

# SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.36 No.2

May - August 2563 (2020)



*Mindful Action  
in the Age of Pandemic*

**Publisher**  
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF  
ENGAGED BUDDHISTS (INEB)

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Bangkok 10200  
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Suggested annual  
subscription \$100USD

**Payment info:**

- A cheque payable to INEB.  
Personal cheques from the UK, US,  
and Euro are accepted.
- Paypal, please go to the INEB website.

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*Seeds of Peace* is published thrice annually  
in January, May and September, in order to  
promote the aims and objectives of the  
International Network of Engaged Buddhists  
(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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## Statement Concerning the COVID-19 Pandemic

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) is appealing all people around the world across religions and beliefs to recognize the interconnected and interdependent nature of our shared humanity during the global COVID19 crisis. This is an opportune moment to show compassion and caring as we strengthen and build social solidarity in the face of the greatest global health crisis in living memory. Although our daily lives are filled with uncertainty, we can show compassion, friendship, generosity and kindness by reaching out to others and by reaching across the many social, cultural, ethnic and

religious divides that can no longer be allowed to separate us from our shared humanity.

The virus does not discriminate, but people do, and as a consequence, people are affected differently depending on their economic status, race, caste, religion, gender, and citizenship or place of birth. All of us realize how the lockdown around the world has brought the global economy to a standstill, and has put the lives of millions of the world's poor and marginalized at great risk.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists – INEB, based in Siam/Thailand, was formed in 1989, by a group of Buddhist thinkers and persons of other beliefs, plus social activists. INEB's vision, mission and activities integrate Buddhist principles with social activism in order to establish a healthy, just and peaceful world.

INEB urges everyone to stand together in social solidarity at this time to confront this common threat to humanity by upholding the core beliefs that promote and support living in peace and harmony. It is only through genuine cooperation and joint action that we can save lives by minimizing social disruption and acts of discrimination; plus ensure equal access to needed resources and health care services.

INEB also appeals to all governments to end any discriminatory practices and segregation of communities and to support each community as an essential part of our shared humanity. INEB appeals to relief agencies to equitably distribute relief aid and not discriminate based on race, caste, religion, citizenship or place of birth, and gender. Additionally, INEB makes a universal appeal to maintain communal harmony and offer loving kindness to all human beings everywhere.

### INEB is responding specifically by:

- Calling for an end to policies that inflict suffering on vulnerable and marginalized groups and encouraging action to provide immediate and long-term support to these groups
- Forming an emergency response fund as a resource to help the most vulnerable groups in affected countries in INEB's network – Mindful Action: COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund
- Developing a long-term plan for the sustainability of a more just and compassionate post COVID19 world

### Visit INEB's website at

<http://inebnetwork.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/INEB.BuddhistNetwork/MindfulAction:COVID-19EmergencyReliefFund> - <http://inebnetwork.org/activity-covid-19-emergency-relief-fund/>

# Should Bhikkhus Play an Active Role in Politics?

**Lionel Wijesiri**, *Daily Mirror* (Sri Lanka) 9 March 2020



**P**resident Gotabaya Rajapaksa has decided not to accommodate any member of the Buddhist clergy in the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) nomination lists for the upcoming General Elections, according to Minister Keheliya Rambukwella.

At the same time, Ven. Warakagoda Sri Gnanaratana Mahanayake Thera of the Asgiriya Chapter told Elections Commission Chairman Mahinda Deshapriya that amendments should be brought into the Election laws to prohibit granting nominations to monks to contest elections.

The Mahanayake Thera said that the duty and role of the Maha Sangha was to offer counsel to the rulers to govern the country in a righteous manner as in the past. If the Maha Sangha went beyond this limit and got

directly involved in politics, it would result in a severe degeneration of the Sanga Sasana.

EC Chief Mahinda Deshapriya said in response that the Mahanayake Thera of the Malwatte Chapter expressed identical views when he called on him and received his blessing. These are three interesting sentiments offered by the Head of State and two leading Maha Nayakas of the country. In my opinion, we should take this advice as a starting point to initiate an honest and frank discussion about the role of Buddhist monks in Sri Lankan politics.

There are a number of questions we need to ask ourselves. Should monks have the same freedom of political expression as lay persons who are political representatives? Should the monks sit together with other

laymen in parliament, where they can inhibit changes in the law, claiming special insight into suffering? Should they have privileged access to some perks like luxurious motor vehicles and other allowances entitled to parliamentarians?

## HISTORY

Despite the often-repeated claim that Buddhism and politics are, or at least must be, separate matters, Buddhism has been closely intertwined with politics one way or another for a long time. The earliest Buddhist texts, the Tripitaka, contain numerous references to and discussions of kings, princes, wars, and policies. Later Buddhist texts, up to the present day, in the same spirit contain advice to rulers about how to govern well and warnings about the dreadful consequences of ruling badly with arrogance and ignoring the needs of the common people.

Buddhist monks' "involvement" in politics was only in the form of advice given to rulers and not direct participation in political field. But things began to change in mid-19th century with the Buddhist revival, later known as Sinhala-Buddhist reawakening.

It was Anagarika Dharmapala, the father of modern Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, who gave the initial momentum it needed in late 19th and early 20th century in response to the British Colonial rule. Along with that revival, Buddhist leaders backed by powerful monks became active in the movement for Independence and securing recognition of and its due place for Buddhism. In 1946, Ven. Walpola Rahula Thera wrote a book titled *Bhikṣuvage Urumaya* (The Heritage of the Monks). He

maintained that Bhikkhus could directly get involved in politics given their mandate to perform social service, and had done so since the time of the Buddha. The book was treated as doctrinal cover for monks engaging in politics.

Cumulatively, these historical experiences have left a deep impression in the psyche of many Buddhists. They believe Sri Lanka is the last bastion of Theravada Buddhism. This feeling also gave rise to ultra nationalist Buddhist monks' fringe groups, who called themselves guardians saving Buddhism and the distinct identity of Sinhala nation.

A serious Bhikkhu involvement in politics began to materialise following independence in 1948. In effect, it transformed Buddhism into a highly politicised religion. Bhikkhu-sponsored interest groups mushroomed and got involved themselves with active politics. They made demands like making Sinhala the official language and Buddhism the official religion of the country.

In 1956, a large segment of Buddhist monks supported SWRD Bandaranaike to form a government. They actively participated in the election campaign which gave the desired result. It was the forerunner and thereafter, politicians began to seek the support of organised Buddhist groups to win elections. 21 years later, this relationship between the state and Buddhism was given special constitutional status with Buddhism being accorded the "foremost place."

The new custodians who took control of managing Buddhism began to unfold a brand of new Buddhism with political patronage. From that time onwards political Buddhism has

become a permanent feature of Sri Lanka's politics.

## LAST CITADEL

When the Government forces won the war against LTTE terrorism, the victory offered a tremendous boost and momentum to the growth of political Buddhism. Some Buddhist monks were involved in the war, not in the front, but actively conditioning the mindset of the soldiers, politicians and Buddhist public. A radical section of the monks transformed this victory into an unshakable concept that Sri Lanka belongs to Sinhala Buddhists and that they are the sole owners of this island. The political Buddhism became a power to be reckon with. They were in a position to make or break Governments. They justified their campaigns against radical Muslims as legitimate actions to protect Buddhism and there were a number of instances when they went berserk.

Gautama Buddha in his lifetime never got involved in political sphere of the Kings. His approach to "politics" was the moralization and the responsible use of King's power. In Anguttara Nikaya he said: 'When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good, when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good, when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good, when the rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good.'

In the Kutadanta Sutta, Buddha suggested the king should use the country's resources to improve the economic conditions of the country. He could embark on agricultural and rural development, provide financial

support to those who undertake an enterprise and business, provide adequate wages for workers to maintain a decent life with human dignity

## BUDDHIST CONCEPT

Why Buddha did not encourage monks to intermingle with politics. He just gave specific guidelines for governing a country in a proper and peaceful manner and these rules are known as "Dasa Raja Dharma." Any political system, any political ideology, or any political party can apply these ten rules if they want to create a just society in the country.

The basis of Buddhism is morality while that for politics is just retaining power and securing more power. The power of the Buddha Dhamma is not directed to the creation of new political institutions or working with existing political groups. Basically, it seeks to approach the problems of society by reforming the thinking and behaviour of individuals constituting the society.

It suggests some general principles through which the society can be guided towards greater humanism, improved welfare of its members, and more equitable sharing of resources.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Our mixing Buddhism with political activities had been behind much of our own country's disasters. Sangha Nayakas of the highest order were aware of it. Political and social leaders were well aware of it. For obvious reasons they kept silent while watching how these ultra organisations led by a segment of the monks were causing severe damage to the country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious social fabric.

## Japan

Although Buddhism and the Buddhist monks have always played a vital and important role in our society, the greatest Buddhist scholars were the ones who refused to have their ethical and moral dispositions determined by the needs of power. Instead, they served as a sort of check and balance to the policies of each government. They understood that when the monks play political roles, they corrupt both good governance and religious integrity.

If we learn anything from the past, from our own country and elsewhere, it should be that any religion, reduced to political ideology, does little for one's faith and even less for society. In principle, let the religion remain ready to offer political guidance and criticism, without seeking theocratic power or adherence.

Today both these ultra-Buddhist monks and politicians need a radical change. It is time for them to re-evaluate their opinions, attitudes, principles and values in conformity with the pristine teachings of the Gautama Buddha. And politicians, too, should be forced upon to practise the basic principles of dharma. As Buddha said, "if political leaders are righteous and spiritual, the whole society can flourish and be uplifted."

S

## Religious Leaders Team Up in Court to Suspend Operations at Japan's Major Nuclear Reprocessing Plant

宗教者が核燃料サイクル事業廃止を求める裁判

*Natsuko Katayama*

Translated and edited by *Jonathan S. Watts*

*Tokyo Shinbun*, 17 March 2020

A group of 211 Japanese Buddhist, Christian, and Shinto priests and lay persons have presented a suit in the Tokyo District Court calling for the suspension of operations at the Rokkasho Nuclear Reprocessing Plant operated by Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. (Nihon Gen-nen), located in Aomori on the northern tip of the main island of Honshu. The plaintiff organization is the ecumenical, non-affiliated Interfaith Forum for the Review of National Nuclear Policy. This is the first time that the Forum has become a plaintiff bringing a suit in a court of law. Their background is an almost 30-year history of opposing nuclear energy in Japan.

The background begins in January 1984, when Rev. Masakazu Iwata—the now 77-year-old minister of the Hachinohe branch in Aomori of the United Church of Christ in Japan—received a great shock from an article in the news. This article reported that a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant that would recycle the used nuclear fuel from the enriched uranium used in nuclear reactors across Japan was going to be built on the Shimokita

Peninsula just north of Hachinohe.

After the town of Rokkasho (some 58 kms north of Hachinohe) was selected as the site for this plant, Rev. Iwata began a protest movement together with farming families located on the designated site to stop the construction which would begin in 1993. However, the appeal could not gain widespread support, and Iwata looks back on it saying, "It was a very difficult battle."

In the same year as the construction began, the Interfaith Forum was established. Rev. Iwata explains that, "It came from a critical reflection on the lack of opposition to the Pacific War by Japanese clergy of all religions. We saw the link between nuclear energy, national policy, and the potential use of plutonium by the military. We also came together across denominational lines so as to prevent the outbreak of war from happening again."

As various incidents have arisen on the nuclear issue in Japan over the years, the Forum has issued critical declarations and held negotiations with Japan's large electrical companies, local governments, and various central





*Rev. Masakazu Iwata*

government ministries. In 2018, the office of the plaintiffs—located at the Kenju-in Jodo Pure Land Buddhist temple of Rev. Hidehito Okochi in the center of Tokyo—hosted members of the Forum to reflect on the latest issues and meet with an association of lawyers interested in collaboration. The Forum has now become the main plaintiff for this new litigation, and Rev. Iwata is acting as a co-representative of the plaintiffs. He raises the question, “Is our judicial branch properly independent from party politics? Shouldn’t there be a separation of power between the three branches of government?” These are important issues to raise.

After the triple disaster of March 11, 2011, in Northeast Japan, there were appeals to stop the operations of nuclear reactors through court cases and temporary injunctions. While these appeals were sometimes accepted, they were often eventually overturned by higher courts. The members of the Forum are in agreement that this situation is to the benefit of the government, and so they have concluded that, “We have to work on influencing the judiciary.” In this

way, they resolved to bring litigation into the courts on the problem of nuclear reactors and the recycling of fuel from the standpoint of clergy concerned about the sanctity of life and social ethics.

Unable to conceal his anger over the situation, Rev. Tetsuen Nakajima—also a co-representative of the plaintiffs and the 78-year-old abbot of Myotsu-ji Shingon Buddhist temple in the city of Obama in Fukui which has the highest number of nuclear reactors in Japan—states, “Workers at nuclear power plants have become victims of radiation exposure (hibaku). Although nuclear reactors create energy for urban areas, they have posed a danger to rural areas. When an incident occurs, it will probably be covered up and operations continued.”

The reprocessing center in Rokkasho has the purpose of collecting the vast amounts of used fuel from all reactors nationwide with the yet unrealized hope to recycling this fuel for future use in such reactors. A side issue has also become the vast amounts of plutonium now being processed at this site which has the potential for use in nuclear armaments.

Rev. Nakajima raises the point that, “If a major incident occurs at this reprocessing center, the impact will be beyond the damage caused by a nuclear power plant incident. All living creatures and the entire sphere of life will be contaminated and destroyed. If operations continue, there will be major long-term damage that continues on for our children and succeeding generations.”

The litigation was formally filed on March 9, and the text of it makes the claim that, “The operation of a reprocessing center from this point forward must not force upon future generations atomic waste,” and that, “in the event of an accident, a grave injury to our way of life will be created from the contamination. This will constitute a violation of the right to realize well-being which is further connected to the lives of future generations.” It further points out that the operation of a reprocessing facility is a violation of the Japanese constitution.

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## OPINION: The Movement Has Begun, Now We Need to Organize

*Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal and Suphanut Anekumwong*

*Thai Enquirer, 6 March 2020*

In the past week, there were student rallies against the government. Combined, this was the largest political protest since General Prayut Chan-ocha took power. What's more important is that this was organized by students from around the country, from high schools to universities, from numbering in the tens to the thousands.

In these protests, the use of hashtags was used in a fun and important way. Some hashtags used included #เสาหลักจะไม่หักอีกต่อไป (the foundation will not be broken anymore)

As a political activist that has organized against this government since the start, these protests I felt buoyed by what I saw. There were many that mentioned me and other organizers in a positive way. Some who used to criticize me said that the current events have changed their mind. Where before, I was accused of being violent-minded and talking about subjects that were not permitted to be discussed, now I get retweeted by the thousands.

While many of my peers want the movement to echo the events of October 14, 1973, there are many that have expressed concerns that it may echo another October event in the 1970s, when the students were massacred on October 6, 1976, or the more recent crackdown on redshirts in 2010.

In the past, our concerns would be addressed by our elders and more experienced, but this seems to have changed. Now twitter has become a platform that we are using to exchange ideas, critique one another and solve problems. For example, we have used twitter to address rallies where hate speech was used too frequently or rallies that were too violent or off-topic. I am not certain in our country's history whether we've had such a space to carry out these discussions.

The Twitter world is fast-moving but allows us time to pause and reflect and even delete tweets (although it could be screen-capped). Yet in a protest situation, while I understand emotions run high and we may be prone to outburst, saying the wrong thing can put other people in the protest at risk.

In a democracy, freedom of expression is protected. But in a society led by coup makers, speech is censored and the avenues to expression are narrow. In our history, those with powers often twist arguments to their own ends. The students of October 6 may have been fighting for farmers and workers, but the powers labeled them all communists.

The government, and their now publicized IO program, are going to use every opportunity to find fault with our movement and incite hatred towards us. Using slangs like 'salim'

may stir our emotions but we must not make this a generational conflict, that is what the government wants.

We must imagine the society that we want and have it reflected in our actions.

If all our arguments come from the internet and social media, ultimately our motives and end goals will be mixed to the point where we do not have clear objectives. While if all our arguments come from forums and debates then we do not take into account the real-world concerns found in on-line forums.

Rather we must be like the fox of Isaiah Berlin whose worldview cannot be boiled down into a single issue, rather it is a complicated and evolving mesh of ideas.

Currently, the student movement is in a nascent stage, still finding itself amid online and offline input. Certainly, our creativity is not lacking, the hashtags prove that. But the challenge now is to funnel that energy into setting goals for ourselves both in the short term, medium-term, and long term.

We have to remember that this fight, win or lose, will reflect on us and shape the course of our country's future forever.

I always want to remind the students about the worst-case scenario and what we would do if that were to happen.

We need to remind ourselves that this is a long struggle, one that won't be finished in 30 days or even a year. We must steel ourselves for the struggle and fight with hope on our side because that is what we have. Time is not on anyone's side.

The online world will help us organize and contribute ideas, but it will



never replace in-person dialogue, discussion and debate. A coffee shop where one can discuss ideas must become as important as anything that we do online.

We must keep up this protest through a variety of mediums whether its discussion, talks, essays or even songs and movies. We must also draw upon the history and realize that the most successful movements have been nonviolent in nature.

Nonviolence doesn't mean inaction, it doesn't mean doing nothing

and saying nothing rather it is the opposite, it means resisting the government, resisting oppression at every given opportunity. We can all be involved and choose to participate in this rather than the state's version of this game which involves violence and suppression.

I want to end with a thought from Srda Popovic who said that the success of a movement depends on three things, unity, planning, and discipline.



*see that you are part of the whole web of life.*

When Thich Nhat Hanh was asked what we most need to do for the sake of our world, he said "to hear within ourselves the sounds of the earth crying." I believe it's true. The earth is crying, deep in our consciousness. Sometimes it reaches us.

*The starting place of this work is the admonition to choose life, or, as you put it, to return to the wellsprings of life. All of us probably aspire to that, but how do we do it in practice?*

We can begin by choosing to be present. We can choose to pay attention. That is the essential magic of mindfulness, and of the Buddha's own life.

When you pay attention to your experience, you realize that you're not just a separate organism sitting here breathing. You are not only breathing but being breathed. You need an oxygen-producing web of life for you to breathe—you need trees, you need plankton.

So where does the self begin and where does it end? When you really pay attention, you see that you are part of the whole web of life. That leads you to want to know that life and to protect it.

*Rather than choosing life, you say we are in a culture that "deadens the heart and mind," which it does by encouraging us not to acknowledge our suffering and pain. To what extent does fully connecting with life depend on opening our hearts and minds to the reality of suffering, both our own and others?*

That's how the Buddha began. The first noble truth is suffering. But the truth of suffering seems almost

### USA

## Joanna Macy on the Great Awakening the Planet Needs

*Melvin Mcleod and Joanna Macy, 20 March 2020*

In the May 2020 issue of Lion's Roar magazine, editor-in-chief Melvin Mcleod talks to renowned Buddhist thinker and environmental activist Joanna Macy about the global awakening the planet needs—while we still have time. At heart, it's a spiritual revolution.

Melvin McLeod: *You have had a long and influential career as a Buddhist thinker and writer, social justice activist, and respected voice in the environmental movement. You are also the root teacher of the "Work That Reconnects," which you describe as a body of theory and practice that helps people "experience their innate connections with each other and the self-healing powers of the web of life, transforming despair and overwhelm into inspired, collaborative action." Why is this work important now?*



Joanna Macy. Photo by Adam Loftin.

Joanna Macy: I think the most important thing we need to hear is the voice inside us which connects us to all beings and to the whole web of life. That is needed now to counteract the crippling of the modern self, which is cruelly contained, as in a prison cell, by the hyper-individualism of the last five centuries.

*When you really pay attention, you*

subversive within the American dream of affluence. It seems almost unpatriotic to confess anxieties about this country or our life.

*It's one of the basic functions of ego to suppress our awareness of suffering. So that's not new. But it seems that today the whole system is designed to offer us more and more elaborate forms of deadening, distraction, and self-indulgence to cover over our suffering, and thus disconnect us from the fullness of life.*

That's right. Actually, reconnecting with the web of life may be harder for us than for any of our ancestors. As I look back over the millennia of humanity's journey, it's hard to imagine another time when we were so cruelly isolated by the illusion of a separate self and by a political economy that pits us against each other.

So this primary teaching of the Lord Buddha, the truth of suffering, is both necessary and liberating now. Our pain for the world, which we honor in the Work That Reconnects, reveals that we are far vaster than we ever imagined ourselves to be. This crumbles the walls of the little separate ego and moves naturally into seeing with new eyes. Then you see with the eyes of an undefended being, intimately interrelated with this incredible living planet. You see that you're part of everything.

Compassion—literally to “suffer with”—asks you to not be afraid to be part of this world. When you are that wide open, you see that the grief you feel is just the other side of love. You only mourn what you love.

*Let's turn to your analysis of the global situation and the choices humanity faces. One path you describe is supporting business as usual—*

*continuing in the direction we are currently going. The alternative is to proceed with choices that lead to a life-sustaining culture. These range from how we grow food to how we resolve conflict. You have come to call this “the Great Turning.” Ultimately, you argue that this must be a spiritual revolution, because only spirituality leads to the kind of profound change the world needs to avoid the looming catastrophe.*

Yes. But it's spiritual with legs. Spiritual with hands. Spiritual with a loud mouth. Because we need to slow down the powerful impetus of economic growth that drives industry and government. It's spirituality that's ready to sit on the tracks, that's ready to take the guns out of their hands.

This is where the two streams of your life come together—the spiritual and the politically engaged.

I experience them as one river. In early Buddhist scriptures there is a simple and wonderful phrase describing the relation between wisdom and action: they are “like two hands washing each other.” It is a dance of reciprocity. You can't have one without the other, because they generate each other.

I learned this in my year with the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka, which brings a Buddhist understanding to Gandhian nonviolence. In India, the word Sarvodaya means “the uplift of all,” but in Buddhist Sri Lanka it means “the awakening of all.” In the buddhadharma, that waking up is inseparable from realizing our interdependence or interbeing.

*When you talk about the Great Turning, it sounds like that means people need to realize the basic Buddhist teaching of anatta — that there is no separate, independent, permanent self*

*and everything is interconnected in the ever-changing web of life.*

That's absolutely essential, but it also needs to include being willing to get your hands dirty.

*But you have to start with the realization.*

Actually, it's not sequential, Melvin. Even the eighth-century Buddhist master Shantideva made clear that you can discover wisdom through your actions. In the Sarvodaya movement, the work camps in the villages are one of the ways to discover your mutual belonging.

I remember one unforgettable work camp in the middle of a town where we were digging a fountain for a hospital. We were in a kind of bucket brigade passing along buckets of mud, and next to me in the line was a fellow who was dressed like an office worker. He was sweating from the effort and laughing. He said, “Ah, now I am experiencing no separate self. I'm now experiencing anatta.” He thought that it was a great joke, but that is the main reason for Sarvodaya's work camps. As the movement puts it, “we teach through actions first; words come after.”

*We're up to almost eight billion people on this planet and time is short. Do you really have hope that this great awakening can take place on a sufficient scale to change the direction in which we're heading?*

I find that assuring people there's hope, including myself, is not all that useful. In Buddhism, there is no word for hope. It would be viewed as a distraction from what's at hand. It takes you out of the present moment and into conjecture.

*We have a choice: do we want to give up and surrender to the great*

## Country Reports

*unraveling, or do we want to join those who are working for a liveable future?*

I think all we can really affirm is where we want to put our attention. I have a choice: Do I want to give up and surrender to the great unraveling, or do I want to join those who are working for a liveable future? Since the outcome is uncertain, we have to enjoy doing something exhilarating and useful without knowing for sure if it's going to work out.

We need to and we can find adventure in uncertainty. That's the best we can offer right now. Uncertainty rivets the attention. It's like walking on a narrow trail with the land falling off on either side. It concentrates the mind wonderfully. But if you want a sure fire, guaranteed deal, then I don't know where you'd find it right now, except through some kind of frontal lobotomy.

*I think it's more than wanting guaranteed success. It's about having any hope at all. You could come to the conclusion that we simply can't turn the whole thing around in time. So where do you find the motivation to do the right thing if you don't have any real hope?*

To be honest, it looks like we're nearing the end of corporate capitalism. People and ecosystems the world over are already suffering from its massive dysfunctions. Within another generation or two, all of us, regardless of our current level of comfort or privilege, will be struggling to build a future through the rubble of a failed political economy.

So in that context, what's our real hope? That is something wonderful to ponder. If you want to live with an open heart and a free mind, it leads you to confront such questions as:

What can we do to reduce suffering now? How can we bring forward the moral strength, the values, and the practices to help us prepare for so great a challenge? What do we need to let go of in order to build a life sustaining culture?

We have a choice. We have the tools in our spiritual traditions. Being fully with what we're experiencing, we can work together and cherish each other. Professor Jem Bendell, who writes about the need for "deep adaptation," says, "Now that I have accepted this collapse, I have more peace of mind and love in my life than ever before."

*It seems there's a deep connection between impermanence and love, because it's recognizing that someone or something is impermanent that frees us to truly love them.*

That's it. There is a cherishing that allows space for love as we stand at this incredible brink. I'm gradually losing my vision through macular degeneration, but I'm very happy that I can still see that beautiful tree behind you as we speak.

*And perhaps you love and treasure it more because you will lose the sight of it.*

What you're expressing so beautifully is the exquisite and sacred aspect of impermanence.

*In Buddhism, it's recommended that every morning when you wake up you say to yourself, "Today may be the day I die," because that will transform how you live that day. Because of death—impermanence—you will live that day with more love and gratitude. I wonder how it would transform us to apply that meditation to the world itself—that it too will die sooner than we expect.*

We would want to cherish each other while we still can. To look into each other's eyes with love. I imagine going out and thanking the trees and all the life forms instead of turning them into money. I imagine us wanting to liberate those in prison. We have just a short time. These are the kinds of things we can do before it's too late.

When we look into our own soul with love, miracles can happen. It's a great thing to come out of the sleep, out of the hurry, out of the rush, out of the constant comparing ourselves with other people. To let that terrible strain drop away.

I feel so fortunate to be alive now. People might think I'm crazy, but just speaking personally, it's an incredible thing to be alive with my fellow humans at a time when the future looks so bleak.

Right now we can be here to honor life. It's a precious thing to be giving thanks for what we have instead of insisting it must last forever. Well, it's not lasting forever. Can we still be grateful?

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**Joanna Macy** is an environmental activist, author, scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. She is an Honary Advisory to INEB.

**Melvin McLeod** is the Editor-in-Chief of *Lion's Roar* magazine and *Buddhadharma*.

Lion's Roar - <https://www.lionsroar.com/joanna-macy-on-the-great-awakening-the-planet-needs/>





## USA

# Use This Time Well

## by Roshi Joan Halifax

3 March 2020, in Bearing Witness, General, News, Roshi Joan Halifax, Upaya's Blog - <https://www.upaya.org/2020/03/use-this-time-well-by-roshi-joan-halifax/>

Winter Solstice, 2019, I went to Washington, D.C., to join Jane Fonda on her Fire Drill Fridays climate protest, in order to give a talk on our capitol's steps about the impact of our climate catastrophe on health. was Jane's 82nd birthday, and a time when I could join my good friend in her important endeavor to bring attention to the climate catastrophe we are in.

After the talk, hundreds of us went to the Hart Senate Building, where 138 of us were arrested as we engaged in an act of civil disobedience. It was good to be there with Jane Fonda, Gloria Steinem, Eve Ensler, Dolores Huerta, and many others who are deeply committed to changing the policies and behaviors around climate change.

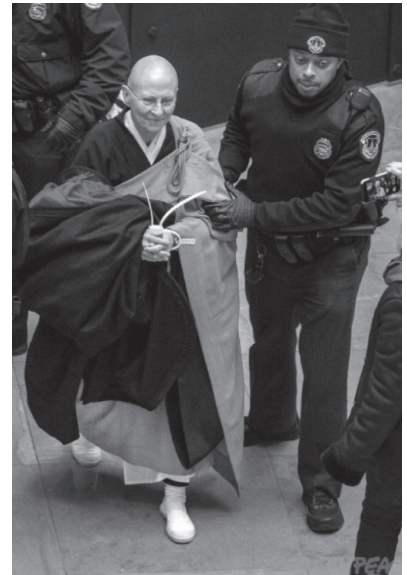
Recently, I received an email from someone who was doing outreach for teaching I'm going to do in Japan; he asked if he could use the photograph of my arrest in the Hart Building. "It's fine with me," I said. "Please go ahead." Then he asked, "Why are you smiling?"

There were two reasons I was smiling. I was not grinning; rather I was completely at peace in this very complex situation, as I was being pushed by a policeman across the foyer of the Hart Building toward a

processing area where for an hour I would be made to stand with everybody else in order to be finger printed, check to see if I was carrying a weapon, and so forth. Two things were clear to me: What joy it is to live your principles, arrested or not. What ease there is in being congruent with one's values.

After being put through that phase of the "processing" experience, I (along with others) was put into a police wagon, and, honestly, this was a clear wake-up call. The police wagon that I was led into had a gleaming white interior where two, maybe three people, could barely fit inside an interior cubicle. There were multiple cubicles. The ceiling of the police wagon was canted so one was not able to sit up straight. I thought: how "interesting:" you cannot lift your head and are forced into in a position of humiliation.

Squashed into this transport vehicle, I simply noticed my experience, seeing how the actual physical context might have affected my mental state had I been in a psycho-socially more vulnerable situation. I also realized that I am a well-known, white woman elder. I have privilege. No matter what



*Roshi Joan Halifax arrested on the floor of the Hart Senate Office Building as an act of civil disobedience during the eleventh Fire Drill Friday, Dec 20, 2019, Greenpeace.*

happens over this next period of time, Greenpeace and Jane Fonda are going to get me out of jail. My privilege was clear to me.

I then reflected upon the millions of people who have been pushed into police wagons—people of color, poor people, people standing for their principles, people who have harmed others—so many who do not have the privilege that I have. I knew that I was not in danger; I would not be harmed. But I could not stop thinking about all those who find themselves in such a vehicle and the despair, terror, and anger most must experience.

When the door was slammed shut, the tight space that gleamed like an operating room suddenly turned into a small airless black box. Suddenly I found myself in a constricted sensory-isolation chamber, and being

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driven bumpily through the streets of Washington, D.C. to who knows where.

During this strange drive, I asked, “What sustains me?” Not just the peace that I felt but also the practice to notice and to do perspective taking. In other words, not to sit in the police wagon like an upset old woman, but to actually work that experience, to derive from it more than actually was specifically given. I learned and explored quietly as we made the strange drive to an unknown destination.

As it turned out, we were transported to an enormous warehouse, our plastic handcuffs were cut off. I was in Zen robes, I had to remove my okesa, I was thoroughly searched, and the police officer took the skein holding my robes together, because perhaps they thought I would harm myself or others. And then, I was again handcuffed, and sat in a chair in

this drafty, dim place for ten hours with 137 others, as we had our mug shots taken, our fingerprints taken, and our backgrounds checked.

Just before 11 at night, after 10 hours, I was released into the arms of Greenpeace and friends, as I made my way in the cold, windy dark, across the street someplace in D.C.

For me, this situation was the perfect time and place to practice: Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, Compassionate Action (the Three Tenets of the Peacemaker Order). To the best of my ability, I live by these Tenets. That is why I was smiling.

I didn’t think about privilege when I was in the Hart Building—the scene was so intense—but the police wagon really brought home my privilege. And the thought, from my point of view, came: I have to use this time well.

My request of myself is the same to all of us: Please use this time deeply

and well. You can fall asleep, you can fall prey to your own unhappy story, and you can squander the precious opportunity to turn the light around and illuminate your mind, illuminate your heart, and discover how to end the suffering in this world. I urge us all to take responsibility for the privilege that we might have and use it well. I urge us to use our time well. Use this life well. We have much to do, and to “undo.”

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This article is based on a Dharma Talk given January 26, 2020, for Sesshin: Ancestral Heart. You can listen to the entire talk at this link on Upaya’s Dharma Podcast.

**Roshi Joan Halifax** is an Honorary Advisor to INEB, abbot and guiding teacher of Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico.



*Small Stone Buddha Image for  
Madame Poonsukh Banomyong*

### 120 Year Anniversary of Mr. Pridi Banomyong 11 May 1900 – 2 May 1983

Mr. Pridi Banomyong would 120 years old on May 11 had he lived. He was the one who really brought Democracy to Siam in 1932, and during the Japanese occupation of this country in the last World War. Pridi was the leader in organizing the Free Thai Movement to sabotage the Japanese, in spite of the fact that the Thai Military Government declared war against the UK and the USA. Because of the Free Thai Movement was significant and was recognized by the alliance, unlike Germany, Italy and Japan, Siam was not regarded as the defeated country. She was even admitted to be a member on the UN before Sweden.

Pridi contributed so much for his country and world peace, which was recognized internationally, however, he was falsely charged for murdering King Rama VIII.

Hence, he had to live in exile 21 years in China, and 16 years in France, where he passed away on 2 May 1983.

While in China he commissioned a Chinese craftsman to make a small stone image of the Buddha as a special souvenir for his wife (Madam Poonsukh Banomyong) in recognition of his love for her who also contributed so much for the wellbeing of the Siamese and their neighbors.

# What are the Good Things During the COVID-19 Situation?

A talk by **Ven. Phra Paisal Visalo**

16 March 2020

Organized by We Oneness, SHDM Foundation and Thai Health Fund

**I**n the past, we thought that we were winning against viruses because we had developed antibiotics and vaccines that prevented diseases such as smallpox that have disappeared. We also expect that polio, tuberculosis and malaria will end, too.

There are 3 lessons that we can learn from COVID-19:

1. Opportunity to learn and accept reality: We have to realize that humankind will continue living with infectious diseases in various forms. In the past, we used our hands to clean and touch the face, but now we can't do that any more. Even if we want to do it, we have to clean our hands properly. This mindful handwashing is making us more careful, and at the same time giving us more opportunity to be more mindful in our daily life. In the past we took for granted many things, like touching our face as many as 15-20 times an hour without realizing it.
2. Opportunity to practice mindful living: Now the news about conflicts and armed fighting has reduced. News about the US and Iran has stopped. Thai news on political unrest has been reduced as well. The conflict between the government and opposition parties is being ignored by the people as their focus is COVID-19, to the point of driving them crazy.

We have to find a balance between careless and craziness. And, also be aware that not only is the Corona virus spreading, even though the COVID-19 harms our body. Our fear is spreading and harming our minds, and even impacting our humility, causing us to become selfish, looking down those who are infected.

We buy masks, alcohol and other things, even though they may not be necessary, especially for those who are not infected. Now, masks are out of stock throughout Thailand, and are not available for those

with tuberculosis, pneumonia or influenza. The shortage of face masks has serious repercussions as it means that caretakers, and medical persons such as doctors and nurses do not have masks. Warnings are being given to people who are not sick that they shouldn't buy and use masks. This demonstrates that the COVID-19 disease is less harmful than fearing the COVID-19 itself. Therefore, we need to prevent both the COVID-19 infection entering our body, as well as preventing the fear of COVID-19 from infecting our mind. Let's support each other on both levels.

3. Opportunity to be generous and support each other: Let's be thankful for persons and groups who have been volunteering at the hospitals. We have stories that when COVID19 began in Wuhan, China, people began volunteering to support each other. These acts of selflessness and kindness include providing rides for nurses to go back home to rest and bring back them to the hospital for work. Some volunteer drive all night long to serve these doctors and nurses so they can have some rest and continue to work. These actions may begin with one volunteer that increases to many more. These small volunteer activities can build into a network of volunteer spirit during this crisis.

This situation has the potential to help us to reduce our selfish behaviors and increase our generosity to support each other. We need to stay connected and encourage people to express their goodness from within which ultimately helps others.

**Phra Paisol Visalo** is the abbot of Wat Pasukato in Chaiyaphum province, Thailand, and a member of INEB's Advisory Committee.





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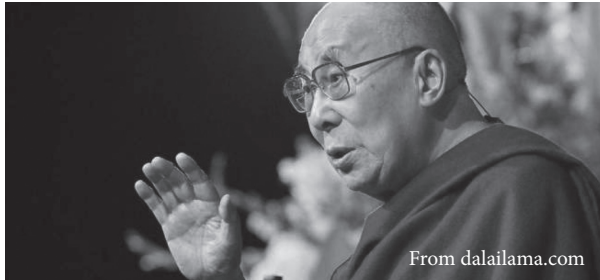
# COVID-19 a Lesson in “Universal Responsibility,” Dalai Lama Says on Earth Day

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Craig Lewis

Buddhistdoor Global, 24 April 2020

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In a public statement marking the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on 22 April, His Holiness the Dalai Lama called on people around the world to recognize the vital need for “a genuine sense of universal responsibility: the wish to actively help others overcome their problems” during the unique challenges posed by the novel coronavirus pandemic—in particular for those living in vulnerable communities. (His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet)

“Our planet is facing one of the greatest challenges to the health and well-being of its people. And yet, in the midst of this struggle, we are reminded of the value of compassion and mutual support. The current global pandemic threatens us all, without distinctions of race, culture, or gender, and our response must be as one humanity, providing for the most essential needs of all,” His Holiness stated.

“Whether we like it or not, we have been born on this Earth as part of one great family. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated, belonging to one nation or another, ultimately each of us is just a human being like everyone else. Furthermore, we all have the same right to pursue happiness and avoid suffering. When we recognize that all beings are equal in this respect, we automatically feel empathy and closeness toward others. Out of this comes a genuine sense of universal responsibility: the wish to actively help others overcome their problems.” (His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet)

The Dalai Lama, who in February marked the 80th anniversary of his enthronement as the spiritual leader of Tibet, emphasized the importance of ensuring that frontline medical workers and care providers throughout the world are provided with fundamental necessities, such as clean water and effective means of sanitation and hygiene, as

they work to limit the spread of the virus known as SARS CoV 2. He noted that sustainable and properly equipped healthcare facilities are essential to effectively addressing the current crisis, as well as being a strong defense against future potential public health emergencies.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate recalled developing an appreciation for the importance of environmental conservation after fleeing the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959: “Whenever we saw a stream of water,” he said. “There was no worry about whether it was safe to drink. Sadly, the mere availability of clean drinking water is a major problem throughout the world today.” (His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet)

“Our Mother Earth is teaching us a lesson in universal responsibility. This blue planet is a delightful habitat; its life is our life; its future, our future. Indeed, the Earth acts like a mother to us all; as her children, we are dependent on her. In the face of the global problems we are going through, it is important that we must all work together,”

His Holiness said. “As we face this crisis together, it is imperative that we act in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation in order to provide for the pressing needs, particularly of our less fortunate brothers and sisters around the world. I hope and pray that in the days ahead, each of us will do all we can to create a happier and healthier world.” (His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet)

At the time of writing on 24 April, global SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus infections were reported to total 2.7 million, with 190,858 deaths so far confirmed, and 738,486 people recovered.\* The World Health Organization in March estimated the mortality rate from the virus at 3.4 per cent, based on incomplete and preliminary data, with the elderly and people with underlying health conditions considered most at risk.

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\* Johns Hopkins University & Medicine: Coronavirus Resource Center

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/covid-19-a-lesson-in-universal-responsibility-dalai-lama-says-on-earth-day>



# Shelter in Place: Practicing in the Pandemic

**Hozan Alan Senauke**

Berkeley Zen Center

25 March 2020



Several years ago, the Berkeley Zen Center board was discussing how things were going at ZC. At that moment, everything was rolling along well, but my teacher Sojun Roshi off-handedly commented that, “Things are wonderful ... and in a moment they could go away... pffft!” I lacked the imagination then to see a pandemic coming.

With the COVID-19 pandemic taking root in China, Europe, and now in the United States, I realized that fear and social displacement was arriving. By March 3, we were no longer greeting each other with handshakes or hugs. We were learning to wash our hands frequently with soap and water for twenty seconds, about as long as it takes to recite the Four Bodhisattva Vows, and to use hand sanitizer freely. Over the next few days, as Italy and Iran were internally quarantined, local supermarkets experienced a run on toilet paper, with hoarding and panic-buying. If you hadn’t laid in a good supply of toilet, you might be up shit creek for a while.

On March 7, I was supposed to leave for the Upaya Chaplaincy Training in New Mexico. Shortly before my flight, the training was redesigned to be done online instead of face-to-face. At the same time Berkeley Zen

Center suspended all of our public programs until the crisis abated.

Overnight our world has changed. Social-distancing with no social gatherings; working from home, with endless hours of video-conferencing. Schools closed and kids staying home for home schooling. Restaurants shut down. Streets emptied of traffic. I began to binge-watch TV series, old and new. The air was cleaner. The city was quieter. Simultaneously one breathed an atmosphere of kindness and an atmosphere of anxiety.

Having shut down all of our public programs at Berkeley Zen Center, we took a step back and reflected on how we would sustain our precious community, our meditation practice, and the study of dharma. Here are some of the things we are doing.

We have set up an Online Zendo at Berkeley Zen Center using the Zoom platform. Of course, you are welcome to join us. In fact, this is a great time for many of us to sample the practice of our sisters and brothers in far-flung places. Our link is at the bottom of this page.

The startup format is simple. Forty minute periods of zazen twice a day: at 7:30am and 5:40pm. Ring three bells to begin each session; end with one bell. We have an image of the BZC altar as the default view on Zoom.

Attendance is about 30 people each day. We had nearly 80 for a sangha meeting on Sunday evening, and we plan to have these meetings every two weeks. In subsequent weeks, we will begin to roll out short liturgy, classes, practice interviews, and maybe one-day sittings. But we’re going slowly. Each step we take has unforeseen complexities and calls for people willing to take responsibility.

While we learn to take care of ourselves and each other, many of us wonder what do Bodhisattvas practice at this moment. We bow to doctors, nurses, technicians, public safety professionals, truckers, farmers—and many other who are doing essential work supporting us. In our sangha, some of the younger members are shopping for the elders. And everyone has the capacity to reach out to others to see if they need help, supplies, or a simple conversation.

We also can freely admit that we don't know quite what to do right now. This is the First Tenet of Engaged Buddhism: Not Knowing. The Second Tenet is: Bearing Witness. The Third Tenet is: An Appropriate Response.

Not Knowing is Beginner's Mind, *shoshin* in Japanese—the mind that meets each moment fresh and with curiosity. Shunryu Suzuki Roshi wrote: “In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.” We are living out a great human experiment. There will be failures. There already are. Some people will die, perhaps unnecessarily, tragically. But it's not all loss. A national or international “time out” is a creative moment. We are already exploring new ways of practicing Buddhism, new ways of maintaining our necessary social fabric. This fabric is tough and durable, tougher than we may think it is. So, we can wrap ourselves in it and survive, even as things we think are essential to our everyday life fall away. Look for the small or large ways we can be of service to others. Keep the Bodhisattva's Prime Directive in mind: “Sentient Beings are numberless. I vow to save them.”

**Hozan Alan Senauke** is the Vice-Abbot at the Berkeley Zen Center and a member of INEB's Advisory Committee.

To enter Berkeley Zen Center's new Online Zendo, click this link on your computer or mobile device:  
<https://zoom.us/j/6577982914>

## The Four Marks of Existence

I suffer because I want things  
 To be different from how they are.  
 I want to go to the gym  
 And I have to do sit-ups in my office.  
 I long for tacos and beans at Picante  
 And I settle for lukewarm takeout.

Impermanence is all I can count on.  
 The world we knew  
 Has turned around in a handful of days.  
 My god, will it always be like this?  
 Yes, and it always has been this way.  
 Blossoms fall and weeds grow.

The ache of social-distancing  
 Is the suffering of no-self—  
 I am pulled away from all of you, who are my self:  
 The woman behind me on the checkout line;  
 The prisoner I visit in a narrow steel cage;  
 The fiddler whose tune is naked without accompaniment.

Take a breath and enjoy it.  
 Things change and we change too  
 Universal truths flourish even in pandemic  
 Resisting truth is suffering  
 Accepting truth is nirvana,  
 Which does and does not make life any easier.

**Hozan Alan Senauke**

21 March 2020

Berkeley, California





# Joined Together Through the Crisis

Ven. phra Paisal Visalo

19 March 2020, Morning talk at Wah Pha Sukhato Forest Monastery, Chaiyapoom Province, Siam

I have a good story to share with you. This story is from Japan, many years ago, where a carpenter repaired and rebuilt a house. This house is a one storey building where the wall was built by two pieces of wood with a hollow space in the middle. After tearing down the wall, he found a lizard stuck inside because a nail from outside was hammered into one of its feet. The carpenter looked into it and was curious about how long this house gecko had been stuck inside and found that the nail was hammered into the house gecko about five years ago. He was surprised that the lizard was alive although it had no ability to gather food. He was curious and tried to find answer. Then he realized that another lizard came every day to feed the vulnerable lizard, even though the second lizard didn't gain any benefit from feeding the first one.

In nature, when animals face danger or difficulty, they will try to help each other. This may be an animal instinct to care and share loving kindness to each other. We see this not only with reptiles, as it can also be seen with birds.

Two parrots that were trained by a human being were caged together and became attached to each other. The parrot on the left could show its head outside the cage to communicate with the trainer, but the parrot on the right could not do that since there was no hole in that side of the cage.

The parrots were trained to exchange small stones for peanuts. The parrot on the right had stones, but the one on the left didn't. Even though, the right one could not exchange stones with the trainer, it was happy to give the stones to the other parrot that could communicate and exchange the stones for peanuts with the trainer. The right parrot knew that he/she would not benefit by doing that, and yet was still happy to support the other.

We can see that animals care for and support each other. How about us as human beings, especially during times of crisis?

More than one hundred and fifty years ago, two big sailing ships wrecked and were castaway on different sides of Auckland Island, New Zealand. The two boats

didn't know about each other, nor that that they had been wrecked and castaway in the same time period. The *Invercauld*, en route to Chile, wrecked on the northwestern end of the island, had 19 survivors that swam to the island. After one year only 3 survived the winter. The other boat named the *Grafton*, on its way from Sydney, Australia, had 5 survivors. Two years later these 5 people still survived. What are the differences in these stories of two separate shipwrecks? The survivors of the *Invercauld* should have more collective strength than the *Grafton*, because it had more survivors.

When looking into the details and we can see that when the *Invercauld's* survivors arrived at the island they just disbursed and didn't care for or help each other. When they moved up to the cliff they didn't support each other, split into small groups and fought among themselves. When someone died the others ate the dead body. Whereas, people from the *Grafton* supported each other, consulted with each other and helped learn about survival skills together. They also learned many other things from each other such as their languages, mathematics and other subjects. Consequently, their rate of survival was 100 percent.

These stories provide us with lessons during times of crisis regarding not being selfish and working together instead of surviving alone. We all benefit when we share and support each other with food, materials or knowledge during times of crisis.

Day by day the news reports show that this crisis is worldwide, reaching far beyond Thailand and Asia. So far more than 8,000 people have died because of COVID-19, and some estimates project that it will kill over a million people during one and a half years or in an even shorter time. We are facing a crisis which is in front of us. If we just want to survive alone that will create more problems during this crisis. We need to look to one another and find ways to support each other that can reduce the possible damage that is confronting us at the moment and in the near future.

Supporting each other at this time must be

different from other crises that we have faced. During other crisis we may join hands to support and help each other. However, during this time we may be distancing or quarantining ourselves, especially those who came from high risk areas, in order to prevent spreading the virus to others. This is difficult and uneasy for all of us, but we need to think about other persons that may become infected by us. This is the 'new normal' and a basic requirement for all of us at this time. We need to be uneasy, uncomfortable for others, not just walk to places as usual. These will create danger to others and oneself.

Beside 'social distancing' ourselves from others, we need to look at what else we can do, for example, making masks to donate to others who don't have them, or sending information to others to help them be aware of the situation and be able to protect themselves. There are some countries we could see that they try to survive by

themselves, and are not caring about others, not sharing masks with others.

We can take lessons learnt from the survivors of the 2 shipwrecked boats. We learned that even though the *Invercauld* had many more survivors than the *Grafton*, the majority didn't support each other because of their divided and selfish attitudes. Consequently, the small number who survived may will feel guilty that they survived without the others which wounds them deeply in their mind. Once again, these are true accounts of how human beings responded in times of life-threatening crises, with very different outcomes.

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**Phra Paisol Visalo** is the abbot of Wat Pasukato in Chaiyaphum province, Thailand, and a member of INEB's Advisory Committee.

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## Message from Phakchok Rinpoche

**D**ear INEB Community,

How are you and your loved ones amidst the present global pandemic? On this New Moon today, we are offering a wholesome Riwo Sangcho 'Mountain Smoke Offering.' The Sangcho Offering is a skillful means of realizing the perfection of wisdom through the accumulation of merits with the practice of offerings and purification especially of impurities and obstructions.

These impurities and obstructions can manifest as diseases which are a result of causes and conditions. The causes and conditions, in this case, are our collective karma as human beings. So, to purify karma, you can practice virtue through your actions, your practice, your meditation, and so forth. This will remove our karmic debt. The most important part is to dedicate merit and make aspirations for our parents and family members in this life and past lives, our friends, for our villages, towns, and cities, and for all human beings. This also means to dedicate and aspire for their good health, happiness, and fulfillment of all their wishes.

During my retreat I am making aspirations for all,

especially for those who are sick, those who are having difficulties coping with the present situation mentally, emotionally, physically, financially and where all your wishes are not fulfilled and the undesired materializing, so to all your fears. My days are filled with prayers for all.

For those of you who are not faced with such difficulties please take this time as an opportunity to focus on your practice. Regardless of what tradition you follow, please pray for the awakening of all sentient beings and practice loving kindness and compassion.

Thinking of you all and making aspirations for your wellbeing.

**Phakchok Rinpoche**

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**Venerable Phakchok Rinpoche** is Vajra Master of Ka-Nying Shedrup Ling monastery, abbot of several monasteries in Nepal, and co-chair of INEB's Advisory Committee.

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# Good Governance Initiative For Post COVID-19

Harsha Navaratne

*In far too many places, health systems are unprepared for an onslaught of COVID 19 patients and its paramount to give them a boost ... and this can and must go together with support for economy: wide priorities required to reduce unemployment, minimize bankruptcies and overtime, and ensure recovery.*

WHO/IMF on the Role of National Governments

In many countries political systems are in a crisis. Political scientists identify countries with failed democracy as failed states— a common Western perception that depends on their economic and security interests. A failed state is one that has lost both legitimacy and governance. There are various pathways to such a failure, which include the collapse of democratic systems and a shift towards authoritarian regimes, crony capitalism and corruption, internal conflict and social divide, etc. Many such nations today have turned inward towards populism, including well-regarded Western democracies, which has created an atmosphere of crisis in those nations.

Good Governance means nation states steward over social, cultural, political, and economic development, as well as looking after fundamental human rights and the prosperity of its citizens. However, the weaknesses of many countries' policymakers retard the central government's provision of citizen services. In such a situation, the state no longer effectively performs its roles and responsibilities: including public health, education, and national security – which are the most important basic needs of the citizens.

With the on-going COVID 19 pandemic, nation states need to focus on the right set of priorities to save lives and livelihoods. The present-day global community has many ideas and plans for making our planet safe so

that people can have a decent and good life, for example the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Those goals are unique in that they call for “action by all countries, poor, rich, and middle income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet.”

There are three important areas for addressing these problems outlined above:

1. **Address the grievances of the people, especially the youth:** The above outline of Bad Governance has created numerous social, political, and economic problems that have deepened divisions across ethnicities, religious groups, and various other identity based groups. These must be addressed and can only be done with dialogue among stakeholders, listening and accepting their concerns as they are and searching for solutions.
2. **Mobilize think tanks, intellectuals, academics, advocacy, and civil society groups:**

This is necessary in order to:

- a) challenge and expose the hidden agendas of government regimes, regional power groups, and big conglomerates; and
- b) establish a critical engagement with nation states to avoid structural changes that are detrimental to the people and have wreaked havoc among disadvantaged groups in rural and mountainous areas.

## 3. Organize and build capacities to transform complex systems to be people-friendly and avoid exploitation:

This should focus on areas of energy, food, health, and environment. Activists and civil society groups need to build collaborative leadership as well as collectivity to critically engage in such situations in their respective countries, thereby limiting the power of certain vested policymakers who strongly influence investment, international borrowing, and the policy of debt settling.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists will seek to support the development of the three agendas above by:

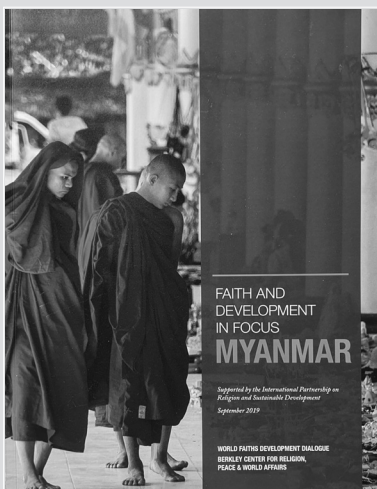
1. **Using our values, practices, and presence to help build a global community:** INEB's overall vision is to develop the perspective and practice of socially engaged Buddhism to promote understanding, cooperation, and networking among Buddhist groups, among religious groups, among social action groups, and among secular civil society organizations. This base will allow us to mobilise all these groups into a social movement.

2. **Act as a key mover in new systems change:** INEB provides a platform or umbrella for like-minded groups to use as a means for developing forward thinking systems. Such groups may include think tanks, research institutes, universities, social enterprises, trade unions, academics, etc. Such collaborative leadership can collectively engage with nation states, international organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, ADB, and also conglomerates who are presently controlling most of the world's economic systems.
3. **Providing ethical standpoints for good governance, human rights, and peace in the rapidly increasing use of IT:** The world is now entering into the fourth industrial revolution, which includes artificial intelligence, block chains, nano technology, and bio technologies. Such technologies need to focus on avoiding massive environmental and structural damage. Technologies and business models need to be safe, affordable, and cater to the betterment of the society, citizens, and the future. Finally, systems need to be accountable to the people.

Harsha Navaratne is the Chair of INEB's Executive Committee.



## Recommended Reading

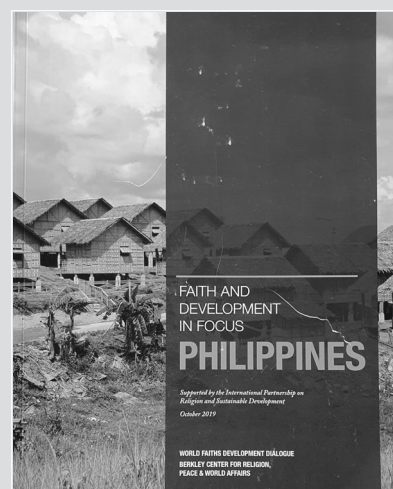


### Faith and Development in Focus Myanmar

Publisher: World Faiths Development Dialogue

### Faith and Development in Focus Philippines

Publisher: World Faiths Development Dialogue





## Mindful Action: COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

<http://inebnetwork.org/activity-covid-19-emergency-relief-fund/>



Atish Dipankar Society - (ADS), Bangladesh



Buddhist Relief Fund, India

### Why Support the INEB COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund?

In response to the unbearable levels of suffering among the poorest and most marginalized communities in South and Southeast Asia, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) has set up a COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund.

As we write to you, the World Food Program is warning of a famine of biblical proportions as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our network partners are already providing food and medical relief, and we know the most critical needs will increase exponentially over the coming weeks. Our goal is to be able to increase our response to the most urgent needs for food supplies, hygiene and sanitary supplies, in addition to medicine, hospital beds, and toilets.

We know this is a difficult time to ask for your support, but this is the moment when even a small contribution can save lives.

For 30 years INEB has been pioneering grassroots, community led solutions to end poverty, inequality and social injustice among the poorest and most marginalized communities in South and Southeast Asia. This commitment to a global community, based on the universal truths of wisdom and compassion, guides all our activities. As practitioners of a buddhism with a small “b” – in the words of our founder, Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa – we actively work with social activists, spiritual leaders, academics and young people from Buddhist, as well as non-Buddhist backgrounds.

The communities that we work with in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar are those that are often ignored or actively discriminated against even by their own governments. They need our help to survive the

pandemic. Thanks to our global network of organizations we have unparalleled access to some of the most at-risk communities, enabling us to distribute emergency relief quickly, efficiently and equitably.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the global economy to a standstill and exposed even more clearly the social distortions and growing inequalities of our present global order. We are all suffering together, especially the most vulnerable groups, even in rich countries. Persons living in poverty and on the margins of society – whether by race, religion, class, citizenship or place of birth, or gender – have been the most vulnerable to the disease on a variety of levels: crowded living conditions and the absolute need to continue to work that increases exposure, weaker immune systems from the effects of poverty (stress, diet, etc.), and poorer access to testing and medical services.

### To respond to the COVID-19 crisis INEB has developed a three-part initiative:

1. Forming an emergency response fund – Mindful Action: COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund – to support the most vulnerable groups in regions and countries in the INEB network, specifically in South and Southeast Asia.
2. Issuing a statement of solidarity with other religions to call for an end to responses to the pandemic that inflict suffering on vulnerable and marginalized groups while encouraging action to provide immediate and long-term support to these groups.
3. Developing a four-part strategic plan to realize shifts in consciousness and the building of alternative structures that create societies that can flourish and endure the sorts of dislocations that COVID-19 and environmental changes will bring to our world.

This note was received from our local partner who was able to bring critical food supplies to a Dalit (Untouchable) village in India in response to emergency aid that our network was able to provide. Imagine the scene repeated over and over as we are able to bring help in the form of food and basic medical supplies to these at-risk marginalized communities thanks to your generous support.

*"We distributed free one-month rations to more than 100 families of marginalized communities based in Vannur, Villipuram District, Tamil Nadu on April 13th, 2020. The distribution items included Rice 20 kg, Sugar 1 kg, Salt 1kg, Dal 1 kg, and 1 litre edible oil along with vegetables."*

*This village does not have proper food, livelihood, and other basic amenities and is largely inhabited by Dalits. There were tears in the eyes of villagers as no one has ever visited them or even listened to their social suffering which they were undergoing from both caste and the lockdown. Caste discrimination has treated them so badly that they were denied to receive support from anyone outside. The people are begging for food in this village."*

## INEB Partners' Emergency Relief Effort

### BANGLADESH

#### ● Atish Dipankar Society – (ADS)

The Atish Dipankar Society is distributing humanitarian relief aid to poor local Buddhists as well as to people in Muslim and Hindu neighborhoods who have lost daily livelihoods and income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and government lockdown. The corona virus is spreading rapidly among Bangladesh's dense population, where now millions are without work and food.

THE ADS humanitarian response includes distributing food – rice, potatoes cooking oil, onions, wheat and salt, as well as soap. We have also provided 12 hospital beds. The humanitarian response also includes sanitizing areas by helping spray inside and outside homes and other buildings.

### INDIA

#### ● Buddhist Relief Fund In coordination with the Sunyatee International Foundation (SIF)

The Buddhist Relief Fund – BRF, was setup to respond helping persons and communities who are being discriminated against in Indian society. Specifically, the community response is making a food supply available to marginalized and vulnerable persons through:

1. Giving money to families to meet their daily needs
2. Distributing raw food grains to families

The BRF is coordinating with Sunyatee International Foundation (SIF) as SIF will make a matching grant towards helping needy and marginalized families during this difficult time.

*Every donation will be matched with an equal amount of funds.*

#### ● Nagaloka Relief Fund

The Nagaloka Relief Fund team is rapidly responding on the ground to the corona virus outbreak. Their immediate focus is to reduce human

transmission and provide people with their basic needs such as food, hygiene supplies (soap) and masks.

#### ● Foundation of His Sacred Majesty

The COVID-19 Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Initiative of the Foundation of His Sacred Majesty – FHSM – is asking for help meeting emergency needs of the most vulnerable communities of Dalits, tribal persons, nomadic communities, transgender persons and migrant workers. FHSM is also helping stranded migrant students.

Emergency relief includes providing basic food items (rice, wheat flour, dal, edible oil, salt and sugar), and primary hygiene items (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, sanitary pads, and soap). Relief aid is distributed through relief clusters with the help of government-registered professional volunteers.

#### ● ADECOM Network

The ADECOM Network, based in Puducherry, India, works with Dalits and supports women's empowerment. They are asking for support for providing basic food commodities to needy families. They are distributing food baskets with 16 food items to feed a poor family for one week. The baskets include rice, dal, oil, salt, wheat flour, RAVA (refined wheat), tamarind and various spices. The cost of each basket is 650 Indian Rupees.

#### ● Youth Buddhist Society India

Youth Buddhist Society India - YBS India is helping to meet the daily needs of local villagers in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan by distributing food: wheat, rice, sugar, cooking oil, spices; hygiene supplies, face mask, and medicine etc. Established in 1986, YBS is a united group of people from various races, religions, and castes. YBS is not working only to promote Buddhism, but addresses a range of social problems such as education, poverty, environment, economic, self-sustainability, and health-related education.

### MYANMAR

#### ● Kalyana Mitta Foundation – KMF

Kalyana Mitta Foundation – KMF is working closely with the Myanmar Buddhist Sangha and youth, and in areas of Yangon and Mandalay where the urban poor live. Their relief efforts to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable communities include providing accurate information about the crisis to local communities, food and essential hygiene supplies (soap, sanitary products, basic medicine, etc.).

#### ● Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School

Some students and teachers have been stranded at the Paung Daw Oo Monastic School after it closed when the COVID crisis began. Although most students and teachers have returned to their home communities, 150 students living in dormitories including novices and monks living on campus urgently need food and hygiene supplies.

Students of all religions and ethnicities are welcomed at Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School in Mandalay, where more than 8,000 students (boys and girls) are enrolled. This "monastic" school offers a secular curriculum, as well as special classes in Buddhism and Pali for novice monks and any secular students who opt to take them.

### NEPAL

#### ● The Nepal Buddhist Federation – NBF

The Nepal Buddhist Federation – NBF – is responding the COVID-19 emergency through providing assistance to marginalized Buddhist, Dalit and minority communities in Nepal. Most recently they responded during the earthquake of April 2015 which devastated Kathmandu.



International Forum on Buddhist - Muslim Relations

# International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations (BMF) Highlights from 2019

By INEB/BMF Staff

The International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations (BMF) has completed its first fiscal year (January through December 2019) with the Secretariat based in Bangkok, Thailand. The BMF was formed by a Core Group of international members in 2013, to address the rising Buddhist-Muslim conflict fault-line emerging in the South and Southeast Asia region, and to overcome extremism through advancing peace with justice by nonviolent means.

The Core Group guides all of the BMF activities to bring peaceful coexistence and understanding among the Buddhists and Muslims. This takes place through advancing inter-faith dialogue and actions among Buddhist and Muslim religious leaders and persons of faith to build inclusive and peaceful societies throughout the South and Southeast Asia region.

Current Core Group Members include:

- ◆ The International Movement for a Just World – JUST
- ◆ Religions for Peace – RfP
- ◆ Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah – PM
- ◆ The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers - The Network
- ◆ International Network of Engaged Buddhists – INEB is the current Secretariat.

We are concentrating our efforts in countries with both Buddhist and Muslim populations to strengthen

our connections with regionally-based organizations. These countries include: Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, India and China.

The BMF's overarching ***Vision is for people of the region to live in harmony with respect to freedom of religion/beliefs by reducing tensions and extremist narratives violence and amplifying positive peace voices.***

Specific accomplishments or outputs are in the areas of the BMF's organizational development, implementing activities and management by the Secretariat. BMF outreach takes place through meetings and presentations. Implementing activities have also been initiated under 4 planning categories

1. Regional Meeting of Religious Buddhist-Muslim Leaders conducted the second high level meeting in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh
2. Promoting Interreligious Literacy through gathering information about Buddhist and Muslim universities and higher education networks
3. Buddhist-Muslim Regional Youth Exchange
4. Buddhist-Muslim Women's Leadership Exchange

The BMF Secretarian, based in Bangkok, manages day to day operations through the coordination by the

Secretary, support staff and finance staff. During the year a logo was designed which is being used and a Facebook page and blog are available online.

Key outputs during the first 12 months include:

1. Developing a two-year proposal with specific activities which was an outgrowth of the Core Group meeting.
  - 1st activity - to convene a high-level Regional Meeting of Buddhist-Muslim Religious leaders in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh, November 21 and 22 in collaboration with RfP.
  - 2nd activity – developed a proposal for promoting interreligious literacy.
  - We are in the process of seeking funding for the proposal's third and fourth activities that will support and enhance Buddhist-Muslim Regional Youth and Women Exchange.
2. Being part of the Southeast Asia: Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief (SEA-AIR) Project, partnered with Finn Church Aid (The Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers), Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) (INEB under the auspices of SNF), World Faiths Development Dialogue, Islamic Relief Worldwide and World Conference of Religions for Peace. The project is funded by the European Union which also provides support to the BMF.
3. Assisted the Network/Finn Church Aid set up a work space within the SNF office that is benefitting both partners, especially the ability have a closer communications, as well as collaborating on the concept and activities.
4. The 2-year strategic plan was approved and fully endorsed by the Core Group member during the July Core Group meeting in Kuala Lumpur,
5. A workshop on Culture of Peace and Justice was held during INEB's biennial conference held in India which was attended by 40 participants.

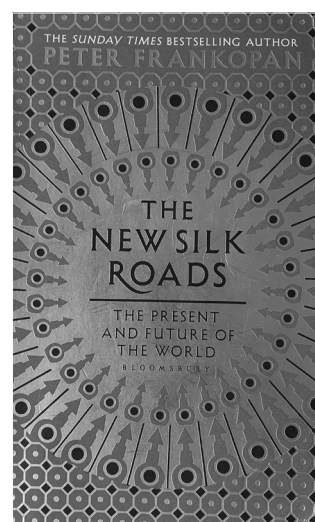
6. The second-high level meeting convened at Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, in November 2019.

Tentative future planning activities for 2020:

- ◆ First annual review of the SEA AIR FoRB project by the partners
- ◆ Hold the next Core Group meeting
- ◆ Religious literacy – The Secretary met with the rector of the Shan State Buddhist University, Taunggyi, Myanmar, which has formed a Theravada University Network.
- ◆ Religious Literacy - Visit an Islamic university to begin planning some of the next steps for the religious literacy project.
- ◆ Women and Youth - Hold a planning meeting with AMAN and The Network to discuss the possibility for collaboration and initiating activities.
- ◆ Interfaith Peace Literacy Planning meeting



### Recommended Reading



The New Silk Roads:  
The Present and Future  
of the World

Author: Peter Frankopan  
Publisher: Bloomsbury



# Living in Harmony with the Environment: Focus on Reducing Single Use Plastics

## *Buddhist and Muslim Leaders Reaffirm Commitment to Yogyakarta Statement*

Sanat Kumar Barua

**D**uring the Second High Level Buddhist and Muslim Leaders Summit held on November 21-22, 2019, in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, over 20 Buddhist and Muslim leaders from across South and Southeast Asia advanced the Yogyakarta Statement. This Statement of shared values and commitments to overcome extremism, advance societal peace with justice, is a guideline for intra-religious and inter-religious initiatives among Buddhist-Muslims across the region.

Both Buddhist and Muslim leaders reaffirmed solidarity with Rohingya refugees and to advance one of the seven shared values embodied in the Yogyakarta Statement on 'Living in Harmony with the Environment - by reducing single use plastics,' focusing on Bangladesh. A task force was formed to implement the outcomes working for a sustainable and harmonious future.

South and Southeast Asia is one of the most religiously diverse regions in the world. Among its various problems environmental issues for peace and sustainability are threatened. Under these conditions, joint efforts by Buddhist and Muslim communities with shared ethical, moral and spiritual undergirding can collectively begin to address the issues.

Environmental ethics in Islam can be summarized as just three precepts: 'Do what is right, Forbid what is wrong, and Act with moderation at the time.' In Buddhism, human excessive Loba, Desha, Moha, i.e., greed, delusion,

attachment are the main causes of suffering on our planet. The main issue in environmental degradation is due to climate change, i.e., global warming, soil-water-air pollution, biodiversity, ecosystem losses and many more unethical human activities.

Throughout South, Southeast Asian countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Philippines and other countries people suffer from loss of homes and personal property, health hazards, increased violent conflicts and the foregone income that accompanies climate change induced disaster and instability. Thus, environmental issues cannot be separated from social-justice.

Now, plastic products have become one of the major pollutants in this region. Plastic is inert and hard to degrade. So, it becomes a toxic technowaste that has severe polluting effects on the earth's biodiversity. *National Geographic* reports that plastic kills millions of marine and land animals every year. Experts have found that we are all consuming micro-plastics in the food supply, may cause damage to our digestive and reproductive systems and eventually lead to an early death.

Plastic products are expanding worldwide. A report says, plastic contributes to greenhouse gas at every stage of its lifecycle, from its production to refining and the way it is managed as a waste product. We produce over 320 million tones of plastic globally every year, almost half is single-use plastic, useful for minutes, then destined to pollute our planet and oceans for centuries. Its production

must end now and find environment friendly alternatives.

A report from the summit's host country shows, Bangladesh is the most populated Muslim country in the South Asia, where about 170 million people live in 147,5070 square kilometers. It adds also 1.1 million Rohingya refugees to this population. Over-population causes the country to lose huge acres of natural forests and their resources for livelihoods.

Climate change causes natural disasters, health hazards, sea levels rising that ultimately cause mass internal migration, contamination of salt water with ground water, all of which deplete food production, damage natural mangrove forests and cause many other climate injured incidents. This report mentioned that Bangladesh emits only 0.3% of the world emissions, but is suffering most due to the environmental crisis making it the most vulnerable country in the world.

Another report says, Bangladesh generates around 3,000 tons of plastic waste every day. 36% of plastic waste is formally recycled, 39% is dumped in landfills, and the remaining 25% leaks into the environment, eventually flowing to the Bay of Bangle through the rivers. 3,744 tons of single use plastic are produced annually, approximately 80-85% are discarded being used only once. Single use plastics include drinking straws, plastic cotton buds, sachets, food packaging and plastic bags. It takes 10-200 years to decompose these types of single use plastics.

Like Bangladesh, South-Southeast Asian countries people are suffering from plastic pollution. So, we appeal to the Buddhist-Muslim communities to raise massive faith-based approaches working for environmental peace and harmony. It is urgently necessary to reduce plastic products, especially single use of plastics for environmental harmony.

Throughout South and Southeast Asia, Buddhist-Muslim leaders and other religious actors

have wide reaching influence. Here religion plays a central role in the daily lives of many people and in the broader social dynamics. Religious actors often utilize 'value based' approaches which have potential for wider application.

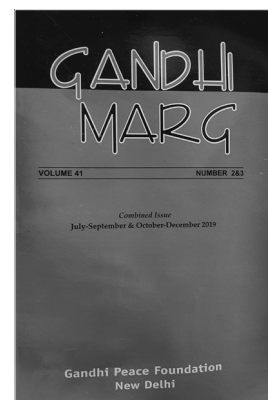
So, for a just peaceful South-Southeast Asia countries, we humbly request coming together through interfaith initiatives to address the complex and combined challenges of 'Living Harmony with the Environment.' We have unlimited desire, yet few resources, and the destruction we cause now will have a long term, everlasting effect.

And most of all, the environment isn't only for us humans, but for all species on Earth. As we only have one mother Earth. We seek to encourage healing in a world struggling for equality, justice and well-being. We shall continue in good faith as a sign of commitment to our religious teachings and shared love and compassion to all living beings.

**Sanat Kumar Barua**, INEB Executive Committee member, General Secretary, Atisha Dipankar Peace Trust Bangladesh, e-mail: sanat.ads@gmail.com



### Recommended Reading



Gandhi Marg Volumee 41 No. 2&3

Editor: Ram Chandra Pradhan  
Publisher: Gandhi Peace Foundation



## International Young Bodhisattva Program: For Spiritual Resurgence & Social Transformation Postponed until October 2020

3 - 16 October 2020

Buddhist Hongshi College, Taoyuan, Taiwan

Application Deadline Now Extended to **31 July!**

Established by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in conjunction with Buddhist Hongshi College, the International Young Bodhisattva Program (YBP) aims to develop young people's confidence, capacity, and commitment for social and spiritual transformation. The program combines experiential learning with cultural exposures for youth to learn about social engagement. The YBP is centered on values of lovingkindness and compassion—in Asia, particularly in the context of Taiwan.

Whether you were born into a Buddhist family, came to Buddhism on your own, or do not identify as a Buddhist,

this program is designed to strengthen your understanding of the roots of “dukkha” or “suffering” in our modern societies, as well as potential ways to address them.

The content is based on a three-mode learning process involving intellectual, spiritual and physical practice. Sessions will include panels, discussions, community-building activities, meditation practice, as well site visits to understand opportunities and challenges for social engagement in Taiwan, and the role played by Buddhists and other activists. Please find forms for the program available at <https://forms.gle/RTL5gomYK5NqKWda8>

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The Network for  
Religious and  
Traditional  
Peacemakers



Strengthening Interfaith Relationships  
South and Southeast Asian Inter-Religious Dialogue and  
Freedom of Religion or Belief Project (SEA AIR FoRB)



Philip Gassert

The European Union-funded SEA-AIR project kicked-off 2020 with the second Interfaith Fellowship Workshop. On February 5 – 9, 50 fellows from 9 South and Southeast Asian countries reconvened in Bangkok, Thailand, 6 months after they joined the fellowship program. Project staff and affiliates of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers facilitated technical and thematic focused peer-learning sessions that built on the conflict analyses they began at the first workshop. Session themes included hardline engagement, negotiation and mediation, monitoring and evaluation, gender and the role of women in peacebuilding, communication campaigns, hate speech, and conflict transformation.

Following the workshop, the Network announced the second round of grants for the fellowship program. The Network awarded 15 grants for community-based intra-

and interfaith peacebuilding activities in January, and will award a second round of 9 grants to groups of fellows in April 2020. Fellows based their second round grant applications on the main thematic areas identified in peer-learning workshop sessions. All 24 projects are scheduled to occur in 2020.

Concurrent with the Fellowship grants, the SEA-AIR project announced grant support to Interfaith Councils and other community organizations as a means to strengthen FoRB and social cohesion in South and Southeast Asia. This activity supports particularly strengthening of structures or institutions at the local level. Grants will be awarded in May for activities to take place in 2020. Application instructions can be found on the Network's website, or by contacting Project Manager Philip Gassert for more information ([philip.gassert@kua.fi](mailto:philip.gassert@kua.fi)).

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## The School of English for Engaged Social Service (SENS) 2020 Program

We are now in a worldwide pandemic that is changing the world as I write. I first want to express my condolences to all those who have lost loved ones. May they rest in peace and be remembered always with dignity. I also want to express my appreciation for all of you who may have suffered through the disease, or lost your salary, or remain isolated from your loved ones, or had to risk your own health to care for others. I appreciate your determination to do what is right and what is needed, for yourself and for others. We will all have to keep doing that through these hard times, and none of us can do it on our own. Can we find a way to encourage each other, with clarity and kindness; can we find a way to walk through this side-by-side?

We try to create an atmosphere in the SENS program in which people can not only develop their English skills, but also learn to rely on their own innate beauty and strengths to heal from how they have been hurt and to overcome the obstacles in their path. We practice showing that we care for each other and that we are ready to learn what it takes to understand and to support each other. We do this by meditating, by appreciating each other (in English), by learning to listen with our full attention, by noticing the places where another person needs outside support, and by daring ourselves to offer that support.

We have learned many particular ways of doing these things effectively, and each year we do them better. Each year we also have new members of the team who bring their strengths to the course. Melissa Storms, the new Assistant Director, brought her enthusiasm for the power of language, her deep caring for students, and her profound understanding of oppression, among other things. Similarly, the strengths and particular backgrounds of the students and tutors make for a course that is always fresh and novel with unexpected



*SENS 2020 Group Visits Ajarn Sulak at home  
Photo Wansiri Rongrongmuang*

developments, while also being a reliably safe place for growth and for progress on many fronts for everyone. For this I am very grateful.

This year we began losing students in Week 9 of our 12-week course due to imminent pandemic-related travel restrictions. Only a week later we had to abruptly close the in-person part of the course for the same reason. In fact, at this moment several students remain temporarily stranded in Thailand. We continue to support them emotionally, with living arrangements and food, and in finding flights home.

We would like to thank the generous donors and sponsors who showed tremendous kindness in supporting us both financially and in other ways, thus making SENS 2020 possible. Stretching to bring 14 students this year was a decision we will never regret, but it meant taking on a small deficit; making up for this will be part of our work in the coming months. If you would like to support us as we complete our SENS 2020 course online and prepare for upcoming programs, you may do so at: [www.inebinstitute.org/donation/](http://www.inebinstitute.org/donation/) Thank you so much!

**Ted Mayer**, Director of SENS



## SENS in Bloom

When I did my evaluation after SENS 2020, strangely, the most difficult question for me to answer was the first one on the sheet: *What did you love or appreciate about this course?* It's not an exaggeration to say that I might not come to an end if I start to list answers to that seemingly simple question. Reflecting for two days, I now realize that there is one thing above all that I really want to share.

In SENS 2020, the virtuoso designers of the course didn't try to change students into common models to suit this society. SENS 2020 embraced our uniqueness, cultivated our virtues, and allowed us to flourish.

I do believe that human beings are born with seeds from Mother Nature which are the essence of their soul. Seeds sown in the garden of the soul grow up with our body so closely that we suffer if we deny them. SENS consists of the most thoughtful gardeners who genuinely see seeds inside each individual and design and cultivate conditions in which these seeds are able to bloom. Someday, those seeds will metamorphose into gorgeous flowers.

My most powerful moment in SENS 2020, and also in life, was when I decisively stepped into a designed circle and voiced: "I'm marginalized because I'm an introvert!" Never before had I myself fully accepted that truth, let alone shared it with other people. In the past, I tried to ignore the fact that a value system that Susan Cain calls "Extrovert Ideal," marginalizes introverts. A powerless feeling will overcome me if I accept that system. Finally, after many years, I do indeed accept that I'm an introvert; that is one of my seeds. That is one of my powers.

SENS 2020 has created a safe, encouraging and loving space in which I am accepted as I am, and I am free to be authentic with myself and others, which makes me feel confident enough to live in harmony with people, and with my own unique seeds.

I believe the kind gardeners in SENS can support more and more people to bloom by recognizing, accepting, and honoring their seeds.

**Le Ha Anh Thy**, SENS 2020 Student from Vietnam

## SENS 2020 Appreciation

One aspect of the course I found deeply moving was the focus on exploring the distress patterns that constantly influence our lives below the level of conscious awareness. Ted's skill in teaching both the practice and philosophy of Co-Counseling created a safe environment where I felt encouraged and supported to investigate the inner workings of my habitual behaviors. Thanks to this simple self-reflective technique, practiced in numerous in-class and private sessions, I developed a deep appreciation for my fellow classmates. As a student keenly interested in studying mental health counseling at the graduate level, engaging in this therapeutic process was both satisfying and profoundly meaningful, giving me a greater capacity to hold compassionate space for myself and others.

Another facet of the course that has made a lasting impression on me is the sense of community that developed organically between all of the participants regardless of "position" within the program. As a member of the work team, I found that my time spent with students during our tutoring sessions never felt forced or hierarchical. There was always lively discussion between members that often carried on long past the hour mark. These rich conversations led to fast bonding—and an atmosphere of curiosity and engagement always seemed to permeate our communal meal times. I feel that it was during these unstructured periods and the wonderfully immersive field trips that I forged the strong friendships that I believe will last a lifetime. Often I had to stop and pinch myself, reflecting on the fact that I was now part of such a compassionate and joyful tribe of new Asian leaders.

The passion, awareness, and commitment to service and insightful leadership that I saw each student demonstrate at various times throughout the course inspired me every day. Whether it was seeing Myanmar student Hkun Myat explore new means of managing his foundation's work team, or hearing another student's visionary idea of a summer camp for members of his ethnic minority, the melting pot of SENS seemed to generate an endless stream of creative enthusiasm. I harbor tremendous pride that I can now call myself a part of the larger SENS community, a privilege I am honored to make skillful use of in the exciting years to come.

**Dexter Bohn**, SENS 2020 Tutor from the U.K.



# Slowly, Consciously Nurture Inner-Growth Awakening Leadership Training

Petra Carman & Jessica Armour

*“Awakening Leadership Training was one of the most illuminating and life changing programs I’ve participated in. Before going, I had a lot of hesitancy. I wasn’t sure it felt right to travel so far to work with people I did not know, but I was quickly proven wrong.”*

Bianca, USA

Beginning of 2020 ended the 4th cycle of Awakening Leadership Training (ALT) – an alternative educational program combining

- 4 dimensions of sustainability: worldview, social, economic and ecological;
- 3H principle: engaging Head, Heart and Hands; and
- 2 types of transformation: inner and societal,

all in one transformative learning journey spanning 5 months, from September 2019 to January 2020.

The program recognises the vast contributions the Asian region has made, and continues to make towards dialogue and action for regeneration. Contemplative practices are key among these, which support a deepening and grounding of both personal and interpersonal learning, beyond what is normally experienced in mainstream classrooms. By integrating Asian worldviews into a broader framework of education for sustainability, participants are able to experience a place-based and global approach in dynamic relationship with each other.

*“ALT gave me a sense of harmony. It has awakened me to find balance and growth between mindfulness and action.”*

Participant from Hong Kong

## Participants and Locations

What makes this course unique is that it is place-based, drawing on and highlighting diversity of Asian worldviews,



Opening Ceremony  
Photo - Marcelo Viotto

practices and experiences – from indigenous to post-industrial, from N Asian to S to SE Asian; from history to present day. While based at the ecovillage Wongsanit Ashram, the training also took participants to a number of diverse traditional and intentional communities to enrich the learning journey. This year we visited the indigenous Karen community of Pa Teung Ngam (*Deep Ecology, Vision Quest*), Nong Sarai (*Re-defining the Market*), Pun Pun (*Foundations in Ecology*), slum communities in Bangkok (*Mindful Activism*), and the beachside village of Bornok (*Mindful Facilitation for Empowerment/ Training of Trainers*).

The fourth cycle of ALT hosted all together 80 participants, with half from China, and the remaining half from a number of countries, among them Myanmar, India, Thailand, Korea, Cambodia, Vietnam, UK, USA, Colombia, Brazil, and for first time also Syria. This wide-ranging participant diversity created a unique atmosphere and space for learning, which is always commented on by the participants themselves.

*“A lot of the skills I learnt came from the other participants, and that is why this participatory approach is fantastic, because it really brings out the best in each one of us.”*

Pierre, France



*Deep Ecology classroom in the village*  
Photo - Marcelo Viotto

## The Learning Journey

ALT adopts the Gaia Education framework of 4 dimensions of sustainability, with the added 5th dimension dedicated to different means for social transformation:

### 1. Emerging Worldview, Self Discovery and Healing

This was the most popular dimension of learning, covering 5 modules, which built on each other. The first two modules – *Slow is Beautiful* and *Paradigm Shift* – provided a framing for the whole course in terms of presenting the present-day situation, and looking deeply into root causes, before exploring alternatives through cultural practice.

### 2. Interpersonal Dynamics: Power Sharing and Compassion

Building on from the community-building processes that had already been integrated into the first learning module, this dimension focused on specific tools for living together: non-violent communication, conflict resolution, mediation and decision-making utilizing self-awareness, empathy and deep listening.

### 3. Eco-Political Economy: From Global to Local

Due to a lack of applications for the political economy dimension, the *Right Livelihood* and *Re-defining the Market* module was re-designed as a learning and sharing platform among 4 key sustainable community models in

Thailand – Inpaeng Group, Koh Yao Noi, Mae Tha, and Nong Sarai – to identify key practices and lessons learned for inspiration, scaling-out and application. With valuable insights from academics and participants themselves, the module proved a unique and powerful forum around the topic of community, self-reliance and re-defining the market.

### 4. Ecology and Ecovillage Design

During ecological dimension, participants had the unique experience of homestay with an indigenous Karen community for 2 weeks, during which the community became the learning classroom for *Deep Ecology* and the *Vision Quest*. Learning spaces were scattered around the village – under the sacred tree at the monastery; in the rice fields below the protected forest; and in the community forest. Living with indigenous Karen families provided a unique opportunity to observe and practice their daily rhythms of life intertwined with deep connection and reverence for nature. The physical relocation to the intentional eco-community Pun Pun, the final module *Foundations in Ecology* also shifted emphasis from experiential connection with nature to an approach of curiosity and scientific exploration, inadvertently linking science and spirituality.

### 5. Skillful Means for Social Transformation

The *Mindful Facilitation for Empowerment* (TOT) remained a powerful learning journey for the participants. The contemplative rhythm of the course through mindfulness practices made it a deep internal process, alongside participatory learning and developing facilitation skills. The final module on Mindful Activism proved quite popular especially with participants from places with challenging social-political dynamics (Hong Kong, Myanmar). The training offered inspiration, as well as a rich source of learning and exchange of activists' personal stories, and diverse case studies – shared by both guests as well as participants themselves.

## Learning Outcomes and Future Plans

A long-term participant summarises their experience:



*"Joining ALT was like being reborn, experiencing so much learning that greatly contributed to my peaceful life. ALT was the right choice for my personal and professional development. [Knowledge] has been continuously applied in my projects, used to benefit the whole organization through sharing skills and knowledge to help the management team, whole staff engagement, school of public health training and to social media community. I am so proud to have been part of ALT."*

*Kimsear, Cambodia*

As for the future of the program, amidst the Coronavirus pandemic the team is considering postponing the start of the next cycle until December 2020. In order to capture the needs of a growing number of people stepping into activism, who are looking for inspiration and lessons learned to guide them in their own actions, the 5th cycle of ALT will also focus more exclusively on the topic of mindful activism, including knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for active and inspiring changemakers.

### **Finding wonder at "the nexus of spirituality and science"**

a reflection by Ilana Nyveen

I decided to join ALT for the ecology dimension which spanned three weeks . . . I remembered why I started studying ecology in the first place. the sheer diversity of life is awe-inspiring and I find immense joy in trudging around barefoot through forests. In some (though importantly not all) ways, studying ecology has distanced me from those feelings. It's easy to get lost in the numbers and the scientific writing and the chaos of trying to quantify organisms that have no interest in being quantified. I still love science, but I adore climbing trees. These interests sometimes feel hard to resolve. I was taught not to stray from the path while hiking in order to preserve the environment around me. Should loving the forest mean not disturbing it? It reminded me of what I learned in Tanzania about fortress conservation, the practice of sectioning off areas for Nature and areas for US - spoiler alert: it is rarely that simple.

I had a conversation with a wonderful

environmental educator who was also participating in the course about this tension. She said she felt the same way, but told me I should be easier on myself. I am also part of the ecosystem and I'm not obligated to be a misanthrope just because I'm an environmentalist. It's okay to let myself enjoy things for what they are instead of piling so much baggage and guilt onto them that it becomes impossible to distinguish what is real and what is projection.

### **A Breather in Life:** Personal reflection on the Awakening Leadership Training journey by Marcelo Viotto

The opportunity of living together in Wongsanit Ashram sets the atmosphere for a community-based life in a beautiful nature-abundant place. Our daily practices of Qigong and meditation helps us to be mindful of our actions throughout the days. And the delicious home-made Thai food adds an extra dose of happiness to our learning process.

As for myself, the five months that I joined the program has also been a breather in life, a moment to stop and rethink life and paths taken. I feel sometimes it is necessary to let go, leave home and go away in order to see our lives from another perspective. In this program I found a safe place for sharing, being myself and finding commonalities among people from different places and life stories. In the end, I could say I left home and I found a home elsewhere, in which I made friends I'll carry on for years to come. For all of this, I'm very grateful for the ALT experience.

For more information check out the official Awakening Leadership Training website:  
[www.awakeningleadership.net](http://www.awakeningleadership.net)





## The Story is One of So Many: Reflections on Ratan Barua

Matthew Weiner, *Princeton University*

**T**he story is one of so many. A Bangladeshi Hindu family moves to New York and struggles. They take up residence in a dilapidated apartment building in Bushwick, Brooklyn. It's what they can afford. They have financial problems, no community, and their teenage daughter cannot adjust. Locked in the bathroom, she overdoses on sleeping pills. The family is helpless to handle the logistics of death. They want to bring their daughter home. Across the hall a Muslim Bangladeshi tells them about a man named Ratan Barua, known to help. He is a former student leader, freedom fighter, and Buddhist monk. Now, he is just a man who helps. Who knows why?

He grew up very wealthy because his father fled British rule and moved to Burma, where he became a successful businessman and cared for the poor. When the Burmese nationalized all industry, Ratan's family lost everything and crawled back to Chittagong as impoverished villagers with barely enough rice to eat. Still, they gave to those worse off than themselves. Ratan learned about uncertainty and instability, and most importantly about the need to give no matter how low one was. He learned it from his father, he says, and from words spoken by the Buddha about death and giving and why a pure heart is far more precious than gold.

The neighbor who tells the grieving parents about Ratan knows nothing about his story. He has never met him. He hears only that this man named Ratan helps. Who knows why? So this neighbor finds him at his family's tourist shop, near Ground Zero. Ratan works the nightshift, unsafe for others. They sell miniatures of the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, subway maps, and I love NY shirts, but mostly it is cigarettes and lotto. To every customer Ratan says "thank you, and good luck." The neighbor explains the situation in between sales, and

brings the Hindu couple to Ratan's home in Woodhaven, Queens, the next day. It is a narrow house, one residential block from the elevated J Train. Ratan lives here, with his brother's family and a revolving cluster of people in need.

This day Ratan has dealt with human rights abuse in Bangladesh and with an immigration problem of another client. He is tired from the night before, which got him home at 2:00 a.m., and from taking care of guests: a woman abused by her husband has stayed with them for weeks; an orphaned girl whose parents were killed in a car accident. He has his own chronic health problems caused by extreme overwork and the experience of physical violence and torture he endured back home, about which he never speaks.

I talk often to Ratan, and when we meet or find each other on the phone, his greeting is always the same. "How is your everything?" he asks. In return, I ask about his health. "So so," he says. "Rest sometime," I suggest. He laughs. "When I'm dead, *then* I can rest," he says clearly. We laugh together. "While I am on the planet, so I should *do* something." His laughter increases.

He sits with the couple over so many curries, and then fruit, and then tea, and then more tea that his sister-in-law brings from the kitchen. This is the routine at his home. One cannot escape eating a great deal of food when one comes to this house in Woodhaven, Queens. I have experienced it countless times, coming to his home as an organizer with the Interfaith Center of New York, and as a researcher concerned with civil society and religious leadership, and as someone who would later become a chaplain concerned with service and social change.

I came again, purely as a friend, just last week. Ratan was sick with a recent diagnosis, and family members were out for the day, yet to my exasperation he had cooked me a five-curry meal by the time I arrived.

With the grieving couple, he feeds them. He listens to their story. They drink tea. He puts on glasses and takes down their names and their daughter's name. He asks questions to aid his task. "All this time I am praying," he explains. "Sending them kindness. My heart is the most important thing. With a pure heart, he wants to clarify, then joy will follow like a shadow." He smiles, "So it is two jobs at once."

Then he has the information he needs. He tells them he will do what he can. As they leave, he starts calling. He calls Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists. Most are Bangladeshi. Friends, community members, small-time organizers, art and poetry groups he knows from the multiplying associations with which he works.

There are comrades from Bangladesh when he was a student leader, when he was a freedom fighter, when he was a monk walking from village to village providing blessings, teaching, and lobbying in Dacha for his people. When he joined the independence movement, Ratan oversaw food distribution for troops in Chittagong. He fed the poor as the son of a rich man, as the son of a poor man, and then as a warrior. Buddhists were just one percent of the population, and so Ratan worked closely with

Christians, Muslims and Hindus. A lifetime later in Queens, I note his comfort working across difference in cases such as collecting funds for a funeral. "Yes, I work and pray with everyone," he says. "We fought together. We didn't *care* about this and that religion. In those days, when one of us died in battle, we all attended the funeral. A Muslim funeral or a Christian funeral. And *lots* of people were dying."

I have collected dozens of stories about Ratan, and reflect on them as I would an ethnography, puzzle, or parable. Any story will do. He relays tales about attending to the dead: his sister when they were impoverished and recently returned from Burma, comrades and enemies in battle, prayers uttered as a monk; and now in New York, no longer a monk, never to return to the country he fought for.

Along the way I ask questions: about his life, about his activism, about being Buddhist. I am curious as a student of Buddhism, because his work is driven by the Buddha who tells us that life is impermanent and precious, and that having a pure heart is the essential tool we need to face this impossible situation we find ourselves in.

I am also curious as a scholar and interfaith organizer, because while we work to connect religious leaders through carefully designed programs, and think though the intricacies of religious difference and moral encounter, Ratan's whole lifeworld is an unfolding interfaith extravaganza, one infused and driven by religious identity and secular civic engagement so diverse it would astound the likes of Toqueville, who long ago wrote that reaching across difference to build voluntary associations was the lifeblood of American democracy. This man, his friends, religiously diverse from halfway around the world, the life blood of democracy and what I will call both calculated and spontaneous kindness.

But mostly I know Ratan as a friend. For him, the hard lines that are drawn by professional organizers and scholars between sections of our lives is crazy talk. We laugh together so much. Over his self

characterization as a troublemaker on issues of human rights, his unflinching and at times unhealthy commitment to helping whoever asks, his recognition that the world will remain swelled with suffering and mistrust in spite of his work. It does not change his approach. "All my life I have dedicated to this work," he says, as if with glee "and everything is just as bad!"

If I ask Ratan for help, he is there. When I was sick, he was there. When our dog, who we love, faced death from eating twenty-seven Aspirin, Ratan instantly promised to dedicate all of his merit to her as only a fool would, and as if by miracle, she lived. He had happened to call me when we sat crying in the veterinarian's office. I told him after, and he had such a look on his face. He told me about his beloved dog in Bangladesh, to whom he gave a daily bath. She was a lion, he says as he makes fists and shoulders and shows his own strength. It was during the time of the liberation movement. He fled to the jungle in Agartala State, India, for training, and his dog died. "We missed each other," he said, "and she died of a broken heart."

The grieving family of the daughter has left, and Ratan makes calls, and calls for others to make calls. That night and the next days he shuttles between meetings: community problems here, human rights back home, a planning session for a cultural program, a religious service that as a former monk he organizes, a women's empowerment event. In each case he explains the situation of this family, collects funds, notes the name and donation.

Late evening from his shop, he makes more calls. So many are to those previously helped: when they first arrived, with their marriage in jeopardy, in need of funds for a crisis like this. There are multitudes, now forgotten, and when they find him again, and thank him, he pretends to remember, and thanks them back. In fact, cataloguing the range of his work and associations, something I try to do for my dissertation on faith based organizing in New York, is maddening business. Who has he helped? Everyone. What does he do? So many things, he laughs. How

many people? Oh, lots of people!

I learn by shared work, as I am an interfaith organizer, and more importantly our friendship. Inviting him to a program about domestic violence and explaining what it is, he explains back his most recent cases. Asking him about the document on his couch teaches me about a Bengali poetry group he belongs to called Bangaloka. It means Jungle Leaf. What other groups? Lots of groups!

Sometimes we seek his help. Chaplains with permission to visit immigrants held without trial by Homeland Security identified a prisoner from Bangladesh, with no English. Ratan was dispatched. It was the prisoner's first conversation since being incarcerated. How many years? Ratan took a phone number, and from his shop that night he called his parents. They had not heard from their son, and feared him dead. Their family was from Norsinnngdi, the father explained. Ratan reached out to this community in Queens, made calls, spoke about the prisoner as he passed through meetings with activists, social workers, and poets. Then he brought the prisoner home made food, tea, money, new clothes, and a message from home.

Returning to our story, of the suicide and the family, he makes calls, and sends a selected few to visit the family. "My parents didn't know anyone," their son Kishore tells me. "Mr. Barua sent people, just to be with us. He also dealt with the police. Can you understand?" he asks me after a moment where his throat grips silence over the phone. In the months and years that follow Ratan's circles become the family's support system. "It is important that you understand," Kishore urges, after he is able. "Yes, money. We could hardly pay rent. Yes. But he sat with my mother. He sent friends."

Along the way he navigates otherwise unknown portals of bureaucracy: fills out forms, gathers a passport and secondary documentation, negotiates with the funeral home, US and Bengali immigration officials, their corresponding consulates, the airline.

In cases where there is no way to certify that the person was a Bengali citizen, a relative of the deceased must certify such; thus, a plane ticket can be purchased, and the body returned. Ratan often signs as a relative. Otherwise, he explains easily, they will remain in this morgue forever.

In those first days he also gathers from individuals with whom he has stark political difference. He has helped many of them to our surprise, as we tend to argue that interfaith requires theological or political alignment. Ratan has reason to be weary. He has suffered at the hands of countrymen who disagree with his call for a secular government and religious freedom. Still, “I don’t care who they are, I will help them,” he says. “We are all human beings. We are all just the five elements. So it’s our moral duty.” I ask if partnership leads to their liberalizing. “I don’t think so.” He says easily. While it is a hope many of us have, for Ratan the responsibility is to act. “I am part of nature. I am just doing my job.”

Now, calling from his shop, he deals with drugged, drunk, homeless customers buying cigarettes and lotto tickets. Thank you and good luck, he says to each of them. He also receives calls about new problems. How is your everything, he asks me when I call him that night.

Rest sometime, I suggest.

And we laugh together.

He returns home well past midnight, to Woodhaven Queens. He notes the donors and the amounts given.

And here is something I am trying to get at. It is not too much to suggest that Ratan’s central moral practice as a Buddhist is a kind of radical *dana*. The Buddhist idea of *dana* is traditionally focused on giving to monks, by which one gains merit for this lifetime and the next. Ratan has done this kind of thing plenty, but for him *dana* is giving to whoever suffers in front of him, man, woman, or dog, in the spirit of, what we could call reflecting back on it, spontaneous abandon, straight from the heart.

Indeed, though he is an exemplar of how one can develop and share what scholars call social capital, defined as the civic connections one builds through ongoing and overlapping group activity, this technical concept misses the undeniable texture of such a being.

“We can carry *nothing* with us when we go,” he says on an occasion when he is nearing death from his illness, and I am for some stupid reason telling him about Tocqueville, “so while I am on the planet I should *do* something.” His voice holds surprise that others may behave otherwise. “If you act with a pure mind,” he continues “then joy will follow you like a shadow.”

While many of us dedicate our lives to just causes, friendship with Ratan makes me, anyway, reflect on why and how I do the work I do. Yes, I belong to the right organizations and can point to my work, both professional and volunteer, and feel decent about it all. And yet when I reflect on it, and think of Ratan, it leaves me, I must confess, a bit uncomfortable with myself.

The story is one of many. He calls, collects funds, sends friends. In one conversation, I relay my civic analysis. He knows I am writing about him. “The girl was in high school,” Ratan explains. “She loved her family and her friends. She was excited to move to New York. Scared, but excited to do well in school, to make new friends. She laughed a lot, when she was happy.”

He has made calls. He visits the mother. Soon, he has enough money. He has new cases. He handles logistics and funds for the family. He explains expenses to the larger donors, has kept a detailed log, and gives back what he has not spent. Some refuse its return, and he hands this to the family. He has not taken money for his subway pass or his tea.

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# Buddhist Perspective on Protecting Vulnerable Communities (Minorities): Citizenship, Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion or Belief

Mangesh Dahiwale

## 1. Background

### 1.1. *Buddhism in the South Asia and South East Asia*

Buddhism was born in India. In a short span of a few centuries, Buddhism travelled the East and West of India and became civilizing force for many communities. It influenced arts, aesthetics, politics, and culture wherever it went. Today Buddhism remains alive in the countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka in South Asia. It is a dominant religion in South Asia except in Malaysia and Indonesia where Buddhism is still popular among the Chinese ethnic minorities (McMahan, 2012).

Buddhism continues to play an important role in the contemporary world. In India where Buddhism was born, it is the main religion in the Himalayan region and is resurging throughout India after the great conversion movement inaugurated in 1956 (Omvedt, 2013). Buddhist communities all over the world have undergone a great change due to the scientific and political changes taking place in the world.

Buddhism is rich in diversity and no two Buddhist communities are alike. The intersection of ethnicity, language, and culture has given rise to different forms of Buddhism in different places. Buddhism is known as a peaceful religion and

wherever it went it created great civilizations. In the recent times Buddhism is facing the complex challenges arose out of political boundaries and political ideologies. Some Buddhist groups in countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand have become aggressive and they are termed as “militant Buddhists” (Lehr, 2019 and Tambiah, 1992). In this situation, it is essential to understand Buddhist perspective on emerging issues facing humanity today. As forms of Buddhism are diverse, it is futile to define Buddhism only on the basis of its cultural form to offer any perspective on the universal problems faced by communities.

### 1.2. *What is Buddhism?*

It is difficult to define Buddhism as the rites and rituals of Buddhism change from country to country and even within the country. Buddhism, with its diversity, also eludes definition according to Western ways of defining religion. Though Buddhism has acquired different cultural forms, its basic teachings are common in all countries.

Basic Buddhism includes the Four Noble Truths, the teachings of dependent origination, the importance of the triple gems (Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha), and Four Sublime Abodes. Any classification of Buddhism will include these basic teachings of the

Buddha. The Buddha condensed his teachings into only two teachings: suffering and end of suffering. This focus on understanding suffering, its cause, its end, and the path leading to the end of suffering is the essential teaching of the Buddha (Wallis, 2007).

### 1.3. *Engaging Buddhism with Contemporary Issues*

Though Buddhism is the oldest religion in the world, it has been continuously engaging with the social, political, and cultural issues throughout its historical journey. In the modern times, Buddhism has engaged with social, political, and economic issues. A new movement within Buddhism has begun independently in the name of Socially Engaged Buddhism in several parts of world.

Increasingly this movement within Buddhism is gaining strength day by day. Some of the prominent Buddhists who engaged with problems of the modern times include people like Tai Xu from China, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar from India, His Holiness the Dalai Lama from Tibet, Venerable Mahaghosananda from Cambodia, Thich Nhat Hahn from Vietnam, Sulak Sivaraksa from Thailand (Queen and King, 1996). They draw their intellectual resources and experiences from their deep engagement with the Buddhism itself and try to apply Buddhist resources to engage with the contemporary problems.

## 2. Buddhist Perspective on Citizenship

### 2.1. *Concept of State in Buddhism*

Buddhism is not an anarchist philosophy. It prescribes certain mode of relating with each other based equality, liberty, and fraternity. The foundational values of any society must be based on *brahma-viharas*: *metta* (loving kindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic love), and *uppekha* (boundless love for all and all times). It does not prescribe any form of government. The ideal government encouraged by Buddha is ethics-based democracy.

Buddha encouraged the kings of his times to be ethical and seek the welfare of his people. While describing the evolution of human societies, Buddha showed how the rulers were first chosen with the consent of people. He did not prescribe a form of government, and modelled his Sangha (the community of his followers) along the lines of democratic principles. Hazra (1998) discussed at length the constitution of the Buddhist Sangha and how they contained the procedures to deliberate. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), helped draft the Indian constitution, included a parliamentary democratic model inspired by the parliamentary democracy that had existed within the Buddhist Sangha:

*It is not that India did not know Parliaments or Parliamentary Procedure. A study of the Buddhist Bhikshu Sanghas discloses that not only there were Parliaments—for the Sanghas were nothing but Parliaments—but the Sanghas knew and observed all the rules of Parliamentary Procedure known to modern times. They had rules regarding seating arrangements, rules regarding Motions, Resolutions, Quorum, Whip, Counting of Votes, Voting by Ballot, Censure Motion, Regularization, Res Judicata, etc. Although these rules of Parliamentary Procedure were applied by the Buddha to the meetings of the Sanghas, he must have borrowed them from the rules of the Political Assemblies functioning in the country in his time. (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly of India on 25 November 1950.)*

### 2.2. *Buddhism and Democracy*

After his great awakening under the Bodhi Tree, the Buddha understood the fundamental nature of existence. The key insight into conditioned co-arising has a clear implication on understanding human

beings as interdependent beings and human societies as depending on each other for their very existence. These two insights are technically termed as *idappaccayatā* and *pa icca-samuppāda*. One of the founders of socially- engaged Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hahn, termed this reality of dependent existence as *interbeing* (Hahn, 1997).

The Buddha taught that the human beings do not exist in the atomised form, they co-arise depending on certain conditions. They do not have an immutable and independent soul. Their existence depends on the environment and other human beings.

The human mind is a natural phenomenon that arises depending on the conditions. The evolution of human mind is the historic process. It is not the evolution of the individual mind, but rather the evolution of the human mind in general, which arises depending on human cultures and the societies into which an individual is born. The human mind is social mind. The formation of identity consciousness is a social and cultural process. In technical Buddhist terminology, it is known as *atta* or *atma*. The Buddha taught *anatta*: the absence of a permanent soul. Garfield (2001) described intrinsic relationship between Buddhism and Democracy.

Any identity based on territory, membership of certain groups, gender, race, caste, and anything that confines a human mind to restricted identity produces conflict in society, that ultimately leads to violence and suffering. From the Buddhist perspective, the awakening to reality of dependent origination is to let go of identity. All the identities are therefore tentative. The use of identities is only for the pragmatic purpose and to serve the ultimate goal of welfare and the happiness of the humanity. From the dynamic of dependent origination (or interdependence), arises the fundamental value of fraternity (or community). With the arising of fraternity, the equal opportunity to all follows, and when the human beings are free to actualize their potential, the liberty is materialized.

Thus, the foundational values of democracy are in accordance with the basic teachings of the Buddha. So there is no contradiction between the Buddha's teachings and democratic societies.

Dr. Ambedkar, who was instrumental in providing India with a democratic constitution based on liberty, equality, and fraternity, declared in an All-India Radio broadcast speech on 3 October 1954 that:

*“Positively, my Social Philosophy, may be said to be enshrined in three words: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Let no one, however, say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French-Revolution. I have not. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my Master, the Buddha. In his philosophy, liberty and equality had a place. (...) He gave the highest place to fraternity as the only real safeguard against the denial of liberty or equality or fraternity which was another name for brotherhood or humanity, which was again another name for religion.”*

### 2.3. Asoka: Welfare State and Citizenship

Once the relationship between the individuals and the state is established, defining the nature of citizenship follows. The model for a welfare state is reflected in the way Emperor Ashoka ruled India. Emperor Ashoka modeled his Kingdom on Buddhist principles. History has it that Ashoka created the first welfare state in which he sought the welfare of all. His Royal edicts summarize the Buddhist perspective on citizenship. Sen (1998) also explained how Ashoka ruled India ethically and was the founder of welfare state in ancient India. Allen (2012) gave a detailed account of how Ashoka ruled India based on the principles of a welfare state.

*In the past, state business was not transacted nor were reports delivered to the king at all*

*hours. But now I have given this order, that at any time, whether I am eating, in the women's quarters, the bed chamber, the chariot, the palanquin, in the park or wherever, reporters are to be posted with instructions to report to me the affairs of the people so that I might attend to these affairs wherever I am ... Truly, I consider the welfare of all to be my duty, and the root of this is exertion and the prompt dispatch of business. (Allen, 2012: Rock Edict 6)*

Thus the Government is duty bound to strive all the time for the welfare of all. Emperor Ashoka did not discriminate between the citizens of his state and strove for the welfare of all irrespective of their religions and beliefs. In Buddhism, any formation of the political state should have an ethical basis and it must seek welfare of all. The state in any form of government must ideally be a welfare state.

### **3. Buddhist Perspective on Freedom of Thoughts, Conscience, and Religion or Belief**

#### **3.1. Buddhism and Human Rights**

Keown (2013) described human rights can find their roots in Buddha's teachings. Buddhism being a process philosophy lays stress on understanding cause-effect. Nothing is taken for granted as a belief without examining the evidence of that belief. In Kalama Sutta (Bodhi 2012), which can be termed as a charter of freedom and freethinking, the Buddha encouraged his followers to examine everything vigorously and cautioned against believing anything that has been handed down by tradition or custom.

This freedom to think for oneself is the core practice of Buddhism. However, the freedom to think is not unrestricted. It is subjected to two tests: if it leads to the wellbeing of self and that of other. Thus, the Buddha cautioned against the speculative beliefs that ultimately lead to confusion and conflict in society. The method to persuade others is clearly laid down as the persuasions with love and based on equal

relationship between parties in dialogue. Instead of enforcing one's ideas on others, the Buddha recommended dialogues and debates as a way to persuade others. This is the reason why Buddhism spread all over the world peacefully and without causing conflicts in the society.

The great Buddhist rulers did not force their Buddhist beliefs on their citizens, instead promoted diversity of opinions and dialogue. While the Buddhist path stresses importance of studying prevalent views, both religious and non-religious, but it does not advocate prosecution of the people based on their views or belief. Right view is the goal of the Buddhist practices and it is also the beginning of the process of transformation.

#### **3.2. Buddhism is an Interpersonal Path to Freedom**

Right view is the understanding of the Four Noble Truths: suffering, cause of suffering, end of suffering, and the path towards the end of suffering. This framework is not only useful to understand the suffering that we all encounter based on afflicted emotions, but also to understand structural sufferings that emerge out of unjust social structures such as racism, patriarchy, nationalism, and hierarchical societies like the Indian caste system. Buddhism does not only teach coexistence with others, but also continuous understanding of what is feared as other is due to lacking knowledge about it.

Buddha encouraged his disciples to understand causes and conditions of the emerged situations and experiences. This methodology to understand the present state of the world is useful, since understanding increases the possibility of transforming for the better. The Buddhists seek conscious evolution instead of leaving it to chance or destiny. It does not recommend violence as the method to transform individuals and societies.

The Buddha was the rare person to encourage the comparative study of the philosophies existing at his time in India. The Buddhist texts are replete with discussions with people having different views and



opinions. Buddhism therefore favours freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.

Kramer (2007) described the Noble Eightfold Path taught by the Buddha as the interpersonal path to freedom.

#### 4. Buddhist Perspective on Protecting Vulnerable Communities (minorities)

In the Southeast Asia, Buddhism is the dominant religion. Majority of the countries in South and Southeast Asia emerged after de-colonisation. Colonisation shaped their political status and their national boundaries. The new nation-states had to resolve the problem of the geographical boundaries. This has manifested into boundary disputes and the status of citizenship. The national identity is clashing with the religious identity, and, in some places, with ethnic identity.

As interdependence is the nature of human existence, Buddha taught that Metta is the foundation of the human society. Metta is an attitude of respect and reverence for a fellow human being and it can be summarised in the formula: As I am, so they are (Ambedkar, 1957). This identification with other human beings is the foundation of ethics and ethical society. As a political value, it can be called fraternity (or gender neutral term, community).

When metta permeates a society, it creates equal opportunities for all. The people who identify themselves with others vibrate with others. This vibration based on metta gives all an equal chance to strive for their human development. This harmonious relation with all that lives is defined in Buddhism as anukampa (being in resonance and harmony with others). That is why the Buddha encouraged his followers to love all human beings just like a mother loves her only child. Buddhism always favored civic nationalism over ethnic and religious nationalism. Hence, the minorities of any background cannot be persecuted in the name of their religions or ethnicities.

Buddhist teachings do not allow treating minorities with contempt. The unit of development is

an individual, and their identities are not the unit for development. The persecution of people based on ethnic identities is not in accordance with Buddha's teachings.

The heart of Buddha's teaching is summarized in the Karaniya Metta Sutta chanted by Buddhists all over the Asia whenever they register their peaceful protest:

Let none deceive another,  
Or despise any being in any state.

Let none through anger or ill-will  
Wish harm upon another.

Even as a mother protects with her life  
Her child, her only child,  
So with a boundless heart  
Should one cherish all living beings;

Radiating kindness over the entire world:  
Spreading upwards to the skies,  
And downwards to the depths;  
Outwards and unbounded,  
Freed from hatred and ill-will.

Whether standing or walking, seated or lying down  
Free from drowsiness,  
One should sustain this recollection.  
This is said to be the sublime abiding.  
By not holding to fixed views,  
The pure-hearted one, having clarity of vision,  
Being freed from all sense desires,  
Is not born again into this world.

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## Learning from the Dark Moments of History

Myint Zaw

Here is a translated and edited excerpt from Myint Zaw's presentation on DVB television in Yangon at the launch of his six booklets in December 2019. This was three days before the International Court of Justice hearing on the case for genocide in Myanmar. The six booklets document and question what we can learn from history, and through analysis highlight eight factors that lead to pathways of darkness. The books aim to contribute to wider discussion as a way of moving from the 'dark moments' towards the light (edited by Jill Jameson).

I would like to explain why we arranged a book series, "Learning from the dark moments of history." These books present the issues you all might have been thinking about lately. We came to discuss peace around 2013/2014, the time sectarian violence was looming in Myanmar. Although we, activists and educators concentrated mainly on environmental and other issues around that time, mass violence happening around us sent us a warning sign that actions for strengthening communal peace and preventing various forms of violence are urgently needed. Since that time, we came to believe that we should do everything possible to prevent mass violence and inhumanity so that we can live together peacefully in a multi-ethnic society. I studied all the available materials on peace and conflict over the last two years, and learnt from many sources where we can draw lessons for our society.

I intentionally chose the title of this book series as *The Dark Moments of History*, but when we speak 'mass violence' in Burmese, it can be open to unintended interpretations. However, mass violence in history has always long-term consequences, and will last painfully long in the memories. That is why I aim to highlight that learning from tragic events of history is necessary.

While these tragic events are called 'mass violence' in some places, it can also be named as genocide or ethnic cleansing in others. I use the term 'dark moments' to refer to all of them. Let's begin to see what had happened in history.

Among a series of six books, the first one is a collection of poems. As poems strike the heart chord directly, it is better to communicate people's emotions through the poems. The title of the poem is "I Believe."

I believe in the sun  
Though it is late in rising  
I believe in love  
Though it is absent  
I believe in God  
Though he is silent.

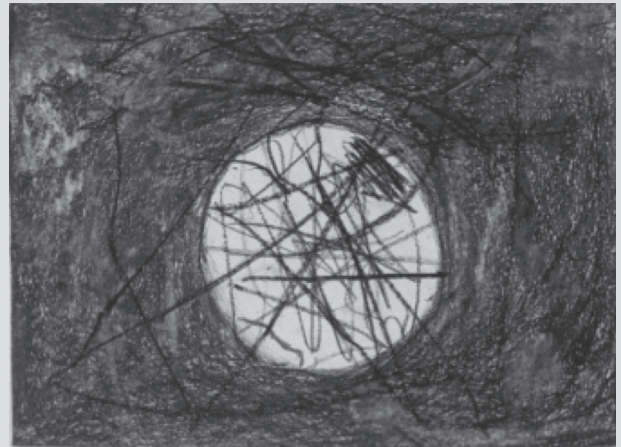
Originally, this poem was written in French and later translated into English. It was found on the wall of a cave near Cologne, Germany. It was a hiding place Jews took refuge during the Second World War under Nazi control. They were longing for escape from deadliest torture. They have been waiting to see the light at the end of darkest hours. The people hiding in darkness are

longing for better days. In the hours before the dawn, they believed the sun will be shining soon. Although they could not find kindness, compassion and love, they still believed these things existed in this world. They believed in God. Even though they were not being blessed by God or good Karma, they still believed the divine had been listening to their prayers.

You can imagine their tragedies as the dangerous events are happening around them. Their desire to escape from the dark moment is so clear. After the poem, let me show you a picture. This painting is drawn by a child artist who lived in IDP (internally displaced people) camps in Kachin State, the northern part of Myanmar. This drawing came from a trauma healing arts programme. In this painting, you can see the moon. The child attempted to brush thick strokes with dark colour over his own drawing of the full moon. Every human wishes to see the moonlight but not this child. Under normal circumstances, children like to play under the moon. In contrast, our children from conflict-ridden Kachin State do not like the moonlight as they were so afraid to be exposed. Let me say a few words that come together with the drawing.

“I never thought the moon would die.  
But I remember at that moment  
I prayed the moon could die  
Because the light of the moon could expose us,  
and our fleeing road.”

The emotional reaction of the Jews from the cave and that of the IDP children from Northern Myanmar are not different at all, although the former longing for the light and the latter fearful for the dark. I feel that both of them witnessed the dark moments of history. These miserable things happened not only in the previous decades, but also at our present moments. Within our lifetime, we have been seeing evils in our daily life. Some of the experiences we recently learned can be called dark moments. If you listen, you can hear the voices from the



*The Marks of the Moon.*  
N-dau Brang, Je Yang IDP Camp Primary School.  
Crayon on paper, 55 x 39.5 cm.

cave. If you try, you can see them in flesh and bones. How are we going to stop anxiety of children with fear for the light? What are our duties to our fellow human beings? I try to see a way forward in this series of books and try to share their feelings.

Now let me show you a map. It was published in the *Washington Post* newspapers on 21 September 2015. It indicates a number of countries, with different levels risk of mass violence in each. The 10 countries at the highest risk of experiencing a future episode of mass killing where Myanmar is ranked as No.1.

When we traced back to our recent events, we can see similar maps showing risk of mass atrocities since 2011-2012. The experts on this subject are warning us we have the highest risk. The aim of this event was to present the complementary value of research and arts. The two poems above are the artwork of ordinary people. The map indicating risk of mass violence is the result of scientific research. The colour over Myanmar on the map is quite dark. Why are we in a dark state? Why have we reached such a higher risk level than other countries? We have to answer all these questions. Why did it happen? We must find the answer. We can all look back at the past in this new book series.

How can a country or a society fall into the darkness? Only if we know the causal factors, can we

avoid tragedy in the future. Analysis identified eight factors locating the pathways to the dark. They existed in the past and they all are present now, and we will see darker moments if they continue to prevail.

**1) Long term consequences of war:** We are living in a country with civil war where suppressing enemies is the goal. Our country has been in this situation since independence, and, we, citizens have grown up in a conflict state. When a country wages war, it must have an enemy. Speaking about threats, social construction of national enemy is common in a conflict state. Then the need to eliminate the enemy will be validated. Any act of oppression is justifiable under the name of war. When we have war, we are very prone to mass violence. Information flow is disturbed, making it easier for war crimes to be committed during the information blackout. During the war, the armed forces were stationed in towns and villages with civilians falling victims to their fighting. We must always remember that there is a very thin line between war and atrocities.

**2) History of violence:** If a country repeatedly uses violence as a means to oppress its own citizens, it is likely to use the same methods in future. Did we attempt all solutions before resorting to war? Do we have a good track record of successful dialogue and negotiation? Does our country's history show how many times did we use armed forces to settle a dispute? We need to consider how much we opt for peace instead of war. If a nation has a history of violence, it is tempted to resolve the conflict repeatedly with violent means, creating a cycle of violence. For those who suffered from violence will see revenge as an option. Definitely they want to escape from fear and oppression. There is a high possibility that they will also use forceful action and violence. There a never-ending darkness surrounding us. Terrorist actions are by-products of violent crackdowns in history. Making transition from the light to the dark became easy. We should bear in mind terrorist events happened in our own history. What is driving us to the darkest spot over the map?

**3) A culture of impunity:** When perpetrators are not made accountable for their actions, law and order must be enforced to prevent offenses from being repeated, and only in this way can we stop mass violence. Otherwise we cannot achieve peace. We should examine if we have a strong culture of impunity. It will not let us live peacefully. It creates the wrong attitude of "we can also do it."

**4) In a society with *authoritarian power or centralized power*,** there is little chance to scrutinize the people in power. If the power is concentrated in a dictator or a dictatorial system, it is overwhelmingly difficult to stop terrorism sponsored by these systems. We have been struggling all our lives to escape from an authoritarian system. Our past is full of struggles. However, where are we now? How is the power structure operating in our society? Let us think if the existing power concentration prompts the terrorist acts of power holders. We have had authoritarian leaders in this world such as Stalin and Hitler. When a leader has too much power, he too could lead the society into darkness. Then we all go into darkness.

**5) Extreme ideologies:** Communism and fascism are examples of ideologies that have ruled the world. We've also seen the rise of ideologies that are based on religions. In a society with competing extreme ideologies, it is hard to create space for tolerance and flexibility. What it can offer is mental rigidity and lacking in cognitive flexibility. We need social harmony to thrive as a society. We need to communicate with each other to build unity and social cohesion. We must appreciate each other with mutual respect and not foster rigidity. The more extreme ideologies the people believe, the easier to produce darker moments. It calls for intense rivalry and is associated with 'us versus them' social divisions. We need to be careful of extreme ideologies no matter what they are based on: ethnicity, politics or religious beliefs. Then we tend to blame or point the finger towards others for all the bad things that happened to us. It is time to think whether we also have had extremism that could



trigger people's emotion and outbursts. We must find an answer for that, because we need to remove the darkness.

6) **Widespread discrimination.** We cannot do nation-building with discrimination. We cannot attain prosperity as a society. What discrimination can do is only to destroy the nation. Or, divide the country or burn it down. Every citizen in this country must be able to enjoy his or her fundamental rights so that all can live equally. Here let me quote the writer Ko Tar from *Chindwin* magazine that if, "we go for a real nation; we must aim for equality for all."

Only when we can embrace the concept of equality will there be a long lasting national will to eliminate discrimination. Now is the time to examine how strongly ideology promotes discrimination within society. Ko Tar's interpretation of 'equality' entails the right to live with dignity. Your dignity as a human being is valued the same as mine. Do we have such equality in our society? Do we respect others' right to live with dignity? The government may also try using a populist approach rather than condemning discrimination. Instead, it is the way to a failed State. Are we capable enough to save the country from being a failed state? Would it be possible to be free from social divisions? We must all consider this.

7) **Economic crisis** and economic hardships are breeding grounds for evil. An economic downturn is never the sole reason for the occurrence of mass violence, but economic factors are important for conflicts in the making. However, it is very common to see economic problems as narrow choices for the leaders. When the economic condition is not good, they are likely to face a political crisis. To divert the people's attention from their mismanagement, what they often do is to use religion or play the race card in political games. They can trigger the anger of people who suffered from economic decline. They point the finger at a group of people as responsible for their troubles. When we hear these kinds of accusations, we must think carefully. If we have other problems plus an economic downturn, what comes next is sparking violence.

8) Now we currently have risk of **increasing polarization**. People may have different opinions, but they also have common ground. There is always opportunity for meeting on common ground and we must find where it is located. However, polarization also occurs when people organize campaigns, such as the disagreement among ourselves around the Myitsone mega dam project, and the same thing happened in other issues very with sharp and contrasting voices. Social division is so huge and hostility towards each other is so visible. That kind of split is quite dangerous. Public discourse on digital platforms can be transformed into the real fighting on the ground at any time. Mass violence is not far away from this stage.

I hope you can relate all these eight factors in our situation. I also hope that our political leaders are willing to guide the people to common ground and build unity among us. I am worried they would encourage the extreme groups that increase polarization beyond what now exists. If this occurs, then the social divisions will be more entrenched than ever before. Let's use these 8 points to reflect on our own society.

One famous quote of the writer Primo Levi helps me spell out the significance of all these eight factors. He is an Italian Jewish writer who survived incarceration in the Auschwitz concentration camp. He said,

"It happened,

Therefore, it can happen again:

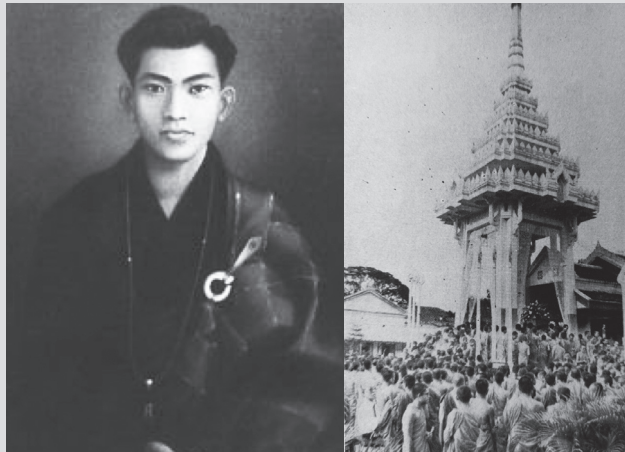
This is the core of what we have to say."

We want to be recorded in history that we are the people who tried our best. We want to be remembered as people who put all possible effort for a better world. Even if we are living in the dark moment, we would like to believe that we can bring light for this country.

§

## Sathian Bodhinanda (1929-1966): The “Layperson Sage”

Naris Charaschanyawong



*Sathian's Funeral*

Despite having been an “ordinary person” of Chinese descent and died at the rather young age of only 37. The funeral of Sathian Bodhinanda, at the famous Bangkok monastery Wat Thepsirin in 1967, did not only receive “a fire for the cremation” (*phra ratchathan phloengsop*) from the King of Thailand (*raja*), but was also financially supported and presided over by the then Supreme Patriarch (*sangharaja*) of the Thai monastic community (*sangha*). The number of people from all over the country who attended the funeral in order to show their respect to Sathian Bodhinanda was so large that the monastery Wat Thepsirin was overcrowded (the picture of the cremation ceremony shown in this article has never been published before).

For the occasion of the funeral of Sathian Bodhinanda, 14 cremation volumes were produced, possibly more than for any other “ordinary person” in Thailand’s history.

What made the life of Sathian Bodhinanda so extraordinary? Why did so many people develop strong faith in him? More than half a century after the death of this outstanding scholar and deep thinker, I wish to dedicate this article to the person who was called the “walking Pali canon”: Sathian Bodhinanda. In fact, given

his enormous importance for Thai Buddhism and Buddhist Studies, I believe that it is long overdue that people outside Thailand who are interested in Buddhism learn about Sathian’s extraordinary life and the lasting influence he has had on Thai Buddhism and Thai Buddhist studies. It is also regrettable that none of his works have been translated into a Western language; nor has, as far as I know, there been any significant publication outside Thailand about his life and teaching. This article intends to start to change this.

Sathian’s original surname was “Kamolmal” (กมล-มลาย), which he changed to Bodhinananda when he was 20 years old (“bodhinananda” can be translated as the “joy of [finding] awakening”). His Chinese name was Chen Mingde (陳明德). Sathian was born at 8 am on 17 June 1929. He had two elder sisters and two elder brothers (from a different mother). His father, Pengchang Saetang, returned to China, whilst Sathian’s mother, Malai Kamolmal, was still pregnant with him.

From one of his many cremation volumes, we can learn that the young Sathian was described as being “well-behaved as a young child. He liked to show respect to the Buddha and with his friends he playfully recited Buddhist texts. He once told me that when grown up, he did not intend to get married, but rather wants to show his respect to the Buddha, recite Buddhist texts and

abstain from doing any unwholesome deeds, which for him even included the slapping of mosquitoes and killing of any creature.”

At the age of 17, when having completed the 5th grade of secondary education, he decided not to pursue any formal education any longer, arguing that he needed the freedom to engage in his own independent exploration of knowledge. This was also the time when he met for the first time the well-known and highly educated Buddhist studies scholar Suchip Punyanuphap (1917-2000), who was at the time still ordained as a Buddhist monk with the ordination name “Sujivo” at the Bangkok monastery Wat Kanmatuyaram. This monastery was only a five minute walk away from Sathian’s house, which was located in Bangkok’s Chinatown.

During their first meeting, the young Sathian asked the senior Buddhist studies and Pali language scholar such a profound question about a Pali canonical text, that the Venerable Sujivo became deeply impressed. They quickly developed a deep dhammic relationship. Sujivo invited Sathian to write for the Buddhist journal *Dhammacakkhu* of which Sujivo was the editor. At the age of only 18, Sathian published his first article in *Dhammacakkhu*.

In the same year (1947), whilst still using his first surname Kamolmal, he wrote a letter to one of Thailand’s most influential and famous monks, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906-1993). In this letter, in which he expresses the deep respect he had for Buddhadasa, he invited Buddhadasa to give a Buddhist sermon in Thailand’s capital, Bangkok. Over the course of the following two decades, the two Buddhist thinkers must have written a number of letters to each other.

The last reply letter from Buddhadasa that can be found dates from 26 February 1963. In this letter, Buddhadasa praises one of Sathian’s books (even though it is not entirely clear which of Sathian’s books Buddhadasa is referring to, it seems rather likely that he praised the book *The Sage of the East*). In his autobiography Buddhadasa also says about Sathian the following: “[Sathian] possesses not only good knowledge [of Buddhism] but also a good memory. But when it comes to the interpretation of specific Dhamma teachings ... our understanding did differ, which is of course quite normal. He did not agree with me and in some of his books he expresses quite severe disagreement [with my

interpretations].”

There are other sources that show that from a young age Sathian was able to express his views, even when in disagreement with those of other thinkers, in a confident and eloquent way. It is reported that people listening to his talks were deeply impressed with his skill to communicate and defend his understanding of the Buddhist teaching in a humble and respectful way.

Over the course of his short life, Sathian wrote altogether more than 10 books and gave numerous public talks. In fact, to this day people still listen to and are deeply impressed by Sathian’s talks: on YouTube one can find more than 100 of his talks. This shows that, even though a rather long time has passed since his untimely death, people are still impressed with this young scholar’s profound Buddhist knowledge and the eloquent way he demonstrated it in his talks.

Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa, who himself attended several of Sathian’s talks, says about Sathian’s outstanding skills as a Buddhist speaker: “In terms of giving *dhamma* talks, apart from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Pannananda Bhiikhu, I cannot think of any other Thai with such an excellent ability to teach Buddhism.” However, it should also be pointed out that Sathian has had significant impact on Thai Buddhism not only through his many public talks and publications.

He was also vital in setting up the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) of Thailand which, to this day, has been one of the most successful and famous association in Thai Buddhism. Together with his dhammic friends Suphot Saengsombun (1923-1955) and Bunyong Wongwanit (1925-2015), Sathian established this association by taking the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) as a model. However, being strongly convinced that “the *dhamma* is not only beneficial, but also essentially important for the daily life of young people,” for the three dhammic friends it was important to be more inclusive. This is the reason why they decided not include the word “Men” in the name of their association. Sathian, Suphot and Bunyong started to develop ideas for the association in 1948, but the official beginning of it took place on 26 October 1950 when the then Supreme Patriarch Kromluang Vajirayanawong (1872-1958) presided over the opening ceremony.

Sathian’s arguably most influential work is *The Philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism* (*pratya mahayan*)

which has become the most cited Thai book on Mahayana Buddhism. However, Sathian was also significantly contributing to a better understanding of Mahayana Buddhism in Thai society by translating central Mahayana texts from Chinese into the Thai language. His many publications on Mahayana Buddhist thought, history and texts may be the reason why Sathian is widely regarded as a Mahayanist thinker (*prat mahayan*).

However, it is very clear that Sathian was an expert on the different schools of early Buddhism as well. This is well demonstrated by the work he published *On Buddhist History* in the year 2500. In this work he shows a deep and comprehensive understanding of the complex historical development of Buddhist schools and thought over the span of 2,500 years. Thus, it may not be a surprise that Thai scholars and thinkers regarded Sathian as a genius of Buddhist thought who was able to draw from Buddhist texts in English, Pali, Sanskrit, Japanese, and Chinese. When asked how he was able to master all these languages, he simply answered: “through *chanda* [joyful aspiration] only.” What seems to be clear though is that he must have had an extraordinary memory.

Former Thai Prime Minister Professor Sanya Dhammasakti (1907-2002) even argued that “the dhammic talks that [Sathian] gave show signs of what in the West is called photographic memory.” This is also confirmed by an account written by one of the aforementioned three dhammic friends, Bunyong who reported that “Sathian once told me that he needs to read a book only once in order to memorise all its important content. I am not joking here. Sathian possesses an excellent memory, (Photo-Graphic Minded [sic]).”

It seems that Sathian somehow knew that he was not going to live a long life, for at the age of 20, he gave Suchip Punyaphap a note in which he detailed of how he wanted his funeral rites to be organised. Sathian’s mother described the final hours of Sathian’s life with the following words: “He came back home between 9-10 pm and then took a shower as usual. Before he went to bed, with a wooden stick he was chasing away two cats that were biting each other on the outside windowsill of his bedroom. He then returned to bed.” At 8 am of the next morning, it was found out that he had died. Later on a doctor established that Sathian must have died between 1-2 am. He must have passed away peacefully as his dead body was described as looking as if asleep.

Initially, Sathian’s mother intended to hold the cremation ceremony only a week after his death. But, as many people disagreed with his decision and volunteered to help with the funeral rites, there was a period of 33 days during which people could perform meritorious deeds for Sathian at his open coffin in the Bangkok monastery Wat Chakkrawat. Then his coffin was taken to Wat Thepsirin where his cremation ceremony took place on 14 May 1967.

Within the last 10 years before his death, Sathian, at least twice, expressed his intention to perform meritorious deeds and practice Buddhist teaching with the intention to gain rebirth during the time of the next Perfectly Awakened Buddha, Buddha Metteyya. During a talk he gave a year before this death, he said that he wanted to be reborn as the celestial son of the future Buddha Metteyya, who, according to Theravada belief, is currently residing in the heaven Tusita, so that he “can listen to his teaching and then as a result gain full awakening [*pen phra arahan*].” This wish of Sathian strongly resembles that of another great Buddhist scholar: his students asked the famous Chinese scholar monk Xuan Zhang (Chinese: 玄奘; fl. c. 602 – 664) of the Tang Dynasty not long before his passing way “Master, are you sure that you will gain rebirth during the time of Buddha Metteyya?” The great scholar monk gave a simply answer: “Sure, I will!”

Both the Thai monastic university Mahamakut and the Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives recently held symposiums (28 September and 23 October 2019 respectively) in order to commemorate the 90th anniversary of Sathian’s birth. Amongst other speakers, the famous Thai monk Venerable Paisal Visalo and the social critic Sulak Sivaraksa gave very insightful talks about Sathian’s life and the importance of his scholarship and Buddhist practice (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jI--aDxVyVE>) in the context of modern Thai society. Even though Sathian has had only a short life and died many decades ago, these recent events and the continuous interest Thai Buddhists have in his talks and books, show that Sathian is still very much alive in the heart of Thai Buddhists.

For more on Ajarn Sathian Bodhinanda, please see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEhukAyluNU>



# Practicing What Is Preached: Practices of Justice in a Multi-Faith Context

**Robert McCloy**

Annual Lampeter Interfaith Conference

By a strange set of circumstances the writer attended this year's Inter Faith Conference at Lampeter. He had been busily exploring the possible relationship between Rowland Williams, that brilliant early nineteenth century theologian and vice principal of Lampeter, and Sulak Sivaraksa. Drafting a piece about post Second World War Britain, he had written:

*'Thus whilst the West uneasily displayed confusion as it sought to come to terms with a world of changing values, the East, too, faced its own challenges. An insight, for the writer, into the latter was offered by meeting Sulak Sivaraksa at St. David's College, Lampeter in the early 1950s [and thereafter remaining a life-long friend]...'*

Reading a recent edition of *Seeds of Peace*, the journal of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, the writer read to his surprise an item about this year's event at that very institution, and duly resolved to attend.

As he sat at the first session he was much impressed by the authority and tolerance displayed by the speakers and reflected that the two figures he had been studying would each have surely been most impressed had they too been on that occasion in the Founders' Library. Reflecting upon the conference, certain impressions stand out. Participants spoke from differing perspectives: some driven by profound belief, but overtly anxious to learn of other experiences; others more focused upon a clinical analysis of differences in faith; and yet others preoccupied with the practicalities of improving society.

It can be supposed that here was a contemporary manifestation of parallel discussions in the 1950s in Sulak Sivaraksa's Lampeter, albeit the context then would have been more narrowly drawn, often limited to 'shades'

of Anglicanism. The conference contained witnesses of a considerably more diverse world who were able to speak with direct experience and surely, at the very least, would have been able to qualify and correct many misunderstandings that would have been present even in this generally benign gathering. Conversations at coffee breaks and meals complemented the positive experience and offered further evidence of Lampeter's current outreach, embracing, for example, the Catholic University in the Ukraine, in marked contrast to the insularity of its earlier life.

In a sense, this conference was focused upon the very subject introduced by Rowland Williams. As a gifted theologian and linguist Williams had contributed an article to *Essays and Reviews*, a publication that had profoundly stirred the intellectual world of early Victorian Britain.<sup>1</sup> Herein Williams and his co-authors had mounted a defence of the liberal and German-inspired interpretation of religion to the consternation of their then rather conservative fellow clergy.

Such was the uproar provoked by this popular publication that clergy brought against Williams a charge of heresy and demanded his removal from office. The charge upheld in the ecclesiastical Court of Arches was however dismissed by the High Court on appeal. His vigorous stand has been subsequently recognized as the decisive factor liberating to this day the freedom and intellectual integrity of teaching in theological faculties in England and Wales. Whilst *Essays and Reviews* had a

shattering effect, his sustained major study, 'A Dialogue',<sup>2</sup> written in the style of a platonic dialogue, reveals in detail his knowledge and respect for Hinduism and Buddhism. In holding to his own Christian beliefs he nevertheless reaches out in sympathy to those sincerely professing other beliefs. In this he very much exemplified the approach of those attending the conference.

The Sulak Sivaraksa first encountered in 1954 in Lampeter was and remains a Buddhist. For some fellow students, his regular chapel attendance was a surprise. Notwithstanding, he participated fully in collegiate life which was characterized by daily chapel, formal daily dinner, with Latin grace, in gowns, lectures and tutorials, likewise in gowns, afternoon sport or walks, study in the Library [now the Founders' Library], and evening meetings of societies, occasions for animated debate and the consumption of cocoa and toast, and meetings of the Junior Common Room. As Student Librarian he would have ascended and descended the same stairs, walked the same cloisters, occupied the same spaces and examined the contents of the same library shelves, as Rowland Williams a hundred years previously.

For the writer's part, he deeply regrets not reading Rowland Williams' publications as an undergraduate at Lampeter. At the time vigorous arguments between high and low church took centre stage whilst both factions were united in castigating 'modernism.' In retrospect, the

rationalism and tolerance of Rowland Williams could have been a powerful and effective stabilizing force.

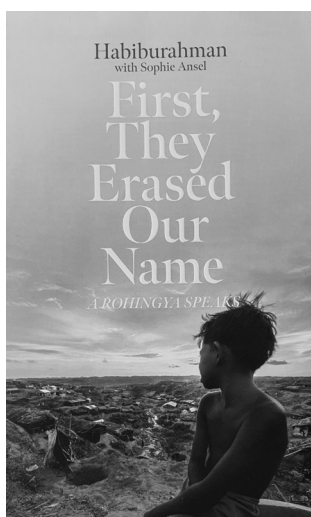
As for Sulak, following further study at the Inns of Court and employment in the BBC, he returned to Thailand and took up the profession of publisher and social commentator. Therein, remaining a Buddhist, he progressively articulated an expression of his faith which emphasized its practicality in social conditions. In due course, this led to confrontation with the autocratic and undemocratic agencies of the state involving exile and trial. Notwithstanding, in that process, Sulak, amongst other lasting initiatives, created the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, and, perhaps inevitably, took on the role of representative Buddhist at international gatherings of world faiths. In a sense both he and Rowland Williams were present at the conference.

<sup>1</sup> Roland Williams, 'Bunsen's Biblical Researches' in *Essays and Reviews*, Benjamin Jowett, editor, London, 1860, John W. Parker and Son.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Williams, 'A Dialogue of the Knowledge of the Supreme Lord, in which are compared the claims of Christianity and Hinduism, and various questions of Indian Religion and Literature fairly discussed,' Cambridge, Deighton Bell and Co., London, Bell and Dalby, 1856.



## Recommended Reading

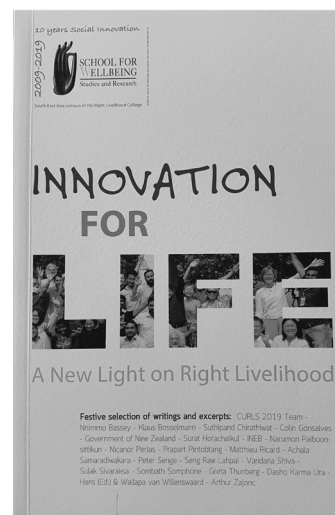


First, They Erased Our Name:  
A Rohingya Speaks

Author: Habiburrahma  
Publisher: Penguin Random House

Innovation for Life: A New  
light on Right Liverlihood

Editor: Willenswaard, Hans van  
Publisher: School for Wellbeing Team



## Are monks allowed to be involved in politics?

I'm delighted that you, a young novice, shared your views with me. I sympathize with you. One of our country's big mistakes, especially after the 1932 Revolution, was the failure to educate monks and novices about the possibility of their involvements in politics.

Thus far, we have only told them not to be involved in politics. But this is a big lie! Many monks, including the abbots of various temples, are not neutral politically. In fact, they are canvassers of political parties. This is partly because their temples rely on financial donations from powerful politicians. Often, these monks are politically naïve and are the pawns of their political patrons.

Former premier Chatichai Choonhavan once said that "monks are the most expensive party canvassers." On this view, monks can be involved in politics as long as they remain in the background. But should we not also allow monks to play a political role publicly?

Let's look at Tibet for comparison or inspiration. Tibet is a Buddhist country like ours. The previous prime minister of Tibet was a monk—a very disciplined one too. A monk could serve as premier!

Politics is about power. If monks and novices know how politics works, then they will be able to identify which political parties are truly working for social justice.

Monks and novices are told simply to not get involved in politics. Rather, should we not say instead that they can be politically involved as long as they are mindful, are conscious of what they are doing, steadfast in their moral discipline, etc.? Don't monks also have a duty to speak the truth and warn the people?

In Sri Lanka, several monks were elected into parliament. At first, I had reservations about it. But when I got to know Ven. Rathana Thero, I changed my mind. He had used nonviolence and truth-telling to remove the president from power. When someone donated a large plot of land near his temple to him, he used it to farm organic vegetables. He even vowed to make all of Sri Lanka consume only organic vegetables in ten years. Monks can do and say this kind of thing. In our country, it seems that monks are living a little too comfortably. They won't even tell people not to provide offerings to the temple in plastic bags.

My suggestion is for you to form a study group with like-minded young monks and novices to learn more about

politics—in particular, how moral courage can help guide politics in our society.

In central Yangon, there's a monument of a monk who fought against British rule in Burma. A similar monument exists in Sri Lanka. It's often said that our country was never a colony. But our ruling elites have built internal colonies. They could be worst than Western colonizers. We need to fight against them too. Today, the ruling class is oppressing us in the guise of democracy. You must try to understand the working of the deep state in the country.

Like lay people, monks don't have to shy away from politics. Monks are part of the demos too. We need to expose how corrupt and unfair our justice system is. It's always siding with the powers-that-be. It's indifferent to the most elementary rights and freedom. When the people are awakened democratically, the dictatorship cannot last for long.

I hope you find my answer helpful. Monks can be part of a movement that rekindles the flame of democracy in the country.

Respectfully,  
Sulak Sivaraksa

### Dear Ajan Sulak Sivaraksa,

It was so so nice to see you with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. I was so overjoyed for this experience. You look great and healthy.

I and my wife Tsering, we are still in Boulder, Colorado and doing well and healthy. Tsering decided to buy a house, so finally we are settled in Boulder. We also have a nice guest room, so if you ever visit Boulder, you can stay with us.

If your situation allows, I would like to pay a visit to Thailand to pay homage to you from me personally & on behalf of Tibetans. The concerts will be "A Heart Felt Thank You to Ajan Sulak Sivaraksa for Being the Greatest Supporter for Tibet in Thailand." If your those friends can put up some concerts, I have open dates in this year after May this year. I am not sure which email still works, anyway I had to put all these # emails.

By the way, I saw you with His Holiness on YouTube TV.

With much love and respect from Nawang Khechog and Tsering.

# Dorothy Maclean

7 January 1920 - 12 March 2020

by **Jane Rasbash**, *Findhorn Ecovillage*, April 2020



*‘When a smile touches our hearts, when the forest stills us to peace when music moves us to rapture. When we really love, laugh or dance with joy. We are at one with the angels’*

Dorothy was a beloved co-founder of the Findhorn Foundation a spiritual community in Northern Scotland. Born in Canada she was always an adventurer with a deep love of nature and an early interest in Sufism. She went on to work in Panama, New York and London as a secretary for British Security Services and during WW2 for British Intelligence.

In the 1950s she met mystic Sheena Govan who was influenced by the Moral Rearmament Movement that focused on following God’s Guidance and dedication to the Christ Within. There she met fellow Sheena followers Eileen and Peter Caddy. The three went on to run hotels together using these spiritual principles.

In the early 1960s they were fired from a hotel and moved into a near-by rundown caravan park by Findhorn Bay in the barren sand dunes. This was the start of the Findhorn Foundation Community. Working alongside the Caddy’s Dorothy followed her inner guidance connecting with the consciousness of nature that she called devas. This cocreation with nature contributed to the famous Findhorn garden celebrated for giant cabbages. News spread far and wide and many more came to join the small community. Dorothy left in 1973 to return to North America where she co-founded along with mystic David Spangler the Lorian Association. Over the years she was a regular visitor to the Findhorn Foundation sharing her wisdom and returned to live in the community fulltime in 2009 blessing us all with her presence. Over the years the Findhorn Foundation has grown into the largest ecovillage in the UK with thousands of visitors attending

courses and events many inspired by Dorothy’s wisdom on inner listening and cocreation with nature.

In 2005, Pracha Hutunuwat, published an article in Thai about the Findhorn Foundation. A Thai NGO invited Dorothy to Thailand to consult with the rice devas to see what they thought about chemical farming. Accompanied by her close companion Judy McAllister they joined a series of events with academics, indigenous elders, local farmers, NGO workers. Farmers and indigenous elders, in particular, respected Dorothy’s work that resonated with traditional ways of living where the spirits of nature are honoured. Dorothy gently explained the need to tune into nature for themselves rather than to ask direct questions. I was honoured to join Dorothy for part of this journey where she also fulfilled a lifelong ambition to ride on an elephant.

Dorothy turned 100 years old in January 2020 and a big celebration to honour her life was held in February at the Universal Hall, Findhorn. She passed away peacefully on 13 March with Judy at her side who said,

*‘What we can all gift to Dorothy now is our love, our gratitude and blessings of freedom.’*

Her life experiences are told in books including *To Hear the Angels Sing* (1980), *To Honor the Earth* (1991), *Come Closer* (2007) and *Memoirs of an Ordinary Mystic* (2010).

S

## Rev. Shokan Okano

2nd President of

the Kodo Kyodan Buddhist Fellowship

Passed at 2:16 p.m., 15 September 2019, Age 93



**B**orn in Tokyo in 1925, Rev. Shokan Okano was the eldest son of Rev. Shodo Okano (1900-78) and Rev. Kimiko Okano (1902-76), the co-founders of the Kodo Kyodan Buddhist Fellowship based in downtown Yokohama. In 1951, he graduated from

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Waseda University Graduate School and then spent eight years at the illustrious Manshu-in Monzeki temple of the Tendai school in Kyoto studying the three great commentaries on the Lotus Sutra by Chinese Tiantai Master Zhiyi from former Chief Priest Koin Yamaguchi. From 1962-67, he was a researcher in comparative religion at Clairmont Graduate School in California, USA.

In 1975, he was inaugurated as the 2nd President of Kodo Kyodan. He oversaw the rebuilding of the main temple located in downtown Yokohama, which included the Main Hall of Worship, the Mausoleum of the Founder Presidents, and the Mahakala Hall. He also established branch temples in Shizuoka, Aomori, and Fukushima, and relocated the former Main Hall of Worship from Yokohama to the Tohoku Branch Temple, displaying an inexhaustible energy for the development of the denomination. In 1986, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the denomination, he inaugurated the Maitri ("loving kindness") Movement, which adopted the 5 Practices of Compassion that aspire to build a society in harmony with nature and the co-existence of all peoples. Upon his death, he was given a posthumous name by Rev. Koei Morikawa, the 257th Chief Priest (Zasu) of the Tendai school.

On September 19, a wake service for close relatives, friends, and followers was held at the Main Hall of Worship in Yokohama with 600 people in attendance. At the service, the second son of Rev. Okano, Prof. Hirotaka Okano of Tokyo Jikei Medical School, spoke about his father's final moments. "He spent his final days peacefully being watched over. In the final moment, he lost consciousness as he fell into a peaceful sleep and his breathing became slower and slower until it stopped. He was exceptionally calm and at ease."

Rev. Rinko Okano, his wife and the 2nd Vice-President of Kodo Kyodan, who walked by his side for 60 years, also offered some words, "The one thing above all I have learned from him is a faith in which 'we must return to the mind of the one vehicle [of the Lotus Sutra]'. This is the teaching of how all living things will become buddhas." She then concluded by saying, "I am grateful to everyone for their praise and kind words for the life work of our 2nd President."

On September 20th, a private funeral was hosted by his son, Rev. Shojun Okano, the 3rd President of Kodo Kyodan. At the end of the service, he offered the following words, "I would like all of us to diligently devote ourselves to maintaining the teachings, community, and temple facilities developed by our 2nd President in order to carry on his legacy and the task of encouraging people to cultivate their buddha-nature in this new age we are facing."



## Peter Koret

by **Sulak Sivaraksa**



We are deeply saddened to inform you that Peter Koret passed away peacefully on 9 April 2020, at Ramkamhaeng Hospital. He was 59 years old.

Peter was an American educationist who had long lived in Siam with his Thai wife. He liked to teach English to Thai students and Thai to non-Thais.

His important book is, *The Man Who Accused the King of Killing a Fish*, which was published by Silkworms Press in Chiang Mai.

Also, he translated the story of Bandit Aneeya into English. The latter is a writer who was accused of lese majeste. He found a lot of bail money to help Bandit as well. In other words, Peter was a staunch defender of human rights.

He suffered from brain cancer and was hospitalized for almost six months.

He expected a simple funeral and didn't want people to know of his passing, especially at this time of the pandemic.

Peter Koret led a quiet life all his life. But he was a truly honorable person.



## Arief Budiman

3 January 1941 - 23 April 2020

by **Sulak Sivaraksa**



Arief Budiman was one of my Indonesian friends. He was slightly younger than me. He wrote a festschrift article on me and it was published in *Socially Engaged Spirituality*, a volume edited by David W. Chappell. Sub-

sequently, this book was also translated in Thai.

In the chapter, Arief called me, "an exemplary public intellectual." But he was not full of praises for me. He also wrote as a real kalyanamitta because he was critical of me. Not that many people could write like him.





It was a relatively short article. Arief was very concise and precise in what he said. After explaining my public role, he compared me to other Southeast Asian intellectuals. It was very perceptive. Arief himself was a progressive intellectual - even more than I am. I've followed his life and work since he was living in Indonesia, and then completed his PhD in the US. He returned to teach in Indonesia for many years. But the authoritarian political environment was not conducive for his social activism. As a result, he moved to teach at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

I had visited Arief when he was living in Australia, Indonesia, and the United States. In the US, he was initially studying at Princeton University. His view that Clifford Geertz's work was already outdated for understanding Indonesia was against the grain of the time. Therefore, he had to move to

Harvard University, and eventually to the University of California, (though I forgot which campus exactly).

In my opinion, Arief was invaluable as a friend and human being who had devoted his life to social justice. He had admirably contested Western domination.

Therefore, when Pracha Hutauwatr launched a book project to promote the ideas of Asian intellectuals who challenged the West, I immediately suggested that Arief Budiman be included in it. The book was eventually published as *Asian Future*. There's a Thai translation of this book as well.

The passing of Arief Budiman fills me with grief. However, I can find a little solace in the fact that he was a 'mortal' whose life needs to be known by Thais and non-Thais. It's because of people like him that the torch of *santi pracha dhamma* is carried into the future. S

## Buddhism, Education and Politics in Burma and Thailand

From the Seventeenth Century to the Present

Khammai Dhammasami

BLOOMSBURY

I understand that Khammai Dhammasami, the author of this book, is a Buddhist monk from Shan State who is well-versed in not only Thai and Burmese, but also Pali and English. He is now teaching at Oxford University.

As evident from the title, this book is about Buddhism, education and politics in Burma and Thailand from the 17th century to the present. It is the best book on this subject matter to date.

In the first chapters of the book, the author touches on monastic education from the time of the Kingdom of Ava to the period of absolutism. He

## Buddhism, Education and Politics in Burma and Thailand

by Khammai Dhammasami

*Reviewed by Sulak Sivaraksa*

describes monastic education along with the political background in Burma in fine details. The section on Burma ends with King Mindon; that is, prior to Burma's defeat and annexation by the British Empire.

In short, this book is an indispensable resource for anyone interested in Buddhism, monastic education and politics in Burma during the said period.

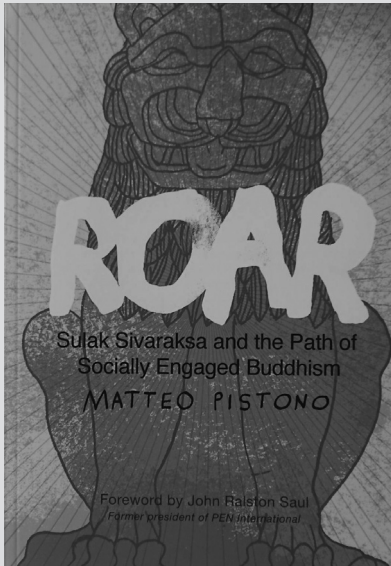
In the part on Thailand, the author begins with politics, monastic education and ecclesiastical administration in the early Ayutthaya period. He then moves on to deal with monastic education in the Rattanakosin Era, ending with the national integration process under Rama V.

In this section, I disagree with the author only on some minor points or details. For example, Vajiranavarorasa (the tenth Supreme Patriarch) wasn't ordained at Wat Bowonniwet. Rather Wat Phra Kaew (or Wat Phra Si Rattana

Satsadaram) is the only place where members of the Chakri Dynasty would be ordained. For members of the Thai royal houses, it's considered contemptible to be ordained elsewhere. The case of Prince Janjirayuwat is illustrative. He was ordained at Wat Suthat and was seen as being a bit of a weirdo.

The book's penultimate chapter is entitled "Idealism and Pragmatism: Dilemmas in the Current Monastic Education Systems of Burma and Thailand." The author compares the ideals of monastic education with the current realities in both countries.

In conclusion, the author provides a quick and easy-to-grasp historical summary and reflects on the possible paths to the future. I hope that someone will translate this book into Thai. It will be an eye-opener for many of us who are interested in Buddhism in Thailand and in our closest neighboring country. S



Author and INEB Executive Committee member Matteo Pistono has done a commendable job of summarizing the life and work of Sulak Sivaraksa in the recently released biography *Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Despite Pistono not speaking or reading Thai, readers will come away knowing the basic contours of Sulak's life and philosophy of socially engaged Buddhism. While researching the book, Pistono traveled to a number of locales in order to interview individuals who know Sulak well enough to offer a range of astute comments.

Not all of the remarks are hagiographical – readers will find insightful, constructive criticism about Sulak from individuals like historian Nidhi Eosewong (p. 227) and others. Furthermore, scattered throughout the book are a series of quotes by Sulak himself. In *Roar's* acknowledgements, Pistono writes that the book “was written for socially engaged spiritual practitioners around the world...”

## ***Roar: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism***

by Matteo Pistono

*Reviewed by Jordan Baskerville*

Anyone with an interest in religion and social change will likely find inspiration from the immensely active life of Sulak. Ajahn Sulak has been and continues to be a leading figure in the global socially engaged Buddhist movement and has, throughout his lengthy career founded a number of organizations designed to mitigate structural violence and the resulting social suffering.

A portion of *Roar* covers material previously written about in Sulak's autobiography *Loyalty Demands Dissent: Autobiography of a Socially Engaged Buddhist*. Despite this, we learn important details about Sulak such as his promotion of the arts and his personal life.

Chapters nine and ten offer the most interesting, original material in the book. Chapter nine provides a lengthy account of Sulak's relationship with Thich Nhat Hanh that includes rare critical comments by Sulak on Thich. Sulak feels that Thich has, over time, strayed from his activist approach of the 1960s and 1970s and remarks “Thay's [Thich] approach has become too dreamy ... structural violence is not going to melt away if all we do is concentrate on our breath. It doesn't work like that!” The tenth chapter explores Sulak and H.H. Dalai Lama's long relationship beginning

when H.H. first visited Thailand in 1967. Sulak has been a tireless promoter of Tibetan Buddhism for decades and worked to bring the Tibetan leader to Siam. During one encounter, Sulak reveals that he was asked by the Dalai Lama to teach him about structural violence (217-8).

Overall, the book is an excellent introduction to the life, thought and efforts of Sulak Sivaraksa but is not without certain limitations. Sulak has written dozens of books and articles in Thai unutilized in *Roar* that could be incorporated in a more extensive future biography. Moreover, Pistono spoke exclusively with Sulak's English speaking colleagues, leaving Thai language voices absent from this narrative.

For those interested in learning more about Sulak's ideas and intellectual influences, I recommend reading *Roar* alongside *Hidden away in the folds of time: the unwritten dimension of Sulak Sivaraksa* as well as Suraphot Thawessak's *Buddhism, Monarchy and Democracy: A Critical Look Through the Lens of Sulak Sivaraksa, the Siamese Intellectual*. Both books are translations from Thai works that offer nuanced glimpses into Ajahn Sulak's thought world and the people who inspired his work.



## ***Resistance and Unity: Chinese Invasion, Makchi Shangri Lhagyal, and a History of Tibet (1947-1959)***

by Tashi Gelek, Dorjee Damdul, Tashi Dhondup

Reviewed by **Dr. Tenzin Rabgyal**

Meeting with Mrs. Tsering Yangchen after thirty-five years since our last meeting in 1982 was overwhelming. Having grown up together in India, she was like my elder sister. I was extremely moved when she mentioned the book: *Resistance and Unity*, written about the historical contribution of her late father Shangri Lhagyal to our Tibetan history.

The book is written by Dr. Tashi Gelek, Mr. Dorjee Damdul, and Mr. Tashi Dhondup. In fact, Mr. Tashi Dhondup had personally offered this book to Holiness the Dalai Lama, to two ministers of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamshala, India, and to other dignitaries at the CTA. This book was launched in Switzerland in the USA. At the end of January 2020, there are two more book talks scheduled in Washington DC, with International Campaign for Tibet and New York City at Tibet House US.

Following this insightful meeting, we met again with Tsering Yangchen, husband Tashi Gelek, and son Tsering Tashi along with my family. I was surprised and emotionally touched when Tashi Gelek presented me the book. I knew

Yangchen's father Shangri Lhagyal when I was a child. He taught us Tibetan writing and reading, to play kids games, and to do physical exercise on rough roads and fields.

On this day, I had one of the most memorable discussion with Tashi Gelek, such discussion I had after a long time. We found multiple common understanding in different global and local issues related to resistance and unity to practicing Buddhism in our daily lives.

They shared their journey of initiating and writing of this book. Their sojourn took them five years and seven months from twenty pages of verbal transcripts of the two audio tape cassettes of Shangri Lhagyal to 400 pages covering the period of Tibetan history from 1947 to 1959. The support from her siblings, relatives, and other Tibetan and non-Tibetan alike were helpful and appreciated and are acknowledged in the book. This book is foreworded and edited by Prof. Carole McGranahan, a renowned historian and anthropologist in the contemporary Tibetan history and politics from the University of Colorado, USA.

During the discussion, Tashi Gelek shared some of the insights

from this book, which sparked my curiosity to read the book. Some of these insights were not known to me while I was growing up in the Tibetan community in India and in my high school textbooks about Tibetan History from 1947 to 1959. Subsequently, I suggested that we should offer this book to Ajarn Sulak, a great scholar, supporter of Tibetan cause in Thailand, and a close confidant and friend of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

The following day during our visit, Tashi Gelek and Tsering Yangchen offered the book to Ajarn Sulak. Ajarn shared his experiences and engagement of International Engaged Buddhist Network (INEB) in the region including Myanmar and its contribution in the Asian regions since the last thirty years. Ajarn also shared with us his recent visit to Dharamshala and meeting with His Holiness together with the INEB members.

Ajarn advised me that my sons should learn Tibetan language especially writing and reading. Ajarn also gave us his autographed book written by Mathew Pistono. Ajarn asked me to write a book review of *Resistance and Unity* to be published in the up-coming quarterly magazine of INEB's *Seed of Peace*. He showed us around his home. Both Tashi Gelek and Tsering Yangchen were very impressed and delighted to witness and experience Ajarn's determination to maintain his traditional house in Bangkok in the middle of modern concrete jungle.

The book *Resistance and Unity: Chinese Invasion, Makchi Shangri*



Tashi Gelek & Tsering Yangchen present book to  
Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

*Lhagyal, and a history of Tibet (1947-1959)* springs the insight about the resistance by Tibetan people and unsung Tibetan heroes from the oppression of Chinese People Liberation Army (PLA) from 1947 to 1959. At the same time, the book highlights the unity among the people of three regions of Tibet against the Chinese Communist oppression and suppression and its illegitimate occupation of Tibet. It also reveals the sacrifices and contribution of Makchi Shangri Lhagyal and his personal journey from a businessman to a protector of Tibetan culture, values, and religion from the brutalities of the PLA.

The book is well written with detailed facts, proper indexes, citations, references, and the flow of the stories from 1947-1959 are well-structured. This book has fifteen chapters beginning from Shangri Lhagyal's life in Tibet and ending at why Shangri Lhagyal's story matters. There are some new findings in Tibet

history which are overlooked in some of the Tibetan history books especially from the year 1947 to 1959.

The language in this book is smooth, simple, easy-to-read, and understandable for readers of all ages. To ease the understanding of the Tibetan names, the authors have provided the transliteration of Tibetan names at the beginning of the book. Readers can feel the journey of Shangri Lhagyal through his twenty testimonies included in this book. Readers will be energized while reading about how a successful Tibetan businessman turned against the Chinese political and religious oppression.

The Shangri Lhagyal's decision to join the resistance movement is clearly stated in the eighth testimony on page 150. His victory in the Battle of Dra is revealed in chapter nine. Some of his important contributions are also revealed in different chapters with testimonies such as offering of necessary support and help to escort

His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa and his entourage a safe passage to exile in India; help offered to Rinchen Dolma Taring's safe escape to India. The Taring family played an important role in the establishment of Tibetan schools in exile and leading roles in CTA.

This book stipulates many new insights and the facts which were not well documented earlier such as the making of The Seventeen Point-Agreement given on pages 93 to 99, debate on the critical decision on return of His Holiness Dalai Lama to Lhasa or exile to the USA in 1951 on pages 107 to 108, and Chinese First Five-year plan for Tibet on pages 121 to 122. In addition to the leaders of Chushi Gangdrug such as Andrug Gompo Tashi, it also includes sacrifices of other unsung heroes, unknown among the second generations of Tibetan inside and outside Tibet, such as Kharnang's Pon Gyakong Tsering Wangyal, Yoru Wangyal and Nyatso Wangyal (*I call these heroes "Abimanyus of Tibet."* *Abhimanyu was a young prince character of the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata*), Ngyatos Wangyal, Dorjee Pasang, Fearless women-led revolt by Dorjee Yudon (*I called her Jhansi ki rani of Tibet. Jhansi is great women freedom fighter in India*), and others.

Another interesting aspect to know is why the United States, Britain, Canada, and India were not willing to support the Tibetan request: urging United Nations (UN) to intervene against the PLA aggression. Though, El Salvador rallied the Tibetan cause to the UN,



but the US delegate to the UN stated that, “USA support the El Salvador’s request but did not want to take action.” In addition, the suggestions made by the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to the Prime Minister Nehru are also stated in the book.

The book also revealed how Mao Zedong “*Continuously devising and implementing strategies to take total control of Tibet*” even though China entered the Korean war. It also includes the Mao Zedong’s industrial experiment in the form of the Great Leap Forward, which resulted in devastating famine and deaths of millions of Chinese people including Tibetan in 1958.

The establishment Chushi Gangdrug is explained well in the book. In abstract, readers can learn that the naming of the organization did not originate from the eastern Tibetan region, but from involvement of all the three regions of Tibet. However, motivation of the establishment of Chushi Gandrug sprang from the uprising and resistance fighting in different places from the eastern region of Kham and Amdo as PLA first entered and attacked from the east. At the same time, they lacked proper coordination and well-organized operation management of resistance against the PLA attacks. The detailed planning and contribution of Chushi Gangdrug in arranging the escaping route of His Holiness Dalai Lama from Tibet is well explained in chapter eleven. Andrug Gampo Tashi played an instrumental role in this establishment.

The book also shed light on

CIA’s involvement in Tibetan causes from 1955 to 1974. One of the crucial contributions of Athar and Lhotse in sending valuable information about the intelligence of the escape of His Holiness from Tibet to the US government played a very significant role in achieving asylum in India.

The book also disclosed that social justice was not given to Shangri Lhagyal’s at the later stage of his life in exile. This is not only to him but to all other unsung Tibetan heroes. This is mainly internal politics of Tibetan in exile. This indicates the lack of visionary leaders among Tibetans, and the trend is still continuing these days. This book can have major impact on the current generation living inside and outside of Tibet and to the future generation to think and act proactively, and to be more visionary than only looking at the operational level for the betterment of Tibetans inside Tibet and Tibetan diaspora around the world.

This book could have policy implications for CTA and the Chinese government provided both the government come to the dialogue and revisit the Seventeen-Point Agreement without any prior conditions. This book can also influence researchers to carry out policy research from the Seventeen-Point Agreement. For instance, point three in the agreement stated that, “*the Tibetan people have the right to exercise national regional autonomy under the unified leadership of the Central People’s Government.*” For the last sixty years, this has not happened.

Our Chinese moderate thinkers and researchers can further research on this and can provide good policy recommendations to the current Chinese government to benefit the One Belt, One Road policy (OBOR) of the current government. Another example, the point seven in the agreement stated that, “*religious belief, customs and habit of the Tibetan people shall be respected, and lama monasteries shall be protected. The central authorities will not affect a change in the income of the monasteries.*”

In practice and in the ground level, historical data from the various other sources indicated that it was never implemented for the last sixty years in the Tibetan region. Contrary, it happened the opposite of what was written and what was implemented. Policy makers from both the Central Government and local government in China should have dialogues with the local Tibetans and the CTA to bring the peace in the Third Pole of the world before it becomes far too late.

The last chapter of the book can help the policy makers at the CTA and in China to revisit and re-think in handling the Tibetan ethnic group at a domestic level and in the global platform as China’s influence is growing in the region. If China does not govern its minorities with respect, it will surely trigger future instability in the region.





## COVID-19 EMERGENCY RELIEF AND REHABILITATION INITIATIVE



### Urgent Appeal for Humanitarian Solidarity SUPPORT! SHARE!! VOLUNTEER!!! DONATE!!!!

- \* India has 8 Doctor's per 10,000 people compared to 41 in Italy and 71 in Korea. It has one state-run hospital for more than 55,000 people.
- \* Total of 1637 cases, 133 recoveries, and 38 deaths in the country.
- \* India's testing rates are among the lowest in the world.
- \* Nationwide lockdown for 21 days, affecting 1.3 billion Indian population.
- \* Thousands of sanitation workers engaged in waste disposals, cleaning sewers, garbage collection, etc without proper Masks, Gloves, Boots or other necessary protection gears are particularly at critical risks.
- \* Many Dalits are excluded in the Government list for providing free ration.



Rickshaw pullers, street peddlers, maids, labourers, migrant workers, and rag pickers buy food with the money they make each day which is now affected. They are now eagerly waiting for your support.

#### FOREIGN DONATION

Name : FOUNDATION OF HIS SACRED MAJESTY  
Bank : State Bank of India  
Account No. : 31203682095  
Name of Branch : Selayur, Chennai  
SWIFT Code : SBININBB298  
IFSC Code : SBIN0007948

#### EMERGENCY NEEDS

**S**UPPORT US FOR CATERING EMERGENCY NEEDS such as basic food items – Rice, Wheat Flour, Dal, Edible Oil, Salt and Sugar, and Primary Sanitation Items – Mask, Gloves, Hand Sanitizer, Sanitary pads, and Soaps to the most vulnerable communities such as Migrant workers, Dalit communities, tribal communities, nomadic communities, and transgender communities. We would be procuring, transporting and distributing through Relief clusters with the help of government-registered professional volunteers.



#### LOCATION OF RELIEF OPERATIONS

Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Pondicherry, Haryana, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar

#### INDIAN DONATION

Name : FOUNDATION OF HIS SACRED MAJESTY  
Bank : State Bank of India  
Account No. : 30522574810  
Name of Branch : Selayur, Chennai  
IFSC Code : SBIN0007948

#### Please Support Us

### FOUNDATION OF HIS SACRED MAJESTY

Email: fhsmindia@gmail.com ☎ +91- 9791239333, +91-8680020086, +91-9840813935

*Stand in Solidarity! Save Lives!! Restore Humanism!!!*



Nagaloka  
Walking Buddha  
Compassion in action

## Nagaloka Relief fund

### Fights against Corona Virus

Nagaloka team is rapidly responding to the coronavirus outbreak, with an immediate focus on reducing human to human transmission and providing people basic need such as food, Napkins, Soap, Mask, etc.

In this crucial time Nagaloka is providing supplies and support to the most vulnerable people and their communities.

#### Please help us today

##### Donation outside India

Name : Nagarjuna Training Institute, Nagpur  
FC A/C No. 2010 8156 866  
Bank of Maharashtra, Nagpur Sitabuldi Branch  
Swift Code : MAHBINBBNGP  
ISFC CODE : MAHB0000005

##### Indian Donation

Name : Nagarjuna Training Institute  
A/C No. 5099 10 100 1710  
Canara Bank, Bhilgao, Nagpur Branch  
ISFC Code : CNRB 0005099



Hand Made Masks  
Distribution



Daily wages workers  
walking home for 3 days



Food Distribution on the road



Food Preparation



Food Distribution on the road