civilian based defense were distributed among Palestinians by resistance leaders, including Mubarak Awad and Sari Nuseibeh. The widespread use of the work led to a meeting between Gene and Yasser Arafat in Tunisia, where Gene implored Arafat to give up the violent component of the struggle against Israel, and mark a new phase by calling for a nationwide hunger strike.

Gene was also present in Tiananmen Square in 1989 as the PLA tanks rolled in to crush the Chinese students uprising. For days he interviewed student leaders before the crackdown and smuggled the cassette recordings out past Chinese security by disguising them as Pink Floyd albums.

The Serbian group OTPOR credited Gene's work in their campaign to oust President Slobodan Milosevic, as did many of the leaders of the 'colour revolutions' which followed in the Soviet successor states, including Georgia in 2003 and the Ukrainian Orange Revolution in 2004. Leaders from these struggles spread his work further afield, such as former OTPOR activists

training the leaders of the Egyptian youth movement and members of similar organisations in Syria. His work continues to be used in Hong Kong, Venezuela and Burma among many other countries.

Gene was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on at least three occasions and won a number of international prizes including the Right Livelihood Award. In 2012 a biographic documentary about his work, 'How to Start a Revolution' won a BAFTA award and was shown internationally and used screened in Occupy camps all over the world.

A statement from the Albert Einstein Institution read, "Gene Sharp refused to retire and worked up until his death. A rare collection of orchids on the top floor of his home were his joy and respite. He enjoyed keeping animals, especially his dogs and exploring the wild spaces of Norway and Canada. He never married or had

children, but he loved and was loved. He leaves behind generations of students of his work all over the world who are better able to win political freedom and resist oppression than ever before. He has set down his pen for the last time, but his work will continue forever."

You can watch How to Start a Revolution, the film about his life here <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/4878>. For commemorative public screening please contact [ruaridharrow@gmail.com](mailto:ruaridharrow@gmail.com).

The institution is asking friends and those that found his work useful not to send flowers, but instead donate to furthering the work of his institution on the donate link here: [www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org).

## Events

### 12 June 2018

At Lamphun, commemorating 140th anniversary of the venerable Kruba Srivijya, the holy monk of the north.



### 23 June 2018

At Bangkok, Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa will receive the Humanity Award from CHEE CHIN KHOR 紫真閣 on its 66th anniversary.



### 5 August 2018

Netiwit Chotiphathaisal will give a lecture on the future of Siam to celebrate 50th anniversary of Sathirakoses-Nagapradjpa Foundation (SNF) at Bangkok Art & Culture Centre (BACC).

### 3 August 2018



The Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood Summer School (CURLS) is hosted by **Sulak Sivaraksa, Right Livelihood Award** (the "Alternative Nobel Prize") laureate laureate 1995; with public lecture and workshop by: **Nnimmo Basse**y, Nigeria, Africa, Right Livelihood Award Laureate; introduction by **Anwar Fazal**, Right Livelihood

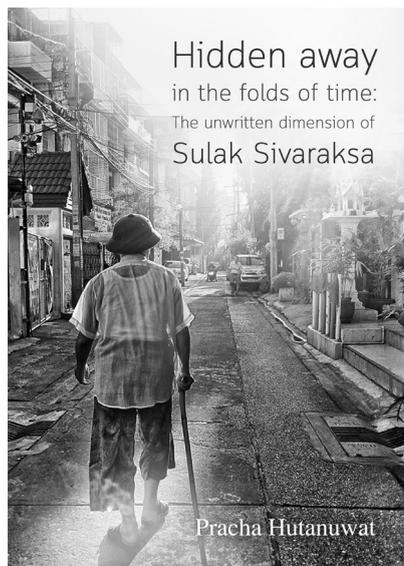
College Malaysia; **Daw Seng Raw Lahpai**, Myanmar, Magsaysay Award laureate *Sombath Somphone* lecture with introduction by **Shui-Meng Ng**, Laos; **Dasho Karma Ura**, Bhutan; **Michiyo Furuhashi** from Japan. And from Thailand: **Prapart Pintobtang**, **Surat Horachaikul**, **Amara Pongsapich** and **Suthipand Chirathiwat**, Chulalongkorn University; **Shalmali Guttal**, India, Focus on the Global South; **Anupan Pluckpankhajee**, Seven Arts Inner Place and **Makhapom** theatre group; and many more.

A learning journey from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, to Chiang Dao in Chiang Mai province; and back to "Chula".

#### Sombath Somphone Public Lecture



To keep alive the legacy of Sombath Somphone, PDR Laos, who disappeared in Vientiane, 2012. **Daw Lahpai Seng Raw** is the founder of Metta Development Foundation, Myanmar's largest NGO which runs healthcare, agriculture and peace projects. A member of the Kachin ethnic minority. She is at the forefront in facing challenges in Myanmar that include decades of ethnic strife and military dictatorship. In 1987, she started to work with the internally displaced people at the Myanmar-China border. Moving to Bangkok in 1990 she joined the Kachin Independence Organization's humanitarian wing (ROKA). She started the Metta Development Foundation in 1997. In 2013, she was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award the highest distinction for social activists in Asia.



## Hidden away in the folds of time : The unwritten dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa

Thomas Francis Brown

Sulak Sivaraksa. *Hidden Away in the Fold of Time: The Unwritten Dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa*. Interviewed by Pracha Hutaniwat. Forword by Matteo Pistono. Introduction by Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. Edited by Jane Rasbash. Translated from Thai by Zai Collins Free. Bangkok, Siam (Thailand): International Network of Engaged Buddhists, 2017. 280 pp. \$20 US; 700 Baht; 17 Euro (paper). Available in English and Thai. ISBN 978-616-92828-1-5.

*Hidden Away in the Fold of Time: The Unwritten Dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa* transforms into the Written Dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa. The Folds of Time—are no longer Hidden Away—Ajarn Sulak makes known through the Folds of Time by telling us where, how, and when he gained his knowledge. He takes us on his life-long journey with him. One learns how he gathered, assessed, absorbed, and consolidated his knowledge into what it is today. Ajarn Sulak published *Hidden Away in the Fold of Time: The Unwritten Dimension of Sulak Si-*

*varaksa* to coincide and celebrate his 84th birthday on 27 March 2017. It was to be a companion publication with the release of his biography written by Matteo Pistono, *Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*. (Publication, forthcoming) on the same day. Unfortunately, rather, fortunately, that did not happen. Application of Article 112 of the criminal law code certainly could result in charging and arresting Ajarn Sulak for lèse majesté on his birthday. Ajarn published his autobiography in 1968 (see, *Loyalty Demands Dissent: Autobiography of an Engaged Buddhist*. Parallax Press, 1998.).

Chapter 1 shared the knowledge that he gained from his parents and other relatives. Ajarn Sulak informs us that he spent much quality time with his father—who told him many stories. They were common stories; nonetheless, he remembered every one of them to this day. He gained most of his knowledge from his older female relatives. He did not spend very much time with his mother. He enjoyed most of his time talking to his aunts and hearing their stories. He memorized all of them and remembers them all to this day. Ajarn

Sulak gained much knowledge from his Ajarn, who was closest to his father, and spent most of his time with him. Early on, Ajarn learned to distinguish between the truth and untruth, and to recognize it from the outset of each conversation. Ajarn cautions us that when a person exalts oneself with praise, they are merely exaggerating, and never adds up to what or who they really are, and only try to deceive you.

In chapter 2, he enlightens us on the knowledge that he gained from Chao Khun Pat at Wat Tongnoppakun. Chao Khun Pat told Ajarn many stories that he had heard from Somdet Puttajarn (Toh) of Wat Rakang. Ajarn makes mention of how this knowledge helped shape him and his outlook on life. He learned all the mannerism and how to conduct oneself as a mindful and virtuous monk. Says, “I had the worldview of a householder, living that life with myself at the center of everything. I was number one at home, my father’s favorite son.” That all changed. When I went to stay at the temple, though, I didn’t have any rank. I was, however, fortunate that the Chao Khun was kind to me. Ever so, it was a long time before he took me under his wing” (p. 70). When he was at the Wat,

he witnessed the social life of high ranking-monks. When Ajarn was at home, he was at the top. Everyone catered to him—he was always privileged. Living at Wat Tong, he was overjoyed and excited to live there. It was there, that he began to see how monks and others lived. It was an awakening.

In chapter 3, he makes known the knowledge he gained from Western and Siamese culture. At the outset, Ajarn Sulak notes, “Humanity needs perfection. To reach the highest goal, we need to achieve perfection and excellence” (p. 73). While at Lampter, truly understood the essence of Britain. He learned that Western Civilization had two foundations: Ancient Greece and Christianity. On the one hand, Western society concept of perfection lends to look down on other cultures, vis-à-vis Siamese society to a minor extent. Cultures tend to look down on other cultures while propagating that their culture is the best. He provided multiple examples and a comparative analysis of several, and annotated why and how some of them engage in brainwashing. For example, “Atrocities occur due to brainwashing of the perpetrators, nothing else. The more wisdom possessed by humans individually or collectively, the less brainwashed they will be” (p. 77). Ajarn numerates many examples and continues on his journey of acquiring his knowledge.

In chapter 4, he provides insight and illuminates the knowledge that he gained from both the schools and universities that he attended. Some knowledge that he gained was posi-

tive, while some negative and counter-productive from schools and universities. Ajarn Sulak commented that studying at Assumption College is “a factory churning out tons of finished human products” (p. 109). Moreover, “the education system is rubbish in my opinion” (p. 109). It was Ajarn’s discovery of the works of Bertrand Russell, Ivan Illich, Schumacher, and Paulo Freire when he began to embrace alternate ideas. He recommended those authors and their ideas to the Siamese populace. While attending in Lampter, he was very much in the mainstream with the anti-labor politicians. He only read the pro-establishment Times Literary Supplement, while radical students read Encounter. Later, he got an inscription from the Encounter Journal and used his inspiration to initiate the Social Science Review. Many Siamese looked to it as an alternate to the mainstream media in Siam. The Asia Foundation funded the Social Science Review. Later it became clear that the Asia Foundation was as a CIA front. Ajarn’s translation of Herbert Marquis into Thai, radicalized the Social Science Review. That opened Ajarn to revisit Bertrand Russell, Virginia Woolf, and the Bloomberg Group. Ajarn conceded that he was conservative without knowing it. He was from the upper class and read all of the conservative books—he became and was one of them.

Chapter 5 shared the knowledge that he gained from books. Ajarn began to read and devour books beginning with Bertrand Russell, Paulo Freire, and Ivan Illich. Nicholas Ben-

nett played a major part in helping him know Ivan Illich. Following Ajarn’s return to Siam, he got familiar with the Bloomberg Group. He read many of the works by its members. They included Sir Leslie Stephen, Virginia Woolf, and her friends. The group was the most progressive in Britain, and brought about socialism in Britain. Subsequently, Ajarn began to read myriad bibliographies to learn about people. Early on, he read funeral commemoration booklets and memorized them. He studied the characters in literature and the language used. He wrote books and told everyone he met to go to museums and libraries. He challenged and confronted Siamese history that was questionable, and posed all the right questions, questions that put his freedom into jeopardy. Finally, there is much more to grasp and absorb from this chapter, nonetheless, it would take an essay to capture it as all of his chapters do.

Chapter 6 shared the knowledge that he gained from elders and teachers. Ajarn acquired knowledge by reading the works of Prince Naris and Prince Damrong. While he never met them, he knew their children quite well. Mom Chao Jongjittanom Diskul revealed much and told him that royals withhold things from commoners. He was able to get her to disclose secrets using what he learned in law school. Ajarn provide a rich and in-depth review and synopsis of all the knowledge that he gained from his elders and teachers. He discloses how to tell whether the information is true or false, looking at the sources, where did it come from, and who provided it. On

this journey, he mentions about all those that he respected and disliked with the reasons and supportive evidence for his rationale. He numerate both good and bad teachers that include kings, monks, leaders, and teachers, singling out many of them. For example, Ajarn shares,

“I told Sanya Thammasak (the prime minister appointed after the events of 14th October 1973) how to find out whether Kittiwutto (the monk who endorsed the 6th October 1976 massacre) was a good monk or not. It is easy, I said. Just go to Wat Jitapaawan (the temple in Chonburi of which he was the abbot). You don’t have to go inside, just around it. The local people won’t recognize you. Back then, nobody knew the privy councilors. Chat to them and you will find out. I went to ask the locals myself. They said “That man, he’s no monk! He even cheats workers out of their wages. He scatters food and possessions everywhere, but the junior monks go without” (p. 155).

In this chapter, Ajarn provides an in-depth analysis of the myriad monks that he respected, disliked, and pointed out all the reasons that he felt the way he did toward them. He surmises that formal education lacks the knowledge that the rural populace has. This chapter is full of wonderful examples and comparisons, that one wishes for more time to delve into and cover them all. As all his chapters are so rich in Ajarn’s written dimension, it is enough to say, that the journey Ajarn takes you on touches and reveals every aspect of his analyses and thought processes.

In sum, Ajarn Sulak unravels the myriad intricacies woven into, embedded, and solidified into his web of knowledge. That is, how it developed, how he applies it, and how he uses it to approach and address the problems of today.

In the final analysis, Ajarn Sulak stipulates his failures and shortcomings, in spite of all that he has done for the rural and disenfranchised communities of Siam.

“I have encountered some successes in my life. But on the whole my life is characterized by failure. I have failed much more than succeeded. Why? If I were successful, we Thais would not still be living under a military dictatorship. We would have a truly constitutional monarchy; that is, one in which the monarch is under the constitution. We would have a transparent and accountable monarchy. The Crown Property Bureau would be owned by the people. The military would not be a deep state. Farmers and manual workers would have equal social dignity. Businesses would be guided by Right Livelihood. (some of the business people I have known give me hope in this respect.) The rivers and canals would be clean, and the fish would return to them. And so on.” (p. 27)

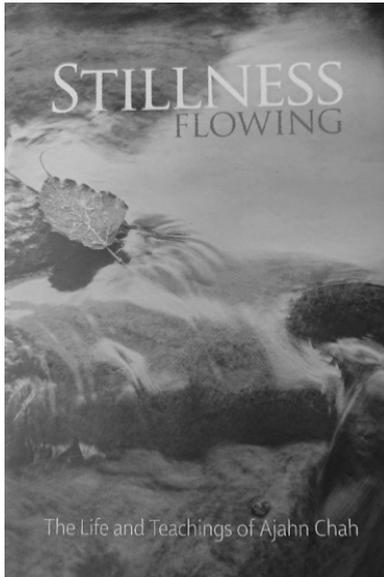
Ajarn Sulak takes us with him on his lifetime journey. Beginning with his formative years through adulthood, and taking us with him to where he is today. This book will help you understand what Ajarn Sulak stands for, and what he defends always with a steadfast position—giving no ground. This is a necessary and man-

datory must read to understand him and take this journey with him. Then, and only then will you come to an understanding of him by traveling with him on his lifelong journey. Through each chapter, Ajarn Sulak articulates to us how he arrived to where he is today, and the reasons why and how he became the way he is today. Travel with him through his journey, as the unwritten dimension becomes the written dimension.

When asked to write a book review of Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa’s latest book, I was humbled, honored, and overwhelmed! Humbled by him asking me with having none of the credentials that so many other people have. Honored that he would ask me, and so overwhelmed by the task of doing justice to capture the essence, the message, and thrust of his revelations in this new book. Might I say, that I have known Ajarn Sulak for more than forty years plus. I thought that I knew a lot about Ajarn. Little did I realize the journey that Ajarn took me on, where he was then, and now enlightened. This further humbled me!

I highly recommend the Unwritten Dimension. Once you begin to read it, you will not be able to put it down. Take the journey with Ajarn Sulak.





# Stillness Flowing

Sulak Sivaraksa

When it comes to the “Wheel of the State”, we should lose all hope in the military dictatorship. However, the new King still offers a glimmer of hope. The domain of religion is also in disarray. Many shameless and immoral monks are holding ecclesiastical ranks and titles. The scandalous Dhammakaya movement is merely the tip of an iceberg. Its teachings are contrary to Buddhism. Nevertheless, it has attracted a large following.

One of the best news from the domain of religion in the kingdom is the publishing of P.A. Payutto’s *Buddhadhamma* (complete edition) in the English language. This book is a real gem. My wager is that it is the most important Thai (Theravada) contribution to Buddhist studies and practices in the past millennia. As such, it is likely to be translated into other languages.

P.A. Payutto is a peerless authority in the study of the Buddhist Scriptures. He has also neatly merged ‘theory’ and practice in Buddhism. As for contemporizing Buddhism, Bud-

dhadasa Bhikkhu’s contribution is unparalleled. Moreover, we must not forget Ajarn Chah Subhaddo of the Forest Tradition. He was very talented in setting up modern Buddhist communities (sangha) and monasteries that have steadfastly upheld the Dhamma. Communities like these have enabled Buddhism to survive and flourish over the ages. Mainstream Buddhist communities are often weak and faltering. By and large, they have capitulated to capitalism, commercialism, and superstition. But not Ajarn Chah’s communities! As a result, they serve as a guiding light for Buddhist monks today.

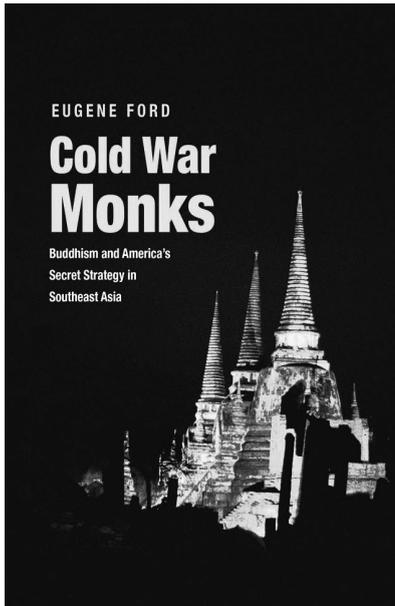
Buddhist communities established by Ajarn Chah have spread internationally and more extensively than those by other Thai monks. They would meet annually to discuss on both Dhamma and practical matters. They are the true upholders of the Doctrine and the Discipline. Monks in this Forest Tradition would not accept any money, travel without the company of an attendant, smoke, perform fortune-telling, etc.

Ajarn Chah’s new official biography in English, written by Ajarn Jayasaro, an English monk, was also recently published to commemorate his 100th birth anniversary. This massive volume is entitled *Stillness Flowing*. It was especially written for the Western or non-Thai audience. It

includes the necessary background on Thai history and culture. As a good biography, it touches on both the strengths and weaknesses of Ajarn Chah. On the contrary, many biographies of monks written in Thai are really hagiographies. Take for example the biography of Ajarn Mun Bhuridatta that was written by Ajarn Maha Bua Yanasampanno. This book has also been translated into English.

Fortunately for the reader, the publisher of *Stillness Flowing* is not terribly interested in commercial success. Rather, this book project is envisioned as a gift of the Dhamma. In other words, the interested reader may contact the publisher to obtain a free copy. There’s still much to learn from and be inspired by this exemplary monk.

Ajarn Jayasaro must be applauded profusely for writing such a wonderful biography. We are fortunate to have monks like him as our contemporaries. *Stillness Flowing* and Ajarn Jayasaro show that there still are reasons not to give up on Buddhism (in the kingdom). And if the Wheel of Religion is turning as it should, the Wheel of State may work normally too. Learning from *Stillness Flowing*, we may be more mindful and wiser and be in a better position to cultivate happiness, our own as well as that of other people and sentient beings.



Eugene Ford's *Cold War Monks* is based on declassified US official documents, and focuses on the American efforts to use Buddhism as a tool for waging the Cold War in Southeast Asia.

Ford had made extensive use of primary and secondary resources. He had also conducted interviews with a number of relevant informants. Overall, this is an important book. However, it is marred by some minor factual errors. For example, Ford stated that Christmas Humphreys received Prince Damrong who was on a visit to England during the Seventh Reign at the Buddhist Society, which is located at 58 Eccleston Square. In truth, the Buddhist Society moved to this address when I was studying in England; that is, well after Prince Damrong's visit.

Ford examines the US government's engagement with Buddhism in the early Cold War years. He traces the emergence of America's Buddhist policy to the period 1954-1957. He then turns to Siam and the inter-

## Cold War Monks: Buddhism and America's Secret Strategy in Southeast Asia

*Sulak Sivaraksa*

national Buddhist scene in the period 1956-1962.

Ford discusses the founding of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) in Sri Lanka by the initiation of Malalasekera. WFB had an important meeting in Nepal. After that, the venue changed every two years—to Cambodia, India, etc. Also, he highlights newly independent Burma's role in reviving Buddhism at the international level. More precisely, Prime Minister U Nu sponsored the convening of the Sixth Buddhist Council in Burma. It was a major international event. At first, the Thais were lukewarm towards this gathering. However, the Phibun Songkram government wanted to establish closer ties with Burma. As such, it supported a number of Thai monks to participate in the Council. The most important figure on the Thai side was Phra Phimolatham (Ard Arsapho), for whom Ford provides a nice biographical sketch. He was from Khon Khaen province (considered backward at the time). He was a rising star and steadily moved up the ecclesiastical ladder. Unfortunately, he failed to reach the top because of the intense conflicts between the Dhammayuttika and Mahanikaya sects as well as the

ethnic prejudices of central Thais against northeastern Thais. Phra Phimolatham was a Mahanikaya monk from the northeastern part of the country.

Ford talks about many important Thai monks in the book, such as the Supreme Patriarch (from Wat Benchamabophit) and Somdet Phra Mahawirawong (from Wat Makut Kasatriyaram), who would later also become the Supreme Patriarch. Interestingly, he does not refer to Somdet Phra Putthakhosachan (from Wat Sarm Praya), who was a central figure in the Phimolatham case. It seems that the American official documents would only go so far. Ford discusses in detail the case of Phra Phimolatham who was disrobed on charges of being communist. He was imprisoned at the Special Branch Police for five years. The military court ultimately dismissed the allegations against him, but the whole trial was very time consuming—as was the process to restore his ecclesiastical title and rank.

Ford does a good job at reconstructing and narrating the politics of monkhood. The US government used the Asia Foundation as a vehicle to intervene in the affairs of Buddhist monks in Siam, Laos, Cambodia, and

South Vietnam. An important figure in the Asia Foundation when it came to Buddhism was William Klausner, who is still alive today. Moreover, it is later revealed that the Asia Foundation had received money from the CIA.

Civil unrest in Sri Lanka forced WFB to move its headquarters to Burma. However, Ne Win's coup in 1962 transformed Burma into an authoritarian and isolationist country. This time, WFB moved to Siam, and MC Poon Pisamai Diskul served as its president. WFB has been in Siam ever since.

The Thai government has consistently supported WFB since the relocation of its headquarters to the kingdom. The cost of this support was WFB's indifference to political issues. For example, when Buddhists from South Vietnam asked WFB to condemn the country's authoritarian government, especially its treatment of Buddhists, WFB refused.

Ford introduces the reader to many Buddhist leaders in South Vietnam. Unfortunately, the name Thich Nhat Hanh is conspicuous by its absence. Likewise, when Ford discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU), which is the oldest Buddhist university in Siam, the name P.A. Payutto is nowhere to be seen. This is a significant negligence because Venerable Payutto was then serving as Secretary-General of MCU, and he played a crucial role in putting the faltering MCU back on the right track. Also, the Venerable contributed considerably to the de-

velopment of what later became known as socially engaged Buddhism in the kingdom.

When Ford talks about some of the keynote speakers at the WFB conferences, he mentions the name of Kukrit Pramoj. But he did not add that Kukrit opposed Buddhadasa Bhikkhu's "Dhammic Socialism", which advocates anti-capitalism and anti-consumerism. Nor did Ford mention that I once gave a talk at a WFB conference. At least, Donald Lopez considers my WFB speech worthy enough to be included in a book he edited: *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West*.

During the Cold War, Buddhist monks in Siam were likewise deeply polarized into right and left. A key figure on the right was Kittivudho Bhikkhu. He had connections with extreme right-wing movements like the Nawaphon, the Red Gaur, etc. A key figure on the left was Phra Maha Jad Khongsuk. Generally speaking, the government and the Sangha supported the right-wing monks—at times shamelessly. They collaborated to oppress leftist monks who were struggling for justice in solidarity with the farmers in the country. Admirably, Ford had managed to conduct an interview with Phra Maha Jad Khongsuk. Kittivudho was not available for interview because he had passed away. However, Ford did interview a close disciple of Kittivudho who defended his former master unquestioningly. But, in my opinion, Kittivudho was not as terrible as Dhammajayo, the leader of the

Dhammakaya movement. In fact, both Kittivudho and Dhammajayo were ordained at Wat Paknam.

The politics of monkhood in Siam was connected to the 6 October 1976 massacre. Ford provides a detailed account of this connection. He also does a good job at narrating the post-14 October 1973 period, beginning with the premiership of Sanya Dhamasakti, followed by that of the Pramoj brothers, and ending with the death of democracy on 6 October 1976. Ford is correct to point out that the Thanin Kravixien government was extremely authoritarian. As such, General Kriangsak Chamanan found it intolerable and staged a successful coup. Kriangsak became prime minister from late 1977 to 1980.

Many Thai people are already familiar with this story. Ford includes a story about King Rama IX from this period that many Thais may not know. The King was greatly worried about the country's image. He asked his principal private secretary to meet unofficially with the US ambassador in Bangkok. The King was concerned about authoritarianism in the kingdom, but wanted the US to sympathize with the Thai situation. At that point, American military bases had already been withdrawn from the country due to Thai pressures, and Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia became communist.

In sum, this book provides the reader with a wealth of information based on primary documents. It is an eye-opener in many respects.

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