

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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Celebrating the 108<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the late Dr. Sem Pringkuangkeo

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## Editorial team

Sulak Sivaraksa (Advisor)  
Harsha Kumara Navaratne (Advisor)  
Somboon Chungprampree (Editor)  
Theodore Mayer (Assistant)  
Arjun Kumar (Assistant)  
Rita Litwiller (Assistant)  
Dhanakhorn Thongdeang (Assistant)

## Cover

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Sem Pringkuangkeo Foundation website

## Lay-out

Surapong Petnamlai

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Suksit Siam  
113-115 Fuangnakorn Rd.,  
Bangkok 10200  
Tel. (662)2259536-40  
spd@semsikkha.org

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666 Charoen-Nakorn Road,  
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600 Siam  
Tel. (662)860-2194  
Fax. (662)860-1277  
coordinator@inebnetwork.org  
www.inebnetwork.org

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(INEB) and its members around the world,  
and the organizations under SNF including  
the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)  
and the School for Wellbeing Studies  
and Research.

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nuns, serious practitioners and specialists from a variety of fields together in Bangkok. This was an opportunity for them to deepen understandings of key issues and develop further collaborative initiatives. Their efforts are significant to the growing need for professionals and trained lay persons to respond to communities and individuals grappling with psychological, mental health and end of life concerns. The four-day meeting significantly contributed to the growing momentum among the diverse group of participants from many countries and cultures.

Ajarn Sulak's keynote speech, entitled *Dharma Has No Gender*, is an inspiring call to support gender justice and diversity. The speech was given at the 2nd International Conference and Culture and Gender Ethics where he challenged participants to take concrete steps leading to eradicating discrimination and injustice of people who are marginalized by mainstream cultures. Ajarn Sulak highlighted the women's, LGBT and bhikkuni movements in Siam. He talked about the country's Theravada bhikkuni movement that recognizes bhikkuni Venerable Dhammananda as its most senior Theravada bhikkhuni for her tireless effort to re-establish the country's Bhikkhuni sangha. Ajarn closed by saying that "Dharma cannot be used to justify gender inequality." "We can bring about loving kindness instead of hatred. We can be part of the solution instead of part of the problem. We can be for diversity instead of discrimination."

Our Awakening Leadership Training (ALT) and School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS), each successfully completed their courses with brief descriptions by students included in their articles. We continue to be uplifted and committed to each of these programmes' unique means of stimulating learning and personal growth.

Please note the particular situations described in the country reports as non-violent means were used to save the environment. Also, the book reviews offer some interesting reading on topics ranging from modern Thailand, and a guide to practicing Dhamma in daily life, to Pracha Hutauwat's recently published book about Ajarn Sulak.

We thank you for your steadfast support and interest, and ask you to save the date for the next INEB conference scheduled for October 22-24 in Bir, India, hosted by the Deer Park Institute. This year's conference theme is *The Culture of Awakening – Cultivating and Harvesting Wisdom*. Please visit our website for more information.

## Editorial Note

### Hello INEB Friends,

Greetings from Bangkok where the country has been celebrating the coronation HM King Maha Variralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun. We wish him well with the hope that the entire country benefits during his reign.

We appreciate our friend Jill Jameson's insightful and heartfelt article about peacebuilding efforts in Myanmar despite rising military control. The training Jill has facilitated over many years is based on building trust and acceptance across differences through sharing stories in a supportive environment and by using deep listening skills. This process is essential for opening hearts and makes transformation possible at many levels. The article describes her interactions during recent training describing the complexity of issues faced by various organisations and individuals from Myanmar's diverse ethnic groups, states, and social and economic sectors.

The international roundtable discussion on Buddhist psychology, psycho-spiritual counseling and training on chaplaincy training held in March 2019, brought monks,

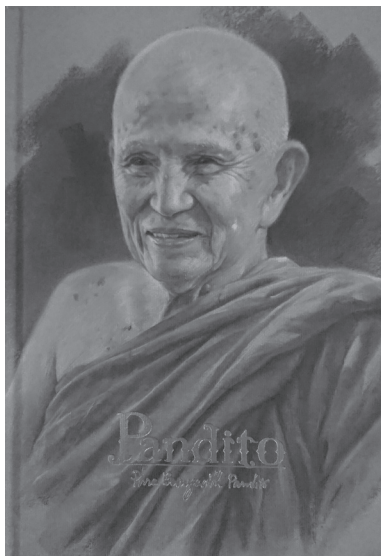


# 31 May 2019 Marks the 108th Birthday of Dr. Sem Pringkuangkeo

Dr Sem Pringkuangkeo, from Siam, was a social thinker involved in medicine, public health and education for over several decades. Dr. Sem was a pioneer in rural Siam's health care and over time he helped build a strong foundation for Siam's medical and health care development and reform. He was recognized as a dedicated mentor, educator, rural doctor, and visionary.

The name SEM for the Spirit in Education Movement comes from an abbreviation of the organisations' name in Thai language, semsikkhalai. Sem is derived from the venerated Dr. Sem Pringkuangkeo, in order to honour his legacy of dedicated work that continues to support Thai society. Sikkha is a pali word, translated as education or training. Sikkha is further defined by three components, sila (morality), samadhi (concentration), and panna (wisdom). These components are critical aspects of education because they encourage authenticity, ingenuity and innovation to flourish. Lai is an abbreviated form of mahavittiyalai, which is the Thai word for university, or place of higher learning. Together, both the Thai and English titles illustrate SEM as an organisation working on education grounded in spirituality, which supports people to serve each other and society which Dr. Sem embodied throughout his lifetime.

## Recommended Reading



Pha Boonyarith

Editor: Thippaya Kittikachon  
Publisher: Salapimpakarn

10 years Social Innovation

2009 - 2019



SCHOOL FOR  
WELLBEING  
Studies and Research

In collaboration with the Centre for Buddhist Studies & CNH

South East Asia campus of the Right Livelihood College

## INVITATION 2019

### 10 YEARS SCHOOL FOR WELLBEING STUDIES AND RESEARCH

- South East Asia campus of the Right Livelihood College -

Annual Chulalongkorn University Right Livelihood  
Summerschool (CURLS)

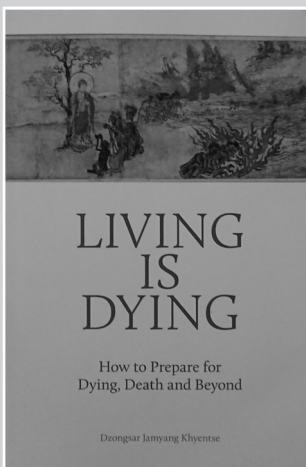
**7 - 21 JULY** including Wongsanit Ashram retreat, academic exchanges at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, action research in rural Chiang Mai province and EARTH TRUSTEESHIP FORUM

**19 - 21 JULY** NATURE RIGHTS, GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND RECLAIMING 'THE COMMONS':  
THE RISE OF EARTH TRUSTEESHIP

The Earth Trusteeship Forum will highlight the 2019 Right Livelihood public lecture with **Raúl Montenegro**, Prof. of Evolutionary Biology, University of Cordoba, Argentina, Right Livelihood Award laureate (The 'Alternative Nobel Prize') 2004. With intercultural and multi-stakeholder dialogue, public CURLS presentations, theatre improvisation and partnership co-creation World Café.

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY, BANGKOK, THAILAND

### Recommended Reading



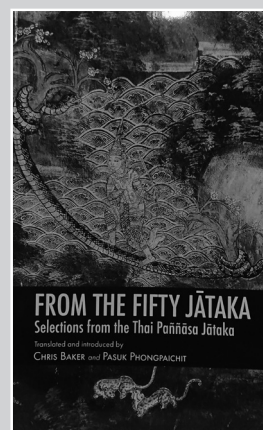
Living is Dying: How to Prepare  
for Dying, Death and Beyond

Author: Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse



First Thing First

Publisher: Dhammatalks.org



From The Fifty Jataka: Selections  
from the Thai Pannasa Jataka

Translator: Chris Baker and Pasuk  
Phongpaichit

Publisher: Silkworm Books

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## 2019 Buddhist Women's Leadership Training Series I & II: To Become a Dream-maker of "Dhamma"

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Dates: 2019 Series I: 3-5 May, Series II: 16-19 May  
Location: Taiwan

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Organized by:

- Research Center for Chinese Subjectivity Chengchi University,
- Taipei Dharma Rain Temple Foundation
- International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Register: Internet: <https://reurl.cc/dnxbk>

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We invite Buddhist monastics and female lay devotees who are interested in Buddhist education to join hands and design a collaborative plan for training teachers of Buddhist monastics. The training for trainers will offer Dharma courses for adults and adolescents in Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

### **Series I - May 3 - 5**

For Buddhist women in Taiwan to investigate and understand the past, present, and future. The focus is to enable participants to contribute their expertise and experience in planning educational programs for Buddhist monastics, adults, and adolescents in Southeast Asia. In this way, Buddhists in Taiwan can share their perspective of Dharma as a response to challenges of the world and support one another to become a dream-maker of "Dharma."

### **Series II - May 15 - 19**

A workshop entitled, *A Feminist Anti- oppression and Socially Engaged Buddhism*, will be led by Ouyporn Khuankaew, a well-known Buddhist grassroots activist from Thailand. Ouyporn has

experienced domestic abuse and walked out of it. She found power from cattáro-brahmavihára (loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and detachment), and has since supported women to find power from the Dhamma, too.

This workshop aims to deepen and broaden our awareness and understanding of the suffering at personal and social levels by investigating issues of gender and sexual suppression. Rooted in the Buddha's core teachings, the Four Noble Truths and the *Four Brahmavihara*, along with integrating modern feminist theories, Ms. Ouyporn develops a unique holistic training method, through which one will gain insight, a compassionate heart and communication skills needed to face and transform the suffering of oneself and the world. Participants will learn to analyze the structural inequality and prejudices in massive consciousness based on the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism. Ouyporn also proposes Dhamma as the antidote to consumerism, conflicts among ethnic groups, and the divergence of duality in of consciousness.



# Buddhist Teacher David Loy Briefly Detained in Denver During Climate Protests

Justin Whitaker  
Buddhistdoor Global

Buddhist writer and teacher David Loy reported being briefly detained and issued a summons by police while taking part in a direct action protest with the group Extinction Rebellion (abbreviated XR) in Denver, Colorado on Saturday 20 April, along with five other protesters. The activities coincided with Extinction Rebellion events around the world, most notably ongoing activities in London, England.

At the event on Saturday, Loy and five others sat in a roadway blocking traffic until police removed them. Lisa Widdekind, who sat with Loy, commented that, "Speaking for myself, I'd say there's a lot of relief over the outcome mixed with joy that we accomplished what we set out to and hopefully added our voices to the outcry for the transformation that needs to happen." (Facebook)

Loy explained that



David Loy at the Denver Extinction Rebellion protest. Image from [denver.cbslocal.com](http://denver.cbslocal.com)

while the small group was not very long. I'm inspired by what has happened in London this week. Here in Colorado we need a lot more than six people..." (Facebook)

Extinction Rebellion was founded in England in May 2018 and seeks to use nonviolent resistance to raise awareness and directly challenge human activities



Lisa Widdekind (front) with David Loy behind her and other protesters in Denver. Image from [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)



An Extinction Rebellion sign in Denver. Image from [facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)



An Extinction Rebellion event in Uganda. Image from [rebellion.earth](http://rebellion.earth)



A “die-in” led by Extinction Rebellion in Belgium 20 April. Image from [rebellion.earth](http://rebellion.earth)

known to drive climate change. “We want (politicians) to treat it with the same sense of urgency. Because, we have read the science, and we understand the science,” Extinction Rebellion Denver spokesperson Rick Visser said. (CBS)

Loy, a long-time environmental activist and author of *Ecodharma: Buddhist Teachings for the Ecological Crisis* (Wisdom Publications 2019), and *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency* (Wisdom Publications 2009) wrote after the events:

The biggest question for me these days is: What should we do if and when we realize that “business as usual” — including all the usual, acceptable political channels [elections, contacting politicians, citizen initiatives, etc.] — will only lead to disaster? As some have pointed out, the avail-

able legal channels for dissent aren’t working because “the system isn’t broken, it’s fixed” — it’s working the way it’s supposed to, to absorb our dissatisfaction and protests without ever addressing the fundamental issue and making the changes that are necessary if we are to avoid or minimize global catastrophe.

We need to keep in mind that the people who control the present economic/political system are also the ones who benefit the most from it. It’s very difficult for them to see the roots of the problem — after all, that system is working very well for them, isn’t it? So they focus on the short-term [quarterly profits, re-election] and largely ignore the greater long-term challenges ...

Not paying our taxes won’t do enough, at least not quickly enough. The government has well-established

ways of responding, with various legal maneuvers that after some years end up garnishing wages or seizing one’s property.

So we can’t simply work within the present system, but must challenge it, shake it up.

For me, that is our collective koan today. So can we avoid “inconvenience”? I don’t say that what XR is doing is the best possible response, but right now I don’t have a better one. And the time for us to get our act together is very, very short. (Facebook)

Speaking after an earlier Extinction Rebellion event in Denver, Visser said, “We’re having conversations that we didn’t have last year. The frequency is increasing; it’s not just occasional actions. And it’s going to be ramping up throughout the year.” (Westword)

Extinction Rebellion events are planned to continue internationally at least until 29 April. So far, they have engaged in a variety of actions to broaden awareness and pressure lawmakers, from “die-ins” in government buildings and public spaces to a disco dance party in Denver and poetry read by actress Emma Thompson.

S



# Save the Irrawaddy by Offering Compensation

*English version of remarks delivered by panelist Lahpai Seng Raw on the public discussion event at Novotel-Yangon, on April 20, 2019*

I am from Myitkyina, a flourish along the Irrawaddy's path – from its watersheds in the upper reaches of Kachin State to the delta region in the south.

The Irrawaddy is a precious national heritage. From time immemorial, the Bamar and other ethnic nationals have lived and thrived along its riverbanks. Not only is it an amazing natural ecosystem, it is an icon of our cultural and national identity. If we do not safeguard this treasure, we will suffer from its devastating loss just as our neighbors to our immediate east did when the Chinese dammed the Khong River within their borders. The impact on downstream countries like Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam has been disastrous and irreversible.

To have the Irrawaddy flow freely for all time is a cause very dear to my heart. And putting my money where my mouth is, I used the USD 50,000 I received from the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation as seed money to establish the non-profit organisation Airavati with a few like-minded friends in 2014. Airavati's major work entails preserving the environment, culture, and way of life of the diverse communities that

Protecting the Irrawaddy therefore, is of national importance as the whole country's fate and existence depends on it. Building a dam near the confluence



site, or the Myitsone Dam Project as it is called, poses irreparable cultural, ecological and economic damage to the nation. Furthermore, the existential threat posed by the Myitsone Dam on communities within the reservoir inundation areas and those downstream is enormous, given that they are in an earthquake prone zone. In the meanwhile, communities in the confluence area have been forced to relocate, living in limbo in places where they could not engage in their traditional livelihood.

Moreover, the lack of transparency and consultation with communities

whose lives would be directly impacted have given rise to passionate opposition against the project not just by Kachins, but by all Myanmar nationals who love and cherish the Irrawaddy for practical as well as sentimental reasons.

We, the peoples of Myanmar, with roots in different parts of the country, may differ in ethnicity, language and faith systems, but when it comes to saving the Irrawaddy, we are of one mind. This unity of purpose will empower us as we harness it in taking steps to put a stop to a project that will do irreparable harm to our beloved Irrawaddy. If we,

each and every one of us Myanmar citizens, dig deep into our pockets and collectively make one-time or multiple-times one dollar donations, we will surely reach the goal of repaying the debt incurred when the previous government signed onto an ill-conceived Chinese-funded mega project that would bring no benefit to Myanmar nationals.

Recent history has shown that we can come together with strength in times of great national need. When Cyclone Nargis struck in 2008, ravaging the delta region, the Metta Development Foundation was deeply involved in post-tsunami relief work there, and witnessed how the hill peoples – Kachin, Shan, PaO, Kayah – responded collectively and instantly, rushing

to the Irrawaddy Delta to help rebuild the devastated region in tandem with other lowland Myanmar communities.

I believe if we are resolute and united, the Myitsone Dam construction can be stopped. It will never go ahead. We must not give in to threats nor show signs of weakness in resolve. Otherwise forces intent on exploiting the Irrawaddy and doing perpetual harm to our country will prevail.

To give you a sense of how strongly feelings against the Myitsone Dam are in the heart of local Kachins, let me share a story about a neighbor of mine at Alam, the village midway between Myitkyina and Myitsone. On the evening of 6th February she came to my house with two chickens under her arms, asking me

to take them for 13,000 kyats (about 8 US dollars). She said she urgently needed some cash for transportation to join the public demonstration against the Myitsone Dam planned the next day at 8 am at the Manau festival compound in Myitkyina. She felt she should go and show her solidarity with those opposing the dam, no matter what her financial situation.

My neighbor is a widow, eking out a meager living from the land. A while ago her son had gone to China in search of job opportunities. The border police arrested the group of job seekers he was with, stripped them of their clothes and belongings and pushed them back to the Myanmar side of the border. The mother had to sell part of her land to pay a middle man to bring her son home. In spite of all this, I know for sure that my

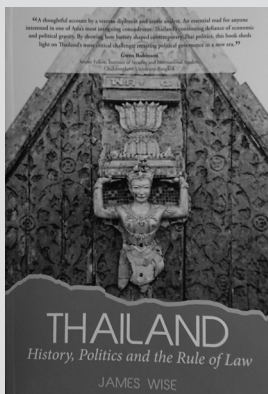
neighbor, and others like her, would happily pay a dollar per month until we are home free of the Myitsone debt. Buying back the Myitsone debt can also be seen as a symbolic act of buying back peace. The anger, the discontent, the pent up feelings of exploitation and injustice stemming in part from heavy handed, unilateral projects like the Myitsone Dam that benefit only

non-Kachins, have given rise to armed conflict in the Kachin area. A nation-wide effort to put a stop to a project universally opposed by the Kachin could be construed as an act of solidarity, a show of empathy for the suffering of the Kachin, and can ultimately lead to national healing.

It is also a lending of ears to the voices of those forced to flee the Triangle Area north of the Irrawaddy confluence. When the threat of the Myitsone Dam is removed, they can return to their homes in the highlands, instead of languishing in crowded lowland IDPs camps. It would also eliminate the ominous choice the Chinese ambassador made Kachin church leaders take during his visit to Myitkyina: to support Myitsone Dam construction or risk losing aid for the safe return of IDPs.

The Myitsone Dam was halted in 2011 due to intense public pressure. We need to keep up the pressure, and consistently say “NO” with a united voice. Launching a public fundraising campaign to repay what is “owed” to the China Power Investment Corporation is a good way of reclaiming our beloved Irrawaddy, as well as salvaging our dignity and sovereignty.

### Recommended Reading



Thailand: History, Politics and the Rule of Law

Editor: James Wise

Publisher: Marshall Cavendish International

# Thai King Crowned Amid Pomp and Ceremony

*The Straits Times, May 5, 2019*



*King Maha Vajiralongkorn sitting on the throne after being formally crowned during his coronation ceremony at the Grand Palace in Bangkok yesterday. It is part of a three-day elaborate traditional ceremony to complete the monarch's accession to the throne. PHOTO: EPA-EFE*

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn was formally crowned yesterday in the kingdom's first coronation in almost seven decades.

The 66-year-old monarch was sprinkled with water collected from around the kingdom, before donning a 7.3 kg diamond-topped crown and reading out his first royal command.

"I shall continue, preserve and build upon the royal legacy, and shall reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the people always," he said in

the Grand Palace before members of the royal family and senior officials, including Singapore's ambassador to Thailand Chua Siew San, who was dean of the diplomatic corps.

The King then proceeded to install Queen Suthida, the deputy commander of his bodyguard unit who had been announced as his wife on Wednesday.

Later, he was ferried on a palanquin to Bangkok's Temple of the Emerald Buddha, where he pronounced himself patron of Buddhism

in the country. The new appointed queen sat alongside her husband during religious rituals in the evening.

Yesterday's coronation took place amid much political uncertainty.

The kingdom has been ruled by a military junta since a coup in 2014. While it held an election in March, official results will only be released by Thursday, amid dispute over the method of allocation of parliamentary seats and allegations by one of the top winning political parties that the junta is trying to destroy it with spurious charges.

The monarch, meanwhile, has been an assertive and unpredictable figure since taking the throne after the death in 2016 of his revered father Bhumibol Adulyadej. King Vajiralongkorn is the 10th king of the Chakri dynasty, and is also known as King Rama X.

While Thailand is a constitutional monarchy, the royal family has extensive influence, wealth and power.

Over the past three years, King Vajiralongkorn has consolidated personal control over royal guards and the Crown Property Bureau, which was estimated to hold over US\$40 billion (\$\$54 billion) worth of assets in 2014. He now personally

appoints members of the Sangha Supreme Council, where the Buddhist country's most senior monks sit.

Meanwhile, members of a new civilian volunteer corps wear signature yellow and blue uniforms and salute the King's portrait before conducting any community activity, like cleaning roads and running public kitchens.

Thailand's strict le'se majeste' law makes insulting or defaming the king, queen, regent or heir apparent punishable by up to 15 years in jail.

As le'se majeste' complaints can be filed by anyone, critics argue that the ruling junta has wielded them liberally against political dissidents.

But le'se majeste' prosecutions abruptly dropped in recent months, something veteran historian Sulak Sivaraksa attributes to the personal intervention of the King himself.

Mr Sulak, who had a personal audience with the King in 2017, described the monarch as "very well-read."

"Based on my impression, he was concerned about the survival of the monarchy, the state of the Thai sangha, and how democracy would work in Thailand," the scholar told *The Sunday Times*.

Naresuan University

political science lecturer Puangchon Unchanam, assessing the King's first three years in power, told *The Sunday Times*: "Against all odds, he has shown to the public that he has more political skill, will and assertiveness to steer his reign than what many people thought he had, especially before he became King."

He was also arguably more active than his father

in protecting the political and economic interests of the crown, said Dr Puangchon.

"Before he ascended the throne, it was still somewhat debatable to what degree the monarch controlled, owned, and even cared about the Crown Property Bureau; and whether it belonged to the crown as an institution or the monarch as a person."

"Thai conservatives

tended to say that it belonged to, and aimed to benefit, the nation as a whole, or the monarchy as an essential part of the nation - not the monarch as a person. Now, under Rama X's reign, it is clear that it belongs solely to His Majesty."

Tens of thousands of Thais are expected to descend on inner Bangkok today as the King rides a pal-

anquin along a 7km route in symbolic circumambulation of the kingdom.

Street dessert vendor Rattima Thamrunakit told *The Sunday Times*: "I am glad Thailand still has the monarchy and see it stand strong and firm."



## Grieving for Sri Lanka

Hatred never ceases through hatred

It ceases only through love.

This is an eternal law.

—Dhammapada, verse 5

Our deepest compassion and sympathy goes out to the victims of Easter Sunday bombings across Sri Lanka, to their families, and to an entire nation in grief. The world is grieving with you. More than 350 people have been killed, with 500 more injured. We wonder what it will take for people to learn that differences and conflicts are never resolved by cascading violence?

Regardless of who is held responsible for these atrocities, our concern is based on compassion for all whose lives have been torn apart by these acts of extreme violence and by our unshakeable opposition to all forms of hatred, murder and terror.

Our nonviolent stand does not arise from any one religious tradition, but from a universal awareness that life is precious to all.

As Western Buddhist practitioners, teachers, and clergy, we depend on the Buddha's ancient teachings on non-violence and love even in time of fear and uncertainty. Of course, we wish to see those responsible for these bombings held accountable in courts of law. At the same time, we urge the leaders of all faith communities in Sri Lanka and around the world to guide their congregations with wisdom and compassion in breaking the chains of violence here and now.

**Rev. Hozan Alan Senauke**

for Clear View Project

and Buddhist Humanitarian Project

23 April 2019

# Walking the Path Together: International Roundtable on Buddhist Psychology, Psycho-Spiritual Counseling, and Chaplaincy Training

Jonathan S. Watts



The era of modern, industrial capitalism & communism based in the dualism of mind and body has increased our fundamental human anxiety to new levels. This latest post-industrial era of mass media is intensifying this condition and reaching a tipping point in the worldwide epidemic of mental illness. As a response, incredible innovations are occurring not only in biomedical solutions, but more importantly in new forms of psychotherapy. Buddhism finds itself in the center of this movement as western based therapeutic systems seek to import its concepts and practices, specifically mindfulness meditation. At the same time, practicing Buddhists worldwide are themselves experimenting with adapting traditional teachings and practices to new contexts. As innovations continue to grow and new techniques emerge everyday, one can feel as

overwhelmed by the methods for healing as by the causes of suffering. In our work for suicide prevention in Japan and through our increasing connections worldwide with the Buddhist based end-of-life care, psychotherapy, and chaplaincy movements, we have been deeply impressed and moved by what we also find to be the fundamental simplicity of healing: connection, or as the Japanese would say *en* 縁, “karmic connection.” All the techniques and training courses and years of study are essentially trying to lead us to the simple yet fundamental healing qualities of connection, kindness, warmth, and community—something that your neighborhood grandmother perhaps knows better than your famous Buddhist master.

With these emerging lessons in our mind-hearts, a group of 20-30 monks, nuns, serious lay



practitioners, and specialists in a variety of fields gathered for an International Roundtable on Buddhist Psychology, Psycho-Spiritual Counseling, and Chaplaincy Training from March 12-15 at the headquarters office of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in Bangkok, Thailand. This meeting was the first major follow-up to the 1st International Conference on Buddhism, Suicide Prevention, and Psycho-Spiritual Counseling held in Yokohama & Kyoto, Japan from November 6-10, 2017. That conference was the culmination of over a decade of activities by the International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC) of the Kodo Kyodan denomination in Yokohama to nurture a collaborative network of priests in Japan working on suicide prevention. That conference also included co-sponsors the Jodo Shin Hongan-ji Denomination Research Institute, the Ryukoku University Research Center for Buddhist Cultures in Asia (BARC), the Association of Buddhist Priests Confronting Self-death and Suicide of Greater Tokyo, and the Soto Zen Denomination Research Center.

In an effort to deepen understandings of key issues and develop further collaborative initiatives, the core group of participants from the first conference along with a select number of new participants met in Bangkok for four days of more intimate and focused discussion on the following themes: 1) the interface between Buddhist thought and modern psychology; 2) modalities for training Buddhist chaplains in psycho-spiritual care; 3) cooperative strategies & team building for medical and spiritual caregivers; and a new theme 4) confronting substance abuse through Buddhist methods. Participants came from Japan, Thailand, the United States, Myanmar, and India.

## Workshop for Monastics on the Meaning and Practice of Death

Before the main meeting began on the 13th, a special meeting & workshop for monastics on the meaning and practice of death was held as single-day event on the 12th. Initially, this meeting was planned as an exchange between Japanese priests working on suicide prevention and Thai monks working in end-of-life care. However, it grew to include Tibetan and Myanmar monastics, who enriched the discussions with their own viewpoints and experiences.

The core participants from Japan represented the Jodo Shin Pure Land Hongan-ji Denomination, the largest traditional Buddhist denomination in Japan. In 2010, a small group of priests created a public, non-profit group called the SOTTO Self-Death & Suicide Counseling Center to offer counseling for the suicidal and grief support to the bereaved, as well as to educate society about the issues of suicide. As Pure Land Buddhists, their understanding of humans as deeply flawed and unable to access bodhicitta through their own efforts is quite unique. However, their approach in the end is quite congruent with other Buddhists and other clinical chaplaincy approaches of “sitting quietly at one’s side” (the literal meaning of *sotto*). Their particular emphasis is providing the sense of warmth that a Pure Land Buddhist feels when embraced by Amida Buddha. However, as a public non-profit, they never communicate Buddhist teachings to clients, and like clinical pastoral education in the United States, the religious teaching and training is focused on the cultivation of counselors themselves. At the end of their presentation, they offered a short demonstration of the type of role-play training they provide their staff, which is mostly but not exclusively ministers from their Pure Land denomination. Two other priests from the Tokyo area of Japan, one from the Soto Zen sect and the other from the Jodo Pure

Land sect, also presented on the work of offering special memorial services for bereaved families of those who had committed suicide. Because of social taboos against suicide and the intense sudden trauma of suicide, most families are not able to use the funeral of their loves one as a time to heal. New Buddhist associations like the Association of Buddhist Priests Confronting Self-death and Suicide are using private memorial services at major temples to gather such families to share experiences. As Japanese priests have often been criticized for making easy money by doing nothing but performing funerals, this transformation of the Buddhist memorial service is an important innovation for not only the public good but the revival of Buddhism in Japan.

The core participants from Thailand represented the Kilanadhamma Group for end-of-life care, which began from the individual work of Pramaha Suthep Suttiyo. Kilanadhamma started as a volunteer group of monks to visit and support dying patients in hospitals. This work has begun to include the care of professionals who also experience suffering in this difficult work environment. Kilanadhamma has also expanded their work to a grief care program called Bhavana Forum, which invites twenty or fewer bereaved persons for a three-day program to share feelings and solutions to their grief. Like the Japanese, they have found the need to properly train monks to do this work and so have developed a four part program of introductory seminar, skills training, field training, and reflective conclusion.

The group now has 60 monks actively involved. A second Thai group represented was the Buddhika Network for Buddhism and Society founded by Pra Paisan Visalo, the leading socially engaged Buddhist monk in Thailand who attended the last day of the conference. They began 16 years ago creating small workshops on care for the dying

with nurses and doctors, and have continued to promote forums to bring monks and medical professionals together to develop better mutual understanding and collaborations beneficial to patients. In 2017, they held the Happy Death Day festival at Bangkok's large Queen Sirikit Conference Hall that featured a wide variety of events to educate the public about death and shift attitudes away from the abject fear and denial of death that most modern people have.

Although only one brief day together, the entire group was inspired to learn of the wide variety of innovative activities toward dealing with death in contemporary society by traditional Buddhist monastics. While further follow up will be conducted, the group's imagination was stimulated to think of a longer and wider ranging such program among Buddhist monastics of all traditions.

### Main Conference Day 1: Roundtable on *Interfaces Between Buddhist Thought and Modern Psychology*

Throughout the work of the priests in Japan doing suicide prevention, there has been the tension or contrast between the modern, predominantly Western style of professional psychiatrist and the traditional style of Buddhist priest-counselor or what could be called "spiritual friend" (*kalyanamitra* 善知識). As our discussions have widened since our first international conference in 2017 to include the concept and role of the professional chaplain, there has developed a strong interest to continuing dialogue on the now popular theme of *Interfaces between Buddhist Thought and Modern Psychology*.

In short, the various traditions of Buddhism and modern psychology hold a generally common viewpoint on the nature and cause of human suffering in the neurotic patterns of the mind (1st &

2nd Noble Truths). Where there is great divergence, however, is in the vision or goal of psychological well-being and the means for realizing it (3rd & 4th Noble Truths). For example, what is the vision of personal well-being in modern psychology: to maximize individual coping mechanisms and performance in the world; to attain a state of psychological balance and therefore well-being? While nirvana is the stated goal of all Buddhists, the path towards getting there and the goals to be achieved along the way can vary greatly among traditions; for example, the extinguishing of all defilements (*kilesa* 煩惱) and attainment of meditative peace in the Theravada; the transmutation of such defilements and the attainment of bodhisattvic virtues in the Mahayana; or even the total acceptance of the defilements and the attainment of salvific embrace by the Buddha in the Pure Land tradition. This issue is critical in ultimately evaluating how traditional Buddhist teachings and practices are adopted into the modern world and used in different paradigms. For example, mindfulness meditation has very different connotations when used for: 1) the maximization of personal performance, 2) the attainment of a calming bliss, or 3) the transmutation of neurotic psychological processes.

The group was very honored to be led into these issues with a special opening talk by Dr. Yonyud Wongpiromsarn, Chief Advisor of the Department of Mental Health in the Thai Ministry of Public Health and Former President of the Psychiatric Association of Thailand. Dr. Yonyud began by pointing out how Buddhist interfaces with modern psychology have been taking place since the very advent of modern psychology, such the Shoma Morita (1874-1938), a Japanese contemporary of Freud who influenced by Zen started using mindfulness in his work as well as Yoshimoto Ishin (1918-83), a Japanese Pure Land

Buddhist who developed Naikan Therapy at the same time that western behavioral therapy developed. Dr. Yonyud himself started working on developing more accessible styles of the vipassana meditation methods of Goenka into his work 20 years ago.

In explained how using mindfulness in therapy differs from common Western psychological therapy, he described what he calls the Basic Consciousness, which has the tendency to collect negativity and remember negative experiences, and the Higher Consciousness, which is resilient to negativity and the place where meditation has great effect. Mainstream Freudian psychoanalysis, the Cognitive and Behavioral therapeutic models which have now become predominant, and Humanistic psychotherapy which works on adjusting faith and beliefs basically all speak about correcting what is happening in Basic Consciousness. Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn, and its offshoots like Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness Based Therapy and Counseling (MBTC), all try to work on the Higher Consciousness and thereby transform and heal the problems of the Basic Consciousness. Because of this basic difference in approach, most of the mindfulness based therapies are trying to distance themselves from the more mainstream forms of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which only use mindfulness as a tool. MBTC is a therapy that Dr. Yonyud is now developing and popularizing in Thailand.

After an incredibly stimulating presentation and discussion with Dr. Yonyud, one lingering thread left for further discussion is the problem of translating Buddhist terms for mental processes into English, which often has poor equivalents, and using them in secular psychological contexts. This problem also holds true for the adaptation of such terms within Buddhist cultures like Japan and

Thailand where the new terms have lost touch with original meanings. At what point, do essential ideas and nuances get lost in translation? Furthermore, what happens to Buddhist concepts and practices when they are cherry picked out of their contexts, which are highly evolved with a rich series of checks and balances?

In the afternoon session, these themes were further discussed as participants spoke of each of their own particular traditions. Elaine Yuen of Naropa University in the U.S. noted that her teacher Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche taught *shamatha-vipassana* meditation as an essential foundation and that the post meditation experience should be roughly 25% as specific mindfulness and 75% as general awareness. Rev. Shojun Okano, President of the Kodo Kyodan Buddhist Fellowship in Japan, also noted the essential elements of *shamatha-vipassana* (止観 *shikan*) in his Tendai (Ch. Tientai 天台) tradition. Neurotic thought patterns, or *kilesa*, should not be gotten rid of forcibly or denied but transformed through developing balanced approach in which bodhicitta is cultivated. Rev. Akihiko Hisamatsu of the Soto Zen sect in Japan concurred that in Zen, the *kilesa* are seen as the raw material for enlightenment, like a stone that is polished into a gem through the practice of sitting meditation (*zazen*). Rev. Ichido Kikukawa of the Jodo Shin Pure Land sect in Japan offered a quite different perspective noting that as we are so vulnerable to our *kilesa*, we cannot develop bodhicitta through meditation but only gain it and salvation through the power of Amida Buddha. Rev. Shunsuke Kono of the Jodo Pure Land sect concurred and noted that while Pure Land teachings still value wisdom, it is in the process of relying on the other power of the Buddha that we are able to live a life of wisdom based in faith. Ani Losong Chotso, a Tibetan nun from the United States, noted the warmth and non-judgemental stance that the

Pure Land priests offer in their counseling. Ani Pema, also a Tibetan nun from the United States, concurred that in her experience, people are healed as much by their inner resources as by connection, human kindness, and community. Ven. Nandiya, a Shan monk studying at the Walpola Rahula Institute in Sri Lanka, offered a similar perspective noting that the goal of the counselor is to become an ordinary person, not an elevated spiritual teacher, learning how to reduce harm and to function in the world. Finally, Pra Woot Sumetho of the Kilanadhamma group in Thailand, also noted that monks should not speak down but rather share, empathize, and support, empowering each person to face and solve their own problems through their own potentials.

## Main Conference Day 2: *Roundtable on Training Buddhist Chaplain in Psycho-Spiritual Care and Cooperative Strategies & Team Building for Medical and Spiritual Caregivers*

The conversations and themes of Day 1 naturally led into the themes of Day 2 of the conference, which focused on developing supportive relationships and structures for those coping with psychological suffering. For these sessions, we asked three participants from different regions with extensive experience in training counselors and working in the public sphere to lead the discussions.

Elaine Yuen is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Chair of the Master of Divinity Program at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado where she trains and develops interfaith chaplains to work in public institutions such as hospitals. At Naropa, they have a dual training

system for spiritual caregivers, which focuses on: 1) building the caregivers inner strength by accessing higher mind/consciousness, which is a mind of ambiguity or “not-knowing.” This is cultivated through courses in *shamatha-vipassana* meditation and other contemplative practices; 2) developing the skillful means to be able to guide others to make meaning for themselves. This is cultivated through a variety of courses on Indo-Tibetan Buddhist thought, such as Madhyamika and Atisha’s Lojong slogans. However, the training must go beyond acquiring techniques to the caregiver understanding how to be authentic to themselves and also learning boundaries so that caring for others doesn’t become about healing something unresolved in themselves. After “not-knowing,” “bearing witness” is a second essential modality to bring to the caring environment. Ultimately, being aware of inner and outer aspects is key in terms of not turning away from the suffering that is happening before oneself while trying to enliven both the outer environment and one’s inner being.

Mindfulness and meditation practice are obviously important for caregivers in dealing with demands of “bearing witness” and “compassion fatigue.” However, Prof. Yuen and other Buddhists in the U.S. are now trying to integrate other Buddhist based contemplative strategies, such as “self-compassion.” Drawing on a variety of Buddhist teachings—especially the Four Divine Abodes (*brahma-vihara*) of loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*), and equanimity (*upekkha*)—American Buddhists in clinical and hospital environments are attempting to practice and transmit practices to develop warmth and understanding in oneself in times of professional suffering, failing, and feeling inadequate. Prof. Yuen explained that this involves practices to develop empathy and the ability to regulate one’s own arousal to situations so that one

develops resilience rather than becoming overwhelmed. There is also the practice of perspective taking to develop congruence in goals and values between fellow clinicians and patients and their families. The practice of moral sensitivity is another important key in being able to recognize conflicts and obligations within the institution and to support caregiver decision-making. In this way, Prof. Yuen outlined the ways the holistic Buddhist approach of ethics (*sila*), meditation (*samadhi*), and causal insight (*panna*) work together to support a caregiver in navigating the wide variety of issues that arise in working in healthcare organizations.

Pra Paisan Visalo is the founder of the Buddhika Network for Buddhism and Society developing networks of religious and medical professionals to integrate spiritual and physical care for the dying in Thailand. He noted that more work is needed to overcome the barriers in Thai Buddhist culture that wall off lay people from monks because of their sacred and celibate status. In this way, creating friendship with the patient in the beginning may be a problem for a monk, but ultimately it’s more about the monk’s attitude towards his own practice and identity. Monks must also learn that giving dhamma teachings and preaching does not work with people in grieving and pain. The focus must first be dealing with all their anxiety, so it’s important to become friends first and to be present with them.

Deep listening is the next step, but without purpose or agenda. The desire to heal or get the patient to move out of their suffering state is often something that obstructs the process of listening, creating a wall between the caregiver and the patient. However, it is often hard for monks to listen, because they may expect or feel they know the problem in advance. In this way, Pra Paisan’s approach to mindfulness and meditative training is to be aware of and accept everything that arises.



This type of practice empowers someone to really be able to listen and develop compassion.

Pra Paisan also uses the practice of “not knowing” and learning the art of asking questions. The best questions are open ones like, “What happened to you?”; “What is your feeling now?” These kinds of questions not only provide information to the caregiver, but also help the patient understand themselves better. A third question can be, “What makes you suffer?” Patients may not even know how exactly how they feel now much less what is the cause of it. This question leads into the cause. A final question can be, “What can reduce your suffering?” The patient can often answer this themselves, with a certain amount of self-awareness or supporting atmosphere that helps them free from disturbing emotions. This process of questioning is a skillful way to lead a patient through the entire process of the Four Noble Truths from suffering to causes to the path of cessation.

Rev. Ryogo Takemoto is a Representative of the SOTTO Self-Death & Suicide Counseling Center in Kyoto and a priest in the Jodo Shin Pure Land tradition. As with the observations of so many at the conference, they seek to recognize and affirm the patient’s experience rather than negate it by offering their own solutions or viewpoints. In this way, they prefer to not see their work as “suicide prevention.” They feel they should not tell people, “You musn’t die,” and put further shame on them. Rather, they way to ease their desire to die comes by being with them and accepting their feelings just as they are, in the same way the Pure Land practitioner feels accepted by Amida Buddha despite being filled with kilesa, just as they are. Rev. Takemoto again emphasized the importance of transmitting warmth through intimate communication.

In terms of training Buddhist priests in this work, they find that at the beginning most of them cannot interact properly. Some have a poor

emotional response to the suffering person and their feelings. As their goal is to alleviate loneliness and providing warmth, the priest or caregiver needs to learn how to actually feel what it is like to be depressed. When Rev. Takemoto first practiced as a student, he responded to the person, “Oh that must have been difficult!” and their response was, “How would you ever know!” He explained that his comment showed that he was not feeling the person’s feeling but simply observing the situation from outside. The biggest question for them is: Is the caregiver connected with the suffering person’s emotional center? It is a slight difference that makes all the difference. He remarked that if he had been really feeling the person’s pain, he could have said the same thing and the response from the person could have been, “Thanks for understanding. I don’t feel so alone now.” This seems simple in theory but very hard in practice, so they continually practice role-plays to develop their counselors. In terms of also developing resilience and avoiding compassion fatigue in this kind of practice, they emphasize working as a team, through monthly meetings amongst counselors to share their work and difficulties. Rev. Takemoto concluded that the living quality of warmth is key, and team building enables them to revive each other with warmth.

In the afternoon, these discussions expanded outward to the topic of strategies for Buddhists and religious professionals to develop partnerships with secular organizations and gain better public acceptance. Speaking from his own experience in Thailand, Pra Paisan commented that the indivisibility of social and spiritual transformation is the starting point. In the social activist world and in the medical world, the spiritual aspect is often missing, because the modern world view is still dominated by Cartesian Dualism. Because of this dualism, there are many cases in which doctors cannot find the physical cause of a sickness. In these instances, monks and

religious professionals may play a role to show the links between spiritual well being and physical well being. Palliative Care is a field in which this can be more easily demonstrated, so it offers a good entry point for this work. Pra Win Mektripop of the Sekiyadhamma Network of Engaged Buddhist Monks, of which Pra Paisan is a founding member, noted how the Kilanadhamma group developed training methods that are now being used by the main monastic training university in Thailand, Mahachulalongkorn, as a good example of mainstream institutions by first developing activities on the margins. A similar example of this was in 2018 when the official university of the Rinzai Zen Myoshinji sect, Hanazono University in Kyoto, hosted an entire program year of the Rinbutsuken Buddhist Chaplaincy training program.

In speaking of the barriers for Japanese Buddhists to work in mainstream society, Rev. Takemoto noted that as in many other countries, Japanese religious institutions had a tradition of medical and welfare care activities, but the government took over those roles in the modern era. Many Japanese priests actually work today as teachers or doctors, but they are not allowed to wear robes or have their identities as priests shown openly, so their work cannot be unified. However, the government has begun to downsize and outsource many social welfare services due to its financial problems, so this is an opportunity for religious groups and professionals to re-enter the public sphere. Rev. Akihiko Kikukawa also noted that in reflecting on Buddhism's active support for fascism during the war years, Japanese priests lost confidence in themselves and withdrew from society. While the need to recognize mistakes from that period is essential, the response needs to be more pro-active by reviving the various medical and social welfare activities in which they used to be involved. Rev. Zenchi Uno of the Soto Zen

Denomination Research Center in Tokyo explained that his Soto Zen sect has set up a basic program for some 6,000 priests to learn and promote deep listening practice. On the one hand, he noted, it is wonderful that their priests can be respected as counselors, and not just ritualists for funerals. However, he feels there is something mistaken in this approach, which loses the true sense of a priest as someone engaging people's suffering as bodhisattva practice or as a "spiritual friend" (kalyanamitra 善知識). Bodhisttava practice is in fact deeper than being a counselor and can only be done from a religious or spiritual standpoint. In this way, he regards engaged Buddhism as a way to revive their true and original roles.

### Interlude: Study Sessions on Substance Abuse & the Situation of Mental Care in Thailand

As part of our desire to always learn more from our host country, in this case Thailand, and to expand our frames of reference, the conference held an interlude day between the first and second main days of the roundtable.

In the afternoon, the group was able to take a study tour of the Somdet Chaopraya Institute of Psychiatry, located nearby the conference site. The facility is Thailand's oldest mental hospital and overall second oldest hospital, established in 1889, under the inspiration of King Rama V Chulalongkorn who had seen how the British were dealing with mental health problems on a visit to Singapore. With 500 beds (430 psychiatric, 70 neuropsychiatric), it acts as the major referral hospital in Bangkok. Our host and guide, Dr. Suttha Supanya pointed out that ideally psychological rehabilitation should occur at the community level. However, Thailand has not yet

developed such infrastructure, so it still relies on this type of large mental hospital. There do provide a form of community psychiatric care for patients who have been discharged. Especially for patients at risk of suicide, there is a hospital team that will visit the home's of such patients to check in on them. Just before our conference began, there was a major article in the *Bangkok Post* about the sudden rise in suicides in past year in Thailand, especially among young people, which featured Dr. Yonyud's analysis. Unlike this article, Dr. Suttha felt that due to a poor understanding of suicide by the mass media and the spread of social media, news reports tend to be sensationalized, which seems to promote more repeat incidents. The hospital does have a Stress Management Clinic that uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and various relaxation methods. Another main reason for our visit to this facility was that a participant in the November 2017 conference, Dr. Polpat Losatiankij, is a resident psychiatrist there. He has recently conducted a study on mindfulness with chronic major depressive disorder and has begun an initial mindfulness based therapy program that runs regularly once a week.

In the morning, we hosted three speakers who are using Buddhist methods to address the problems of substance abuse in their own countries. The first was Venerable Kuppiyawatte Bodhananda Thero, who offered his presentation in absentia due to visa complications. Ven. Bodhananda is the founder and the Director of the Mithuru Mithuro Movement, the first and the largest Buddhist Rehabilitation Centre in Sri Lanka, where he has successfully rehabilitated more than 5,000 young, male drug addicts since 1987. He has established and currently operates five rehabilitation centers around the country and a Leadership Development Center that can accommodate around 100 students, providing outbound training to students as well as professionals.

Ven. Bhodhananda has creatively applied the Buddha's classical teachings of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness called *Satipattana* to build a basic structure for his program. As Ven. Bhodhananda

explains, the Four Foundations roughly correspond to the key areas of a human being that should be addressed to bring upon long lasting change: the biological aspect, psychological aspect, social aspect, and spiritual aspect.

In the first of these, the Contemplation of the Body (*kayanupassana*), they work on the rehabilitation of the resident by redeveloping their physical well being and basic physical discipline through meditation and a strict daily schedule that includes cooking and cleaning. The psychological aspect is addressed through the Contemplation of the Mind (*cittānupassana*), which focuses on peer and group counseling as well as the teaching of Buddhist psychology of the mind and meditation. For the social aspect, connected to Contemplation of Feeling (*vedanānupassana*), the rehabilitation of social skills and the ability to deal with difficult emotions is emphasized. One important activity in this area is an encounter program where residents are put in a controlled environment to safely express negative or difficult emotions they are having with another resident. There is also a program that focuses on family reconciliation.

The final, spiritual aspect or Contemplation of Dharma (*dhammanupassana*) involves the development of the personality towards a religious or spiritually desired better personality. As a Buddhist organization, they focus on providing a good understanding of core Buddhist concepts, such as the Five Precepts, Dependent Origination, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path, which provide a practical grounding for integrating the other three areas of development. As residents continue to develop, they are given increasing responsibility within the community, becoming mentors to new residents and eventually gaining the chance to join the movement as staff. In this way, the program is not run as a "professional" organization with staff brought in from the outside, but rather as a "community" whose members are all in various stages of purification and practice.

The second speaker was Mr. Rahul Bam, co-



founder of Practical Life Skills Neuropsychiatric Wellness & Research Centre in Pune, India. Rahul noted that the defining factor of substance addiction is when harm is involved; in other words the loss of the first Buddhist precept. This is especially true of the untold harm to others. For a single addict, the lives of at least 20 people are directly affected. Their center has a capacity 50 persons and is the only free drug rehabilitation center in India. In order secure certification by the Indian government, the program is limited to three months, the first month of which the addict is not allowed to leave the community. Much of their work is based on the research of Canadian physician Gabor Mate, who identified how the four basic brain circuits of edorphine, dopamine, adrenaline, and impulse control correspond to different drugs. The disease of addiction is one of disconnection due to a lack of nurturing and other issues in child development. As such, the brain develops deficiencies, and when a person takes a drug that meets that deficiency, their tendency to become addicted is strong. Rahul explained that talk therapy does not work with addicts. They may understand their issues but cannot control them. In turn, they use other therapies like art therapy in which the modality and goal are the same, a very Buddhistic understanding based in non-duality. Rahul then explained a very creative system they are using of applying the six Mahayana Buddhist perfections (*paramitas*). They

are developing a system to find the correlation between the *paramitas* and observable therapeutic goals (TGs) employed by western psychology. For the *paramita* of patience (*ksanti*), there is development in impulse control and emotional regulation with stress management; for diligence (*viriya*), one works on consistency and planning & implementation; for meditation (*samadhi*), one develops sustained attention and analytical skills; for generosity (*dana*), one works on social and communication skills and empathy & understanding others' perspectives; for discipline (*sila*), one works on self-care and instruction following; and for wisdom, (*prajna*) work is done in identification and understanding of the problem and consequential thinking. The center has a strong emphasis in documentation and developing certified therapeutic tools so that they work can be more widely accepted in the professional world of rehabilitation and therapy.

The final speaker was Pra Peter Suparo, a British monk representing the Wat Thamkrabok community, a temple situated in Saraburi, Thailand some two hours north of Bangkok. In 1959, it began a heroin and opium drug rehabilitation program under its first abbot Luang Por Chamrun Parnchand, a former policeman who was awarded the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1975 for the temple's drug rehabilitation work. At present, there is a floating population of addicts in rehabilitation of 50-60 Thais and a handful of Westerners that usually

do not exceed 10. There are around 8 monks and 1 Western nun who run the detox program along with another nun who is a qualified nurse. The larger temple hosts some 40 nuns and 160 monks. The temple practices the stricter, Thai forest tradition of Tudong from which much of the traditional knowledge of herbal medicine comes. From this tradition, the temple developed its unique detox program of meditation, a special herbal detox potion, and induced vomiting, which has drawn the attention of foreign visitors and has brought the temple international notoriety. The detox program has now developed a second branch for long-term alcoholics, especially older chronic users. Despite all the attention drawn to the special herbal potion and induced vomiting, Pra Suparo noted that many successfully rehabilitated addicts highlighted the program's emphasis on vow (*sacca*), which comes from one of the extended list of 10 Theravada *paramitas*, truthfulness or honesty. He explained that *sacca* is not just about being truthful but being authentic.

After arrival at the temple, the addict first engages in a long group prayer and takes a vow "together with body, mind, and action"—the three doors of karma. As the specific teaching of karma in Buddhism is about the intention (*cetanā*) behind action, Pra Suparo noted that the many *sacca* vows the addict takes in the program are not about making promises to behave well but rather getting in touch with and honoring one's own real intentions. Once one develops *sacca* at the level of mind as intention, then one tries to bring it into word. Can you make a verbal commitment that other people will hold you to? In this way, there is not a strict daily program imposed on the addicts in their time, and if they are unable to fulfill their own *sacca*, they are asked to leave.

Pra Suparo pointed out that the deeper focus of the program and the temple is confronting the 1st Noble Truth of suffering (higher consciousness) rather than the more symptomatic condition of addiction (basic consciousness)—recalling the discussions from Dr. Yonyud's presentation on the first day of the roundtable. A number of monks and part-time/full-

time residents of the main temple living the much more formalized monastic life came from the detox program.

## Conclusion: From Thought to Word to Deed

Taking a cue from Pra Suparo's explanation of vow (*sacca*) and its manifestation in thought, word, and deed, we were able to reflect on the group's development since the first conference in November 2017. That conference was very much focused on "thought" with a large number of presentations and exchange of information. This conference attempted to shift to a more conversational style of "word" to delve more deeply into the many issues that arose from the first conference. As we sat to discuss the merits of moving forward together, a consensus arose for more active forms of interaction in the style of "deed." A number of sub-themes have emerged as essential for not only deeper exploration but also for sharing and training in methods which the group will move forward in developing, perhaps as smaller sub-conferences:

- Mindfulness: how to use mindfulness and meditation in authentically Buddhist ways to support those in suffering and their caregivers
- Ritual: how to use Buddhist rituals, especially those around death such as preparation for death and dealing with grief
- Compassion & other "emotional" tools: going beyond the emphasis on mindfulness and meditation, how to use the variety of "emotionally intelligent" Buddhist teachings and practices in therapeutic settings, such as the *paramitas*, the *brahmaviharas*, etc.
- Monastics workshop on death and ritual
- Religious trauma: clarifying and redefining traditional Buddhist teachings that stigmatize mental illness and marginalized identity.



# Awakening Leadership Training Programme:

## Towards a New Paradigm of Holistic Sustainability

*Jessica Armour and Petra Carman*



*"I was looking for some answers to big questions - how to connect my inner happiness with the world around me and its problems. I was looking for how to connect inner and outer change. I now feel I am more connected to all parts of myself. I am more committed, more inspired, more able to cope with my inner and outer reality, and more grounded as an agent of change for myself and for the rest of the world."*

– Pierre, France

The third Awakening Leadership Training programme, a collaborative effort of Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Ecovillage Transition Asia (ETA) as well as Gaia Education and Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), took place from 2 September 2018 – 15 March 2019 in Thailand. The Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) framework was integrated by expanding modules of learning with increased emphasis on self-cultivation and social transformation. The 5 areas of learning were:

- **Emerging Worldview, Self-discovery and Healing** (EDE Worldview Dimension) helping participants ground their own perspectives by providing different pathways into self-exploration, and utilising that as a basis to explore the world around them.
- **Interpersonal Dynamics: Power Sharing and Compassion** (EDE Social Dimension) building a community of good friends, participants co-created the space for inquiry and experimentation, which formed the foundation for practicing deep listening, compassion and empathy, as well as exploration of inter-personal relations, power issues and marginalisation.

- **Eco-political Economy** (EDE Economic Dimension) including a deep exploration into the key political 'isms', alternatives to neo-liberalism with emphasis on Asian schools of Political Thought and Eco-Political Economy, as well as introduction to community organising and social movements.

- **Ecology & Design** (EDE Ecological Dimension & Design) integrated experience in an indigenous Karen community in northern Thailand, and provided an idyllic setting to connect with nature intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, and ending with participants bringing together all they have learned in the design module.

- **Skilful means for Social Transformation** (Including Training of Trainers) looking in more detail at skills and learning from good models of practice, drawing from their lessons learned, as well as a variety of tools that can be used to help facilitate transformation, like Applied Drama, Work that Reconnects, and Facilitation for Empowerment.

Over 27 weeks, participants took a journey grounded in critical self-awareness. Different forms of mindfulness and reflection were embedded into the daily rhythms of the programme, helping participants to be present, to understand themselves as a way to understand others and vice versa, all the while gaining confidence and grounding to find their way forward. They spent time in nature, explored their own inner healing, and practiced 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. They built their own community of good friends and care over time together, and had the time and space to practice possibilities of what community can be and

how it can transform society.

Participants came together from 5 different continents, many of them are active in the social realm in differing capacities, (lawyers, trainers/facilitators, NGO and community workers, activists, environmental educators etc.), or seeking direction in how to walk their path with sustainability and authenticity at its core. Conventional educational levels ranged from participants with few years of schooling to PhD candidates, and ages from 20 to over 60.

## Course Rhythms

Every day began with movement-based practices, and each learning day was introduced with half an hour of meditation together in the classroom. Learning sessions began with group re-caps of the previous days learning and energy of the group. Six-seven hours of study made up the rest of the learning timeframe, with another half hour of guided and self-directed deep relaxation in the middle of the day. Journal writing was introduced for half an hour at the end of each day to continue the flow of self-awareness and reflection. Wellbeing circles were held intermittently, as a lot of reflective sharing also took place during modules.

Long-term students were given space to practice and experiment with self-governance. They were given responsibilities such as writing reflective articles posted on social media, organising social events and welcoming new participants into the group. Having space for decision making and taking responsibility strengthened their own skills in social dynamics.

## Key Learning Outcomes

Overall, there was clear self-transformation of all participants, and facilitators through the learning journey. Together there was a continuous co-creation of a compassionate energy field, which opened possibilities for each participant to deepen their learning experience and personal transformation through allowing for vulnerability and trust.

*"I liked the program because I could witness lots of beautiful moments in many people, and oftentimes that was when I observed people really expressing themselves with authenticity."*

– Azusa, Japan

Inner reflective work provided a foundation of integrated learning across all modules, and a means for exploring diverse pathways for personal growth. As a result, the learning was grounded in experience beyond intellectual understanding, through connection of head, heart, hands and spirit together.

Working with the range of human emotions, there were also opportunities to learn and work with conflict, which led to changing attitudes through realisation of conflict as an opportunity for growth and healthier relationships. Many of these practices opened participants to accepting the polarities, the shadow sides, which exist in themselves and others, and accepting and opening to them as part of the richness of human experience.

New learning arose by being exposed to a broad set of cultural perspectives, through the diversity of participants from around the world and their unique life experiences, and the diversity of resource people, who drew on teachings from their own experience, as well as both Asian, Western, new paradigm thinking and beyond.

While not every module was participatory in nature, the overall structure that gave space for group work and reflection helped the transition of information and knowledge. This clearly built confidence in the participants. They were able to develop their own conceptual understanding of social, interpersonal, and personal perspectives through the framework of the four dimensions of sustainability, plus the added dimension on Skilful Means for Social Transformation, and identify the connections between them all.

*"I think I was afraid to leave at the end of ALT and take my own journey because I feel scared. But, I also have found my strength during Vision Quest, that I can do it, that I am strong enough to follow my own path. Now I feel I am ready to take my own path, but I could only reach this point because I came here and there were people who could understand, who were accepting of people like me."* – Azusa, Japan

## ALT Master of Arts in Holistic Sustainability

In 2019, a Master of Arts programme in Holistic Sustainability will be piloted to build on the ALT and the ALT to be offered as the coursework component. A handful of Alumni have already expressed interest in exploring this learning avenue, and we are looking forward to many more joining.

*"This is what education should be, something that is meaningful to you, and you keep it as part of your essence, and every action you do grows from that. That is what we will pass on to the next generation."* – Machima, Thailand



# INEB Sangha Trip to Jungto Society



South Korea the 7th INEB Study Trip  
(27 May - 4 June 2019)

INEB and Jungto Society developed the Buddhist Sangha Study program to visit South Korea since 2013. The main objectives are:

1. Learn from Ven. Pomnyun Sunim and Jungto Society on how to apply Dharma into modern society.
2. Comparison on traditional Buddhist temples and Jungto Society for their practice and social engagement.
3. Exchange of experiences of ordained Buddhists on how to apply Dharma into their respected societies.

## OVERVIEW

### Ven. Pomnyun Sunim

Ven. Pomnyun Sunim is the founder and Guiding Zen Master of Jungto Society. He is not only a Buddhist monk and Zen master, but also a social activist who leads various movements such as ecological awareness campaign; promotion of human rights and world peace; and eradication of famine, disease, and illiteracy.

- <http://www.pomnyun.com>
- [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=ven.pomnyunsun im](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=ven.pomnyunsun+im)



### Jungto Society

The Jungto Society is a Buddhist community founded with the aim of solving problems prevalent in a modern society such as greed, poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation, based on the teachings of Buddha.

Founded in 1988, The Jungto Society has established the Jungto Retreat Center, Jungto Magazine, the Korean Buddhist Society Research Institute, and Join Together Society, Eco-Buddha, Peace Foundation.

- <http://www.jungtosociety.org/>



### Moongyung Jungto Retreat Center

Jungto Retreat Center has provided several retreat programs for the beginners as well as the volunteer members of Jungto Society such as Awakening program, Mind sharing program, 100 day retreat program which is intensive for beginners, and Meditation program.

These all programs lead people to realize that human beings are all interconnected with each other including nature. People also learn that helping others is to help themselves and try to work as volunteers.



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# School of English

## for Engaged Social Service (SENS)

### Completes Its 4th Annual Course

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#### Appreciation for All Who Made SENS 2019 Possible

As I write we are near the end of the New Year celebrations that take place in much of South and Southeast Asia in mid-April. We completed our fourth annual SENS program on April 3rd, at a Graduation Ceremony generously hosted by INEB supporter Dr. Pichai at his Nakhon Chai Si resort outside Bangkok. We had our largest and most diverse student body ever, comprising 18 students from eight countries, including for the first time Pakistan and France. Their closing talks were inspiring and provided concrete evidence of their dramatic progress in English. Below you can find excerpts from a few of those talks.

I want to thank our very gifted work team of Assistant Director Soeui Fah from Hong Kong, tutors Cindy Stewart from the U.S., Olga Vita from Russia, and Siew Joo from Singapore, and Logistics Coordinator Topsi Rongrongmuang from Thailand. Everyone worked very hard, and the bodies of knowledge they brought—on meditation, sustainability, language teaching, and caring for the self and the earth—made a huge contribution to the course. The warmth and dedication with which they worked made an indelible impression on the students and the course itself.

We faced unusually difficult conditions this year, including numerous family emergencies, extraordinary visa problems, and extreme air pollution in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Yet everyone came through the course safely, and with gratitude for the experience of what 25 people can do together—when they are dedicated to supporting each other, growing through personal obstacles, and planning concrete action in the world. Our successes in spite of external difficulties, as well as our own mistakes, have given us confidence that we can continue to offer this program on a yearly basis, and that we can continue

to learn to make it ever more effective.

The next SENS program will run from January 12th to April 8th, 2020. You can support this upcoming program through spreading the word, encouraging deserving students to apply, and offering or helping to find the necessary financial support. We will also need to begin building our 2020 work team.

With gratitude and appreciation to all participants and supporters of the 2019 course,

Ted Mayer

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#### ●● Excerpts from Student Graduation Talks

##### ●● *Rushda Noor, Research Associate and Teacher Trainer, Akhuwat Foundation, Pakistan:*

Before coming here, the only goal I had was to do something for underprivileged and orphan children.

After attending SENS, I have become able to think through every thought and action: what are the causes, what are the consequences, what do I gain, and what do others gain. After learning about the importance of interfaith dialogue and conservation of the environment, now I want to work in these areas. My main goal is to start an awareness campaign about protection of the environment by reducing the use of plastics and recycling trash. At the same time, I want to work on interfaith dialogue and religious pluralism. As an Islamic scholar, it is one of my goals to write articles to emphasize the importance of living together in peace. My third main goal is to study about international human rights law regarding children affected by war.



Rushda Noor (L), with Fellow Student Phra Maha Napan from Thailand, and Thai Muslim Scholar, Saowani Chitmuat (R), at Kamalun Islam Mosque in Nong Jok, Thailand



Tongpang Kumzuk (center), and Saw Ye Win Hein, a Student from Myanmar (R), Speaking with Mr. Karun Kuyai, leader of a Muslim Community in Nong Jok, Thailand



I would like to express my profound gratitude to the founders, sponsors, and teachers of SENS. For me, this course isn't only about English; it is learning about humanity and compassion. The classroom created by Ted is the only place in the world I know where we who belong to different religions and backgrounds still experience a sense of deeply connected humanity and unbiased understanding. Thank you so much for including me in your lives. I will keep on propagating what I learnt from here.

●● **Christelle Nicolas, Freelance Worker in the Field of Preservation and Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage, Brittany, France:**

Good morning everybody, my name is Christelle, and I come from Brittany, in France. First of all, I would like to thank INEB, particularly Ted and all his team, for leading this 2019 SENS program. "Sens,"\* what a beautiful word for an amazing program. Now my English is much better. And I'm convinced that personal transformation and commitment to deep social transformation are essential.

In fact this program taught me a lot about myself, and about engagement for social transformation. Before I came here, I was already aware of the different societal issues, and engaged in a sustainable life in Brittany. However, something was absent in me, and I could feel emptiness in some way. During this program, I nourished this empty part of me, and I can feel a change in me today.

Indeed, I started to practice meditation with Soeui Fah's guidance. Thank you, Soeui Fah for sharing

your experience with me. And I became aware of my fears, emotions, and distress patterns. This practice gave me a lot, and it was complementary to the learning in Ted's class about human psychology and co-counseling. Also, I discovered principles of Buddhism, and especially about engaged Buddhism.

This learning inspired me in different ways, and I realized how this movement within Buddhism can be a helpful way to explore change, not only in Asia but globally.

Finally, this program has helped me to start a few steps on the path of peace, and to find a way of nourishing my mind, for growing my spiritual path, and at the same time to be engaged in change.

Now I go back to Brittany, with a will to find a way to go further to practice and to share with others. I want to start something new in Brittany, with my boyfriend Pierre, who participated in the ALT program this year. And at the same time I would like to continue the rich relationships and connections begun in SENS.

As a first step I want to suggest to the SENS group to share ideas and information about different topics, like environmental and social issues in our countries, and about solutions and practice. To put it into practice, we need to come up with an appropriate platform, like for example Skype.

To finish, I'm grateful to INEB for giving us the opportunity to live this beautiful experience.

●● **Htet Naing Win, Peace Project Coordinator for the Kalyanamitta Foundation (KMF), Myanmar:**

The content of the SENS training was systematic

and comprehensive. I got a lot of energy and a powerful sense of inner peace from the field trips. I hope many of the skills and knowledge I gained will be supportive of community development and peace building in my work.

My goal for my organization for the next year is to strengthen relations within our team with mutual trust and more friendliness. I want to be able to write reports in English more fluently. I want to be able to speak with the colleagues in my office more smoothly.

My long-term goal is to build trust between Burma's diverse ethnic groups and to grow confidence as we go towards a more peaceful and holistically developing society.

●● ***Yeseul Shin, Volunteer for the Join Together Society in India, Under the Jungto Society, South Korea:***

I have been a member of the Jungto society for 6 years. The Jungto Society emphasizes individual Buddhist practice, but it also supports broader goals like the unification of the two Koreas. The society's main attitude about work is that we do whatever is needed wherever we are needed. Before now I hadn't set my own goals in detail because I always did whatever the Jungto Society needed me to do.

I appreciate the SENS program because I've started to make my own goals. I believe it will be very helpful if I can learn to concentrate on my life and be able to work clearly on my life goals.

My main long-term goal is to be a field worker for emergency relief. Over the next 10 years, I will take the following steps:

First, I will concentrate on learning English, especially speaking, because English must be used in the field. I will also study standards for relief activities, like dealing with disaster response.

In two to four years, I will network with other NGOs in Korea that are also in this field and participate in relief work and training workshops. I also want to work with an expert in Jungto Society and learn from her. Within five to ten years, I want to begin doing emergency relief in areas that are affected by disasters.

I think I am really lucky. Because I got many gifts from this program. First, I could examine myself when I did co-counseling. During my sessions I

discovered my deep sadness related to my parents, and I could release some of that. Second, I met good friends who will be leaders in their respective fields. I hope we can work together. Third, I gained confidence in studying English.

I'm glad I had the chance to join this program. I appreciate Ajan Ted, who always tried to give us a lot! I am grateful to the work team for helping us. I'd like to recognize the Ashram staff, who supported us like mothers on hot sweaty days.

I will not forget the kindness I received from all of you. I will share it wherever it is needed.

●● ***Tongpang Kumzuk, Independent Activist, Nagaland, India:***

My name is Tongpang Kumzuk, and I belong to the Naga indigenous tribes of India. I want to take this time to thank the SENS 2019 team and INEB for creating this wholesome platform to learn English with the aim of connecting with oneself and with others. I would like to thank my sponsors and the people supporting this program.

My region is war torn. Politically speaking it's a rogue or disturbed area. Militarily or patriotically speaking for the nation it's a buffer zone between China and India. The conditions I state here are just words, but I speak for my land and for people who are poor and lacking in infrastructure in terms of education, medicine, transport, and jobs.

We are mostly Christians of diverse denominations and in an identity struggle. Most of the groups are not focused on spirituality, and the sense of community relations is not realized as it once was. Their practice of religion is stagnant because they don't address the real problems.

I have a project, "YOUTHHEAL," which is focused on youth health, education, advocacy, and life. It is a part of my larger goal to start a community which has a focus on the younger generations in my region, and which can look beyond one another's differences. I plan to bring in the ideas of engaged Buddhism to support existing Christian institutes to respond more directly to peoples practical, spiritual, and relationship needs.

This program has helped me to articulate my

thoughts and has raised my morale and readiness to share my viewpoints in English. In addition to that I have started reflecting on my actions and deep emotions. I look forward to engaging in more programs like SENS, which don't limit creativity and which create the space for a person to realize their potential.

Lastly, I am grateful to myself and I thank myself for surviving, adapting, and overcoming the obstacles so far. I believe in love and co-existence of all life.

### ●● *This student wishes to remain anonymous:*

When I first arrived here and started this program, in class I couldn't give an answer to common questions, for example, "Did you sleep well last night?" I didn't know how to answer. In my mind, I would need to think about five seconds, but now it's better than before. And my listening has improved a lot. In this program I started to speak out, and without fear. Through this program, I met a lot of community leaders and learned a lot. This program helped me clarify my life goals.

My most important goals for 2019 are learning English as much as I can, and reading an English book once a month. Also, I want to build a work team of tour guides for my region. My long-term goals are to write a tour book from the perspective of my people. To do this, when I go on a trip I will need to record everything, and my experiences, and study and read a lot of tour books about other places.

### ●● *Dewi Martina, Lecturer, Faculty of Communications, University of Muhammadiyah, Riau, Indonesia:*

I have studied for three months in this program, and it has helped me shape my goals.

Some important goals I made are that as a lecturer I want to spread knowledge about global warming and how to deal with it. Because from this course I learnt a lot about it, so I want to encourage my students to do the same. I believe spreading knowledge about global warming with youth will have a big impact.

Talking about issues of religion, I want to spread love and peace by being a good Muslim. I will start from myself and encourage people to love everyone, regardless of their religion.

Another goal for myself is that I want to make

sure that my family is always united; that no matter what we are fighting for we will always be together as a family against any problem. I see many people facing internal and external problems. And I want my family to be able to face these together.

Within the next 10 years I have a plan to live in a village with my own family. I will plant my own food and have flexible and lovely work. It might sound impossible to some people, but I see the possibilities after learning about inter-being. Now I know how to value my life.

SENS not only taught me about English but also helped me understand about many issues that are happening around us. I learnt how to be a leader from several great leaders. I learnt about the suffering of people whom I had never known before, for example the story of Khun Krarok in Bo Nok. I also learnt about life from my friends. I learnt many things that I have never encountered before; it is because I joined this program and I feel grateful for that.

I would like to say thank you very much for SENS 2019, especially to Ajan Ted for having me and choosing me to join this incredible program. Thank you for the team, Soeui Fah, Siew Joo, Olga, and Cindy, who always supported us during this program, in the classroom and in the break time. It was very helpful and fun! Thank you to all my friends, we have shared many things – stories, knowledge, time, food, laughter, and tears. When will I have many friends from different cultures like you all again? I think only in this program everyone is required to cry, as they discharge their patterns of hurt in co-counseling sessions. Oh, Topsis! I'm saving you for the last. You always managed everything for us with your smile. Thank you! So I want to say thank you to INEB for making such a great program, the School of English for Engaged Social Service, and thank you to all the sponsors for supporting me and my friends to join this program. Because of this course, I can set my goals clearly. And I hope I can fulfill them all properly.

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\* "Sens" is a French word with rich meanings including: sense, instinct, judgment, reason, meaning, and direction or way.

# Dharma Has No Gender

This conference is significant in many ways. First, it solidifies Taiwan's monastic leadership in gender and diversity justice movement. We are thankful to Ven. Chao-hwei, who, after decades of advocating for animal rights, banning gambling, and environmental conservation, has now taken the step to recognize and honor same sex marriage. She first did so by giving her Buddhist blessing to two women at their wedding. Same sex couples are shunned by the society because of ignorance, fear or misunderstanding. But Ven. Chao-hwei sees them as good people who truly love each other and only want to have a happy family. Ven. Chao-hwei and her community have become the beacon of hope for many who suffer this kind of discrimination.

Secondly, this conference celebrates the 114th birthday of the late Master Yin Shun as we recognize his significant contribution to promote the philosophy of humanistic Buddhism, or in other words socially engaged Buddhism, and undertake extensive research into his teachings. This gathering of international academics and activists will provide opportunities for in-depth discussions and analyses needed for a pursuit of gender justice and diversity. The Buddha's teachings are radical and gender neutral. And the four-fold sangha that thrived during the time of the Buddha is based on democratic values. Yet, many doctrines were influenced by societal beliefs of two thousand years ago and some are not direct teachings from Lord Buddha himself. We must earnestly look at how they are selectively

used in order to support institutional policies that are riddled with patriarchy and androcentrism.

Thirdly, it is my hope that the conference will result in concrete steps leading to the eradication of discrimination and injustice toward people who are marginalized by mainstream cultures. As a Buddhist, I believe that every human being has Buddha nature and potential for enlightenment. Every life is of great value and each person can contribute to the welfare of the society. In this day and age of global destruction of the environment and democracy, we must work together to bring more loving kindness and compassion to the world and to our fellow sentient beings. This conference is a part of this effort.

## Gender Justice and Diversity

The oppression and discrimination based on race, class, and gender have been subjects of social discourses, academic studies, political debates, civil movements, and artistic expressions for many decades. Power and control have always existed in all societies, whether feudal, monarchy, socialist, or democratic. The power-that-be always wants to exert control over the less privileged in order to maintain their status quo and to continue the socioeconomic exploitation for their own benefit. For ruling power, oppressors use laws, military force, punishment or torture to make people

submissive and obedient. For economic power, oppressors use false hope for prosperity, greed and poverty to make people dependent. For cultural power, oppressors use behavioral codes of conduct, fueled by the media, to make people conform and leave the rest as outcasts. Their success comes when the majority of the people accept the norm and turn against those who are marginalized.

We have seen such evidence in slavery, caste systems, gender inequity, and homophobia. There were shameful times in history when the society thought a certain human race was a commodity to be traded and exploited. Slavery in the historical sense has now been condemned (although other forms of modern slavery still exist today). In South Asia, we see the Dalit communities in India being murdered or abused without any real legal protection. Everyday we consume many negative news stories about others' misfortunes, making us desensitized to them. We have grown accustomed to certain way of perceiving and judging based on the entrenched hierarchy and patriarchy in society.

## Women's, LGBT, and Bhikkuni Movements in Siam

In Siam today, women are better off economically and socially than women of two or three generations ago. Thai women are more educated and have made many important contributions in almost all aspects of the society, with the exception of military. We can see women holding higher positions in the corporate and academic world, in politics and in government, as well as in science and in arts. Nonetheless, they still face some level of discrimination in the workplace and in society. A glass ceiling still exists for female executives. Although there are women in very high positions, their pay is usually less than men's pay in the same rank. Women in politics are

also not common and they often become targets of biased criticism. Women in science often do not receive the same credibility as men in scientific research. The root cause of these inequalities has to do with the patriarchal nature of a male-dominant society. Generally speaking, in Siam, male dominance in bureaucratic institutions is the norm. This form of social organization and value system where men are the leaders and hold the power of decision making has made it impossible for women to rise to men's equal.

Aside from socioeconomic inequity, women also face issues affecting their safety both inside their own home and on the street. The Thai Health Organization and the Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation released a study last year looking at eleven newspapers' reports on domestic violence from the first seven months of 2018. There were 367 cases of domestic violence in total. Of this number, 65.9% resulted in death, 22.9% serious injuries and 11.2% suicides. 367 cases in seven months and these are only incidents that made it into the news. Domestic violence is still perceived to be a private family matter when women are hit or abused in their home. When they are on the street, women can also become targets of sexual harassment. And, in area where economic needs are strong, under-privileged girls and young women become victims of human trafficking.

## LGBT's Community

The term LGBT has grown in its definition to include not only lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people, but also other queer and non-binary people as well. As a Buddhist country and with a more tolerable attitude, Siam is known to be more accepting of LGBT people. However, this acceptance should not be mistaken as gender equality. Same sex



partners are not illegal, but they are not eligible for the same legal protection and benefits as the opposite sex couples are. In general, the LGBT community in Siam does not face persecutions like those in some other countries. But, some horrifying attitudes can still be seen in public, especially the one stating that homosexuality is wrong and can be cured with a corrective rape. We also hear about crimes of a violence nature toward LGBT people or about children being bullied in school because of their LGBT identity.

The United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights identified murder, beatings, kidnapping, rape and sexual assault against LGBT people as examples of homophobic and transphobic violence and noted that violence against LGBT people “tend to be especially vicious compared to other bias-motivated crimes.” The International Labor Organization sanctioned a study published in 2014 on LGBT population in the workplace. The study finds evidence of workplace discrimination, harassment, and prejudice against LGBT workers. Transgender people generally face barriers to full-time employment and executive positions. All of them face verbal abuse, hostile work environment or sexual assault on a regular basis.

At the 2009 Pride Parade in Chiang Mai, northern Siam, participants were surrounded by a mob of violent people who did not want to see LGBT people celebrate their pride on the street. The marchers retreated into a building and sat in meditation while the protesters threw fruit and stones at the building to frighten them. Government authority could not do anything to disperse the mob and the attempt from the parade organizers to have a nonviolent dialogue with the mob was not welcome. The parade was eventually canceled for the safety of everyone. Every year since then, the LGBT community commemorates that event, which they named “Saturday the 21st.” The 21st of February

is now the “Stop Violence Against LGBTs Day.”

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have existed throughout Siamese history, but they were invisible. Now their voice and contribution have begun to be heard and acknowledged publicly with their true identity. Many NGO groups have worked diligently to advocate for equal rights. On March 13th, 2015, the gender equality act was passed and came into effect on September 9 of the same year. This act bans discrimination according to gender identity and sexual orientation and was the first law in Siam to contain the language mentioning LGBT people. It prohibits discrimination toward “a person who has a sexual expression different from that person’s original sex.” The punishment is up to six months in prison and a fine up to 20,000 baht. However, there is a critical problem with the law because it specified an exception for “education, religion, and the public interest.” This means an educational or religious institution can discriminate against LGBT people and get away with it.

## Theravada Bhikkhuni Movement

Female monasticism is where we see sexism and prejudice most clearly. The problem of Bhikkhuni ordination in Theravadin countries is still a divisive issue in the monastic community and in our society at large.

According to the government data in 2015, about 95% of the 69 million people in Siam identify as Buddhists. There are some 40,000 Buddhist temples and over 300,000 monks in the country. But, there is no mention of female monasticism. This is because such recognition does not exist, even though there are about 250 bhikkhunis in Siam today. The Buddhist Sangha Supreme Council officially forbade female ordination in 1928 after an incident where an outspoken politician who were

critical of the laxity of the sangha, had his two daughters ordained as Samaneri in 1927. They were not accepted and were ordered to disrobe. The council cited the reason that the Bhikkhuni lineage had been lost for centuries, and making it impossible to establish it again. This is because the vinaya stated that in order to ordain a woman, there need to be a senior Bhikkhu and a senior Bhikkuni from an unbroken lineage to perform the ceremony. Up until 2002, any woman who wanted to live in the monastery could only become a renunciant or Mae-Chee and wear only white or pink robes while observing 8-10 precepts. Or, they could become ordained in the Mahayana tradition. The historical landmark for female monasticism in Theravada tradition for Siam occurred with the ordination of Bhikkuni Dhammananda in 2003.

When we talk about bhikkhuni in Siam, the first name spoken is usually that of Venerable Dhammananda, who is now our most senior Theravadin bhikkuni. Ven. Dhammananda, has played a crucial role in re-establishing the bhikkuni sangha in Siam. From the time of her academic career as a professor in Buddhism and women's studies, she has been committed to bringing the four-fold sangha back to Buddhism. Her mother was ordained a Mahayana bhikshuni and founded a temple called Songdhamkalayani. Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, as she was known before her monastic life, authored many books and articles about women in Buddhism.

In 2003, after becoming a novice for two years, Ven. Dhammananda traveled to Sri Lanka where she received a full ordination, and since then has worked tirelessly to advocate for female ordination both in Siam and internationally. She was met with many obstacles including threats and arson, but her conviction remained strong. Because she is firm in the dharma and proves herself to be a venerable teacher, today, the public receives

Bhikkunis more positively. Ven. Dhammananda also receives support from progressive monks both in Siam and abroad. As abbess of her temple Songdhamkalayani, Ven. Dhammananda continues to fight for equality for female Buddhist monastics. She is now a preceptor and has ordained Bhikkunis with a strict guideline in order to uphold the integrity of the female sangha. So, we now have Bhikkunis in Siam. Sadly, they do not yet have recognition from the government. Hopefully, Ven. Dhammananda can soon establish a Bhikkuni Council so that all bhikkhunis can have an effective way to come together and support the movement.

But when we talk about female monastics, we must not neglect the Mae-Chees, the white or pink robe nuns. Mae-Chees have a long history in Siam as recorded by a missionary some 400 years ago (in the 17th century A.D.) Generally, the public does not have a reverent attitude toward Mae-Chees, often seeing them as servants at temples, or thinking that they are women who turn away from worldly affairs because of personal disappointment. Many Mae-Chees come from a less privileged and less educated background, although it is not always the case. Mae-Chees are not recognized by the Department of Religious Affairs, therefore they do not have the privilege afforded by the ordained monastics, like the discounted or waived fare for public transportation. Mae-Chees are generally grouped together with lay people. However, unlike lay people, Mae-Chees do not have the right to vote during an election. In this way, they receive the worse end of the deal.

Currently, there are about 27 groups of Mae-Chees that are registered under the Thai Nun Foundation, which is under Her Majesty's Royal Patronage. Many Mae-Chees run orphanages and work to protect children from abuse. They provide job training and education for women and girls. Some also provide elderly care. They have projects

reaching out to children who are not in school. They provide occupational training, facilitators workshops, youth training and youth camp. Even though they do not go through the rigorous disciplines like the bhikkuni, Mae-Chees are dedicated practitioners who commit themselves to the religious life style. Their contribution to the society is that they quietly serve those who get left out of the system. But, they themselves need more education and support. Currently, the Siam-based International Network of Engaged Buddhists is offering training programs for Mae-Chees.

In fact, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists is taking a bold step to reach both lay and ordained Buddhist women in countries from the Asia and South Asian region to coordinate training and education through our Female Buddhist Leadership for Social Transformation initiative. We are fortunate to have several key international partners. The initiative is also designed to build close collaborations and networks among Buddhist women within their country and within the region so that they can support each other to take active leadership roles in making a just and peaceful society. Its goal is to empower Buddhist women so that all fourfold Buddhist communities are equally capable of fully engaging with social issues locally, regionally, and globally with values guided by the Buddha-Dharma.

I would like to acknowledge the work done by Martin Seeger, whose book *Gender and the Path of Awakening: Hidden History of Nuns in Modern Thai Buddhism*. Seeger and his Thai counterpart, Naris Carascanyawong also produce quite a number of Thai books introducing us the otherwise unknown leading female Buddhists, both lay and ordained. Their knowledge of Dhamma was not inferior to any male well known teachers.

## Why Support Gender and Diversity Justice?

The central teachings of Buddhism have to do with the nature of suffering, its causes and ways to end it. We know that suffering has to do with our attitudes toward life experiences and we can end our suffering by changing those attitudes. But, as socially engaged Buddhists, we are able to identify the cause of suffering that come from the structural violence throughout society. We see how the self, the others and social systems are all interconnected. Let's say we see a male child being bullied in school because he has two mothers. It is not enough to just focus our attention on the child alone. We can comfort him or even help him nurture his compassion and loving kindness toward the bully as well. But we will fail to truly make any change for the better if we do not see that this bullying is a symptom of a bigger problem. First of all, it comes from the culture where violence is accepted. It also happens because of an educational system that neglects to educate children about respect and diversity. We see how it is also related to the teacher and school administration that fail to protect their students. Our compassionate action should not only result in the child feeling safe, but also through instituting strict policies against bullying in school.

Therefore, as socially engaged Buddhists, we see how policies that discriminate against women in monastics enforce male dominance, patriarchy and perpetuate misogyny in religious institutions. For gender equality, feminism offers a helpful analysis and framework for discussion and transformation. Feminism, often misunderstood to be only about women, is the theory that looks at patterns of patriarchy and focuses on the fundamental reorientation of how things could be for the political, economic, and social equality of all genders. It challenges supremacy of male dominance

and its oppression toward others. As defined by Ouyporn Khuankaew, a leading feminist Buddhist in Siam, “The term feminist does not mean women or women’s problems. Women’s problems were created and sustained by social structures and a practice of gender inequality and misogyny. Feminists are people who embrace a different worldview, methodology and commitment to create justice and equality that is inclusive and intersectional. It is a worldview that believes in a power sharing culture that sees and trusts every human beings as equal and beautiful in their rights, their wisdom, and their ability to lead change regardless of their sex, gender, ethnicity, class, caste, age, ordained or lay.”

### Women Entering into Monastic Life are Spiritual Warriors!

Specifically relevant to the conference here is the issue of bhikkhuni ordination. Even though it is a tremendously challenging undertaking, it goes without saying that from the first bhikkhuni in the history of Buddhism to today’s newly ordained ones, women entering into monastic life do not do so lightly. It takes great courage, true dedication and real commitment. They face more challenges due to the unsupportive environment in society, and in the patriarchal sangha. Not only they have more rules to uphold, they also face more pressure to live up to everyone’s expectations.

When Buddha’s aunt Mahaprajapati, who raised him from birth, asked to be ordained, the Buddha refused a few times. Still, she persisted. In the end, it was Ananda, who asked the Buddha directly if the women were not capable of attaining enlightenment, to which the Buddha clearly said that both men and women had equal potential in the spiritual path. After this answer, the Buddha then

allowed for female ordination. But they were required to accept eight special rules called Garudharma that essentially subordinated them to the monks.

The most well-known one is the bhikkuni always has to bow to a monk first regardless of how long they each have been ordained. The thought of a senior bhikkuni bowing to a newly ordained monk is unsettling for many. Many studies have been conducted to analyze why the Buddha set up this rule. Many attributed it to the social condition of the time where women were not allowed to leave home or to decide their own destiny. During the Buddha’s life time, many women attained nirvana and their stories were collected as Songs of the Women Elders or Therigatha. There was never a record of the Buddha saying that women cannot become enlightened or that the dharma is not meant for women. Unfortunately, after the Buddha’s passing the acceptance of female into sangha disappeared. Many scholars concurred that the social environment at the time in India was not supportive of women becoming monastics.

After 500 years of the Buddha’s passing, Mahayana emerged and emphasized the larger sangha to include lay people and especially women. We can see the bodhisattva appearing in female form. Mahayana practitioners have no notions of discriminating women in the temple whereas in Theravada tradition, women are forbidden to enter certain areas of the temple. In Mahayana traditions, we see female sanghas flourishing and leading the society in a positive direction. This is exemplary. In Vajrayana Buddhism, we often see male and female images in sexual union. This is the Prajna and Karuna in completion. The Buddha is also portrayed in feminine forms. The story of Tara making a vow to work for the benefit of sentient beings in a woman’s body has been retold many times to point out the historical support for women practitioners.

Unfortunately, women were still not equal to men even in Vajrayana Buddhism as they can only become ordained at the level of getsulma or novice. However, there has been a movement in Tibetan Buddhism toward gender equality. His holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has been speaking more about how important it is to include women in the sangha and the 17th Karmapa also promised to reinstate the full ordination of female practitioners. But in Siam, we still have not heard the head of state religious institution speaking in support of bringing back the bhikkhuni sangha.

## Our Positions on Gender Equality

As Buddhists, we practice loving kindness and compassion which is the foundation for all actions that we take. The first precept in Buddhism is non-harming. We must recognize how harmful it is to allow discrimination in our society. Patriarchy, or the attitude and practice that does not recognize everyone as equal is opposite from the Buddha's teachings and from the ideal of democratic societies. The male-dominant culture not only devalues non-male genders' humanity, it also cultivates violent traits in the people, which leads to all sorts of problems – war, cut-throat competition, and of course, violence on the streets and in the home. We seek to support gender and diversity justice because gender discrimination interconnects with other forms of oppression and causes suffering.

Dharma has no gender! The dharma deals with human sufferings and offers a way to end sufferings that “anyone” can practice. The Buddha never said women could not become enlightened. What he did was extremely radical, given the social and cultural condition of his time. Even though he gave garudharmas, or extra rules for bhikkhunis, which are indeed prejudiced, the decision to allow

for bhikkhuni ordination was unprecedented and a radical act of true compassion. Dharma cannot be used to justify gender inequity.

Be an Ally. Network. Organize.  
Above All, Practice the Dharma.

Bearing witness to the suffering of others helps strengthen our compassion. We do so by not turning away and by providing safe space for deep listening. As an ally, we educate ourselves on the issues others are facing. We network with others who share the same goals of building a society based on respect and nonviolence in all forms. We communicate peacefully with people we do not agree with. Meanwhile, we also examine our own prejudice and work to transform our ignorance. With our network of kalyanamitras, we organize for change, little by little. But above all, we keep practicing the dharma. We uphold our sila, cultivate our samadhi and prajna. We pay attention to our breath as we engage in the dukka. Each one of us is capable of making our world a better place. We can bring about loving kindness instead of hatred. We can be part of the solution instead of the problem. We can be for diversity instead of discrimination.

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*Keynote Speech at the 2nd International Conference on Culture and Gender Ethics: A Pursuit of Gender Justice and Diversity, Taipei, Taiwan on the 25th May 2019.*

*A speech drafted by Anchalee Kurutach*



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## Celebration for the Coronation of HM King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarungkun

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May His Majesty be free from subordinates who  
sing only praises and appreciations

May His Majesty be steadfast in the teachings of the  
Buddha and be blessed with kalyanamitta [virtuous  
companions] who are independent thinkers and are  
willing to provoke and disagree with you

In order to move the Kingdom in the same direction  
as the Wheel of Dhamma, which will truly benefit  
the people, may all royal activities be transparent  
and accountable

May all of His Majesty's enemies, both within and  
without the Kingdom, suffer from calamities

May His Majesty develop the country for the  
happiness of all beings that are living in harmony  
with Nature

May all forms of art prosper and grow

May the Ten Royal Virtues further cultivate the  
growth of His Majesty's wisdom, illuminating  
everyone forevermore

Sincerely,

Sulak Sivaraksa  
5 May 2019

Dear Editor of *The Middle Way*,

I am a life member of the Buddhist Society. I  
appreciate the contributions of the Society as  
well as its journal, *The Middle Way*, which has  
represented the views of the different Buddhist  
schools. Also, I support the journal's ecumenical  
efforts in working with non-Buddhists.

In the February 2019 issue, I enjoy  
reading the obituary of Bernie Glassman who  
had stirred controversy among the Zen  
practitioners in the US. Yet, in this issue there  
is no mentioning of Urgyen Sangharakshita  
who passed away on 30 October 2018 in  
England.

Sangharakshita too had led a  
controversial life, not unlike Glassman. And he  
had contributed so much to Buddhism in the  
West. In India, he inspired hundreds of  
thousands of Dalits to convert to Buddhism.  
This was the promise he made to B. R.  
Ambedkar. His book *Survey of Buddhism* was  
the winner of the first Christopher Humphreys  
Book Award.

In all fairness, you can afford to publish  
my letter in the next issue.

**Yours, in the Dharma**  
**Sulak Sivaraksa**

p.s. Matteo Pistono wrote "*Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa  
and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*"  
published recently in the US. I wonder whether  
you would consider it worthwhile to have it  
reviewed in your esteemed journal.

## Peace Building in Myanmar Amidst Rising Military Control

*Jill Jameson*

In meeting with some old activist friends it was encouraging to hear that after so many years of struggle for democratic change and their basic rights, they haven't given up. They continue to work for constitutional change, social justice and towards greater inclusiveness and social harmony, despite the increasing crack-downs on peaceful protests. This is in the context of increasing military control and their infiltration of all ethnic States. One way this has been achieved is through war, by taking over land of IDPs (internally displaced people) such as in Kachin State, and Rohingya refugees in Rakhine State. The National Ceasefire Agreement with some ethnic armies has also given the military increased access and control such as in Karen State, and the recently amended Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Land Management Law states that land that is not registered will be deemed vacant. Registration is complex, and large areas of land are governed by customary land practice, but the new law will now criminalise those who continue to work on their land. These forces of exploitation and oppression are taken advantage of by, for example, some Chinese factory owners in the industrial zone of Yangon, and by Chinese family companies growing banana plantations in Kachin State, as shared in a recent peace-building training.

Activist friends and their organisations are focusing on the next generation of political leaders and youth by broadening their education to include peace and civic rights. Kalyana Mitta Foundation are introducing peace education at various universities, as well as for young Buddhists and monks in Rakhine State and in Dharma Schools. They also organise peace festivals around the country. Another Civil Society Organisation (CSO) is offering training in governance and federalism, gender equality and providing retreats for political leaders in Thailand. Yet another CSO is working on a civil and political rights program, supporting ethnic CSOs and influencing political parties, and another CSO is working to promote media freedom.

Sharing one's story and some of the underlying feelings in a supportive environment, and with the

practice of deep listening, is at the core of peace-building training I have been facilitating in Myanmar over many years. This is a process of building trust and acceptance across differences, to help facilitate communication and inquiry and the opening of hearts as a basis for transformation – both individual and systemic. Participants appreciate a different approach to learning, one that helps them see potential barriers in their communication, and further strengthens their team work and solidarity especially at this time with the structural violence of land acquisition. Always in this process I find that I have much to learn and I am continually inspired by people who see possibility in the smallest of places. I now want to share some of this from the recent trainings for four different local organisations below.



*Monks and lay people sharing their conflict maps*

## 1. Capacity- Building Training for Leaders in Community - Based Organisations (CBOs) in Hlaing Tharyar

This two day training was for 40 leaders from a range of organisations associated with Ashin U Thatdamma's monastery in Hlaing Tharyar, a newly developed poor area on the outskirts of Yangon with many factories. It had been considered a 'grey' area with little security so the CBO's had wanted to provide service to the community, and have found that the more fearful views of people there have more recently been changing as they reach out more to their neighbours.

I have been co-facilitating peace-building training with Ashin over the last six years, and even longer with Wai Wai from BadeiDha Moe. Participants were from a range of CBO's doing welfare work such as teachers in non-formal education, service in Ashin's temple at Twante, ambulance service and blood donation and the Farmer's Development Party. The framework for training is based on the Four Noble Truths and - in a more dynamic way - the four noble social questions. This was developed recently with Alan Senauke when we were working with Buddhist Dalits at Nagaloka, India.

Participants identified issues or social dukkha in their CBO's (first noble social question) which included criticism of each other's work, lack of transparency, abuse of power, not being able to give feedback in their organisation, having rigid views, not obeying organisation's principles, dealing with 'land-grabbing' issues and violence against women and girls. In looking into the root causes of these issues - the second noble question - there was a tendency to see individual causes such as ego, greed, hatred and anger but lack of rule of law was later included. Mapping of individual conflicts was followed by role plays of six of the issues. This gave them the opportunity both to explore their issues more deeply and for team work and greater openness. It was encouraging to see the rapport Ashin had with his community, to the extent that some of his students role played him! Another presentation revolved around rubbish collection and the need to bribe for this service. In response to the fourth noble social question of ways forward, participants suggested for example, the need to deepen their practice of the Brahma Viharas, especially in giving service to others, and the need to develop the practice of deep listening and meditation to see for example, that the use of angry words was 'wrong'. However, traditional and cultural ways were also voiced such as the 'duty of obedience to the teacher' and a fear of questioning those in authority.

At the end of the first day I travelled in the community ambulance which was also packed with some of the participants, back to Ashin's monastery at Twante. The base of the stupa was said to be from the Mon and pre-Pagan period, pre eleventh Century. Such a long Buddhist practice here, now facing a range of different threats and decline.

## 2. Peace- building Training with We - Generation Network (W-GN) in Hlaing Tharyar

Pressure to migrate to Yangon from the Ayeyarwady delta region and Rakhine State followed cyclones Nargis 2008 and Giri in 2010. Many came to the industrial zone in Hlaing Tharyar, a Chinese area with mostly Chinese

factories, and W-GN works there with labour unions in collective bargaining and labour disputes in many of the factories. They also offer workers capacity building skills such as computer literacy at their centre every Sunday.

Of the 40 participants in our two day training, about one third were union leaders and the rest workers, some of whom were studying. Some had come from night duty and some from far away. They worked in a range of factories – garment (such as sportswear and bridal), shoes, candy, frozen fish, coffee, plastic bags, back-packs, hats and hand-bags. Many such goods, as in other countries like Bangladesh, are sold in the West at prices many times the cost whilst the workers live and work in often unsafe and squalid conditions. Their minimum salary was 4,800 Kyat per day (US\$3). Of this, half goes on rent. Some can cook at home if the owners allow use of electricity. There is little over for food, and many are trying to support their families and for some, to repay debt. The Labour Movement is trying to get salaries raised to 5,600 Kyat or US\$3.66.

Their hopes for this training included to build inner peace for themselves, family and society, and for solidarity, acknowledgement of diversity and for less conflict in Myanmar. And we all needed the practice of inner peace and patience as for most of the weekend, extremely loud music came out of a huge bank of speakers in a nearby building. My colleague tried to have the intensity lessened, but a threatening reply was received from the chief of 'SB' in Hlaing Tharyar (Bureau of Special Investigation, an arm of the military), who only upped the volume. The chief had spotted a foreigner who was with an activist organisation. We were concerned that W-GN and the workers might be at risk but there were no further consequences other than highlighting the power and vindictiveness of 'the authorities'! This was not the most conducive environment for building trust but a feeling of solidarity was engendered, and the participants were eager to learn and be open to new experiences.

From the exercise, 'river of life', participants drew expressive rivers marking some of the challenges and supports in their lives. Of those who shared their very moving stories all had experienced extreme hardships, opening our hearts and touching their pain. Later, in checking how those who had shared more publicly were

feeling, they expressed appreciation for this opportunity and some release. I was so moved by their strength and resilience following hardship, hardships which continue in different ways. Some of the stories briefly follow:

1) A woman said she had a lot to cry about in her life. Her mother died when she was 11, after the government, she said, had asked them to stay near a rubbish dump there since the Japanese occupation, and her mother had contracted TB. Soon after, a fire destroyed her home. She was sent to a monastery and her father remarried. She felt oppressed by her step-mother with often little to eat. She and her brother ran away for a couple of years, but returned when she heard her father was in hospital. At this time she was sexually abused by her step-mother's nephews. She felt broken and was offered for sale or to be trafficked, but somehow had the strength not to accept. She is now together with her siblings after many years and has become a union leader. She believed she faced all these problems 'due to her karma'.

2) A man from Rakhine State said he had a happy early childhood with his grandparents. Five years back he had been in a fight after drinking beer with a friend, and was taken by the police to court. Due to this court case he had to sell his plot of land and he felt very let down by his friend who would not be a witness, so that now he has no trust in anyone. He later came to Yangon for work in a factory but feels he is not skilful and could lose his job.

3) A woman born in 1984 came to Yangon at the time of the Saffron Revolution 2007. She dropped out of school at grade 6 because of illness, and then worked in a factory from 7am- 6pm. Her father became unwell and as the eldest daughter she had to take care of him so she borrowed money. She joined the Workers' Rights Movement but was terminated from her over-time work because of this. However, because she had kept her salary slips for a year the dispute was settled with the factory owner.

Some of the issues faced by the factory workers included not getting annual leave, forced work load,

discrimination from supervisors especially if a union leader, unequal salaries, oppression and use of abusive language. And challenges exist for example in the plastic bag factory where there are two unions, the real and the 'yellow' union of the factory owners. Individual mapping of conflicts included some of these issues, and then a selection was made by small groups to role play. These exercises were empowering for participants - standing up to supervisors and Chinese factory owners, practicing negotiating skills at tri-party factory and higher level meetings and becoming more powerful people in their factories.

In the final group reflection of the training, participants expressed appreciation for the experience of working together on our inner peace, seeing the many barriers - especially power that potentially gets in the way of communication. They also appreciated the experience of unity and solidarity in the 'knots' game and the importance of dialogue and asking questions. The person who shared his story and mentioned having no trust in anyone, acknowledged feeling empathy from others since sharing his story.

The head of W-GN shared his hopes for the training with me, saying that sometimes the traditional way of thinking is carried through from the ancestors in the form of proverbs which can be easily misinterpreted. He felt it was clear to see this through exploring together the 'iceberg' of root causes. He hoped that participants would stop transferring these stories into their lives and to understand the consequences of the internalisation of oppression - even though he felt awareness of structural violence will take time. Conflict, he said, was always there, and we need to be with it and work with it rather than run from it.

### 3. Towards Inner Peace and Social Harmony with BadeiDha Moe at Bago

I have been working with BadeiDha Moe (BDM) on various aspects of peace building over the last seven years. They work in conflict zones of Kachin, Shan, Karen and Mon States, documenting land confiscation issues and

advocating on behalf of local communities for compensation and justice, both at the local level and in Naypyitaw. The training for 22 participants was in the spacious and forested retreat centre of Metta Development Foundation outside Yangon, so it was a mix of retreat and training. Over half of the staff were new.

Their hopes for this training were for the practice of inner peace, to learn ways to support the peace process and to learn how to share this with others. In terms of what was useful in last year's training, the staff present said for example, that in land briefing activities with the army, politicians and stakeholders they have been able to more easily co-operate with each other. The practice of inner peace has helped some to more easily see anger as it arises, to be less reactive and more responsive. From walking meditation in earlier trainings, some saw the need to be more with nature. The conflict mapping had been useful in land disputes to be able to more easily see which stakeholders were involved, and from looking into their own needs and fears and those of others, they felt they understood the issues more deeply. Finally, working on agreements in different situations has been an empowering process.

Their vision for their work in their communities across the different States in this training included being free from war and drugs and living together in a federal country with the rule of law. Regarding natural resource extraction, income should be shared with the States, and there should be a demonstrated commitment to future generations and having minimum environmental impact. For the wider community, the vision was for increased awareness about peace.

The atmosphere of the retreat centre in a forest and built mostly from recycled materials, together with the good food and time to be with each other provided a way for putting into practice taking care of themselves and each other. The atmosphere also encouraged deep sharing and listening. Someone shared that outside everything looks fresh and beautiful, but the feeling inside was heavy. Deep listening by others and being able to ask questions had helped, some participants said, to lighten the load. Others found relief such as playing or listening to music, chanting, in joking and using dialogue for



dealing with conflict.

One of the conflicts mapped from Mon State focussed on farmers and land confiscation. The farmers were caught in conflict between the army, a company and 'fake' activists who had been involved in 'money-grabbing' from the affected farmers. BDM have worked with the farmers for justice and their rightful compensation. Rather than approaching the army, BDM had sent a letter to the President of Myanmar.

The mapping of a conflict in Kachin State involved a Chinese company renting land from farmers for a banana plantation and highlighted the complexities and the many parties involved. In this conflict, a small Chinese company had sent in a broker to negotiate minimal rental for farmers' land for seven years. There are now many such family companies working in Kachin State, having moved from Vietnam and the Mekong Region due to declining crops. Since 2011 this has been illegal in Myanmar but the government receives good tax income from such companies. Most of the workers in the plantations are migrant workers from Rakhine State due to shortage of jobs and conflict there, and due to a deal with the Arakan Army(AA). The AA receive support from the Kachin Independence Organisation for migrant workers as well as training their army in Kachin State. Another party in the conflict Border Guard Force – a militia like organisation, is friendly with the Chinese and receives drugs and bribes and threatens anyone who might disturb the deal. The farmers, having rented their land then have no work and will be left with water and soil which will be heavily polluted.

BDM's role in this conflict has been to get a better deal for the farmers and to negotiate between the local authorities, politicians, the Myanmar army and local activists. They have found that mostly the local authorities do not have a good relationship with civil society so it is better to go higher up where there is a better relationship. In mapping this conflict, staff from Kachin more clearly realised the complexity, risks and how big this issue is. A legal officer is called on for support.

In our final reflection, most participants said that learning further ways to work with inner conflict and nurture themselves and others was the most useful.

#### 4. Leadership and Communication Skills Training from a Buddhist Perspective for Monks, Dhamma School teachers and CSOs at Myingyan, Upper Myanmar.

Of the 40 participants, most were monks from Myingyan and region, about one third were Dhamma school teachers and mostly women, and remaining participants were from local organisations. Some of the monks had wide ranging experience, in some cases with connections to Ma Ba Tha (MBT and stands for 'purity of race and religion'), whilst others seemed to distance themselves from MBT. One monk had attended the INEB conference in Taiwan the year before and was a teacher at the large Monastic Education School Paung Daw Oo in Mandalay. Another monk from Meiktila had received training from SEM -connected with INEB, and had been on a study tour to Sri Lanka. This training was organised by Ashin U Thatdamma, a Saffron revolution monk who had been in prison for six years here in Myingyan, along with several other monks at this training. Layers of involvement unfolded. Ashin calls himself a PBBT (peace-builder and Buddhist teacher), and I later learned that MBT from Mandalay had also been involved in the organising of this training in Myingyan.

In working on agreements to set a safe space for sharing sensitive issues, one monk indicated that if there were disagreements that he might walk out. We were able to turn this around to an agreement to being present. This also underlies a common theme in communication issues - limited dialogue especially across difference.

Games such as 'sitting down circle' for separate groups of monks, lay women and men helped build trust and co-operation and gave a direct experience of harmony when working together. Learning through playing games is always a powerful way for self learning, and games are potential tools for engaging their own communities. Small mixed groups of monks and lay people offered the monks the uncommon opportunity to listen to lay people, as well as to learn from each other. The topic for discussion was sharing ways they promote co-operation in their sangha and organisations. Following this lively discussion, the same small groups were asked to share some of the

issues they faced in their sanghas and organisations. This seemed a useful way to open up discussion and sharing on topics where avoidance is often practiced. The issues highlighted some of their deep concerns for monastic education and dhamma schools, such as their reduced resources (inflation and increasing market prices impacting on monasteries), and declining numbers of monks and dhamma school students.

Exploring the root causes of conflict and what is not visible, the tendency was to focus on individual causes and quickly run off the Pali words for greed, hatred, delusion and ego, seemingly with the need to get the 'right' answers rather than answering from one's own experience. However, later there was a question from a monk about trauma and how to work with this. A layman then asked how to 'cure fear'. This provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the internalisation of oppression and the consequences for self and other and the related structural or systemic sources of conflict and violence, and what social dukkha or suffering might look like.

Based on the Four Noble Truths, mixed small group discussion used the four noble social questions framework to further deepen their understanding of their identified conflict or dukkha, the causes and the Buddhist practices and teachings that they found helpful in working with this. What seemed most valuable was the opportunity for monks and lay people to share and listen to each other – not a common practice it seems. The groups came to see that lots of sharing and dialogue were key to working with many of their conflicts, as was supporting each other. U. Thatdamma - a monk who relates easily across difference - told me later that those monks who think 'they are always right' and were not open were the ones who had difficulty in relating. This is why, he said, that participatory workshops such as this, with their analytical frameworks related to Buddhist practice are so important. The participants in the final reflection also agreed with this, and felt they would be able to integrate some of the learnings in their schools and sanghas.

It seems from talking with one of the senior MBT monks, that MBT as an organisation is now focussed on offering welfare through their community based

organisations, although they did support this workshop! They are 'not involved in politics', but are 'protecting the 135 races'. I was told later by long standing friends that MBT does not have as much leverage as in the past and that Myanmar is not welcoming of monks being involved in politics. MBT has a deep concern about the declining numbers of monks and dhamma school students. The total number of monks in Myanmar I heard is down to 300,000 compared to 500,000 twelve years ago. MBT are trying to remedy this by going into rural areas to encourage youth to become novices in the monastic school system, and then supporting them for higher education, as otherwise, I was told, monks leave. But perhaps they leave for other reasons too. I also heard from various sources – and is also evident in workshops – that many monks are distracted, not only by their phones and Face-Book!

Overall, the bigger picture involving the fate of the IDPs and refugees from Myanmar and the latest Land Management Law with its potential for take-over of much of the land in ethnic states, are the most concerning issues. The Land Law which will especially impact ethnic nationalities is counter to the principles of federalism and will make peace harder to attain. Sadly, land confiscation is not confined to Myanmar, and has been practiced by colonial powers in many parts of the world. In Australia, there was dispossession of our First Peoples just over two hundred years ago, accompanied by widespread massacres. The First Peoples continue to suffer deeply from loss of their spirituality linked with loss of land and from their stories not being heard. There are moves towards constitutional recognition, a truth and reconciliation commission and a treaty, but there is still a long way to go.

The participants in these trainings were grateful for the support received from the Clear View Project of Alan Senauke, and also from Mary Lightfoot - sales from her Bermagui market stall, to cover the basic costs of the training.

# Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC) Organizes Interfaith Conference **at Lampeter, University of Wales**

*Hans van Willenswaard*

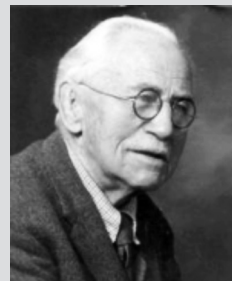
With this water colour painting of Wat Phra Kaew, University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, announces an interfaith conference titled “The Future of Religious and Spiritual Experience: 50th Anniversary of the Religious Experience Research Unit” to be held 1 – 3 July 2019. The painting was made by Sir Alister Hardy (1896 – 1985), the founder of the Religious Experience Research Centre (RERC). As Ajarn Sulak studied at Lampeter he should be central in this event. But limited funds do not allow an invitation, the organisers regretfully admitted. According to its website RERC <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/> houses an archive with over 6,000 accounts of first-hand experiences of people from across the world who had a spiritual or religious experience.

Established by Sir Alister Hardy in 1969 at Manchester College, Oxford, RERC (originally named RERU) moved to Lampeter in July 2000. The Centre’s aim is to study contemporary accounts of religious or spiritual experiences. In addition to its archive of accounts the RERC houses a specialist collection of books and journals. The Centre organises seminars and conferences and supports a postgraduate degree ‘Master by Research in Religious Experience’. The ‘MRes Religious Experience’ is supported by a bursary (based on needs) funded by the Alister Hardy Trust; for information go to: <http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/bursaries/> Sir Alister Hardy was a marine biologist who did breakthrough research on plankton. He founded RERC after his retirement. He was the opinion that spiritual experiences who often occur spontaneously should be studied as a natural phenomenon. RERC research was undertaken in the tradition of the American philosopher William James’ famous book “The Varieties

of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature” (Gifford Lectures 1901 and 1902). A small advertisement placed by RERC asking persons to send in records of their individual experiences triggered an overwhelming response.

Sir Alister Hardy loved to travel especially in the East and made water paintings of places he visited. In 1985 he received the Templeton Prize for his research but he died shortly after. The award enabled a new generation of researchers to continue his mission into the future. Some modern researchers include experiences that drive “engaged spirituality” in their scope of interest and therefor a link with Ajarn Sulak’s work is a logical step.

I have been familiar with RERC because Dutch friends from the business sector supported it in its very pioneering stages. I did not do research myself in this framework directly but was enabled to study “rural development” at Emerson College in the UK by the same friends. That was briefly before I met Ajarn Sulak in the Netherlands and got involved in his work in Thailand and the region.



The Religious Experience Research Centre  
University of Wales Trinity Saint David  
Lampeter, Ceredigion, SA48 7ED  
Tel.: 01570 424821 (direct line) or Ext. 4821 (internal)  
Email enquiries to: [RERC@uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:RERC@uwtsd.ac.uk)

## Local Solutions - Alternatives in Practice in Rural Thailand

*Doreen Wang*

**A**s part of the innovative Awakening Leadership Training programme (a collaboration with INEB, SEM and Ecovillage Transition Asia), learning from real examples of sustainable local community initiatives - from a range of those vibrant and flourishing, to those who are floundering - is to give participants both inspiration and critical understanding of practical sustainable community reconstruction.

Over 12 days, thirteen individuals representing eight different countries zig-zagged by train, plane, minivan, and once, even a pattering farm cart to almost every major region across half of the country. Why? Because we had spent the week prior discussing the major political and economic systems underpinning societies in Asia and around the world. We examined massive concepts—capitalism, socialism, democracy, authoritarianism and beyond—and how they affected each of our families, homelands, and ecosystems. Though we hailed from different corners of the world, we all knew what trauma looked and felt like under the collective heft of these systems.

Now we journeyed to find what words and theories could not. We set out to explore whether alternative ways of living and governing were possible and to meet pioneers in praxis, beginning with the “community” as society’s foundational unit and with examples found in our very own host country, Thailand.

In truth, the trip was such a whirlwind of geographies, cuisines, and visionary, passionate people that I find myself unsure of how to summarize. All I know is that it was successful in its end goal, which was to inspire and plant seeds of possibility. The metaphor of farming is apt because in almost every example we saw, we found local people re-acquainting with and reclaiming their land, on their own terms.

Spending a day and night with Tammoon Network allowed us to hear about various groups of poor

and marginalized farming people forced to defend their homes and natural lands from the destruction of hydropower dams. But they weren’t satisfied with remaining on the defense. They united their disparate groups into a stronger network (connected across a sprawling region faced with a string of dam-building projects), formed musical bands and other cultural activities to support a victorious hunger strike, and began weaning their farms free of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. They collaborated with local government to establish farmers markets on unused parking lots and fed us one of the most delicious breakfasts in my recent memory, on colorful straw mats laid on the black concrete.

At Mae Tha community, I witnessed a phenomenon that I have never seen in any other part of the world—generations of young people proudly, eagerly returning to their village to build their families and dreams. They were in dialogue with their parents, grandparents, and children about creating cafes, organic farms, co-operative businesses, agro-forests, heirloom seed banks, community learning spaces, and much more. Because of this, the outside was steadily coming to them. Their videos are watched on YouTube and other social media platforms; their products are now contracted to be sold in some of Thailand’s most upscale supermarket chains; they receive a steady, regular stream of volunteers, farm-to-table tourists, and study groups interested in sustainability in one form or another. Poh Pat, a respected elder who helped lead Mae Tha’s first wave of

transformation from households beholden to agricultural corporations' debts into a model up-and-coming "eco-village" traipsed us through the forest behind his teakwood house talking about imperialism, natural resource exploitation, and the importance of protecting forests as a source of vital wisdom.

Sometimes, I felt the urge to renounce the life I had built and instead, give myself to these communities instead. But the more we traveled, the more I realized that the greater urgency lied in me getting to know my own piece of land—that instead of growing one community into an all-expansive model or institution, it was more

important to grow many, many possibilities in every corner of the world. That was our work—to reinvigorate our homes and lands, to soil and wet our hands, and to redefine what our security and success meant.

S

The Awakening Leadership Training programme is a five month integrated learning journey in holistic sustainability, utilizing contemplative, participative, and reflective learning approaches. For more information, check out our website: [www.awakeningleadership.net](http://www.awakeningleadership.net) or contact: [blt.ineb@gmail.com](mailto:blt.ineb@gmail.com)

Dear Ajahn Sulak

Since I have moved away from Bangkok, I very regret that chances spare little time for me to call on you as I would have liked and often did in the past. I too miss the opportunities to sound your thoughts on various subjects that happen to be the vogue of the day.

Thank you for the copy of the *Seeds of Peace*, January - April 2019, which makes me miss you even more. On this issue, there are two articles, one, in memory of Lodi Gyaltsen Grari, and the other, a Book Review of *Life with a Choice*, a funeral book and also Dr Chai-Anan's autobiography, distributed at Dr Chai-Anan Samudavanija's royal sponsored cremation ceremony.

Although I did not know Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari that well, I came to realize that he was an important person among Tibetan and world communities, his wisdom and intellect being cherished by all who knew him. His personality gradually grew on me when he came to reside in Thailand. One could feel his presence when he walked into the room. Definitely, there was a quiet and unspoken aura about him, and expression of love and compassion that one misses nowadays in the fast moving world. It was a shock of hearing of his passing away. It came with sadness and disbelief, never imaging that it could happen too him too soon. Actually, he was a number of years my junior.

On the other hand, I can boast that I knew Dr Chai- Anan quiet well. I first met him in person in New Zealand in 1965 when we were still students. I thought he was quite eccentric when we first met, undoubtedly a person of exceptional mind. I don't know whether he was in the same class with Helen Clarke, the former New Zealand's Prime Minister, but if not, they were only a few years apart.

I have to explain more clearly on my calling him eccentric. Well, he used to dress up in 'jong-gra-baen' at various functions at the university, obliquously following the examples that I later realized was set by you.

Being an outstanding political science student, he always had a sharp political mind, being able to analyze Thai and international political events with indebt understanding..

When Ajahn Sanya Thammasak was the Prime Minister, he was appointed as one of the members of the National Constitution Drafting Committee. He strongly voiced his feeling that political parties should be given a strong entity in their own right, advocating for a stable government. Before then, and I guess now soon to be, small political parties often switched alliances which led to the collapse of the government and new elections - one of the major causes of political instability in Siam.

To us all who were his junior, we called Pee Ping. It is only when someone whom we love passed away that we realize much we miss him or her. I miss you Pee Ping!

**Love and respect,  
Siroj Angsuwat.**

PS

I believe there is a misprint at the end of the review of the book *Life with a Choice*. Many who did not know Peeing and his family well would be easily misled by the unfortunate and inaccurate content. The whole paragraph has no connection with him and his family. It is probably taken from another writing, unrelated to your review at all.

## Editor's reply

Thank you Khun Siroj. We made a great mistake. It should read that Chai-Anan's co author David Morell's wife later divorced him and remarried. She used to teach Thai at UC Berkeley and wrote an excellence biography *A Civilized Woman: M.L. Boonlua Debyasuvarn and the Thai Twentieth Century* by Susan Fulop Kepner



**Dear Ajarn Sulak,**

Thank you very much for your kind thoughts. Your wisdom is a great comfort in these troubled times.

I was devastated by the news of Lodi Gyari Rinpoche's death. He had such a great and beautiful life, and did so much for others. We will miss him.

As you know, I regularly when in France see Tenzin's brother, Chemi, his wife and their little boy, Tenzin. Chemi completed his doctorate in Montpellier on Tibetans' family businesses in India, a world which was highly appropriated. He now teaches in a Paris business school.

I was looking very much forward to an audience with HH the Dalai Lama, which unfortunately was not possible.

Thank you for the information regarding Matteo's book he has written on you and our life dedicated to Socially Engaged Buddhism. I have preordered it.

With my most sincere wishes for the New Year.

**Jean Luis Armand**

**Your Holiness,**

I am writing you as a dear friend, kalyanamittra, and next week I will celebrate my 86th birthday on March 27. Our friendship spans many years for which I am most grateful.

I share your loss of close friendship and counsel with Lodi Gyari Rinpoche who meant so much to me personally, as well as through our many endeavors. We held a 100 Day Memorial Service in Lodi's honor on 10 February with chanting in the Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions. His family members also attended this memorial and shared some words with us.

Later this year I will be traveling to India for the conference organized by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and would look forward to seeing you there. I am also inviting you to be a part of the conference. Approximately 200 persons will attend the conference which will be held on the grounds of the Deer Park Institute, Bir, India, where the theme is *The Culture of Awakening*.

Please consider our humble request to receive your blessing for the conference and to give a talk to the conference participants on *The Culture of Awakening*.

Fortunately, there is flexibility in dates and places the participants can hear you. Available dates to meet at your convenience are between the 21st and 24th of October either in Deer Park or in Dharmasala.

I look forward to your reply soon.

**Yours truly,**

**Sulak Sivaraksa**



## Arnaud Dubus

1964-2019

We express our deep condolences to the family and many colleagues and friends of Arnaud Dubus, French journalist who fell to his death in Bangkok on Monday, 29 April.

Obituaries

## George Fernandes: An Appreciation

3 June 1930 – 29 January 2019

*BBC News, 29 January 2019*



*Veteran socialist politician George Fernandes, who served as India's defence minister during the Kargil conflict with Pakistan, has died, aged 88.*

He was suffering from Alzheimer's and had been out of the limelight for many years. He had recently contracted swine flu and died peacefully.

A charismatic trade union leader, Mr Fernandes will be best remembered for resisting emergency rule in the mid-1970s when then prime minister Indira Gandhi suspended civil liberties.

He will also be known as the man who threw out Coca-Cola and IBM from India when he was the industry minister in the late 1970s.

Known to be honest and forthright, Mr Fernandes was often described as a rebel who fought for the rights of the poor people and low-paid workers. His private home was open to welcome Burmese and Tibetan refugees.

In his early years, he wanted to become a Catholic priest and joined a seminary in the southern

city of Mangalore at the age of 16. But two years later, he quit, disillusioned by "the hypocrisy of the church", and moved to Bombay in search of work.

It was there that he became involved with trade unions and the socialist movement, and regularly organised protests and strikes in the 1950s and 60s.

The tall, dark, handsome young man, dressed in clothes made from homespun Khadi material, won people over with his brilliant oratory.

In the 1967 election, he defeated senior Congress leader SK Patil, earning the sobriquet "George the giant killer."

Although he was regarded a hero by the poor masses whose rights he fought for, his trade union activities often put him on the wrong side of the law.

In Bombay, he led the taxi drivers' union and was jailed several times for participating in protests and shutdowns that disrupted life.

As head of the railway employees' union in 1974, he called on its 1.4 million workforce to strike and brought the service to a halt for days.

Thousands of protesters, including Mr Fernandes, were arrested and jailed by Mrs Gandhi's government.

But his most shining moments came after Mrs Gandhi declared the state of emergency in June 1975.

As most prominent political leaders were jailed on flimsy charges, Mr Fernandes became a "most wanted man on the run" and managed to evade arrest for a year, disguising himself first as a fisherman and later as a turbaned Sikh.

He was arrested in June 1976 in Kolkata and flown to Delhi where he was lodged in Tihar jail.

He was brought to court handcuffed and in chains and was charged with attempting to topple the government by force and conspiracy. The case against him was dubbed the "Baroda Dynamite Conspiracy" and he was accused of using explosives to blow up government establishments and railway tracks.

In 1977, when parliamentary elections were

held, Mr Fernandes stood for election from inside jail and won with a massive majority.

Once out of jail, he was appointed India's industry minister in then prime minister Morarji Desai's government.

It was at that time that he forced Coca-Cola and IBM to quit India after they refused to dilute their stake in their local partners.

Although IBM resumed business with Indian firms a couple of years later and returned to the country in 1992, Coca-Cola took two decades to return.

In 1994, Mr Fernandes launched his own Samata Party and later joined the coalition government headed by late prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and

served as defence minister.

He also oversaw the 1999 conflict with Pakistan on the border in Kargil. He resigned in 2004 after his associate Jaya Jaitly was named in an arms bribery scandal, but was later cleared of any wrongdoing by two inquiry commissions.

Mr Fernandes last served in parliament in the Rajya Sabha, the upper house, from 2009 to 2010.

Mr Fernandes was a great admirer of the Dalai Lama. He was a good friend of Lody Gyari and also a pioneer in trying to establish the ancient Nalanda University.

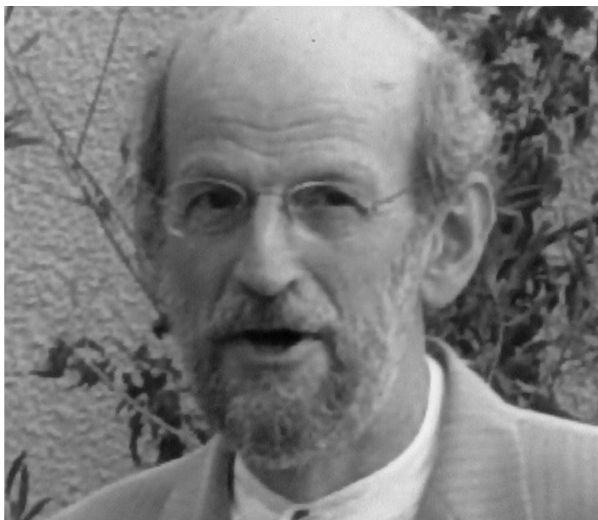
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## Ian Robert Ferguson: An Appreciation

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3 December 1933 - 20 December 2018

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Ian was one of my best friends in the UK. His younger brother, Graham, was my classmate at the Municipal College in Bournemouth. Graham later introduced me to his family. I was well looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson as well as Mrs. Ferguson's mother.

Ian was an architect who first moved to London and later immigrated to the United States. He met Tamiko, his Japanese wife, in New York. They had one son and one daughter. They were a family of artists, one way or another. I was close to all of them. Whenever I visited New York, I would be staying with Ian and Tamiko. When I went to teach at Swarthmore College and Smith College they drove all the way from New York to visit me. Both of them had visited me and my wife too. We had a good time together in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. I took them to the North by bus, and we returned to Bangkok by train.

Ian made his name in architecture apart from being a good amateur painter.

When I got married 55 years ago, Ian gave me one of his paintings as a special wedding gift.

I certainly miss him.

**Sulak Sivaraksa**

# Murray McCheyne Thomson

19 December 1922 – 2 May 2019



Murray Thomson, a pillar of Colonel By residence for the last seven years, died during the night in the Ottawa Civic Hospital, where he had been taken for tests a few days before. He had been in failing health for some months, suffering from pneumonia and fractured ribs.

Born in Honan province of western China, where his father was a Presbyterian missionary, he never lost his love of Asia. After serving in the RCAF during the 1939-45 war and attending university, he spent the early 1960s working in adult education in Saskatchewan. But, then he headed to India with the

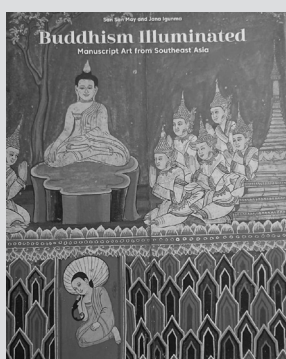
American Friends Service Committee, where he served and first met his Thai wife, Suteera. Their daughter Sheila lives in the Netherlands, wife a Dutch diplomat Robert Quarles and mother of three teen-aged daughters. You can understand why his concerns were world-wide.

Murray led the contingent of CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas) in Thailand, during the Vietnam War and became director of CUSO-SUCO during the amicable process of separation. He then took a leading role in founding several bodies working to help refugees and foster peace that inhabited what he called “the Home of Lost Causes” at 145 Spruce Street. Skilled in enlisting competent young women to run Canadian Friends of Burma that welcomed Karen, Kachin and other refugees from the Bangkok massacre of 1988, he also helped build Project Ploughshares as a research centre. In his last month he was still publishing his on-line Good News bulletin and hosting at Colonel By a meeting of Trinity Anglican church members who have sponsored a Syrian refugee family.

He was also lots of fun, adept at tennis and a life-long fan of basketball and the quirky poet Ogden Nash. He persuaded 1000 Order of Canada recipients to support a UN program of nuclear disarmament, and wrote a book *Minutes to Midnight*, to warn of apocalypse. He was, in short, a wonderful man.

**Clyde Sanger**

## Recommended Reading

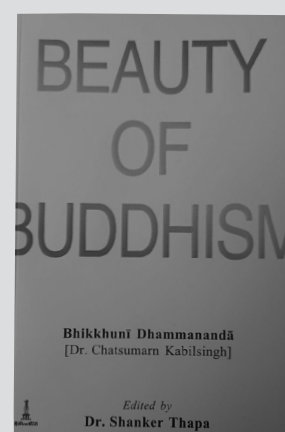


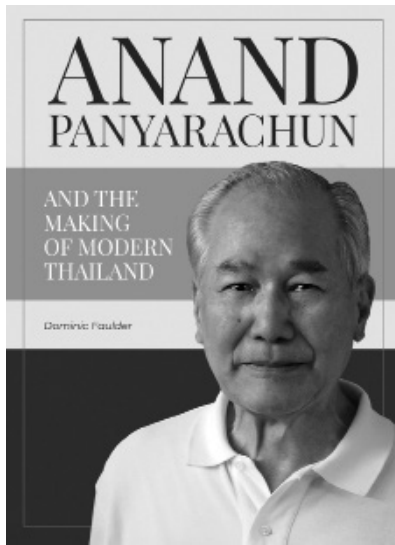
Beauty of Buddhism

Author: Bhikkhuni Dhammananda  
Editor: Dhanker Thapa

Buddhism Illumination: Manuscript Art from Southeast Asia

Publisher: University of Washington Press





## Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand

Dominic Faulder

(Editions Didier Millet, Singapore 2018)

Sulak Sivaraksa

The publisher Editions Didier Millet is also responsible for printing the official biography of King Rama IX: *King Bhumibol Adulyadej: A Life's Work*, which came out when he was still alive. It was subsequently translated into Thai with the title กลางใจราษฎร์ พระราชประวัติพระบาทสมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่หัวภูมิพลอดุลยเดช ทศวรรษแห่งการทรงงาน. Anand Panyarachun was a key figure in publishing King Rama IX's official biography, which—as most official biographies do—reads more like a hagiography. In other words, it is full of praises and is devoid of any criticism. Additionally, this appears to be the genre of Thai funeral books. Of course, the contents of the late king's biography, are also well-guarded by the infamous Article 112 of the Criminal Code.

Arguably *King Bhumibol Adulyadej: A Life's Work* is the palace's response to two other

biographies of the late king: *The Revolutionary King* by William Stevenson and *The King Never Smiles* by Paul Handley. Stevenson had received royal patronage for seven years in order to write the biography. Ironically, the finished book was prohibited from selling in Siam. It is full of flaws and uses improper language. But reading it carefully will reveal the late king's personal feelings and beliefs. Handley's biography was published by Yale University Press. This gives the book an academic stamp, and many readers may find it persuasive. It is definitely superior to the official biography.

My whole point is to suggest that *Anand Panyarachun and the Making of Modern Thailand* must have had the personal approval of Khun Anand himself. It is his official biography. Nevertheless, Dominic Faulder must be commended for providing a fair ac-

count of Khun Anand's life. Faulder's command of the facts and details is also quite impressive. I only have trivial points to quibble over.

I find that *And the Making of Modern Thailand* in the title is too broad. Of course, we can accept the fact that Khun Anand plays a role in the making of modern Thailand. The making of modern Thailand began in the Fourth Reign, when the country was still known as Siam. Any discussion of the making of modern Thailand must then include Pridi Banomyong and Plaek Phibunsongkram—who were like the two main pillars. Unfortunately, they were constantly at each other's throat. Secondary figures involved in the making of modern Thailand include Luang Wichitwathakan and Prince Wan Waithayakon. A serious biography of the latter deserves to be written by someone with the caliber of Faulder. Compared to these figures, Khun Anand's political role was



quite brief even though it was an important one as prime minister in two different periods. On the other hand, Prince Wan was politically active from 1932 to the times of Thanom Kittikachorn and Praphas Charusathien. It can be argued that compared to the royal-appointed prime ministers such as Sanya Dharmasakti and Surayud Chulanont, Khun Anand's performance was much better. However, Prem Tinsulanonda was undoubtedly the strongest of the batch—primarily because he had the support of the military.

Faulder's discussion of Khun Anand's role in the making of modern Thailand is limited to the two periods in which he served as prime minister. Faulder also touches on Khun Anand's supporting role in the normalization of Sino-Thai relations. I read this as one of Khun Anand's strengths, which Thai civil servants should seek to emulate. He is modest and gives credits to numerous lesser known officials such as Voraput Jayanama

for making this feat possible. Someone like Kukrit Pramoj would never do this. Kukrit was an opportunist who liked to steal the limelight.

Although interesting there is nothing extraordinary about Khun Anand's life from the time he was born till the time he was a student in England. The fact that he had served under Thanat Khoman without any qualm despite the latter's authoritarianism is also ordinary for Thai civil servants in general.

However, unlike most Thai civil servants past and present, Khun Anand possesses moral courage. In this respect, he is second only to Puey Ungphakorn. Puey's progressive and social democratic leanings must be whole-heartedly applauded. If Khun Anand had married a progressive woman (e.g., someone like Margaret Smith, Puey's wife) instead of a mom rajawongse would he have guided the country in the direction of social democracy?

For example, when he got to know Wanida Tantiwithayapitak and the Assembly of the Poor he became conscious of his own elitism and gravitated more toward the lower strata. Later, he maintains close relations with the Social Venture Network Thailand, especially Preeda Tiasuwan who became his kalyanamitta. This has enabled Khun Anand to better understand the poor in society. It is therefore not surprising to see Pipob Dhongchai as one of his friends.

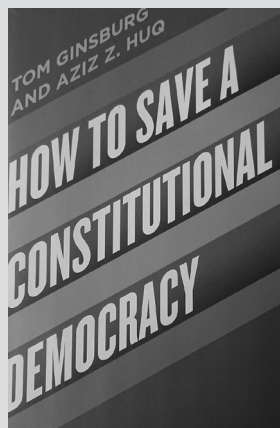
After reading this biography, I perceive Khun Anand as a champion of individual rights. However, sometimes these very rights unduly benefit the rich and even transnational corporations. Put another way, he does not seem to understand the problems of philanthrocapitalism: one hand is able to give because the other hand is taking and exploiting—including the destruction of the natural environment.

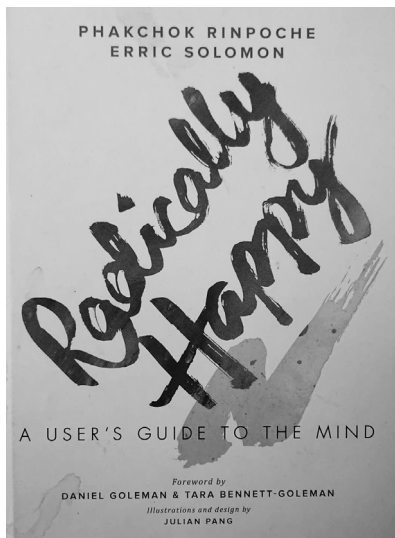
As for Buddhism, Khun Anand could grasp only its formal and ritualistic dimension, not its essence. In this respect, Puey seemed more profound. Moreover, Puey read and wrote more than Khun Anand. Overall, Puey's writings are quite impressive too. I am still eagerly waiting for Khun Anand to find the time to produce a literary gem that is distilled from his long life. It can be written in either Thai or English.

## Recommended Reading

How to Save a Constitutional Democracy

Author: Tom Ginsburg and Aziz Z. Huq  
Editor: The University of Chicago Press





The Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation has been organizing the Sem Pringpuangkaew Annual Lecture in honor of Dr. Sem ever since he was still living. He passed away in 2011 at the age of 100. This year marks the 25th Sem Annual Lecture. Phakchok Rinpoche will be the keynote speaker. The title of his talk is “Radically Happy,” which is also the title of his most recent book, which he co-wrote with Erric Solomon. The latter is a successful Silicon Valley technology entrepreneur turned Dhamma teacher.

Phakchok Rinpoche is a Tibetan who was born and raised in Nepal. He is recognized as a reincarnated one and belongs to a long lineage of established Dhamma teachers. In other words, he is an important “lama,” a word that means “Dhamma teacher” and applies to both the ordained and the lay. As for Phakchok, he is married and has a child. He is a profound lama and is widely respected in Siam and elsewhere.

This book is beautifully conceived and printed. It is designed as a

## Radically Happy

*Sulak Sivaraksa*

“guide” to help us practice the Dhamma in daily life. A very interesting guide it is! Phakchok and Solomon openly draw upon their personal lives to discuss various Dhamma topics in the book.

For starters, they asked whether we should be emulating the dog or the lion in order to be radically happy. How about that for an opening question?

This book is divided into three main parts. The first part is on “basic happiness” and deals with how to be mindful, to let go, to “be present,” etc. Similarly, Thich Nhat Hanh has pointed out that being present is sublime. There’s no need to run after the past or the future. The second part focuses on “interconnected happiness.” A Pali term for interconnected happiness is “*paticcasamup-*

*pada*” [the Dependent Origination]. Phakchok and Solomon are able to explain it well in a clear and accessible way. The third part is on radical happiness. It begins with “mastering dignity.” Then the authors talk about the ways of “cultivating dignity.” They also discuss how to “relax the clinging.” All these are important for the cultivation of mindfulness or to “be aware” in their words.

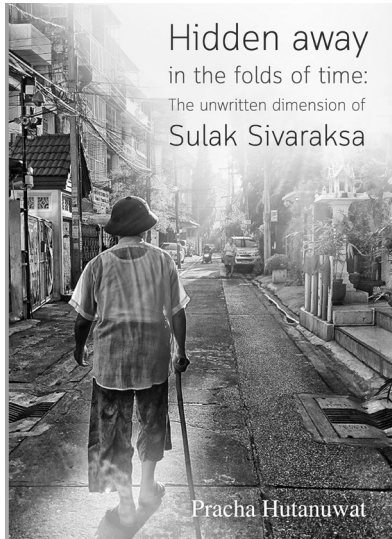
Phakchok and Solomon claim that all these practices can be part of everyday life. As such, there are exercises to perform at the end of every chapter. There’s even a “daily plan for radical happiness.”

This book will be a valuable guidebook for everyone, Buddhist or otherwise. Hopefully, it will also be translated into Thai.



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## Hidden Away in The Folds of Time: The Unwritten Dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa by Pracha Hutaniwat

*Jeffery San*

Suksit Siam, popularly known as Sulak's bookshop, published the Thai version of this book to mark Sulak Sivaraksa's eighty-fourth birthday on 27 March 2017. The book, which contains a series of interviews with Sulak by his disciple, Pracha Hutaniwat, has been translated into English by Sulak's niece, Zia Collins, and edited by Pracha's former wife, Jane Rasbash. As the English edition went to press, an embattled Sulak Sivaraksa labored under the shadow of yet another lese-majeste charge under Thailand's notorious article 112, for challenging the official version of a historical elephant duel between King Naresuan and a Burmese prince over 400 years ago.

The official history, taught in Thai Schools, claims that the warriors king, Naresuan, slew his Burmese opponent during the duel, Sulak pointed out there were alternative accounts of the duel that contradicted the official version. Burmese records offer no confir-

mation of the Thai story. Portuguese sources suggest that the Burmese prince was felled by a gunshot. For taking the trouble to challenge the historical record, Sulak was charged with lese-majeste.

Sulak has acquired a legendary reputation as a veteran defendant in lese-majeste litigation. During his controversial career as a public intellectual he has been charged on four occasions. Each time he has been acquitted; thus earning Thailand's "Socrates" the reputation of a cat with nine lives. This time, however, pundits predicted that he would not escape because of a vitriolic dislike of Sulak by the ruling junta.

Why is Sulak detested by the powers that be, the country's most powerful individuals, organizations, and institutions, yet enjoys a robust following among the youth, lay Buddhists and large section of the public? Perhaps some indirect answer can be found in this book. Pracha's intention is to address

Sulak, the man, not Sulak, the legend, nor Sulak, the hero. He aims to cut through the mystique surrounding Sulak, the public robust figure, in order to uncover the soul of Sulak, the man.

Behind the various poses, hero worship, self-image, testimonies and legends, Pracha's search for a kernel of truth about his revered guru takes him on a journey to Sulak's childhood; tracing the long chain of formative influences upon his education, spiritual experience, metamorphosis into manhood and becoming a public intellectual.

In Chapter 4, Sulak recounts that his lovely, kind teachers at Assumption College, were among the formative influences upon his childhood. He liked the old fashioned teachers best; they "are very sweet." Master Junya, Master Jarern and Master Jueh were mentioned with affection, as well as Brother Victorien. While he praises his teachers, he has a low opinion of Assumption College, valuing it no

better than “rubbish.” He pours scorn upon the institution, which “only taught rich kids to get richer and oppress the poor even more.” He distains the modern-day teachers as much as he despises his school.

Although Sulak went to a Catholic boys school, he grew up as a Buddhist. His inner-directed Buddhist core had already been formed before he was exposed to Western influences and Western education. From early childhood he was tutored by Kleeb, his old nanny, to live by a Buddhist ethical code embodied in the Eightfold Path. At the age of twelve, he was ordained as a junior monk at Wat Tong Noppakun. His trainer and mentor was the venerable monk, Chao Khun Pat, from whom he learned much about Buddhism, including its animistic and magical dimensions. He opposed the teachings of the royalist Dhammayut Sect, which rejected animism and magic. Like Chao Khum Pat, Sulak believes that an exclusively intellectual Buddhism, bereft of animism, superstition and magic, is an impoverished Buddhism.

By the time Sulak departed for England for Western education, he was already a sophisticated and discriminating Buddhist intellectual. His exposure to the culture shock of the West occurred when his personality was already formed. Consequently, Sulak’s encounter with the West was transacted on his own terms; he selected what he wanted

from the West and rejected that which did not suit him.

The Western influences upon his early life came from his teachers at Lampeter, especially Mr. Newte, who taught him Greek and Latin. Newte became intimate with Sulak inviting him on car drives in the country, long walks and chess games during the school holidays. They talked about “all sorts of things” when they were together. Sulak said he learned a lot from these conversations. Sulak first heard of Bertrand Russell from Newte. Although Sulak did not read the works of Russell until he returned to Thailand, Newte’s praise of Russell kindled his curiosity and admiration. Later Russell became a big influence on Sulak, and Newte’s image of Russell as the Socrates of our time must have captured young Sulak’s imagination and contributed to his current reputation as the “Socrates of Thailand” and the Thai social critic par excellence.

Another foreigner mentioned with affection is Mr. Pointon, Sulak’s boss at the BBC, who taught Sulak to be skeptical of the BBC: just like everybody else, the BBC had its own agenda.

Although Western education played an important role in his personal development, Buddhism became the primary and decisive influence on his life. When Sulak returned from his sojourn in the West, he realized that besides his childhood education in Buddhism, he knew little about his own country.

By far the most powerful and important institution in Thailand is the monarchy, yet Sulak knew little about it. He decided to spare no effort to learn about the Thai monarchy until he became the single most knowledgeable person on the subject. Sulak began reading works by royal historians, especially Prince Naris and Prince Damrong, although he never met them. He intimated that in this delicate field it was not documentation, but “word of mouth,” that was paramount in learning about royalty. He was grateful to find royal insiders, like Mom Chao Poonpisamai and Mom Chai Jongjittanom, who were willing to reveal the secret world of Thai royalty to him. Yet another confidant was Prince Dhani, the adopted son of Prince Damrong, who used to dine with Sulak every Saturday.

Besides members of the royal family, another invaluable source of information about royalty were royal monks, embodied in the Royal Chapter of Monks. Sulak tried to find out everything about the Royal Chapter of Monks; its operations, structure, hierarchy and abbots.

He quickly discovered that the subjects of royalty and Buddhism are inextricably intertwined. You cannot know one well without knowing the other. His research into the phenomena of royalty automatically made him an authority on the Buddhist Sangha and its luminaries, including Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Panyananda Bhikkhu and Chao Khun Prayudh Payutto. Today, Sulak’s out-

standing knowledge about Buddhism and the Sangha have earned him grudging respect of royalty and academia, although his relations with academic luminaries have often been testy and ambivalent, especially among Red Shirt and pro-Thaksin sympathisers like Thongchai Winichakul and Nidhi Eoseewong.

Despite his elitist Western education, Sulak has reinvented himself as a Buddhist-centred intellectual. His Buddhist cultivation of his inner self is reflected in a symbolic non-attachment to material possessions. Like the Buddhist monk, who drapes himself in a simple piece of saffron cloth, Sulak goes about clad in simple traditional Thai peasant garb and sandals (see the book cover). Sulak's affectation of Buddhist simplicity and professional faith in the Buddha's eight noble precepts have earned him public recognition as an exemplary Thai Buddhist. Many of his faithful disciples and followers accept him as a simple man ordering his life according to basic Buddhist precepts. This by itself is quite harmless. When then do the powers that be despise him and seek every means to punish and destroy him? Is Sulak a blameless victim of official perversity, or is the story more complicated and more interesting?

This book projects Sulak as an innocent bystander and passionate intellectual seeking to understand the world, including Buddhism and the Thai monarchy. If this is all

there is to Sulak, then it is hard to understand why he is so hated by the junta. The book fails to capture the other, a revolutionary Sulak who aggressively seeks to change the world. Without Sulak's revolutionary activism, it is impossible to understand how such a harmless bystander became the number one enemy of the Thai establishment.

A more careful examination of Sulak's later activities reveals a powerful man, who deploys aggressive confrontational tactics to pressure the establishment and change the system. Far from being simply an intellectual, who wants to understand the world, Sulak is a revolutionary activist who wants to change it. Even his apparently scholarly endeavor to understand the phenomena of Buddhism and royalty is not simply for knowledge's sake. Professor Thamsook Numnonda's remark that "Sulak is a man who knows a lot of history, but he is not a historian," captures the essence of the man—not a harmless man of knowledge but an aggressive and highly effective man of action. Neither is he simply a pious man of religion. His Buddhism is more complex than simple "classical" Buddhism or the Buddhism of the common man.

In his maturity, Sulak has espoused a form of Buddhism that is unconventional and controversial. He calls this "Engaged Buddhism." While "classical" Buddhism is otherworldly, oriented towards individual release from the vicious cycle of

reincarnation, advocating control of powerful human sentiments, such as greed for material possessions, passionate love, hate and lust for power, in favour of a harmless, simple, austere life of engagement! For Sulak, to be "engaged" means to express solidarity with the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged and the exploited in their struggle for justice, human rights and liberation from various forms of enslavement. Engaged Buddhists participate in political activism, community organising, civil disobedience and advocacy for just and human rights.

Matteo Pistono, who has written a biography of Sulak titled *Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism* (North Atlantic Books, 2019), recounts that Sulak began his activism against the backdrop of the social and political unrest of the 1970s when Thailand was greatly affected by the Vietnam War and by the fall of Phnom Penh, Saigon and Vientiane to Communist armies. During the Cold War, donor agencies provided generous funding for academic, political, social and economic research, as well as financial support for charities, development projects, religious institutions, social work training, study groups and seminars. There was plenty of funding available for a budding activist. Sulak launched dozens of foundations, charities, NGOs and activists' groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s. He helped to build the infrastructure for a robust and powerful civil



society in Thailand. With this organisational muscle, Sulak's Buddhist movement addressed issues of social injustices and grievances of the poor and the oppressed at the hands of government agencies, landlords and exploitative corporations. Unlike "classical" Buddhism, which prescribes renunciation of wealth and power, Engaged Buddhism seeks power to "do good."

Often, "doing good" consists of levelling the playing field by aligning the organizational muscle and countervailing power of NGOs with the "powerless" victims of government agencies and powerful interest groups. Sulak's Engaged Buddhism and its affiliated organisations, including the Forum of the Poor, championed the struggle of many communities, including the Pak Moon, Ban Khrua and Bo Nok villagers, fighting against construction of dams, roads, and power plants respectively. Engaged Buddhism derives its inspiration from the age-old tradition of the morality of rebellion, which has throughout history been used to serve as a check on power, to legitimate rebellion and to effect regime change.

Matteo Pistono compares Sulak with the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and Aung San Suu Kyi. These people are steeped in Buddhist practice, which is inseparable from political practice. Even more than Sulak, the Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi are first and foremost political leaders. Until he recently stepped down, the Dalai Lama was

head of the Government of Tibet in Exile, a military transnational Buddhist movement composed of moderate and radical Tibetan nationalists. The moderates, led by Lodi Gyari Rinpoche, favoured a dialogue and bilateral negotiations with China for increased autonomy of Tibet within China, while the radicals demanded independence and performed acts of martyrdom in a wave of protests during the last decade. Aung San Suu Kyi became a human rights icon in the Western world for her courage in standing up to the tyrannical military dictatorship of General Than Shwe in Myanmar. Although Sulak was a well-wisher and steadfast supporter through her years of house arrest, he was closer to Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama. Indeed, these three Buddhist luminaries share mutual and bonding through a history of solidarity.

Sulak founded the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in 1989 with the support of the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, the late Maha Gosananda and the venerable Buddhadasa Bhikhu. Engaged Buddhism is a transnational movement growing out of the personal friendships among these founders. Transnational affiliates of the network have participated in protest movements around the world, including the Occupy Wall Street Movement in 2011.

International political activism is a big and varied movement with many fellow travelers and bedfellows,

espousing a wide range of political ideologies. They share a common method to achieve their objectives—mass street protests, civil disobedience, demonstrations and people's power—but their political ideologies range across the political spectrum from extreme left to extreme right. Most are committed to non-violent methods of protest, but their actions are vulnerable to infiltration by governmental front organisations, mercenaries, agent provocateurs, revolutionary groups and even terrorist sympathisers.

The fellow travelers of INEB include the Gandhian Peace Movement, the pacifist Quakers, the Tibetan Buddhist followers of the Tibetan Government in Exile, the Open Society Foundation of George Soros, and quasi-governmental organisations promoting "color revolutions" that have sprung up around the world since the Arab Spring of 2011.

Sulak's critical posture towards Thailand's junta and its allies caused him to be seen as a threat to the powers that be. Lese-majeste charges were brought against him by the military authorities. With the passing of the Ninth Reign, the momentum of the Lese-majeste case against Sulak appeared to gather momentum. However, contrary to expectation, on 17 January 2018 the military prosecutors dropped all the charges against Sulak. Again, Sulak lived up to his reputation as a cat with nine lives, a survivalist.

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