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Since 22nd May 2557, Siam is under the military junta
which claims itself to be National Peace and Order
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Editorial Notes

The ICE Network: Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network's meeting took place at INEB Secretariat in Bangkok from 10-11 April 2014. The Network is a pan-Asia, local-to-local, collaboration network of diverse spiritual communities seeking to share experiences, learning and wisdom that will build resilience and empowerment in the face of climate change.

We have decided the 2nd International Conference will be held in South Korea from 27 April May to 2 May 2015. The purpose is to wisely influence national public policy, stimulate and strengthen diplomatic discussions around climate change at international level. We intend to cooperate with various stakeholders including faith-based and civil society organizations, gender and age based groups and business networks.

INEB also participated in International Research Conference on Religion, Public Policy and Social Transformation in Southeast Asia on 20 March 2014 organized by the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) at the Phoenix Hotel Yogyakarta. With support of the New-York Based Henry Luce Foundation, this conference is part of the nine-country collaborative research which involves Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and the United States.

The conferences were attended by academia, policy makers, analysts, and others who have the same concerns on the issue of religious diversity. The researchers presented their one-year research in their respective countries on cross-cutting issues, such as religious pluralism and its relations with education and multiculturalism, the majority-minority gap, the politics of domination and 'minoritization' and other relevant issues.

We continue to work on Buddhist-Muslim relations with our partners. To follow up from 2013 International Network of Engaged Buddhists Biennial Conference we took young Buddhist activists from Indonesia to Myanmar during Asian Youth Forum 2014 from 17-19 March 2014 to learn more about conflicts facing Buddhists and Muslims. We also have a future plan to invite journalists writing about Buddhist Muslim relations to visit countries facing this issue to learn more about the nature of the conflicts.

4 years and some 3 weeks after the foundation of this INEB page at FB we will count 5.000 friends !! Let's continue to hold together and share our information and ideas for a more peaceful world !!

The main group is from the USA (889) followed by Indonesia, Siam, India and Malaysia (383). After: UK, Sri Lanka, Germany, Burma, Australia (101), Canada, Singapore, France, Italy, Taiwan, Nepal, Japan, Bangladesh, Portugal, Spain and others.

And this in around 30 languages...

The cities are ranking like this: Bangkok (357), Jakarta (324), Colombo (97), Singapore, Yangon, Kuala Lumpur, London, NYC (49), Medan, Kathmandu, Berlin, Los Angeles, Seoul, Chiang Mai, New Delhi, Taipei (35) etc.

Burma :

Art a means towards mass mobilisation on environment and conflict in Myanmar.

Jill Jameson, February 2014.



Participants with posters.

I was invited to visit an art exhibition¹ in outer Yangon, and yes, there were art works mounted on cords around the temple hall, and in the middle a group of around forty young people at a lively workshop. The works of art – photographs and art work were depicting scenes and issues on the themes of peace, the environment and alternatives to consumerism, donated by local artists. This was the last half day of a one and a half day workshop to coach the delegates, who came from ten provinces, in how to present a workshop

in their areas. During the Pagoda festival from February to April, taking with them sets of the art works and posters, they will go from village to village displaying these in public places, inviting discussion among people on issues affecting them all. What impressed me so much and what I found so inspiring was that here was a training for only 1.5 days and for a large group of people who were obviously inspired by the approach to these crucial issues at this time in Myanmar. Environmental issues and consumerism are

powerful entry points for also working with conflict, with the potential to transform people's thinking and to lead towards sustainable social change. A participatory and critical thinking process, along with the powerful art and photographic images as a means to raise awareness in a dynamic way, was being transferred to the delegates so they too can encourage and engage local people to explore these issues and work towards change. After they finish this campaign, the posters will be left at schools and monasteries.

As I arrived, one of the presenters was inviting discussion on cartoon-like posters on the floor on issues such as identity, media bias and conflict. He asked everyone, pointing to a picture of a tree with a fallen mango, 'why did this mango drop'? He was encouraging everyone to see every event has many causes...like conflict. The same with poverty... many causes, and he said, 'don't just point the finger, find solutions.'

One of the photographic posters on environmental issues showed a flood with children balancing on a temporary bridge on their way to school. This was to highlight the changes to the monsoon since 1978, with a loss of 40 days of rain since then, but much heavier rain and greater extremes. This is affecting farmers, and food security is an issue in Magwe, Chin and southern Shan States. Loss of livelihood is leading to increased internal migration, as depicted on another poster of an over-crowded tractor carrying farmers away from rural areas. Other posters on this theme were on issues such as over-use of chemicals and pesticides, the waste and pollution problem linked with lack of education, and how we all need to be responsible.

Some of the art images along with quotes and poems, were simple

¹ The exhibition was organised by the Joo Foundation, and the training by Myint Zaw.



and powerful. One image juxtaposed the light in a lamp with a window of dark sky, and with a quote by Satish Kumar, that went something like – ‘it is always right to reduce the suffering of others and of oneself. It is always wrong to increase the suffering of others and for oneself’.

A poster with an image of a wild bull had a quote by Bertrand Russell: ‘collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd,’ so a powerful depiction of wild behaviour and discrimination against others. A further poster showed an arm holding a balance; on one side a dagger and the other a rose, ‘What will you choose, love or violence’, thus encouraging active choice.

The delegates also received a book with quotes on peace in Myanmar and English, and information on

Consumer Rights. They were encouraged to include their own photos and stories, contributing to this dynamic and alive process of raising awareness and encouraging alternative and sustainable livelihoods through the use of images which invite inquiry as well as raise awareness. As the issues of the environment, consumerism and conflict are all linked, and the use of art focusses on these issues directly and simply — in a way more accessible for local people than the usual workshop. I feel this is a brilliant approach towards social and personal change on a large scale. And being in a monastery and with some monks present, perhaps this will influence them to be more active in working for the movement towards peace.

China :

Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping President of the People’s Republic of China at UNESCO Headquarters

Paris, 27 March 2014

It gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity of visiting the UNESCO headquarters. Let me begin by offering Madame Bokova my heartfelt congratulations on her re-election as the Director-General of the Organization and paying my sincere tribute to UNESCO for the extraordinary contribution it has made for greater exchanges and mutual learning among human civilizations.

Having gone through over 5,000 years of vicissitudes, the Chinese civilization has always kept to its original root. As the unique cultural identity of the Chinese nation, it contains our most profound cultural pursuits and provides us with abundant nourishment for existence and development. The Chinese civilization, though born on the soil of China, has come to its present form through constant exchanges and mutual learning with

other civilizations.

In the 2nd century B.C., China began working on the Silk Road leading to the Western Regions. In 138 B.C. and 119 B.C., Envoy Zhang Qian of the Han Dynasty made two trips to those regions, spreading the Chinese culture there and bringing into China grape, alfalfa, pomegranate, flax, sesame and other products. In the Western Han Dynasty, China’s merchant fleets sailed as far as India and Sri Lanka where they traded China’s silk for colored glaze, pearls and other products. The Tang Dynasty saw dynamic interactions between China and other countries. According to historical documents, the dynasty exchanged envoys with over 70 countries, and Chang’an, the capital of Tang, bustled with envoys, merchants and students from other countries. Exchanges of such a magnitude helped the spread of



the Chinese culture to the rest of the world and the introduction into China of the cultures and products from other countries. In the early 15th century, Zheng He, the famous navigator of China's Ming Dynasty, made seven expeditions to the Western Seas, reaching many Southeast Asian countries and even Kenya on the east coast of Africa. These trips left behind many good stories of friendly exchanges between the people of China and countries along the route. In late Ming Dynasty and early Qing Dynasty, the Chinese people began to learn modern science and technology with great zeal, as the European knowledge of astronomy, medicine, mathematics, geometry and geography were being introduced into China, which helped broaden the horizon of the Chinese people. Thereafter, exchanges and

mutual learning between the Chinese civilization and other civilizations became more frequent. There were indeed conflicts, frictions, bewilderment and denial in this process. But the more dominant features of the period were learning, digestion, integration and innovation.

Buddhism originated in ancient India. After it was introduced into China, the religion went through an extended period of integrated development with the indigenous Confucianism and Taoism and finally became the Buddhism with Chinese characteristics, thus making a deep impact on the religious belief, philosophy, literature, art, etiquette and customs of the Chinese people. Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang), the Tang monk who endured untold sufferings as he went on a pilgrimage to the west for Buddhist scriptures, gave full expression to the

determination and fortitude of the Chinese people to learn from other cultures. I am sure that you have all heard about the Chinese classics *Journey to the West*, which was written on the basis of his stories. The Chinese people have enriched Buddhism in the light of Chinese culture and developed some special Buddhist thoughts. Moreover, they also helped Buddhism spread from China to Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia and beyond.

In the course of some two thousand years and more, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity have been introduced into China successively, which allowed the country's music, painting and literature to benefit from the advantages of other civilizations. China's freehand oil painting is an innovative combination of China's traditional painting and the Western oil painting, and the works of Xu Beihong and other masters have been widely acclaimed. China's Four Great Inventions, namely, papermaking, gunpowder, movable-type printing and compass, led to changes in the world, including the European Renaissance. China's philosophy, literature, medicine, silk, porcelain and tea reached the West and became part of people's daily life. The Travels of Marco Polo generated a widespread interest in China.

I assume you have all heard of China's terracotta warriors, the buried legions of Emperor Qin. After his visit to the site, President Chirac of France said that a visit to Egypt will not be complete without seeing the pyramids, and that a visit to China will not be complete without seeing the terracotta warriors. In 1987, this national treasure of China, buried underground for over two thousand years, was put on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list. There are many more proud Chinese achievements that have been included in the World Cultural Heritage list, the World Intangible Cultural Heritage list and the Memory of the World list. Here, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to UNESCO for its contribution to the preservation and dissemination of the Chinese civilization.

The Chinese people are striving to fulfill the Chinese dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation. The Chinese dream is about prosperity of the country, rejuvenation of the nation, and happiness of the people. It reflects both the ideal of the Chinese people today and our time-honored tradition to seek constant progress.

The Chinese dream will be realized through balanced development and

mutual reinforcement of material and cultural progress. Without the continuation and development of civilization or the promotion and prosperity of culture, the Chinese dream will not come true. Forefathers of the Chinese nation yearned for a world of great harmony in which people are free from want and follow a high moral standard. In the Chinese civilization, people's cultural pursuit has always been part of their life and social ideals. So the realization of the Chinese dream is a process of both material and cultural development. As China continues to make economic and social progress, the Chinese civilization will keep pace with the times and acquire greater vitality.

A civilization carries on its back the soul of a country or nation. It needs to be passed on from one generation to the next. Yet more importantly, it needs to keep pace with the times and innovate with courage. As we pursue the Chinese dream, the Chinese people will encourage creative shifts and innovative development of the Chinese civilization in keeping with the progress of the times. We need to inject new vitality into the Chinese civilization by energizing all cultural elements that transcend time, space and national borders and that possess

both perpetual appeal and current value, and we need to bring all collections in our museums, all heritage structures across our lands and all records in our classics to life. In this way, the Chinese civilization, together with the rich and colorful civilizations created by the people of other countries, will provide mankind with the right cultural guidance and strong motivation.

As an old Chinese poem goes, "When I glance at the visage of vernal breeze, I know that a thousand flowers of purple and red set spring aglow." UNESCO will mark its 70th anniversary next year. I am confident that under the stewardship of Director-General Bokova, the organization will make still more achievements in its efforts to promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations and advance the cause of peace in the world.

This is a shortened version of the original. For the full version visit http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1142560.shtml

Siam :

China refuses visa for Sulak

Bangkok Post, 11 Apr 2014

Prominent social critic Sulak Sivaraksa says he has been denied an entry visa to China.

Mr Sulak revealed on Thursday that the Chinese embassy on April 3 rejected his request for a visa to enter the country.

He said he was scheduled to visit his ancestral homeland in China yesterday.

"I intended to visit the homeland [of my ancestors] in Taechiew [Teochew in eastern Guangdong province in China] yesterday. But I learned on April 3 that they denied me the visa," Mr Sulak said.

A close associate of Mr Sulak said he intended to bring his close friends with him to China to see and worship wooden tablets representing his Chinese ancestors.

Mr Sulak, who has faced lese majeste lawsuits several times in past decades, said he suspected the rejection of his visa request might be connected to his support of the Dalai Lama, the religious and political leader of Tibet who lives in exile in India.

"They may have let me know that they have felt

a bit uncomfortable with my support for the Dalai Lama. But I always insist that I stand by righteousness," Mr Sulak said.

Mr Sulak said he had previously enjoyed good ties with former Chinese leaders in the past.

He said he was among the first Thais who were invited to visit China after Thailand established diplomatic relations with Beijing.

He said he also led one of the first groups of Thai students to visit the city of Sipsongpanna — or Xishuangbanna — in China's southwestern province of Yunnan.

He was also among the first Thais who were allowed by China to visit Tibet, Mr Sulak added.

Mr Sulak explained that he also had good ties with Sang Pattanothai, who was an adviser to former prime minister Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsongkhram. Mr Sang was an expert on Chinese affairs and he was a pioneer in helping to establish Thai-Chinese relations.

Sri Lanka :

Party politics is absolute taboo for monks- Ven Dr. Brahmanawatte Seevali Thera

Ceylon today, 2 March 2014

Gihan Nicholas

The decision arrived at by the Amarapura Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter, to proscribe Buddhist monks under its purview from all political activities as well as prohibiting them from engaging in protests and demonstrations, has created equal controversy amongst the bhikkhu and lay societies alike.

The Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) was one of the forerunners in denouncing the move, with party member, Ven. Thebuwana Piyananda Thera, saying that monks possess a 'didactic right' to engage in politics.

However, the Bodhu

Bala Sena(BBS), one of the more controversial Sangha fronts said against this backdrop, that it is in concordance with the decision pronounced by the Amarapura Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter.

The decision was conveyed to the rest of the 21 orders coming under the Amarapura Chapter during an assembly held on Friday (28 February), where it was unanimously adopted. Registrar of the Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter, Ven. Kosgoda Sirimitta Thera, said during the assembly that plans were underway to convey the

decision to other two main Chapters, Ramanna and Siyam, who they expect would follow suit.

In an interview with *Ceylon Today*, General Secretary of the Amarapura Chapter, Ven. Dr. Brahmanawatte Seevali Thera, explained the decision made by the Amarapura Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter.

Following are excerpts:

Q: Does the decision arrived at by the Amarapura Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter apply to all other Chapters, including Ramanna and Siyam?

A: No.

Q: How many Chapters are there?

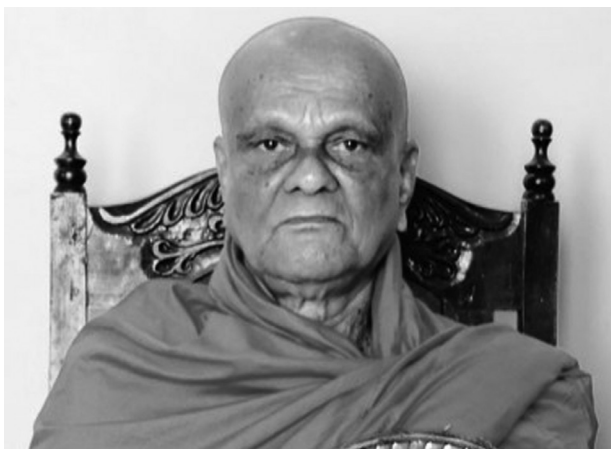
A: There are chiefly three chapters; they are the Siyam, Amarapura and Ramanna.

Q: What served as the basis for the decision to ban monks from engaging in politics?

A: The Amarapura Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter is one of the 22 orders coming under the Amarapura Chapter. This is a timely and sagacious

decision. We, as the patriarchs of the Sangha society, see the manner in which the integrity of the Buddha Sasana has been jeopardized due to monks engaging in party politics. The bhikkhu is a common person. The Buddha once preached that once all the rivers in India debouch into the sea, all that water turns into sea water. The water of these rivers, once in the sea, does not taste different from the sea and is not called by the name of that respective river. Likewise, the Buddha has endowed the bhikkhu with a common identity. He can voice his opinion anywhere. When Arahat Mihindu came to Sri Lanka, no one called him an Indian. The duty of the bhikkhu should be to serve each and every person in society.

That is why the then King Devanampiyatissa, including the people of this country accepted Buddhism, because Arahat Mihindu did not ostracize anyone. We have to follow that path. It is true that the world has greatly evolved since then, but purely because of that we cannot shift the foundation of the doctrine. Many people, who have different political views, walk through the gate of my temple. Once they walk in, I do not see them according to their political preferences or stature. They are all humans. If I have to serve them, I



Party politics is absolute taboo for monks- Ven Dr. Brahmanawatte Seevali Thera

will serve all of them. That is the duty of the bhikkhu. The bhikkhu should be able to stand at any junction of the country. We may have minor flaws in us as bhikkhus, such as our personal allegiances towards politics. But, we have to suppress those thoughts. We have to be equal-minded towards all people in society. This equal-mindedness diminishes once a bhikkhu starts engaging in politics.

That is why this decision was taken. We took into consideration the service being rendered to the lay society by monks. Look at what is happening. One monk set himself on fire; another is prepared to set himself on fire. According to Buddhism, or the law of any given State, a person is prohibited from committing suicide. When you do such things in public, it is degrading. This is a multi-religious and multiethnic country. During a recent protest, monks clashed with the police. The police were seen pulling at the monks' robes. The monks were grappling with the police personnel. These are the very monks whom people worship. The monk is the yardstick for measuring the religion and the Sasana. So, people are questioning whether it is condonable for monks to act in such a way. These are not the teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha did not condone such

actions. These individuals are mental patients. This is mainly because there is no proper mechanism to streamline the conduct of monks. They behave in an unruly manner, because there is no proper administration by the country's three main Chapters.

Q: Ven. Thebuwana Piyananda Thera, who represents the JHU, says that he is against the decision arrived at by your Chapter and says that he has a moral right to express his dissent. What is your opinion regarding his statement?

A: Anyone can rebut this decision, even a layman. Anyone is free to express their views. But, it should be done on justifiable grounds. If Thebuwana Piyananda is opposing this, it is due to personal gains. If he has any objection, he should get his order to contact the respective clerical headquarters. He cannot oppose it individually. Hence, the decision made by Sri Saddhammawansa Chapter is appropriate. He may be intimidated that if Ramanna Chapter adopts this decision, he would end up losing his political career as he is a monk of that Chapter.

Q: As you say, this decision was arrived at to preclude the politicization of the Buddhist monks?

A: Absolutely, this decision in fact should be adopted by all three major

Chapters. The way I see it, at present, all three major Chapters are in shambles. There is no proper centralized administration. They have to reach a consensus and issue a proper code of conduct for all monks, collectively.

Q: Do you think the ramifying of sects has acted as a catalyst to aggravate the present situation?

A: No, I don't think so. Dividing of sects is admissible, since it facilitates the administration over a very large number of monks. There is a downside to it too, such as, minor occurrences of caste discrimination. In this Sangha Council alone there are 12,735 monks. In that respect, division of sects is beneficial.

Q: Are you of the opinion that monks should adopt a passive attitude towards society's grievances, especially those of the Buddhists?

A: No. If the Buddhists are subjected to harassment or are in any manner victims of injustice, the monk has a duty to voice his opinion. But, this should be done decorously. Besides, you do not need to have political affiliations to voice your opinion as a monk.

Q: Do you think the other two Chapters would follow suit?

A: They need to give this decision considerable thought.

Q: Does Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thera come under the Amarapura Chapter?

A: No. He is of the Siyam Chapter.

Q: Are there monks of the Sri Saddhammawansa Chapter represented in organizations such as Ravana Balaya or Sihala Ravaya?

A: There may be. I cannot say exactly. However, Ven. Akmeemana Dayarathana and Athuraliye Rathana of the JHU are of the Amarapura Chapter.

Q: Following this decision, if monks engage in politics, would they be banished from the order?

A: This is a crucial question. We as the Amarapura Chapter, have composed a code of conduct in a manner that represents all 22 sects coming under the Chapter's purview. We have handed it over to the government so that it would be legally sanctioned. So have the Siyam and Ramanna Chapters. For over 25 years, we have been submitting this document to each and every government that has come into power. These governments precluded from legally empowering it. Why? Because if they do that, they cannot use the monks to fulfil their political expectations. If they do that, they would not be able to keep monks on political stages, nor can they send them off for demonstrations.

Hence, we are powerless because the consecutive governments have failed to ratify this code of conduct. We need the essential support of the government to do this. We can banish them from the order, but they can continue to wear the robe and exist in society or join another sect.

Q: What compelled the Amarapura Sri Saddhamawansa Chapter to champion this cause by itself? Why didn't any other of the 22 subchapters rise to the occasion?

A: It is because a majority of the monks who commit unruly acts such as setting themselves on fire and engaging in demonstrations are from this Chapter. This issue was of paramount concern to us as most of the monks under the order are insubordinate.

Q: Why are the Mahanayakes silent on this issue?

A: You have to make brave decisions. One cannot afford to vacillate.

Q: Are you saying that the Mahanayakes have failed in their duties?

A: Yes, they absolutely have.

Q: Don't you think that you would be intimidated by the powers that be, over the decision made by your Chapter?

A: I don't think that anyone can coerce us to repeal this decision. If you die, you will only die once. We will stand by our decision.

Q: Is there not a possibility for certain parties to interpret your Chapter's decision as an infringement on their intrinsic human rights?

A: (Smiling) One becomes a monk renouncing everything. Once becoming a monk, can I get married? I cannot.

Q: According to the Dhamma, is it forbidden for a monk to engage in politics?

A: Party politics is an absolute taboo.

Q: Under this context, is a monk even prohibited from adhering to his political beliefs?

A: No. That is possible. But, just because one is permitted to do so, monks cannot act like disgraceful vagabonds. The Buddha in the Agganna Sutra has preached the manner in which a king should treat his subjects, so that rebellions by the people can be averted.

Q: Can't monks advise any government in power by drawing reference to this sutra?

A: Why do you need to bear political encumbrances for that? You don't need to set yourself on fire or be in Parliament to do that. Adhering to that advice or not is the duty of the rulers. But, we as monks at least can prevent the lay society from travelling on a wayward path. Is that not part and parcel of the greater scope of macro politics? Rulers should not make

monks members of their respective parties. If they so require, they can have them as mentors, but not as stooges.

Q: Certain parties accused your Chapter of having taken this decision in order to prevent Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera from running for President. Is this true?

A: Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha is of the Siyam Chapter. Among the patriarchs in the Sangha society, Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha is one of the most fearless monks, who are unafraid to come to brave decisions. He sees the grievances of society. He raises them objectively when everyone else is silent. When he has not even expressed such an intention, why are they perturbed?

Q: But, Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha Thera has expressed such intentions intermittently!

A: I personally don't think he would run for President. He has not expressed any such interest to me.

Q: What would happen if he does?

A: One cannot make a birth certificate for a child, who is yet to be born. But, I don't think Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha would do so. A majority of the monks who went to Parliament said that they are going there to clean the cesspit. But, what has happened? They ended up falling into

that same cesspit and are now covered in faeces. Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhitha knows this, so he wouldn't. However, the present political system has to change. Time will decide on a suitable candidate.

Q: Are you dejected by the conduct of the renegade monks?

A: Yes I am. They have forfeited their responsibilities and are preoccupied with other issues. They do not preach sermons. They are doing politics instead. This is a tragedy of epic proportions. It is lay preachers who are now delivering sermons since monks are engrossed in various other activities.

Q: Members of the clergy represented by various other denominations in the country do not engage in open politics. How do you view this?

A: That is exactly my point. They are sticking to their tasks. But our monks don't. Catholic fathers do not engage in politics nor do Islam or Hindu priests. They always ask us as to why monks are engaged in such activities.

Q: Since allegations have been hurled against Sinhala Buddhists stating that they are exercising religious supremacy in order to crush minority ethnicities, which encompasses followers of various religious faiths. Do you agree on this?

A:Yes that is true.

We as Buddhist, just because we are a majority, do not have the right to harass the minorities or people who follow different religious ideologies. That is absolutely deplorable. That is why the country has been subjected to such rap even in Geneva. Look at how a majority of Sinhala Buddhists acted when Navanethem Pillay arrived in the country. They were raising their garments and uttering profanities, while expressing their dissent. What we should have done was to welcome her in a hospitable manner. This is the impression they get about the Sinhala Buddhists. She witnessed it first hand during her visit to the country. If we had welcomed her cordially, we could have told her the grievances of the Sinhala Buddhists. Who voiced their opinion with regards to the issues faced by us? Who told the UN or the international community? No one. As soon as she arrived they tried to chase her out by brandishing poles. Ministers were clad in loin cloths and were attempting to die by fasting. So how can we pressure the international community when we cannot even control ourselves and behave properly? We cannot battle the world as a solitary nation full of miscreants.

USA :

How Can The U.S. Continue To Prosper?

HuffPost Korea, 18 Apr 2014



Ven. Pomnyun answering an American audience member's question. Jungto Society

A Buddhist - Christian conference was held at the Union Theological Seminary in Manhattan, New York with a Q&A session. The lectures and subsequent discussions lasted from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. for four days, and more than 300 people attended.

The conference created a space for Americans to share concerns about their country, which carries the power to move the world and maintain its position through its superior military and economic status. I participated as a representative of engaged Bud-

dhism, and had conversations with many Americans.

A young man who was just over 20-years old asked how to strengthen God's will in his heart because his religious convictions have become weaker than they were when he was a child; an African American activist sought advice on how to use meditation to get others involved in abolishing discrimination against ethnic or sexual minorities; and a gray-haired gentleman asked the following question:

"My name is Michael. This is not a personal question... How can we save

the United States and heal the world?"

(The audience laughed because of the excessively broad question.)

The United States has great power. What is important is how that power is exercised. If the strength is used to help others, the results will be positive; if it is used to harm others, it will of course be negative. I was in the village of the Scheduled Caste in India when 9/11 happened. At that time, the whole world was thrown into utter confusion, yet the village was quiet because there was



The audience, consisting of mostly social activists and graduate students studying comparative religion and Buddhism, showed great interest in social change through Buddhist practice.

no TV or radio. I asked myself, “what does it mean to live well?” They didn’t have enough food or clothes, and many of them were sick -- but there was no anxiety or panic that Americans felt at that time.

Visiting the U.S. for the past 30 years, I feel that Americans are more and more afraid. Airport security has been beefed up, and getting into the U.S. is harder than any other country. Access to government offices is also very complicated. “Is living like this really living well?” I asked myself. I think one would live more peacefully if one were to save a fraction of the money spent on security for people in despondency.

I wrote a letter at the time of 9/11: “Your pain might be immense. It will give rise to a great anger. If you act on emotions, you will seek to catch and attack the criminal

in revenge. I would do so, too. But let’s think again. If the US is indeed a Christian country that understands those who are responsible and their frustration and their despair, and thus restrains its emotions to show them mercy, just as Jesus Christ prayed for his crucifiers asking, ‘God, please forgive them,’ then the U.S. will maintain its wealth and power for a long time. If you act in revenge, however, one might suppose one hundred years from now that the empire started falling the same day that the World Trade Center collapsed.”

The U.S. didn’t make the right choice. I understand. It may happen to all of us. But if you were to arrive at a different decision... how do you think things would have turned out in 10 years? You might have punished them by attacking Afghanistan and Iraq, but how much money did you spend? How

much more nervous and terrified are you now?

The holy saying “Do not revenge wrong with wrong” is not for the enemy but for ourselves. I think the U.S. still has a chance. Whether to take advantage of that opportunity and prosper or to collapse like many other empires in history depends on our choice today. We must go beyond our emotions to seek safety and prosperity. Having a gathering like this today also shows a possibility for improvement. I wish we nurture this hope together.

Listening to my answer, the gentleman who originally asked the question said “I deeply thank you” in a cracked tone. Other Americans there responded “yes” as well, nodding and giving a big applause.

Another person asked: “How should we maintain peace despite the anxiety induced by the

threat of North Korea’s nuclear weapons?”

In addition to avoiding war and maintaining life and property, peace should also include living like a decent human being. Towards the end of 1990s, over three million people died of famine in North Korea, which is more than the number of people who died during the Korean War. We might have peace, but North Koreans are going through a more excruciating pain than war. A more active way to nurture hope is to study the international network of relations that affects the severity of famine.

Hope always exists, not only in times of happiness but also in times of despair. Our thoughtful choice today will open the door to hope.

The Fire This Time: Religious Violence in Burma

Hozan Alan Senauke

On February 27, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) was forced to close its long-established clinics in Myanmar/Burma. They were accused of giving preferential treatment to Muslim Rohingya people. The closing was in response to statements by MSF about systematic attacks on Rohingyas in Burma's western Rakhine state. According to U.N. documents the latest of these attacks — in Du Chee Yar Tan village this January — left forty-eight Rohingyas dead, mostly women and children, at the hands of Buddhist-based rioters and state security forces. MSF, with clinics in the area, publicly reported that they had treated at least twenty-two victims. The Myanmar government denied these abuses, asserting that the U.N. and MSF's facts and figures were "totally wrong."

After negotiations the government stepped back, allowing MSF to continue HIV/AIDS work and other activities in Kachin and Shan states, and in the Yangon region. Rakhine state remains off limits, despite the needs of thousands from all religions and ethnicities who depend on MSF clinics.

Seven years ago the junta's harsh economic measures brought a "Saffron

Revolution" into Burma's streets. Thousands joined the protests, led by monks and nuns who faced the armed troops of a military dictatorship. A river of robed monastics took the lead and endured great suffering for the sake of their nation.

The Saffron Revolution was crushed in late September. Monasteries were emptied, police cordons set up at their gates. Thousands were thrown into prisons or disappeared. An unknown number were killed. According to reports, crematoriums on the outskirts of Yangon operated night and day. When I visited Yangon with a witness delegation that December, we saw silent streets, empty monasteries, and fear on people's faces.

The Saffron Revolution woke us to the plight of Burma. The Burmese nation — citizens and junta alike — was shamed by images of violence, smuggled out at great risk. That shame deepened the following year when Cyclone Nargis tore across southern Burma, leaving more than 150,000 dead, and large areas of population and agricultural devastated. The junta's sluggish response and resistance to humanitarian relief drove the death toll higher.

In spring of 2011 a flawed but significant election heralded a period of liberalization after fifty

years of oppression. Many were heartened by this change and by the return of Nobel-laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to political life. In time almost all of the thousands of known political prisoners, including monks and nuns, were released, rededicating themselves to building a free society.

These changes were hopeful signs, welcomed by many nations and international non-governmental organizations offering resources and training. On visits to Burma I could feel the sense that a future was possible. Although there was still active fighting between troops and rebel forces in Shan and Kachin states, one could imagine an end to internal violence after so many years.

But in May of 2012 the rape and murder of a woman in Rakhine State, touched off violence between groups of Buddhist Rakhines and local communities of Muslim Rohingyas. Hundreds were killed, dozens of villages looted and burned, many Rohingyas fled to hastily-constructed camps. The population of these camps approaches 200,000 out of an estimated population of 750,000 Muslims in Rakhine State.

Acts of intolerance in Burma are regularly in the news over the last two

years, along with government denials of discrimination or responsibility. Burma's minister of religious affairs Sann Sint, a former junta general, justified a boycott of Muslim businesses. "We are now practicing market economics," he said. "Nobody can stop that. It is up to the consumers."

Last May Rakhine authorities imposed a two-child policy on Rohingya families in two townships, a step towards ethnic cleansing in Burma. Going further, the June 14, 2013 *Irrawaddy* reported, "About 200 senior Buddhist monks convening in Rangoon on Thursday have begun drafting a religious law that would put restrictions on marriages between Buddhist women and Muslim men."

In July the international edition of *Time* magazine featured a cover photo of the fundamentalist Burmese monk Wirathu, calling him "The Face of Buddhist Terror." President Thein Sein's office released a statement about Wirathu and his fundamentalist 969 movement, saying 969 "is just a symbol of peace" and Wirathu is "a son of Lord Buddha."

Anti-Islamic violence has spread in Burma. March 2013 riots in Meiktila, in central Burma, left forty-four people dead and thousands of homes in ashes. Later religious violence in Lashio — in Burma's northern Shan State — left a mosque, an orphanage, and many shops destroyed by Buddhist-identified mobs roaming the streets on motorcycles.

There has been violence on both sides. But the preponderance of organized violence seems to be Buddhist-identified, often lead by monks, with minimal response from the government and the Burmese army.

This conflict has roots in

Burma's colonial and precolonial history. An independent Rakhine kingdom was only absorbed into "greater Burma" at the end of the 18th Century, then ceded to the British forty years later. More recently Rakhine State was exploited by the junta for its natural resources and labor. Meanwhile an expanding "Bengali" population of Muslim-majority Bangladesh presses from the north. It is no surprise that Rakhine fear "Bengali" settlers and other outsiders. Very likely, we are also seeing political manipulation—the former military junta allowing violence so they can intervene and reassert themselves as the preservers of social order in Burma?

Although Rohingyas have lived in Rakhine state for many generations, the military regime's 1982 law excluded them from Burma's 135 recognized ethnicities. Rohingyas have been denied citizenship and basic rights. While Myanmar is presently organizing its first census in decades, the word Rohingya has been disallowed as an ethnic designation. Meanwhile neighboring Bangladesh denies citizenship to Rohingyas within its own borders, designating them as Burmese. The United Nations views the Rohingyas as "one of the world's most persecuted minorities." In the background, too, is a fear rooted in the historical sweep of Islam across Buddhist and Hindu India, and large portions of Southeast Asia.

The Rakhine region, with gas reserves and a long Indian Ocean coastline, is also at play in geopolitics between China and India, each with an eye on Burma's wealth. Meanwhile Burma is in a delicate transition after fifty years of dictatorship. The 2008 constitution reserves one quarter of legislative seats to tatmadaw/military

delegates. It is hard to imagine Burma returning to its dark ages, yet we can recall the dissolution eastern Europe into bitter ethnic enclaves when Soviet dictatorship ended. One hopes for better. We look to Burma's leaders, including President Thien Sein and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to play an active and nonviolent role resolving conflicts between Buddhists, Muslims, and all ethnic groups. Central to this resolution are guarantees of citizenship, human, and religious rights to all Burma's diverse inhabitants. So far their response has been evasive.

At a March press conference with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Jim Brooke, editor of *The Cambodia Daily* asked about the plight of Burma's Rohingyas. Suu Kyi's response was indirect. She said:

In any society, when there are tensions between different communities, you have to first of all ensure security. People who are insecure will not be ready to sit down to talk to one another to sort out their problems. So if you ask me what the solution is to the problem in the Rakhine, I would say simply 'I don't know what the solution is completely, but one essential part of it is the establishment of the rule of law.'

Law is fine and necessary, of course, but not when the house is burning down. One can, however, understand Daw Suu's vulnerable position as 2015 parliamentary elections approach. Fundamentalist Buddhists have begun to form alliances with the former generals to block Aung San Suu Kyi's eligibility to stand for Myanmar's presidency.

Many "progressive" Buddhists are defensive and closed with regard to Muslims. In part this is a result of a dictatorship that dismantled an excellent education system replacing knowledge

with fear and superstition. A friend recently returned from, Myanmar reports that even voices of moderation are effectively silenced.

A monk in Sittwe, capital Rakhine State, told my friend:

... Rakhine (people) do not like the talk of foreigners on human rights, and their suggestions to accept Muslims. The Rakhine have too much fear and lack trust... They fear Muslims will take over their land, and feel betrayed by foreigners who come to help Muslims and not them.

I know that concerns of Rakhine Buddhist have some factual basis. Violence by individual Muslims is part of the picture. But the fears and acts of Buddhists, the demonization of Rohingyas and Burmese Muslims, are creating the very conditions they fear most — the growth of international Islamic organizations willing to respond to discrimination with force.

Burma seems headed into a maelstrom of inter-communal conflict. This may very well fit the purposes of still-powerful generals and politicians who wish to create a strong Burmese Buddhist nationalist identity. Ethnic confrontation in Burma challenges our cherished ideas of a peaceful Buddhism. For those inside and outside Burma who envision a Buddhist-based nonviolent movement for democracy, violence in Rakhine State and elsewhere is a discouraging reality.

This is not confined to Burma. A decade of conflict between Buddhists and Muslims in southern Thailand has left more than 6000 dead and 10,000 injured. In Sri Lanka, after the suppression of a Tamil minority by Singhalese Buddhist military, tensions between Buddhists and Muslims have taken center stage. In the modern era we see this: where

a nation state and religious identity merge, nothing wholesome will emerge.

There are countless open-minded citizens, monks, and nuns in Burma who desire peace and harmony among all religions and ethnicities. May they have the courage to speak out. And may they remember that Buddhists around the world are concerned for them. Shakyamuni Buddha lived in a time of diversity and change. He never taught fear. He never advocated violence. He did not hesitate to speak out for what was just. I would hope that Buddhists today, in Burma or anywhere, can hold ourselves to the same standard. May all beings live in safety and happiness.

Hozan Alan Senauke
Clear View Project

Postscript: What Can I Do?

Many Buddhists want to know how to help. It is a difficult question. The government of Myanmar is inured to outside criticism, and they know that money from developed nations will continue to flow in their direction so long as Burma has resources to sell.

Nonetheless, we have to try. Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield just returned from Burma. For those in the U.S. he suggests:

...write or contact your congresspeople and the State Department, pressing the U.S. not to support major aid, business deals, and especially military collaboration with Burma unless the Burmese government stands up for human rights for all groups. Western Buddhists can write to Myanmar's Ministry of Religious Affairs www.mora.gov.mm/ expressing your con-

cerns.

Stay informed and watchful. Follow online publications like www.irrawaddy.org/ and conventional sources like the *New York Times*, the BBC, and Asian news outlets.

Throughout last November's conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists in Kuala Lumpur, Burmese Buddhists and Muslims held daily dialogue. From these discussions, a fact-finding committee has been organized by an International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations. This fact-finding commission will meet and collaborate with local civil-society bodies inside Myanmar towards three primary objectives:

1. to bring forth the facts of Buddhist-Muslim conflict in Myanmar;
2. to ascertain the causes of this conflict;
3. to develop resources for the establishment of inter-religious peace and harmony in Myanmar.

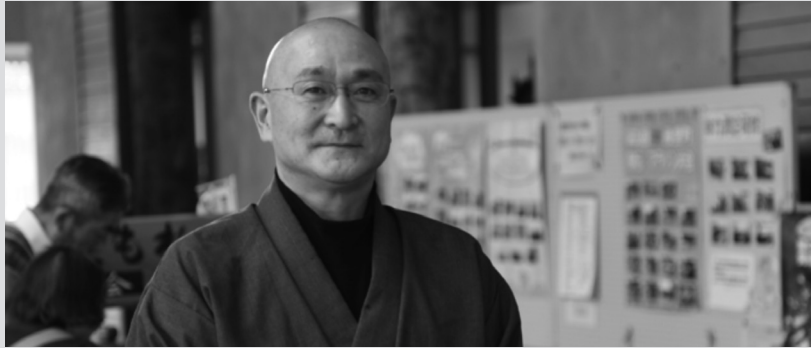
People of Burma and of the whole Southeast Asian region will solve these problems by their own agency. They will need us to bear witness and lend support.

A.S.

Hozan Alan Senauke is a Soto Zen Buddhist priest, vice-abbot of Berkeley Zen Center in California. Alan serves on the International Network of Engaged Buddhists' Advisory Council. In 2007 he founded Clear View Project, developing Buddhist-based resources for relief and social change.

Rev. Shunei Hakamata: A Japanese Suicide Prevention Priest Delving into Structural and Cultural Violence

*Jonathan S. Watts
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At 27,766 suicides, 2012 marked the first time since 1997 that the suicide rate in Japan was under 30,000. Again in 2013, the official rate was disclosed as 27,276. It is hard to assess a qualitative change in the lives of the depressed and suicidal from such numbers. Indeed, 27,276 is still very high, and its rate of 21.7/100,000 citizens keeps Japan in the top ten globally, well above the rates in other G7 nations yet on par with the high rates in other East Asian countries like South Korea (28.1), China (22.2), and Taiwan (15.1). However, it cannot be mistaken that significant progress has been made in raising awareness in mainstream society of the problem of suicide and breaking down the social taboos on discussing and confronting it. The movement of “suicide prevention priests” has been one important part of this change, and their active role in the wider social movement also marks an extremely important shift for Buddhist priests and organizations in developing meaningful social roles in contemporary Japanese society, in which they have become deeply marginalized

since then end of World War II.

At the beginning of the movement around 2006 and onwards for the next few years, most of these priests acknowledged suicide as a “social problem”. However, their activism did not necessarily take place on a social level, that is confronting the structural and cultural aspects of suicide which form the root of the problem. Rightly so, many of these priests sought to address the issue at its crisis point, the suicidal themselves, by engaging in emergency counseling over the telephone, internet, and at their temples. Yet as these priests continued to log endless hours of emergency counseling, they came to understand the issue much more deeply, yet also suffer from the secondary trauma and burnout of such emergency work. This deeper understanding and experience has pushed some of these priests into a more nuanced analysis of the problem. Consequently, some are developing wider ranging activities to root out the problem and reach towards such a “post-suicidal” society—hence a

fuller expression of the practice of the Four Noble Truths.

One such priest who has delved deeply into the structural and cultural roots of the disease of dukkha that has hit his community as well as the entire nation is Rev. Shunei Hakamata, the abbot of Gessho-ji, a Soto Zen temple in Fujisato-cho, Akita prefecture, one of the most rugged northern regions of Japan. In 2000, he founded the Association for Thinking about Mind and Life, a suicide prevention group, in his town of Fujisato-cho. In 2010, he became the Chairman of the Board of the Akita Prefecture Flower Bud Movement, which was the first prefectural level suicide prevention movement in Japan. He also serves on the Tohoku regional board of directors of the Japan Association of Euthanasia, as the Vice President of the non-profit suicide prevention network Kaze (wind), and as a part time lecturer at the Japan Red Cross’ Akita Nursing University.

Rev. Hakamata became concerned with the suicide issue and a host of other related problems as he

watched his community gradually decline in parallel to Japan's rapid economic development after World War II. He points out that Akita—with a total population of 100,000—had until recently the highest suicide rate in Japan for 15 years running. The suicide rate in Fujisato-cho is twice that of the rest of Akita, which he says “indicates that our people are holding a deep sorrow within themselves.” The average annual income in Fujisato-cho is ¥1,462,000 (\$15,000), the lowest in the prefecture and what is considered “working poor”. He believes that the problems of suicide, depopulation, the aging of the community, social withdrawal (*hikikomori*), and people dying alone at home are all due to the increasing isolation of people. He notes, “I also believe that isolation is an illness of modern society.”

Structural Change in Japan's Rural Communities

According to Rev. Hakamata's study, 1965 marks the turning point in his and other rural communities around the nation. Japan could not fully modernize if its human resources were not collectivized and concentrated for industrial production. Thus, under the guise of “social development”, rural communities were transformed and their inhabitants structurally driven into the cities. Through investment in the mechanization of agriculture, money poured into the farming communities and people began to buy mechanized equipment for farming, build new homes, and invest in other new material comforts. However, debts also accrued, and the increasing need for cash income. In this way, people used machinery to work in the peak farming seasons of spring and

autumn, and during other times migrate to the cities to find work.

However, Rev. Hakamata points out that behind the pleasant new material lifestyles and the new ways of farming, something dark started to happen that no one wanted to speak about. From 1930 to 1965, the suicide rate in Akita was below the national average, and in 1955 it was well below the growing national rate of 25.2/100,000 at 20.2. However, in 1965 it began to exceed the national average. By 1970 it was 4.5 suicides /100,000 more, and from 1983 begins a period that has not abated in which it is over 10 more suicides /100,000 than the national average, peaking in 2003 at 44.6 to the national average of 25.5/100,000. At a time when Japan entered perhaps the greatest period of economic prosperity in its long history, why did the despair of the people of Akita go skyrocketing up? To understand, Rev. Hakamata has delved more deeply into the shift in values and culture going on at this time.

The Key Role of Shifts in Values and Culture

Rev. Hakamata explains that traditionally, the one central rule of the community was that everyone participated in collective labor, especially in planting and harvesting rice. This rule was also applied to organizing and conducting funerals, helping out families in crisis, and building important village infrastructure like dams and bridges. Such work was called *shigoto*, which has become the common term today for “work” as in one's job or employment. In the early days of the market economy, Rev. Hakamata explains that the term used for employment or the work one

did to earn cash income was *kasegi*. It was understood in the community that *shigoto* always took priority over *kasegi*. *Shigoto* was “community work”, and it was a duty. The corporate culture as it developed in Japan after World War II smartly co-opted the concept of *shigoto*, emphasizing the community nature of the company. Now, Japanese typically have a hard time getting a break from work for family or community matters, because the *shigoto* of their employment has become the primary obligation in their lives.

In the terms of rural village life today, Rev. Hakamata notes that isolation has developed as people began actively pursuing *kasegi* rather than the mutually agreed upon conventions of collective labor that connected people with each other. For example, in Fujisato-cho, they have day care centers for infants starting from the age of two months who are still breast-feeding. For the elderly, people usually use day care services to look after them, or if they are ill, leave them with specialists at nursing facilities. Rev. Hakamata remarks that it seems that families have basically stopped taking care of their elderly members and now completely depend on experts. The most important thing for families now is their economic means of living.

In looking at this shift in values from collective *shigoto* to individual *kasegi*, Rev. Hakamata highlights how the traditional religious values of Japan, especially Buddhist ones, have been abandoned. He examines the value system lying beneath this modern ethic of *kasegi*, in which it is better for people's wants and desires to develop freely as they are. This has led him into the well-known work of German socialist Max Weber in his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which he claims that Protestant Christian thinkers, especially



John Calvin, gave birth to the basic values of capitalism and market economics. Rev. Hakamata highlights the unique nature of Calvin's doctrine of pre-destination, which led to an understanding that the profits or money gained from the "holy work" of applying oneself diligently to one's own vocation is a reward that comes from God and even evidence or proof of one's truth faith and guaranteed salvation. In the particular form of this concept that took root in the United States, the original emphasis on a life of self-denial and of delaying satisfaction or enjoyment in the fruits of one's work became replaced with the use of these rewards and profits freely without worrying what other people think and, indeed, as a now largely unconscious affirmation of one's sanctified spiritual status.

Rev. Hakamata notes the feeling that profit is the reward given by God is something that Japanese cannot understand. Still, to this day, people in his village community tend to be private about the way they use their money, and this increasing mentality of privacy developed from the personal pursuit of material well being has been an important part in the shift to the isolated culture of the community. This cultural shift has caused as much of a disruption to his community and Japanese society in general as the structural changes. Rev. Hakamata notes that there had always been a sense of the control of desire in village society in the past. It was felt that in order for the bonds within the family and the community to remain strong, it was necessary to control desire. Religion was also part of the value system that was used to restrain human desire. He notes that in the market economy, however, the optimization of desire is the greatest thing. The free development of desire

is the engine for turning the economy, and this has made humans become more immature. "We have been infantilized," he insists, "in that we have been encouraged to quickly raise our hands if we want something. It is very common now to see children throw tantrums at department stores if they are not bought what they want; and adults are not much different." He concludes by noting that, "I have come to notice that in the end, people become atomized within the mechanisms of economics."

A More Holistic Approach to Suicide Prevention

In this way, Rev. Hakamata is not solely focused on suicide prevention, but rather the overall rebuilding of communal bonds and community culture as a way to both structurally and culturally provide an alternative direction for his community. Thus, in 2003, Rev. Hakamata and the members of the Association for Thinking about Mind and Life established a café called Yottetamore in the back of the city hall in the lobby of the Three Generations Exchange Center. The Yottetamore café with its modern, yet warm and very inviting ambience, thus provides not only a place to talk about problems but simply to get a good cup of coffee. Rev. Hakamata comments that, "Whoever comes here will find someone who will listen to them carefully. People know that once a week at this place there will be someone that will surely give them some mental support". In response to the needs of working men, who are only free at night and prefer the atmosphere of a bar to a café, Rev. Hakamata created a Yottetamore akachochin bar to extend and

compliment the café. Rev. Hakamata notes that, "In our town, casual conversation has gone out of fashion, and superficial ways of speaking have become predominant. But at our café, conversation is reborn and so are new connections amongst the people of our community. The meaning of yottetamore is to welcome others to drop by anytime, just to casually drop by and simply chat. So what is the mystery in that?"

Rev. Hakamata feels that this kind of shift in awareness in his community, and ultimately in its culture, is central in caring for the elderly, who are especially prone to suicide due to isolation. Rev. Hakamata emphasizes that the shift is one from seeing the elderly as a "burden" (mewaku) to those who are "cared for" (osewa). In this way, the critical shift occurs not in the suicidal themselves but in the people and the society that surrounds them. This is truly getting at the root of the suicide issue as a social problem and not an individual one. The suicidal is a symptom of a larger disease. To focus on them as the problem is like treating a symptom rather than the cause of the disease. By looking deeply into the structural and cultural causes of this problem, Rev. Hakamata has developed a vision and consequent activities to achieve a "post suicidal" society that goes far beyond decreasing the statistical occurrence of suicide.

For the complete version of this article and other news on the suicide prevention priest movement, visit the Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB) homepage at: <http://jneb.jp/english/>

Reflections from peace-building training in Myanmar

Jill Jameson

At our November 2013 INEB bi-annual conference, a significant outcome of our inter-faith forum was to establish an INEB/ JUST (International Movement for a Just World) fact-finding committee to examine relations between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar. The aims were to bring forth the facts of Buddhist-Muslim conflict in Myanmar, to look into the causes of this conflict and to develop resources to re-establish peace and harmony in Myanmar. This commission is yet to begin.

I recently had an opportunity to evaluate a six week peace-building and training of trainers (TOT) program for Buddhist youth, and this offered a glimpse into some of the challenges in working with the Buddhist Muslim religious conflict in Myanmar at this time, as well as glimpses of possibility for change. The aim of this peace-building program coordinated by Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) was to train Buddhist youth as peace-builders who would facilitate peace-building trainings for their communities across lines of ethnicity and faith. SEM's strategy has been to bring together youth from diverse ethnicities and geographical areas of Myanmar having a common Buddhist identity as a means of developing cross-ethnic understanding and extending this across to difference in religion.

Discrimination towards others of different ethnicity and faiths has a long and complex history in Myanmar. Of major concern has been the recent politicisation of 'peace' as pro Muslim,

and the growing Buddhist/ Muslim violence, not only in Rakhine State but across Myanmar, intensifying the deeply seated internalised fears arising from fifty years of military dictatorship, with an increasing culture of silence and fear of the 'other'.

The focus of this evaluation over seven days was to explore together with the youth what had changed for them personally and what had the potential for social change, as well as their learnings about love and forgiveness. A further part of the evaluation was to observe an extension training by some of the participants in Rakhine State, and to draw lessons learned together from trainees, trainers and stakeholder representatives and to explore how these could be applied to the wider community.

There was a considerable shift in attitude towards acceptance of people from other ethnicities over the course of the training, with growth in self-awareness. The participants reported being more in touch with their own feelings and those of others through the practice of Non Violent Communication (NVC). Many commented on the changes they saw in themselves from expressing anger to others prior to training to now being 'more in control' or 'letting go' of anger, so that their relationships with family and friends have improved. This outcome is seen as beneficial, but I am not sure how much this involves suppression of anger and seeing this possibly as 'equanimity' which is also close to 'passivity'. Anger would seem

to be a natural response to what many have felt towards the military government, and can be transformed for work towards social justice possibly when people feel more secure! And this possibly explains why there was more emphasis on personal change than on the potential for social change, reflecting the rising levels of fear at this time. In the current climate this is perhaps what is most appropriate. Trainees were aware of some of the challenges they face ahead in their extension trainings and other community work – 'the lack of trust by government authorities and the community, and the challenge of promoting emotional development and changing people's perspectives to accept differences'. However, the training has sown many seeds, and people of Myanmar generally have learnt over the years of hardship to find possibility in the smallest nooks and crannies, and to move forward. As one Rakhine participant said, *'realising how little we knew before the training, and with the chance to learn more – so now there are feelings of pain for our country. This motivates us, and also aware we can't accomplish all'*.

Participant's attitudes towards others of different religion reflect to some extent the current polarised climate, particularly in Rakhine State. For example, in a discussion of what would a peaceful Myanmar look like comments ranged from 'it would be good if there are no Muslims, then there would be peace', to, 'we need to respect each other and live together'.

Only 2 participants practiced



metta, and although some participants helped or taught at dharma schools for young children, this seemed to be limited to sharing stories of the life of Buddha for example, as a snake or monkey. From the evaluation, one of the participants commented that, 'hearing about the Brahma Viharas in our training, people with a big heart can more easily understand others.' This Rakhine participant feels that 'most Buddhists in Myanmar are traditional Buddhists – not practicing the Buddhist teachings.' However, it would seem that many of the monks who selected these participants for the training are different and are socially engaged. From what we heard about them from the participants, or learned in speaking with some of them in Sittwe, they are active in their communities and are especially encouraging of youth, facilitating the extension trainings in their communities, teaching metta, and in Sittwe, some are chanting metta to allay the violence. These socially engaged monks had been on Socially Engaged Monastery-based Schools study tours, (some had seen evidence of the genocide in Cambodia under Pol Pot), and they are speaking out –even if quietly – against the hatred and violence. Thus, the direct connection of these socially-engaged monks with the peace-builders in their communities - offering the dharma, support, encouragement and a strengthening of youth networks - is providing an alternative model to the dominant nationalistic Burmese State, with great potential benefit for the youth social movement and the future of Myanmar. As one participant from Rakhine State said, he hopes to 'combine the knowledge from the training with the dharma and to use this to make change at the community level,

to change the violent mindset.'

From the evaluation process and reflection of the participants it would seem that there have been considerable changes in that transformative aspects of love and forgiveness can now be seen in how they relate to each other. And some people also recognised that to change their attitudes towards people of other faiths only requires a willingness to learn about and understand other religions. There has been a strengthening of their mutual understandings and reaching out to each other, a letting go of anger, and the practice of respect and deep listening across some differences, which are all themselves expressions of 'love, peace and forgiveness,' and also of compassion.

Reflecting on the training curriculum, a broad range of topics will be useful for the future, with most emphasis on self-awareness, deep listening, NVC, and the root causes of conflict. In the current climate it is probably not surprising that the topics of nationalism, racism, multiculturalism, trauma healing, reconciliation and forgiveness, were not mentioned by the participants.

The participants from the training were strongly motivated to share the peace-building training in their communities, further reinforced by their own experiences of conflict or of a perceived need for peace in their communities. Many will continue to need support and it is good to know most plan to work closely with the monks who selected them for the training. They plan to mobilise youth networks following training in their communities, or to connect with other civil Society Organisations. Some plan to take up issues such as land confiscation or the environment, or to teach critical thinking to children or

connect villages through community development projects. Thus, they will in many ways be helping strengthen their communities, through facilitating linkages between the community, sangha and village authorities.

The visit to Sittwe in Rakhine State to observe an extension training and to talk with participants and monks highlighted the extreme mind-set of fear and hatred which exists there. Prior to our departure, we had been asked not to mention 'peace and religion'. Mostly, Muslim Rohingyas and other Muslims were 'invisible' or there was only very veiled reference to them. It was a culture of silence – like an elephant in the room - but occasionally strong statements were reported. Some local people had earlier, on hearing some youth had been selected for a peace-building training, asked, 'do you want to teach us not to hate Muslims, and to accept Muslims?' In trying to uncover the fear it seemed that many were afraid Muslims 'would take their land.' The fear of losing land was possibly justified, but it is more likely to be big investors or the 'cronies' who will take their land rather than Muslims. It was assumed that all foreigners –including myself – were being supported by Muslims. On the other side of fear, some monks were practicing metta, and protecting the people from further violence as well as having provided shelter, food and clothing to survivors after the 2012 violence.

In observation of part of the two week extension week training in Sittwe, the focus was on building trust using some games where participants could move, laugh and strengthen relationships. Although this seemed very appropriate, I was also struck by how it was limited to the strengthening of 'us' to the exclusion of 'them.' Maybe at a later stage some bridges might be

built, but otherwise this could further polarise the situation. Hopefully, the monks who selected the participants might be more involved with this expanding network, to continue to motivate youth to 'dare to speak out'. This training and the community projects, which many are planning to participate in are very important at this time, made all the more challenging by the need for good education.

In some ways their training is just the beginning. Trainees will continue to learn from their engagement in their communities, and for further support from SEM. SEM could also perhaps consider further brief training by Joo Foundation in Yangon, which has useful

training prompts – posters of art work and photos for discussion as entry points to work on peace and conflict via the environment and 'anti-consumerism'. With increased sensitivities around 'religion' and 'peace,' the use of art, symbols and photos of environmental issues may be more accessible entry points for working with conflict and towards reaching out across difference.

The increasing discrimination and fear of Muslims highlights both the significance of this training and some of the challenges for the trainees. Healing and transformation takes time, and the wounds are deep. The participants / peace-builders extension training plans and suggestions for work-

ing in the wider community suggest there will be an expanding network of youth collaborating with local organisations, community leaders and the monks towards strengthening of relationships and community. And perhaps the youth movement, and these Buddhist youth leaders in particular, have the greatest potential to facilitate workshops in reconciliation and peace-building across lines of ethnicity and faith in the future, within their own communities and beyond. These courageous peace-builders and the youth movement are the voice of hope and basis for transformation and reconciliation in the future.

Societies of Sustainability and Sufficiency: Learning from Fukushima & Building Green Temple Communities

In late September 2014, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in partnership with the Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB) and the Interfaith Forum for the Review of National Nuclear Policy (Japan) will hold a one week study tour and workshop series for Buddhist activists involved in the nuclear energy issue and the movement for localized, clean energy development. The program will begin with a two-day exposure through communities in Fukushima, followed by a public meeting and workshop in Tokyo on the building of green temple communities. The program will then move to central Japan with a two-day tour of the Nuclear Ginza in Fukui, site of the largest cluster of nuclear reactors in the

world, and finish with an all day program in Kyoto with religious leaders and the public on building a new civilization of sufficiency (sam-tusti) and sustainability.

The program is part of INEB's Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network, which will have its second international conference in South Korea right after the program in Japan from October 2-4. The program in Japan aims to expose foreign Buddhists, other religious professionals, activists, and media to: a) the realities of life in Fukushima, b) the dislocations caused by nuclear energy in other parts of Japan, c) community support and activism by Japanese Buddhists and other religious professionals in these regions, and d) renewable energy

initiatives by Japanese Buddhist groups and other religious organizations. Through sharing the perspectives and skills of South and Southeast Asian Buddhists in community development, and Japanese Buddhists and other religious professionals in anti-nuclear activism and renewable energy, we wish to create an international network for sharing best practices on building "green temples" and "green temple communities".

Support is still needed for the participation costs of activists from South and Southeast Asia, so if you would like to donate to the program or sponsor an individual activist from these regions, please contact the INEB Secretariat in Bangkok or the JNEB international representative, Jonathan Watts @ ogigaya@gmail.com

Further Information & Links:

JNEB: <http://jneb.jp/english/activities/buddhismnukes>

Sulak Sivaraksa

Matteo Pistono profiles the octogenarian Buddhist writer and activist who is still teaching about deep ecological suffering

Matteo Pistono



Sulak Sivaraksa is not afraid to speak out against greed

Photo: Souvenir Press

Sulak Sivaraksa's 82 years show no sign of slowing him down. The prominent Buddhist activist from Thailand continues to travel the world lecturing and publishing, mentoring young activists at home and abroad, and participating in groundbreaking inter-religious dialogues. He also works across a number of spiritual, humanitarian, cultural, and environmental movements. And from his home in Bangkok still supports the many organisations he has founded, including the International Network of Engaged Buddhists.

Sulak also continues his role as a key intellectual speaking out about ecological suffering and sustainability. And when speaking of ecology, he starts by articulating the Buddhist understanding of interdependence (Pali: *paticcasamuppāda*). Like the notion of interconnectedness in deep

ecology, Buddhists assert phenomena exist in mutual dependence; from a plant seed to animals to human beings to the mind itself, all of existence comes into being dependent upon a complex matrix of causes and conditions.

Sulak's own elder and Buddhist teacher, the late Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, asserted that to see profoundly the totality of Nature was to realise the ultimate truth of the Buddha's teachings. Buddhadasa had a deep impact on Sulak. Realising how we as individuals, and the entire world around us, are not independent entities, but rather depend upon a multiplicity of conditions, gives rise to a deep sense of responsibility and ethical behaviour. Buddhadasa stressed that it is impossible to act selfishly if one were to realise this deep interdependence.

Sulak's writings and activism have their foundation in a reinterpretation of traditional Buddhist teachings applied to modern socio-economic, ecological, and political dilemmas, which he develops fully in *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society* and his most recent book *The Wisdom of Sustainability*, in which he elaborates on E.F Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered* – two of over 100 books and monographs in Thai and English that he has now authored.

With a concern for the preservation of Indigenous forms of knowledge, promotion of social justice, and protection of the environment, throughout the 1970s and 1980s Sulak established cultural organisations, founded and/or wrote for many widely respected journals and magazines, and organised activist groups, all of

which formed the basis upon which Thailand's robust network of non-governmental organisations currently exist. He also established a publishing house and even bookstores. Sulak generated meaningful impact through rural and urban community programmes, gave political voice to the poor and displaced, and effectively challenged environmentally destructive pipelines and dams in northern Thailand.

During the 1980s and 1990s a number of monks in Thailand built upon Sulak's training and encouragement by developing creative responses to the clear-cutting of forests – these eco-monks ordained trees, sanctifying them with monastic robes to serve as a reminder that to cut the forests contravened Buddhist principles. They were successful, though not without the accompanying arrests of both monks and lay activists. Sulak sent lawyers to argue for those in custody. The eco-monks inspired Sulak in two principal ways; the first was that his own Buddhist identity deepened, and secondly, Sulak found new ways to articulate his views on alternatives to consumerism, including establishing the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) College.

Today Sulak still lives in his traditional teak family home in the centre of Bangkok. His home serves as a physical and intellectual retreat from where his socially-engaged Buddhism has radiated for four decades. His work has been acknowledged with nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize (1993 and 1994), and awards including the Right Livelihood Award (1995) in Sweden and the Niwano Peace Prize (2011) in Japan. His speeches and writings attacking Thailand's generals and politicians, and suggesting the King should be open to criticism, have landed him in trouble with authorities forcing him

to have to flee his home into exile on two occasions (1976–77 and 1991–94), leaving his wife and family behind, in order to escape arrest.

Today, Sulak's home continues to be a refuge and hub of activity for refugees, poets, writers, artists, activists, nuns and monks, and other intellectuals with Sulak in the centre of it all. His friends and associates are a global community of varied religious faiths and political stripes. He locates the genesis of today's environmental crisis and ecological suffering—from the damming of rivers to climate change, from our petrol dependency to hydraulic fracking, from Bangkok's urbanisation to endangered flora and fauna around the world—squarely in the lap of free-market capitalists and consumerists.

"I explicitly name capitalism because without doing so any critique will be simply abstract, moralistic and toothless," Sulak recently wrote. "Ecological suffering is the result of systemic violence rooted in the global political economy."

What is the root cause of ecological suffering? Sulak returns to his Buddhist upbringing, though with his 21st century take on things, to explain: "Greed is clearly personified in capitalism and consumerism. Human beings are taught to worship money, worldly sciences and technological advance, at the expense of human development and the spiritual dimension of men and women. Descartes said *cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am. I feel that he started the Western dilemma that has now come to the core concept of consumerism, which says 'I buy therefore I am.'"

But despite the grave ecological suffering wrought by consumerism, Sulak has not lost hope: "To counteract these global forces, we need to walk a different path from the one of-

fered by capitalism. The teaching we need in order to walk this path already exists. The challenge facing humanity is not the development of more and more technology, markets and bureaucracies but the spiritual development of wisdom and compassion."

Sulak is quick to advise us to return to what sustains every individual – the breath. By connecting with the breath of life through meditation, this is where Sulak stresses activists, organisers, politicians, nuns and monks must start, and return to, in order for their work to remain non-violent and have long-lasting results.

"The practice of mindful breathing restructures our consciousness and helps us develop critical self-awareness. We become more able to see the structural violence in ourselves and in the world."

Coupled with one's inner meditation practice, through sustained outward efforts within society, Sulak believes a positive course can be charted. He advises and promotes on a wide range of projects including eco-villages, organic and ecological small-scale farming, local ecosystem conservation, urban gardening, food security projects, and Indigenous knowledge system support and community forestry. His multi-disciplinary approach brings together those working in the environmental, cultural and political spheres and has brought about many positive results over the years. Sulak is a symbol of synthesis between action and contemplation and an inspiration at home and around the world.

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Reflections from a Buddhist on How Poverty Affects Children

Rev. Hidehito Okochi

I am a Buddhist priest from Japan. Perhaps you may regard this as a rather typical standpoint from which to think about poverty. It may be thought that the problems of poverty and children in Japan are completely different from those that you have in mind today.

However, Japan, along with the U.S.A. could be considered a country of advanced poverty because the issues of poverty today have been brought about by economic development and globalization. Even in Japan, said to be one of the most economically advanced countries, the problem of poverty is becoming bigger.

Now, it is true that Japan is suffering from economic recession. The number of unemployed and homeless people continues to increase as the economy slides. More than 30,000 persons commit suicide every year, mostly due to economic problems, it is said. Solitary death of people living alone has been a problem for some time, but in recent years, there have been families living together losing their members to starvation. An activist friend working on poverty issues told me that the problem of poverty in Japan has advanced to a

new stage. As a matter of course, poverty has had various impacts on children.

The increase of mental disease, often linked to the causes as well as effects of poverty, is also taking a toll on children. It is often pointed out that poverty becomes one of the causes of child abuse. As the number of children dropping out from school increases, the vicious circle of poverty intensifies.

The essence of poverty is “the division of” rather than “the lack” of the resources which are necessary to live as a human being. Enough leftover food to feed hundreds of thousands of people is thrown away every day in Tokyo. And there are many unoccupied houses and empty rooms. This might be considered an issue of unequal distribution, but we have to ascertain a more basic problem.

The essence of Buddhism is the teaching of interdependent co-arising (Pratityasamutpada). It is the understanding that very existence is connected and related to every other. All phenomena are manifested as a result of the mutual relationship of innumerable causes and conditions.

There is nothing unrelated to me in the world. We have to live in harmony with nature, with other people, with the past and with the future. It is seen that the essence of life is suffering and the root cause of this suffering is our craving, anger, and ignorance. We are taught to face all who suffer, both ourselves and others, with loving kindness and empathy, to discern the mechanism of suffering, and to walk the path of truth as beings who share one universe.

Seen from this perspective, the essence of poverty is human greediness and mammon.

In a society that gives top priority to economic growth, making money becomes the cardinal virtue, valued more than traditional culture, the environment or life itself. Since people with money have decided the laws and policies, we live in a society where people can do anything if they have money, but can do nothing without it. Villages relying on farming, forestry or fishing in harmony with nature, and communities based on mutual aid have collapsed, and our shared assets and social capital have passed into the hands of private corporation. The value of all things is now gauged

in terms of money. As Japan has plundered resources and exploited labor from the Global South at cheap prices, our agriculture, forestry, fisheries and industries have collapsed, making us ever more dependent on money.

It is claimed that economic development eventually trickles down to people at the bottom. But the reality is that disparities are widening, a complex, shrewd and ruthless system is protecting vested interests, and we are walking the path towards further division rather than redistribution of wealth. A lion has no use of money and does not attack other animals if it is full. But hunger for money is insatiable and knows no limits.

It can be said unequivocally that poverty today is structural violence due to liberal economic globalization. This structural violence due to liberal economic globalization. This structural violence is epitomized by nuclear power generation, which has been promoted in the name of economic development while inevitably exposing workers to radiation and contaminating the environment. The effects of radiation on health and the environment have been downplayed while the actual damages and anomalies have been covered up with the power of money. Though the nuclear power plant accident in Fukushima has exposed tens of millions of people to radiation, not only in the vicinity but also in the Tokyo region, its impacts have been underestimated. The government has raised the limits so that the children in Fukushima are left to live under higher radiation levels than in which adults would normally be allowed to consume food or drink.

Exposure to such radiation levels is violence against children. Prioritizing economics over life has victimized the children the most, including the unborn, who are more susceptible the younger they are. But our nation, ruled by money, does not stop to look at this suffering. The citizens, also enslaved to money, have lost the strength to change the government's policy, which promotes nuclear power generation in order to protect vested interests in the name of convenience and economic development.

Such loss of the strength to live is an important facet of poverty today. The children also face the same problem. A high school teacher recently asked his students whether Japanese society would get better or worse in the future, and almost all of them answered that they thought it would get worse. A survey also found that only 20% of young people in Japan think they can do something to change society. One can see to what extent young people have been alienated from society.

I once tried to collect the views of children about child abuse. Unaccustomed to saying what they think, many children at first seemed to be at a loss. They next reacted with suspicion that they would not be listened to or would be made use of. However, once they began to think about the children being abused, they started to show their wish to do something. And as they began to delve into the issue with interest, they tried to understand the feelings of the abusive adults. They debated about the cause of abuse and whether current countermeasures were effective. They began to raise issues and come up with solutions that only

children could think of. The children are our partners, gifted with remarkable sensibility and imagination; they are an invaluable social resource, capable of participating in society with awareness of their own responsibility and potential.

All forms of violence such as poverty and discrimination have a top down structure of domination as a backdrop. This can only be overcome by society which embraces human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which came into being through deep reflection on the many aspects of human suffering. A society free from the tyranny of money, exemplified by many indigenous peoples that have lived in harmony with nature. A flat society that respects all people equally, including children.

I have been given much courage by the children who are participating and speaking out here today. I feel called to begin building a society from this hall and reaching to the corners of the planet.

Because we are connected to everything, we are able to change the future and to remake the world. This is the hope that I want to share with the children.

(Translation : Tom Eskildsen)

The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Fourth Forum

17th June, 2012, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

*Ending Poverty, Enrichment Children
INSPIRE.ACT.CHANGE*

The Monarchy and Thai Politics

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I was once invited to give a talk on “The monarchy and Thai politics.” I intended to give it the following subtitle: “the politics of the monarchy at an historical turning point.” The organizers however didn’t want to confront the issue of the monarchy directly. Likewise, the debate between the red shirts and the “*muan maha prachachon*” (great mass of people) seems to miss the bull’s eye. A crucial question that no one dares to raise is: Should the monarchy be maintained in Thai society or not? Note well that posing this question is already a crime in this country. A follow-up question is: If we want to preserve the monarchy in Thai society, how would a constitutional monarchy look like? What possible forms could it take? And what should its substance or nature be like?

When the people in the capital are unwilling to talk about this crucial issue, we have to come here to Payao province to do it.

I think we should begin by trying to understand what the monarchy is and what its main functions are. We also need to delve into the problem of why many people believe in it, and how the monarchy has been able to create a culture of obedience (which also in part relies on a culture of fear). In short, how has the monarchy been normalized as part of the daily existence of the people?

....

The monarchy is a necessary institution. Necessary for whom? For the ruling elites who constitute a minority in society. The majority may no longer see the value or importance of having a monarchy or ruling class. Here the majority of the people may in fact be behaving as good Buddhists should. Buddhism suggests that greed, hatred, and delusion are at the origins of suffering. And the monarchy is an embodiment of greed, hatred and delusion.

Recall that every jataka tale that talks about the ruling elites never portrays them in a positive light. In these tales, the ruling elites are not figures worthy of emulation. They don’t devote their lives for the benefit of the people. The exception of course is the ‘alternative’ ruler or ruler who is not ruler like Prince Vessantara who gives away everything he owns, including what is considered state property.

Ultimately, the kingdom by popular decision exiled him to live in the jungles.

Prince Vessantara is the last reincarnation of the Bodhisattva before being born as Prince Siddhartha. Then there is the so-called Temiya Jataka. In brief, little Prince Temiya hated the idea of being king (for the second time as he remembered being king in one of his previous births, which brought him great suffering) and therefore he prayed to the deities to receive advice. One of them told him to pretend to be dumb and inactive so as to avoid inheriting the throne, an advice that the young prince followed. A lesson from this tale is that being king inevitably entails the use of violence in various modes.

Perhaps this Buddhist philosophy has influenced Thai people in general who uphold the Triple Gems. In Buddhism even kings are bound to uphold the ten royal virtues, which may be lax in varying degrees but can never be fully ignored. The Wheel of Dhamma plays a role in counter-balancing the State, helping to ensure that the ruling elites’ actions are within the bounds of legitimacy by also drawing upon local wisdom, culture and tradition.

The monarchy is at the apex of the secular world. In the Thai case, the *Trai Phum Phra Ruang* (Three Worlds According to King Ruang) is cited as the main reference to legitimize the monarch’s right to rule. In essence, it says that anyone who has accumulated vast merits in previous births may be born a king who is by nature superior to the rest of the people. However, a king must also uphold certain virtues in order to maintain his position.

In practice, the king must rely on other members of the ruling class—often a selected few—to govern the kingdom. At times the members of this oligarchy might wield more power than the king—or sufficient power to counter-balance or even depose him. For instance, during the Thonburi era the king lost royal power and was removed by a small fraction of powerful ministers with the secret cooperation of the religious institution.

In the early Rattanakosin era, especially from the Third Reign to the middle of the Fifth Reign, actual power was in the hands of a number of aristocratic families. Ultimately, King Chulalongkorn

subdued these families and paved the way to the construction of absolutism. The new absolutist state had no internal checks and balances. Its primary threat came from imperial powers in Southeast Asia.

Thai absolutism survived until 1932. Prior to the 1932 Revolution, it had already been challenged several times. When the Thai monarchy lost its absolutist status, Pridi Banomyong, as the head of the civilian wing of the People's Party, sought to preserve and transform the monarchy into an institution under the constitution. He struggled to maintain democracy in Siam during the phase of the military dictatorship and Second World War. Tragically, Pridi was accused of being behind the mysterious death of King Rama VIII, and the military coup d'état in 1947 forced him into life-long exile.

Thus after 1947 the monarchy was under the control of the military dictatorship. This was essentially similar to the period between the Fourth Reign and the middle of the Fifth Reign in which the Bunnag clan exercised dominance over the monarchy. During 1947-1973, a number of military figures took the place of the Bunnag clan, namely Field Marshals P. Phibunsongkram, Sarit Thanarat, Thanon Kittikachorn, and Praphas Charusathien. These figures were all backed by the American empire, as Siam became a US client state.

Of these four dictators, Sarit was the worst. Sarit relied on Luang Wichitwathakan as his chief ideologue. Luang Wichit had also served under Phibun. Phibun wanted to exercise absolute control over the monarchy, relegating it to an institution of secondary importance in social life. Sarit, on the other hand, sought to turn the monarchy into an institution that was more divine than during the absolutist period. For example, he reinstated the practice of crawling and prostration before the king—a practice that had been abolished during the Fifth Reign. The king was flattered in excess. State power, mass media and education institutions were used to (re)produce an obedient people. It was within this period that the monarch was transformed from an ordinary human being like all others who happened to be king into a divine ruler above all other mortal beings and beyond criticism.

The monarchy's exceptional political position also implied special economic privileges, which often lack accountability and transparency. The Crown Property Bureau is a case in point. But so too are many royal initiative projects; and not to mention

the Chulabhorn Research Institute and the To Be Number 1 project.

The event of 14 October 1973 constituted a victory over the military dictatorship. But whose victory was it? It wasn't a victory for the common people. The military continued to be a state within a state. Rather it was a victory for big businesses. Many of them had prospered under the military dictatorship. After October 1973, they became more assertive—no longer happy to play second fiddle to the military generals when it came to politics. In the wake of October 1973, the monarchy's political and economic influence also increased to an unprecedented level since 1947. For instance, the monarchy was directly involved in the bloodbath of 6 October 1976, and there was a royal-appointed prime minister after this political turmoil. This royal-appointed prime minister was a civilian but arguably he was worse than the military dictators. When the military ultimately removed him from power, he was appointed a privy councillor.

To cut a long story short, Thaksin and the Shinawatra family are like Dit and Tat of the powerful Bunnag clan. Both brothers were bestowed the title of Somdet Chao Phya in the Fourth Reign. Dit's eldest son, Chuang, essentially inherited his power and became the last Somdet Chao Phya in the Fifth Reign.

Likewise, Thaksin practiced nepotism. He first made his brother-in-law prime minister; then his younger sister. Another younger sister is waiting on the side to take the mantle of power anytime should it be necessary for her. Thaksin is also grooming his son to inherit his power, political and economic. Although Thaksin is not a Somdet Chao Phya, interestingly he is the special adviser to the Somdet Chao Phya of Kampuchea.

Would toppling Thaksin and the Shinawatra family be like the removal of the Bunnag clan from the seats of power in the Fifth Reign? In other words, is Thaksin the only obstacle against the return of absolutism in another guise—our best hope against absolutism? Is this one of the reasons why the red shirts are protecting the Phuea Thai party and the current system? On the other hand, the "great mass of people" claims that they want a reformed democracy with the king as the head of state. However, it is unclear whether the king would be above or under the constitution.

The two sides that are engaging in power struggle today both lay claim to legitimacy. One side

appeals to electoral victory and holding the majority of seats in Parliament. Their claim to legitimacy is based on having a bigger number and preserving the form of democracy. But many other countries also rely on this logic, including Malaysia and Singapore. The opposing side contends that the government has lost legitimacy by attempting to pass the amnesty bill which would let Thaksin off the hook and return his seized assets. They point to Thaksin's corruption, extra-judicial killings, heavy-handed interference in the bureaucracy, and so on. Now, they claim, his sister is continuing this corrupt legacy. The existence of the "great mass of people" indicates that a sizeable number of people could no longer tolerate corruption in the country, the reasoning goes.

Many leading academics and legal experts—undoubtedly honest and knowledgeable—are supporting the status quo. They admit that really existing democracy in Siam is far from the ideal type, but assert that by preserving the democratic form democracy in the country will gradually develop and strengthen—as it had happened in England and elsewhere. Let's call it the buying time thesis. But how long did democracy take to develop in England? And how many people had to suffer because of the British ruling elites' imperialism, colonial expansion and capitalist exploitation? Didn't all these happen under liberal democracy?

Perhaps these scholars are too uncritical of their theories. Here they should heed the Buddha's teaching to the Kalama people (known as the Kalama Sutta):

*Do not go by revelation;
Do not go by tradition;
Do not go by hearsay;
Do not go on the authority of sacred texts;
Do not go on the grounds of pure logic;
Do not go by a view that seems rational;
Do not go by reflecting on mere appearances;
Do not go along with a considered view*

because you agree with it;

Do not go along on the grounds that the person is competent;

Do not go along because [thinking] 'the recluse is our teacher'.

Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are unwholesome, these things are blameworthy; these things are censured by the wise; and when undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill, abandon them...'

Kalamas, when you know for yourselves: These are wholesome; these things are not blameworthy; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness, having undertaken them, abide in them.

Is protecting a democratically elected government that has illegitimately engaged in all kinds of corrupt and nepotistic actions an unwholesome or wholesome thing? Will this action lead to the benefit and happiness or the harm and ill of the people? Why are these considerations less important than preserving the democratic shell?

.....

As for the leaders of the "great mass of people," if they are serious about change or reform, to what extent have they deeply thought about some of the following issues? 1) If the monarchy is to be preserved and protected, how will it coexist with democracy? For instance, how will the monarchy be transformed into an accountable and transparent institution that truly serves the people? 2) When Thaksin and his family and cronies are gotten rid of, how will the "great mass of people" handle the other powerful oligarchs and billionaires who entertain special privileges such as the owners of CP and Beer Chang? 3) How will the urban-based political elites or *ammart* be made to serve the people? And how will universities serve emancipatory purposes? 4) How will the Sangha be transformed from a highly centralized and authoritarian institution into an independent Wheel of Dhamma that counter-balances state power? Here can the Thai Sangha learn something valuable from the Burmese Sangha or other religions? 5) If there is no drastic land reform in the country that guarantees equal land rights, will democracy be meaningful in the country? And 6) what should the new government's stance vis-à-vis great powers like the US and China be? Can ASEAN also revitalize the spirit of the Southeast Asian League as conceived by Pridi Banomyong and Ho Chi Minh?

In conclusion, Siam is at a historical turning point that is fraught with risk and uncertainty. However, this may also be an excellent time to stimulate the unrealized potentials of the 1932 Revolution. The best way to be faithful to the 1932 Revolution is to repeat it.

Speech by invitation of Fine Arts Faculty of Payao University, January 15, 2014

On False and Real Changes

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The words that we use to understand our reality may be inaccurate and thoroughly ideological. Today we hear the word “patthiroob” quite often, which is translated from the English word “reform.” It refers to gradual change, one that avoids violence and bloodshed. On the other hand, the word “patthiwat”, which comes from the English word “revolution,” connotes radical and violent change. It is an undesirable change. In Siam, the word “patthiwat” fell into further disrepute when Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat used this term to describe the military coup d’etat in 1958. (Was it possible that Luang Wichitwathakan advised Sarit on this choice of word?)

It is known that Prince Wan Waithayakon coined the words “patthiroob” and “patthiwat”. Pridi Banomyong however felt that the word “patthiwat” could also mean revolving around oneself or going back to the starting point. Therefore, he preferred the word “apiwat”, which means to grow and prosper—hence real change. As for the word “patthiroob,” in Buddhism there is the word “saddhammapatthiroob”, which means false doctrine or pseudo-Dhamma. This is what the Dhammakaya Movement is propagating—as well as all those monks and lay Buddhists who are using Buddhism to support absolutism, capitalism, nationalism, and consumerism.

What do the leaders of political movements in Siam today mean when they utter the word “patthiroob”? What kind of change do they envision? Real or false change?

For the leaders of the “great mass of people” reform means completely dismantling the so-called Thaksin order. Would this make the country’s future merrier and brighter? It is as if prior to Thaksin Shinawatra’s premiership all was already well or in a state of harmonious balance. Yes, it may be contended

that Thaksin has degraded the country in many respects, economically, politically, culturally, ethically, and so on. This is because he used power and money to intervene in and corrupt these domains—and needless to say, to destroy his opponents.

But we shouldn’t feel nostalgic for the pre-Thaksin days. The Thai state has been in a mess well before Thaksin came to power. Corruption has long been endemic in numerous ministries. Even the legal institutions have not been immune to corruption. The military has existed as a state within a state. The police have not acted as a protector of peace and order. Universities have not served emancipation. The Sangha no longer acts as the Wheel of Dhamma, counterbalancing the State. Local capitalists have joined the transnational capitalist class. Global market determines what goes on in social reality, and hence the fate of millions of lives. The natural environment is polluted and degraded. And so on.

The official name in English of the “great mass of people” is the People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). However, the English name is quite misleading. A literal translation of the official name in Thai is “People’s committee for changing Thailand into a full democracy with the King as head of state.” Now, is the King qua head of state above (i.e., a divine ruler) or under the constitution (i.e., just like ordinary citizens)? In the second sense, the King is merely a symbol or place-holder, and the monarchy is rendered accountable, transparent and susceptible to criticism. Is the PDRC ready to tackle this crucial question?

As a crucial step toward real change in Thai society, something must be learned from history. We must understand that the name “prathet Thai” was a fairly recent invention, originating in 1939. The name “Siam” also came only into official use in

the Fourth Reign. Before that we used the name of the capital city to refer to the state—for instance, Ayutthaya. When the actual location of the capital city was moved to Thonburi and later Bangkok the kingdom still used the name “Ayutthaya” until the Fourth Reign.

In the past, Thais didn't use the word “prathet” (i.e., country). Rather they used “baan maung.” “Baan” or house is where people make their living. “Muang” or city is where power is located, especially power in the negative sense of the ability to force the people to pay taxes, to become soldiers, and so on. The Sangha served as the Wheel of Dhamma that held in check the power of the “muang,” working to keep state power within the bounds of legitimacy. The majority of the people were farmers. They lived far away from the city and were not dependent on state power. In other words, state power often had little impact on the people's daily existence. The elites in the city however engaged in power struggle, oppressing one another. Buddhism tempered the ruthlessness of this struggle to some extent.

Most of the people preferred not to serve the city or become involved with the center of power. Therefore, the elites had to hire foreigners such as Persians and Chinese to act as civil servants. All these foreigners eventually became Thai citizens. The king and the elites had to rely on one another to govern the country. Sometimes the king had to share power with a number of elite families, which ultimately became too powerful—with the ability to (un)make the king. King Rama V was dissatisfied with the situation. By the middle of the Fifth Reign, he successfully tamed the power of the political elites and abolished the Front Palace (which had counterbalanced the power of the Royal Palace). King Chulalongkorn turned himself into a self-styled absolutist monarch—and Siam became a wannabe modern, absolutist kingdom. Politics and government meant the centralization of power in Bangkok, further undermining the power and autonomy of vassal states and peripheral areas.

This transformation did not go without protest. For instance, a number of princes and government officials with international experience petitioned the king for the creation of a constitutional monarchy in 1885. Of course, the king dismissed their appeal.

The words of “commons” in Bangkok like Tian Wan also fell on his deaf ears.

My argument can be put simply as follows: first learning to see the great ‘successes’ of King Chulalongkorn as really failures or false change and the People's Party's attempt to democratize Siam in a positive light is a crucial step in changing the country.

King Chulalongkorn saw himself as someone who radically transformed Siam, especially its administrative system. His son and successor King Rama VII even proclaimed that change during the Fifth Reign constituted a kind of “revolution.” At the same time, Pridi Banomyong's also saw the People's Party's task as revolutionary. The point is which change was truly revolutionary? That is, which of them was a real change?

King Chulalongkorn considered the following things as part of his success story:

1) Power was centralized in Bangkok, the capital city, at the expense of vassal states and rural areas. This also led to the denigration of local culture, wisdom, etc.

2) Groundwork for the modern education system was laid in the Fifth Reign. For their own good, rural folks were required to learn from the capital or urban areas. Nation, Religion and King became the primary markers of Thainess. Ethnocentric nationalism became the order of the day. The people were taught to blindly obey the ruling elites. The class system was naturalized, relying on among other things the *Trai Phum Phra Ruang* (Three Worlds According to King Ruang). Even monks were not immune to this system of indoctrination. As a result, the Sangha's role in acting as a check and balance to state power gradually waned from the Fifth Reign onward. Modern education also had no place for spiritual training.

3) The kingdom created its first standing army. (As mentioned above, the military ultimately became a state within a state.) Was the army really used to fend off external enemies like England and France or more likely to quell internal enemies in Ubon, Prae, and Pattani and anyone who opposed state power?

4) Trade liberalization began in the Fourth Reign. This benefited the ruling class more than anyone else in the kingdom.

Now let's turn to the successes and failures of the 1932 Revolution. It overthrew the absolutist monarchy and made sure that power would no longer be monopolized by a single person from a single family. Rather, the people would serve as the locus of power. Hence Clause 1 of the 1932 provisional constitution of Siam proclaims that "The supreme power in the country belongs to the people." Unfortunately, the military clique in the People's Party merely intended to become the new master instead.

Pridi Banomyong on the other hand planned to create a constitutional monarchy. He undertook concrete measures to facilitate the democratization of Siam. For instance, in 1934 he founded the University of Moral and Political Sciences, which was initially an open university. He drafted the Outline Economic Plan to extend democracy into the economic sphere (that is, not to limit democracy within the political sphere). He sought advice from Buddhadasa Bhikkhu on how to construct Dhammic socialism. And so on. These initiatives were the right move in the right direction if Siam was looking for real change.

In the end, Pridi failed to institutionalize democracy in the kingdom. Arguably, however, there are still unrealized potentials in his vision. For instance, he wanted the four southernmost provinces of the kingdom to have great autonomy. He also envisioned the provinces in northeastern part of the kingdom as gradually having greater autonomy. The MPs of the northeastern region also formed a socialist party; this seemed to be a step toward Dhammic Socialism. With Ho Chi Minh Pridi founded the Southeast Asian League, which was headquartered in Bangkok. Its aim was to foster greater regional autonomy. Pridi's quest for greater equality and autonomy earned him no accolade. On the contrary, the ruling elites—supported by the American empire—quickly saw him as their enemy and eventually forced him into lifelong exile. Perhaps, this is a sign that the kind of change that Pridi advocated was a real one.

Artical from a lecture delivered at Thammasat university, Lampang, 29 January 2557

Heirs To Ambedkar: The Rebirth of Engaged Buddhism in India



Dr. Ambedkar's Buddhist revolution, which Alan Senauke so perceptively describes as "hidden in plain sight", is now transforming the lives of millions of Dalits, and at the same time strengthening the ethical foundations of Indian democracy. It also has implications for all Buddhists and social activists throughout the world.

Dh. Lokamitra

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While many people know of Buddhism as part of India's past, it may well be India's future. The Buddhist movement inspired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in the 1950s has taken root as an "engaged Buddhist" uprising among millions in the 21st century. Heirs To Ambedkar draws from Alan Senauke's experience with and commitment to this movement. Since young people are the future of our world, the focus here is on the students of Nagaloka/Nagarjuna Training Institute, creating a generation of gifted Buddhist activists.

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD IN A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE. SUGGESTIONS FOR 21st CENTURY REFORM IN SIAM

Siam always played a crucial role in the development of South-East Asia. Recently it has been misled towards fulfilling an ambition to develop from a “middle income country” to a “rich country”¹. No wonder it got deeply stuck into its present crisis.

King Chulalongkorn, or Rama V (1853 – 1910), as an absolute monarch, was the driving agent of reform of Siam at the dawn of the 20th century. For the changes initiated by King Chulalongkorn “British and Dutch colonial governments and administrations, not the states in Europe, were his models” according to Charnvit Kasetsiri². “It was the progress of colonial Singapore, Java, and India that really impressed the young king at the start of his reign”. He was 18 years old only when he made his first journeys in Asia in the years 1871-72. These study-visits were more influential, according to Ajarn Charnvit, than his later, more heralded, tours in Europe.

Colonial rule, thanks to Asian independence movements, fortunately lies far behind us. But the remains of colonial thinking internalized in Siamese governance still play a role in our contemporary crisis. The political crisis in Siam, by now re-named “Thailand”, does not stand alone. In other parts of the region (Mekong, ASEAN, Asia), Europe and the world, we face similar eruptions of protest against rising inequality and the destruction of the environment. Let me try to give, some suggestions for reform in Siam at the beginning of the 21st century.

The reforms initiated by King Chulalongkorn peaked in 1892 (so before his visits to Europe) with the

introduction of centralized and “functional-not-territorial” ministries headed by cabinet ministries. This could not prevent that the French exploited the weakness of decentralized territory-based governance, forcing the King to renounce Siam’s claim to the left bank of the Mekong River, present-day Laos. But in return, thanks to clever “Siamese diplomacy”, France and England recognized Siam as an independent state. This was a unique, early victory over colonialism. The independence was to be assured by “functional-not-territorial” centralized governance. That made sense in the historical context. But in the 21st century there is a strong rationale for de-centralization in order to make democracy, introduced in 1932, finally work.

Here comes my first suggestion. In order to make decentralization successful we should not only go back to territorial rule: in the 21st century a third and complimenting dimension of governance should be added, which we could call “purpose-driven”. The major purpose – and challenge – of our time is *sustainable development*³.

Our purpose should no longer be dominated by our pride and identity as an independent nation, our challenge is inter-dependence.

Much needed territorial decentralization, like elected provincial governors, will only become beneficial in a framework of strengthened awareness of inter-dependence and the common purpose of sustainable development.

These three interacting dimensions of governance “territory – function – purpose” can be compared with the presently much debated “separation of powers” between the executive, legislative and judicial, also called Trias

¹ Bangkok Post, 23 January 2013. *PM vows splurge on megaprojects Big spend aims to exit ‘middle-income trap’*. <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/332095/pm-vows-splurge-on-megaprojects>

² King Chulalongkorn’s *Grand Europe Tours With Special Reference to Germany*. Paper delivered by Charnvit Kasetsiri at the International Symposium *The Second Visit of King Chulalongkorn to Europe in 1907*, Bad Homburg, Germany, 2007; Siam Society 2008. In *The Visit of King Chulalongkorn to Europe in 1907: Reflecting on Siamese History*. The Centre for European Studies at Chulalongkorn University.

³ See Sulak Sivaraksa *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*, Koa Books, 2009. The Report *Our Common Future*, published by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 introduced the concept “sustainable development” and it became the leading issue of the Rio 1992 UNCED Summit. Finally, after “Rio+20” in 2012, some acceptance as central to the policy development agenda is emerging. The “Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s) beyond 2015” should be characterized as *Sustainable Development Goals*.

Politica. It would be better to speak from the “coordination of powers” in which each are held to have distinct missions towards the same aim. Separate in their perspective they should be, but ultimately they converge in the democratic governance of the country. What is perceived and advocated as “interference” of, for example, the Constitution Court in the legislative power of Parliament – because it should be “separate” – is a misleading perception. The perspectives of the three powers should be appreciated as distinct, yes; but more important is that they merge, observing due mutual respect, in one act of democratic statecraft towards a common purpose. A government that fails at this point is a danger for its citizens.

In the same way the three proposed dimensions of ministerial organization (territory, function and purpose) should not lead to more competition between various ministries, but to better coordination. Functional reorganization of ministries (there are too many) and decentralization should be important targets of reform, but are not enough. The new 21st century “purpose-driven” dimension – “the missing link” – could be visualized, to begin with, as an additional Department of Sustainable Development of the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. As far as I know Thailand (Siam) is the only or one of the few countries who maintain a Ministry of Human Security. Visionary as the concept may be (it hardly is being implemented as the ministry is as ineffective as many others), Human Security at this point of history needs to be more effectively articulated by coupling it with Sustainable Development. This new “department for sustainable development” should have sweeping coordinating power among ministries comparable with the present super-dominant economic cluster.

I suggest that another “three-dimensional” coordination of governance should be taken into account in our efforts to shape the great reform of the 21st century in Thailand (Siam).

At first glance the French Revolution may seem obsolete. As an extremely violent revolution it can in no way be an example of any movement today. But it brought about an awareness of three fundamental values which complement each other: freedom, equality and brotherhood. Contemporary activist intellectuals like my colleague Right Livelihood Award (the “alternative Nobel Prize”) recipient Nicanor Perlas in the Philippines postulate a resonance between the values of the French Revolution

and three sectors in society: government, civil society and the business sector⁴. The respective “missions” are: for governments – equality; for civil society – freedom; and for the business sector – brotherhood. In the future it is equally important to observe a balance of power between these three sectors of society as it is to integrating the “separation of powers” into healthy statecraft.

The awareness of the “threefold nature of society” with government, the business sector and civil society fulfilling their distinctive roles can lead to a particular analysis and subsequent suggestions for reform.

However, before I formulate my suggestions for reform from this perspective let me come back to the history of Thailand. After the royal reforms from around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, another wave of transformation emerged from the actions of Pridi Banomyong (1900 – 1983) who initiated democracy in Siam in 1932. Originally this was a “revolution” but ultimately democracy became embedded in the constitutional monarchy. Until today, made visible by the political crisis, we are still struggling to find our own way towards shaping democracy as a path to common purpose.

A recurring question is: Is democracy something from the West, not applicable to the East? A key to the challenge of comparing western values – as from the French Revolution – with Eastern philosophy, can be found in the work of Dr. Ambedkar (1891 – 1956), who drafted the Constitution of independent India, as adopted in 1949. Dr Ambedkar saw a clear connection between the values of freedom, equality and brotherhood and the teachings of the Buddha. Pridi Banomyong, who like Ambedkar, studied in France, earlier found in the value of equality his major inspiration to introduce democracy in Siam. Ambedkar however made clear that it was not the French Revolution that guided him but the principles he found in the heart of the Buddhist teachings.

“Let no one however say that I have borrowed my philosophy from the French Revolution.

I have not. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha. I found that his teaching was democratic to the core”⁵.

From this perspective we however may still – in our search for a new development paradigm⁶ and to enliven our reform efforts – recognize a resonance between the Three Jewels of Buddhism, the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, and the values of the French Revolution.

⁴ See also *Income Inequalities and the Health of Societies: From the US to Thailand* by Christopher Shaefer in *Essays on Thailand's Economy and Society. For Professor Chatthip Nartsupha at 72* edited by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, 2013.

⁵ Quoted in: Lionel WIJESIRI BUDDHA DHAMMA: Liberty, equality, fraternity and Buddhism (website).

⁶ See also Vira Somboon Ariyavinaya in the Age of Extreme Modernism, Komol Keemthong Foundation, 2002.

Without declaring them synonymous we may see a similar pattern of thought. In the example of the Buddha we may recognize the value of freedom or liberation and the driving force for civil society. In the Dhamma the law of nature which is equal for all living beings, and also can guide our efforts to realizing equality through democracy. And in the Sangha the values of brother- and sisterhood, community spirit and mutual cooperation. The spirit of Sangha in a broad interpretation can guide us towards creating mindful markets and wellbeing economics. It is the spirit of “Right Livelihood” or symbiotic economy, symbolized in the daily food-offering of laypeople to the Buddhist monks and nuns.

This spirit of Right Livelihood, one of the steps in the Buddhist Eightfold Path towards the elimination of suffering, intimated a new wave of reform when Dr. Puey Ungpakorn (1916 – 1999) entered the stage of shaping Thai governance. Initially Dr. Puey made his mark during World War II as a freedom fighter⁷ and he prevented that Thailand (Siam), which had by the political leadership of the day chosen the side of the Japanese occupiers, was treated as an enemy of the allied forces when the war was ended. Puey was the Governor of the (Central) Bank of Thailand for 12 years, a Dean of the Faculty of Economics, and also the rector of Thammasat University in Bangkok. He received the Magsaysay Award in the field of government service in 1965. Puey is the author of *The Quality of Life of a South-East Asian: A Chronicle of Hope from Womb to Tomb* or later known as *From Womb to Tomb*, which is still one of the most influential writings about social security in Thailand (Siam).

Dr. Puey applied Right Livelihood to the dynamics of public policies.

Right Livelihood was explained by the Buddha as the simple principle that you would not spend more than you earned. Simple as it is, this principle in our era of consumerism is obviously completely ignored, be it by individuals, households, companies or countries. We are living in an economic system which is driven by debts and debts “servicing”, which has created deep and growing divisions between the haves and the have-nots.

Hence, in order to make an analysis, in the perspective of Dr. Puey Ungpakorn’s legacy, of the urgent need for revitalization of Right Livelihood in our complex world at the dawn of the 21st century, it may be helpful if we try to understand this challenge from the broad perspective of the Three Jewels of Buddhism. This exercise may lead us to three conclusions:

First we can observe that the business sector has co-opted (if not hijacked) the value of freedom, in line

with the spirit of colonialism: the freedom to conquer human and natural resources by “free” competition attributing power to violence, money and rationalized self-interest. With disastrous impact, completely un-sustainable.

Fortunately we can also see that business reforms itself (in pioneering circles and often not without external pressure) towards more responsible and sustainable practices. That means transformation towards “brotherhood”: socially responsible and sustainable business, an economy of sharing, wellbeing economics. The co-optation of the value of freedom by the business sector has been largely confirmed by the state, resulting in structural state-support for rising inequality, contrary to the state’s mission of equality and justice. This has grown into a global economic system of, at one hand “state capitalism” in communist countries; and “capitalism-supported-by-the-state” in the USA, Europe and most of the world at the other hand. Civil society has been oppressed or absorbed (due to marketing techniques giving rise to a consumerist society) by the cohabitation of states and big business in an overpowering alliance. Fortunately civil society, at present with the help of social media, shows resilience even when it has to go into the streets. Civil society manifests itself in small city gardens, a new solidarity between urban consumers and rural producers of healthy food, and in creative forms of research-journalism and “action-research”.

Second. If we accept the concept of “threefold balance of power” between governments, the business sector and civil society it implies that we should not perceive democracy as a totalitarian system: it is only valid for state governance. Civil society should claim a free space for individual conscience, freedom of expression (regarding politics, personal life, arts, religion and spirituality). There is nothing wrong in inequality in our affections for those we love and others whose lifestyle we disagree with, if we simultaneously cultivate a foundation of equanimity. Democracy has limited validity. Also business, even socially responsible business, is not ruled by equality, but by the market. Not a “free” market, based on hijacked freedom, but a “mindful market” ruled by a spirit of fair sharing according to different needs, capacities and productivity; based on mutual help. And, again, the “threefold balance of power” between government, business and civil society should not be understood as “separation” of powers, but as three dimensions which constitute by mutual cooperation the same purpose: the wellbeing society.

Third. The analysis that within the present distorted balance of power, civil society is actually only a minute minority: it should be strengthened and empowered. In order to co-create a sustainable society, we need to

⁷ He led the Free Thai Movement.

constitute a genuine balance of power where civil society is in balance with state and corporate power. This raises the question “how”? Here I have six suggestions, probably overlapping with existing advice and recommendations.

1. Education. A major shift of power (and budget) from the state to civil society could be realized if education would be truly decentralized and governed by independent local associations of parents and teachers, in inter-action with children and students. Local governments would have part in the governance, but only to safe-guard basic conditions. “School-centered community development” would become a new, well-respected, professional career, providing attractive training and employment opportunities for young graduates.

2. Land. Pasuk Phongpaichit revealed that Thailand’s inequality increased dramatically since 1979 in contrast with neighbouring countries⁸. Not only in income, the most extreme inequalities are found in land ownership. “The bottom 50 percent of holders have only 2 percent of the total, while the top 10 percent of owners hold 62 percent of total land (with a full title) and the top 20 percent hold 80 percent”⁹. Progressive taxation of landownership (including state ownership) to support a self-governed civil society poverty reduction fund would result in both wealth distribution, fair distribution of land ownership, and a better balance of power. However, any change in land ownership policies meets strong resistance as the majority of politicians is among the 20 percent top land owners. Community forestry legislation and common ownership should be governed by fairness and rigorously strengthened.

3. Agriculture. Pradtana Yossuck recently assessed the effectiveness of organic agriculture policies in Thailand¹⁰. A government budget of 4.8 billion Baht over 4 years to promote organic agriculture is nearly completely spent by government agencies themselves scattered over a variety of miniseries with the Land Department as the major recipient. The effectiveness is very low, farmers’ organizations are hardly aware of the policies. There is no participation of farmers’ en consumers’ groups at the policy development level. If this budget alone, not speaking yet of re-allocation of the budgets of the Ministry of Agriculture as a whole, would be transferred to civil society organizations, the effectiveness would be much higher with multiple impacts on agriculture, health, environment, community development and education. This would initially create

an enormous participatory management challenge but I am sure civil society would rise to the occasion.

4. Economy. Reform of policies beyond populist (one-time) increase of minimum wage, would promote and stimulate the growth of labour unions and associations of migrant workers. This would create channels for fair, permanent, negotiations between civil society and the business sector, and provide protection for corruption-watch by employees. Co-operatives should be detached from government influence. Social enterprises (criterion: at least 51% of profits are donated to civil society causes) should receive tax deduction for proven social impact. The informal economy should not be killed by regulation (like in Europe) so that it can remain the most important safety net preventing mass unemployment.

5. Social security. Although the social security safety net for the elderly, ill, handicapped and unemployed could be drastically improved by means of contributions from the land tax fund mentioned above, in the same time the extended family should be celebrated as one of the most important elements of social capital. Each family could appoint and support a “social worker” in the family who cares not only for its own members but also for the neighbourhood, communities and civil society participation.

6. Religion. One of the most important reform policies to strengthen civil society would be to loosen the ties between government and Buddhism and interact with it as with all other religions and spiritual movements in a spirit of mutual cooperation as independent entities. This would create space for much needed “Sangha reform” and revitalization of the role of monastic orders (women and men) as the stabilizing and forward looking forces in society beyond politics and business.

In conclusion I would like to come back to the legacy of Dr. Puey Ungpakorn. His *The Quality of Life of a South-East Asian: A Chronicle of Hope from Womb to Tomb* is still testimony to a real understanding of Right Livelihood as the appropriate driving principle of public policy development. This spirit of Right Livelihood should inspire our efforts for reform at the dawn of the 21st century.

A lecture delivered in Rangoon on 20 March 2557.

i would like to thank Hans Van Willenswaard for kindly drafted this speech for me

⁸ Inequality in Thailand and Japan. In *Essays on Thailand’s Economy and Society*. For Professor Chatthip Nartsupha at 72 edited by Pasuk Phongpaichit and Chris Baker, 2013.

⁹ Ajarn Pasuk refers to Duangmanee Laovakul’s research based on the registration records of the Land Department.

¹⁰ The 2nd Maejo University International Integrated Conference 2013 Asia Today: Questions and Answers “Well-Being, Agriculture and Politics” 5-7th December 2013.

Phan: For King and Country



Phan: *For King and Country* is an admirable biography of Phan Wannamethee authored by Vitthaya Vejajiva. The author had done a lot of research, relying on primary and secondary documents as well as interviews. In general, I concur with the author’s depiction of Phan because I also know him to some extent. I agree that Phan is full of humility, is honest and capable in administrative matters, and has wisely surrounded himself with many virtuous companions, both young and old. Thus it can be said that this nonagenarian is a venerable person in contemporary Thai society.

Phan began from an ordinary background. But he gradually worked his way ‘up’ through education and good service in the bureaucracy. Perhaps with a bit of luck, he was sent to the United States during WWII as a member of the Free Thai Movement. When the war ended, he pursued and completed a master’s degree there—well before many Thais at the time did.

As a civil servant, he rose to the top position of permanent secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also served as Thai ambassador to (West) Germany and to the UK.

After retirement he has capably and honestly served as Secretary General of the Thai Red Cross Society (in contrast to his predecessor who was forced to resign). Moreover, he is also President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists. Under the aegis of the World Fellowship of Buddhists is the World Buddhist University whose headquarters is in Bangkok.

Phan’s accomplishments however reflect the failures of the Thai state. Is the Thai state asking too much from this 90-year-old man? Isn’t it a disgrace to ask this nonagenarian to be at the airport every time the Thai Red

Cross Society’s executive vice-president is travelling abroad? At this age, shouldn’t he be already elevated to an honorary position in the organization? He has brought several capable and younger individuals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work with him at the Red Cross Society. Is it not really possible that none of them are good enough to assume the position of Secretary General in his place?

As for his role as President of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, it must also be honestly admitted that Phan knows absolutely nothing about Buddhism—aside from the fact that he is a humble and generous person. Furthermore, is the president aware of the political interference in the organization? Does he know that the Dhammakaya Movement has established a beachhead in the World Fellowship of Buddhists, controlling a majority of its younger members? Shouldn’t we see this as a crisis? As for the World Buddhist University it is unfortunate that this potentially influential vehicle has been turned into a plaything of a small coterie of individuals.

Of course, he cannot be blamed for all these things. He is a nice and kind person who has accepted the various positions bestowed to him. He is not omnipotent; he cannot be successful at everything.

The World Buddhist University, which is based in Bangkok, is an international institution that is also funded by the Thai state. If the Thai ruling elites know how to use it to cultivate a Buddhist education that is relevant for the 21st century they will be doing a great service to the Dhamma, and the kingdom will be internationally recognized for this feat. The sad point however is does the Thai ruling strata (not to mention the Thai Sangha) really understand the substance of Buddhism? I truly doubt it.

People need Spiritual Heroes

Pracha Hutuanuwatr

This piece is edited from an interview with Pracha Hutuanuwatr, a writer and Buddhist activist, published in Thai in Bangkok-biznews 23/7/2013. A few months earlier a very famous and highly respected Japanese Buddhist monk in Siam called Ven. Mitsuo disrobed to marry a woman he loved. Popular media made a big sensation of this case. Shortly before this another well-known monk appeared on the front page of all the newspapers for corruption, misbehavior and crime. These two cases have left a feeling of crisis in the Thai Buddhist Sangha

Many people in Siam blame individuals like these monks for the crisis in Thai Buddhism. However Pracha thinks the root cause is social structures and spiritual poverty prevalent in current Thai society.

Pracha, a rebel in his teens joined the Marxist movement at university. At 23 he abandoned the left ideology, became a Buddhist monk practicing meditation and digging deep into Buddhist philosophy. He was a close disciple of Buddhadasa Bhikku for seven years and it was during this period he realized Buddhism was applicable to civil society. Since then he has been applying Buddhist teaching to work for just and sustainable change in society through peaceful means including direct action when needed. He sincerely believes that a paradigm change is needed to improve and directly address social issues to create a wholesome new society.

Pracha Hutuanuwatr is a free-thinker, writer (Buddhadhasa's oral biography, Buddhism for New Generations, Green Politics and Asian Futures translator and soul searcher. Currently he is Chairman of Bangkok based NGO Ecovillage Transition Asia and Founder of the Young Awakening Institute. Pracha conducts leadership

training for activists and social workers in East and South East Asia and beyond. During our conversation at his traditional Thai home located next to a rice field, he remarks

"If you practice and follow the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh and Venerable Mitsuo you will find that you are less attached to them. Also you will realize that both are ordinary people."

If what he is implying is true then how come people seem to need spiritual heroes?

What is your analysis of the current situation of Buddhism in Thailand ?

Buddhist values lie in reducing greed, hatred and illusion. Our society isn't a Buddhist society because we keep generating wrong view (*mittcha thiti*) that in the end leads to suffering. We have a tendency to promote greed. If you don't earn a lot, become famous, powerful or accumulate wealth then you are nobody in society. So, we must be aware that our existing social values are different from Buddhist values.

The Buddhist Sangha is facing a crisis. Instead of abolishing greed, hatred and illusion, many modern monks are embodying them. The Sangha education system over emphasises social mobilization for young people from the poorest sectors without transmitting the deep, spiritual message of the Buddha. Hence the values that frame the world-view of the monks are to search for wealth, power and recognition as the aim of life resulting in the Sangha wholeheartedly embracing consumerism and capitalism.

Currently people have become attached to well-known monks and merit making rituals, isn't that a form of greediness?

I think it's a part of capitalism. In modern society people want to be wealthy, to have prestige and power, all of which causes deep insecurity. They think well-known monks can offer a form of security. When they want to profit in their business, they turn to the monk for a blessing

or some ritual performance. The more society leans toward materialism the more people want to approach monks for this kind of purpose. Our society isn't a Buddhist one, it's capitalistic and consumeristic. People are under the impression that offering a lot to monks will bring good fortune. That is NOT Buddhism! I don't blame the individuals. We as a society have purposely chosen to embrace Capitalism. By choosing this path, Buddhism is just a decoration and less and less people are taking it seriously.

What do you think about attachment to well-known monks?

This is a problem for the middle classes. People who look to Venerable Mitsuo, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and Suan Mokkh are trying to seek the essence of Buddhism. They are not seeking some kind of ritualistic magic. However their clinging to teachers and masters is a sign of spiritual poverty of our time. Not only in this country but all over the world. Hundreds and thousands of people circle around Thich Nhat Hanh wherever he goes because they can't rely on themselves in spite of his teaching that clearly states to depend on oneself.

How did you arrive at a view that most people can't depend on themselves?

Let's take Thich Nhat Hanh or Venerable Mitsuo as examples. They are good monks but they are also ordinary men. Ven Nhat Hanh maybe a bit more enlightened. Their teaching is quite simple Buddhist teaching. The good point is they teach the dhamma with a language that ordinary people can understand. This is wonderful but because of spiritual poverty and naivety of people in current modern society, these masters are eulogized and people cling on to them instead of following their teachings.

What do you mean by spiritual poverty & naivety?

If you are short of food for a few days you will get hungry and extremely excited when you see food. This is metaphor for spiritual hunger. On the other hand, if you are not too hungry and you see food you will eat it like an ordinary meal. If you practice meditation regularly, you will understand that the Buddha is within you. The good aspects of Venerable Mitsuo and Thich Nhat Hanh can be found inside you. However most people who approach these monks have an expectation to become more spiritual just by being with them. Meeting good monks and listening to their teaching is a good deed but to attach to them personally is spiritual weakness. If you

can't practice without a master, it is a naïve form of spirituality.

Does one need a master?

Of course, we need a master and good kalyanmitta (spiritual friends) to debate around the nature of practice, not just for the sake of worship. A good teacher is someone who trains us to argue with him or her. He or she attacks your ego and vice versa.

So would you say that if we understand the core of Buddhism we don't need to attach to a spiritual hero?

I believe so. Many people were personally fascinated with the Buddha in his day. But he told them if they don't see the dhamma they don't really see him. 'Those who see dhamma see me.' So when we believe in the master's teaching, we should ground ourselves in the practice of the teaching than offering things to the monk. For the case of leaving the monkhood as Venerable Mitsuo has done it's a common affair. In his case he left the monkhood righteously. His teaching is still correct and we can apply it to daily life.

However I don't blame individuals who cling to him. I think as a society we're holding on to the wrong view that eventually leads to a deep sense of insecurity and alienation. Mass media and advertising manipulate us to desire more and more. This is the true cause of wrong view. The elites who control money and power in society are the ones responsible for this manipulation of ordinary people. This results in huge numbers of modern people feeling that they are not good enough as who they are. One strategy to address this inner restlessness is to look to spiritual teachers to make one feel better about oneself. Mostly people go shopping or get into other addictive behaviours to escape from this aspect of alienation.

You've already ordained and worked with people from various nations. Do you think religion is a drug?

If you approach religion with a wrong view it can be a drug. But if you approach it with a right view, it is beneficial. If you cling to Buddhism as the only right answer and don't practice the teachings it can become addictive. If you use the supra logic of non-self as an aspirin it can become a drug. As can every religion if wrongly used. Even Communism can be a drug for those who cling dogmatically to the beliefs. In this sense all beliefs can be addictive as an attempt to satisfy the existential

sense of lack. All human beings have a natural sense of lack and insecurity. Clinging to beliefs make us feel more solid and secure. If you put the teachings into practice and confront this sense of lack directly that belief can be less addictive. The more you go deep into spiritual experience the less addictive that belief can be.

Do you mean that if you don't feel a sense of lack then you don't need religion?

These sort of people are rare. People who can be enlightened without any teaching are rare. Ordinary people including myself need religion as a moral and spiritual frame of reference. However atheists and agnostics who are good people exist. They are not inferior people.

You were a Marxist and also a monk. What has altered your point of view about life?

Bhikkhu Bhudhadasa made the deep spiritual aspects of the Buddhist teaching applicable to ordinary people like me. I think this is a very important point to remember. Back then the complicated but important teaching was reserved for ordained members, but he insisted such teaching was helpful for everybody. He felt impermanence, suffering and non-self were applicable and important for all.

This unique approach made me appreciate Buddhism. Bhudhadasa also pointed out Buddhism could be used to reorganise social structures. This made him different from other contemporary masters. His thinking is very clear that the current society is based on wrong view which contradicts the law of nature. The more you increase desire in society the more that society sinks into all sort of suffering. The natural law he was referring to was the Four Noble Truths.

At that time were you also searching for a master like other people now are doing?

A part of everyone's life is searching for a teacher, a good friend. Prior to discovering Marxism I had read Bhudhadasa's works quite thoroughly. Eventually I felt Marxist ideology didn't provide me with an answer so in the end I returned to Buddhism quicker than most people. When I was a monk I searched for a teacher but I stuck by Bhudhadasa because I felt he saw Buddhism in a way that other monks didn't. He felt Buddhism could be applied to social re-organizing. Some meditation masters only taught meditation practice.

Why did you disrobe?

I left because the woman I loved came back from abroad. I ordained because I wanted to discover myself and understand society. I was happy searching for a long period of time in robes. When my ex-girlfriend came back from America I was shaken to the core of my life. When the base of my life was shaken I decided to disrobe. Otherwise this instability could make me a bad monk.

Why do you use Dhamma in your work up until now even though you have disrobed? How is it appropriate in the human development in various dimensions such as leadership development, youth training and social worker training?

In my life, I don't just seek only self-liberation but I want to find a way out for society. The idea that Buddhism is worth exploring to solve social problems didn't come from me. Apart from Bhudhadasa there are others working on introducing engaged spirituality to society. When I disrobed I was involved with this kind of work. I co-founded the International Network of Engaged Buddhists with Ajarn Sulak and was their General Secretary for three years, trying to implement a Buddhist framework for society.

As mentioned, from the Buddhist perspective the current social structure is against natural law. For example if you do business, you need to expand the business continually. This approach abuses natural resources and takes advantage of fellow human beings. This is the basic practice since the beginning of the industrial revolution. If you produce more than you need you need to stimulate desire among people for your products. This is not following the natural law of supply and demand. It is the supply that manipulates demand. The result is the economic chaos and damaged planet that is evident today. Global warming is a huge issue in the world but Thai people are buying new cars that are burning up fossil fuel all the time. A rise of just one degree in temperature has enormous impact. When I visited the Surin islands and there were many dead corals. Even breast milk now contains lead.

Apart from destroying natural resources people are unhappy. The majority are not satisfied with themselves. You have to earn more and more all the time. The question is if you have enough why do you need to earn more? This endless 'not enough' creates basic alienation. You are alienated from your own inner beauty and compassion. The present social system doesn't allow us to develop these wholesome qualities from within. Individualism

makes us become so self centred that we cannot see the world as it is. Everything is rooted in 'I', 'me' and 'mine'. There is no harmony even within the family.

I have lived in many countries and have seen this modern unhappiness. Where there is modernization there is this kind of alienation. You can't be an ordinary person you always have to be someone else. You cannot wear an ordinary shirt or an old clothes. You need to put on the brand name shirt to be someone. Capitalistic economic systems are the driving force. This is embedded in the educational system and the media to stimulate competition. Children are taught since young they aren't good enough. They need to compete. This is a disease. We urgently need to come up with a new approach. Not just for us but for the natural world and other beings as well. Buddhism offers an answer. If you organize the society according to the four noble truths then no craving ought to be stimulated. The social system should promote generosity, loving kindness and the wisdom to see things as they are not vice versa.

Don't you think that is idealistic and too difficult?

It's quite difficult but must be done. What we're lacking is idealism. We badly need a dream for a better society. That is why our society is going downhill. Corruption now reaches children. Cheating in exams with the teachers' collaboration is prevalent in both Sangha and secular schooling.

We need to start somewhere, my colleagues and I start with young people. We integrate Dhamma into our learning process. Youngsters in both rural and urban areas can have access to dhamma without boring preaching. When they understand and see the changes they gain enormous wisdom.

We have a youth program in Puwieng, Khon Kaen province, which is a rural area. Once they understand the learning process then problems can be tackled properly. However this type of project is difficult to fund as the whole process takes time. It takes ongoing education to change perceptions. One kid told us that when he grows up he does not want to migrate to Bangkok he would rather stay in the village and work for the village. This is hopeful. It's hard to build this sort of attitude but I think it's possible. Now we have eight hundred thousand people around the world migrating from the countryside to cities every day. I don't think this is sustainable.

My project is small and without much funding but I think it's plausible to make young people love their villages, proud of themselves and not looking down on

agricultural lifestyles. I don't have millions or billions of baht or dollars but we can do it by donating ourselves, encouraging the parents to farm organically, establishing co-ops, using appropriate technology and more to move forwards to an ecovillage lifestyle.

Are you hopeful?

I do what I can. I believe in what I'm doing. Even if we're the minority working in this area we are not alone and are happy to engage in this sort of work. Venerable Subin Paninto in Trat province initiated a local savings group because he saw local villages were slaving themselves to pay for a large amounts of interest imposed on them by banks. This savings group showcases how people can work together to liberate themselves from the capitalist system at least in some aspects.

Ecovillage Transition Asia (ETA) worked to do a master-plan for 11 rural villages in Tambon On-Tai, Chiangmai Province, Northern Thailand. After a field research process that included all the villages was completed, we discovered around thirty millions baht interest per year was being paid to commercial banks. Think about it if the money stayed in the villages, how prosperous these villages could be. However the money has landed in the hands of wealthy elites making up just one percent of the Thai population.

Examples like Venerable Subin's can be found in many places in Thailand and around the world. Ordinary people are re-creating and re-designing their communities in this manner. I am hopeful partly because I am in the global ecovillage movement that is part of the new social movement.

Apart from working on a youth project you are also involved with developing youth leaders in Asia?

ETA was invited to run Ecovillage Design Education in China and Burma using the Gaia Education curriculum tailored to the local context. I have met some young Chinese who feel after graduating from university they don't want to participate in mainstream society where getting wealthy is a priority. We've organised educational programmes for them to empower themselves. I see the vital energy of these young people who are yearning for a more meaningful life. This gives me hope.

As for Burma, we have been working there for more than a decade. Actually the prime time of my life was spent in training young change agents in Burma. We are invited back to run leadership training regularly and are now using an EDE inspired framework. These grassroots

change agents are committed to work for the betterment of their society. I get so much inspiration working with them.

This EDE course was developed by ecovillage activists around the world and I was invited to teach and input on an early pilot at the Findhorn Ecovillage in Scotland in 2006. I have been included in the faculty team since then as well as adapting the course in Thailand, Burma and China. Participants at Findhorn are young and older people, from many countries mostly in the West who feel that life and society can't go on as it is. They are looking for inspiration, wisdom and tools to live a new lifestyle and re-creating community in the West. My contribution is bringing in spiritual and intellectual aspects of small 'b' Buddhism, wisdom of Taoism and engaged spirituality into this curriculum as using a participatory facilitation approach. My colleague Jane Rasbash and I have taught participatory skills for empowerment on most of the Findhorn EDEs.

We can use meditation and fostering of wisdom to change consciousness without embracing Buddhism and Taoism as a religion, just use the essence of both traditions. Instead of embodying the self as the centre of identity and as a way of being one can use the ecology and the cosmos as the centre. We're just a part of nature. Every life has its worth. Not only human beings are worthy but ants, insects and mosquitos also have a right to life just like us.

What do you think about Buddhism in neighboring countries and in the West?

Buddhism in Burma is a lot stronger than Thailand because the country was closed for a long time. Capitalism couldn't get in for half a century although now is knocking aggressively at the door and speedily infiltrating systems. However Burma has meditation masters with diverse Buddhist lineages. Thai meditation traditions and lineages have been destroyed since Rama the 5th reformed the Sangha. In Sri Lanka monks get too involved in politics and Buddhism is fused with nationalism and gets implicated in racial politics. If Burma is not careful there is a tendency to follow Sri Lanka's footsteps as is evidenced in recent Buddhist – Muslim clashes. For me this is a very dangerous situation leading to the peril of Buddhism and the country. Buddhism in Laos has a better chance to flourish meaningfully because of the more enlightened leadership in the Sangha. Unfortunately there is no matching leadership in the political sphere otherwise Laos could have been an alternative model to capitalism in Southeast Asia.

Buddhism in the West is varied but the strongest influence is coming from Tibetan Buddhism. There are good Tibetan influenced teachers with very skilful means teaching Western people. The second most popular is the kind of Buddhism that is associated with the practice of mindfulness in psychology and psychotherapy and applied in all sort of fields. A lot is going on in research of mindfulness practice and neuroscience. I see this as a positive development.

In Thailand, monks and the Sangha play less and less role in society. A large amount of monks can no longer communicate with those wanting to develop their spirituality. Lay Buddhist teachers will increase as this style of teaching can focus on delivering experiences of mindfulness in daily life. They will be able to communicate with spiritual seekers better than ordained individuals living inside monasteries. However it must be noted that significant Meditation masters in the forest monasteries will continue to be around for those who seek to practice seriously and bear witness to authentic teaching and practices of the Buddha.

The highest goal for meditators is liberation. What do you think about that concept?

I'm not there yet. Nibbana (Nivarna) or liberation means greed hatred and illusion are no longer dominating your life. I believe this is possible. We experience this state from time to time in our daily life. Meditation is to learn just to be. The goal is here and now. The enlightened one lives in here and now all the time, although we can experience this from time to time.

What do you think about various crises we are facing in Thailand?

I think the political crisis and Buddhist crisis raise questions among Thai people. That's a good thing. Asking questions is the beginning of wisdom. It doesn't matter if the question is right or wrong we usually find the right answer. As a collective, Thailand has not suffered in comparison with neighbouring South East Asian countries. I believe we are approaching a change of era and the crises will continue until this happens. Social structures will change whether this worse or better than now remains to be seen.

Consciousness Bound

David R. Loy

Let the mind come forth without fixing it anywhere.

Diamond Sutra.

The Platform Sutra makes the same point: “When our mind works freely without any hindrance, and is at liberty to ‘come’ or to ‘go,’ we attain liberation.” Such a mind “is everywhere present, yet it ‘sticks’ nowhere.” Our awareness becomes trapped when we identify with particular forms, due to ignorance of the essential non-dwelling nature of our attention.

These are familiar Buddhist teachings, yet an important implication is not usually noticed: the danger of collective attention-traps. We tend to have similar problems because we are subjected to similar conditioning. What do contemporary societies do to encourage the constriction or liberation of awareness?

These questions are important because today our awareness is affected in at least three ways that did not afflict previous Buddhist cultures: fragmented by new information and communication technologies, commodified by advertising and consumerism, and manipulated with sophisticated propaganda techniques.

The Fragmentation of Attention

Media coverage suggests that one of our major concerns about attention is the lack thereof. Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder has become a serious medical issue. Last November the Center for Disease Control said that rates among children have increased 42% over the last decade; more than 20% of 11-year-old boys have been diagnosed with ADHD at some point in their lives. Diagnoses among adults are also rising quickly.

It’s not clear why this is happening, but one likely factor is new technologies.

Buddhist practice evokes images of meditation with minimal distractions. The IT revolution -- personal computers, the internet, email, cellphones, walkmans and iPods, etc. -- encourages an unremitting connectivity that

pulls us in the opposite direction. As we become attentive to so many more possibilities always available, is less attention available for the people and things most important to us?

Channel- and internet-surfing, video-games, Amazon one-click orders of books, CDs, DVDs, and everything else... Our old foraging habits were based on info-scarcity, but suddenly, like Mickey Mouse the sorcerer’s apprentice, we find ourselves trying to survive an info-glut, and the scarcest resources have become attention and control over our own time. Thomas Eriksen has formalized this relationship into a general law of the information revolution: “When an ever increasing amount of information has to be squeezed into the relatively constant amount of time each of us has at our disposal, the span of attention necessarily decreases.”

In place of the usual Buddhist warnings about clinging and attachment, many of us now have the opposite problem: an inability to concentrate on one thing. Yet an attention that jumps from this to that, unable to focus itself, is no improvement over an awareness that is stuck on something.

The Commodification of Attention

For most of us in the developed world, the greatest attention trap is consumerism, which involves sophisticated advertising that has become very good at manipulating our attention. Today the bigger economic challenge is not production but keeping us convinced that the solution to our dukkha “dis-ease” is our next purchase. According to the pioneering advertising executive Leo Burnett, good advertising does more than circulate information: “It penetrates the public mind with desire and belief.” That penetration may have been lucrative for his clients, but there are other consequences, as Ivan Illich pointed out: “In a consumer society there are inevitably two kinds of slaves, the prisoners of addiction and the prisoners of envy.” Whether or not one is able to afford the desired product, one’s attention is captured.

In other words, attention has become the basic commodity to be exploited. According to Jonathan Rowe, the key economic resource of this new economy is not something they provide, it's something we provide – “mindshare.” But “what if there's only so much mind to share? If you've wondered how people could feel so depleted in such a prosperous economy, how stress could become the trademark affliction of the age, part of the answer might be here.”

A turning point in the development of capitalism was the enclosures in early modern Britain, when villagers were forced out of their villages because landlords found it more profitable to raise sheep. Rowe discusses “the ultimate enclosure -- the enclosure of the cognitive commons, the ambient mental atmosphere of daily life,” a rapid development now so pervasive that it has become like the air we breathe unnoticed. Time and space have already been reconstructed: holidays (including new commercialized ones such as Mother's Day) into shopping days, Main Street into shopping malls. Sports stadiums used to have ads; now renamed stadiums are themselves ads. TV shows used to be sponsored by ads; today product placement makes the whole show (and many movies) an ad. A 2005 issue of the *New Yorker* did not include any ads because the whole magazine was a promotion for the retail chain Target. According to one study, two-thirds of three-year-olds recognize the golden arches of McDonald's.

Unless we're meditating in a Himalayan cave, we now have to process thousands of commercial messages every day. As Rowe emphasizes, they do not just grab our attention, they exploit it:

The attention economy mines us much the way the industrial economy mines the earth. It mines us first for incapacities and wants. Our capacity for interaction and reflection must become a need for entertainment. Our capacity to deal with life's bumps and jolts becomes a need for “grief counseling” or Prozac. The progress of the consumer economy has come to mean the diminution of ourselves.

Consumerism requires and develops a sense of our own impoverishment. By manipulating the gnawing sense of lack that haunts our insecure sense of self, the attention economy insinuates its basic message deep into our awareness: the solution to any discomfort is consumption.

The Control of Attention

Dictatorships control people with violence and the threat of it, to restrain what they do. Modern democracies control people with sophisticated propaganda, by manipulating what they think. We worry about weapons of mass destruction, but perhaps we should be as concerned

about weapons of mass deception (and weapons of mass distraction). The disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq would never have been possible without carefully orchestrated attempts to make the public anxious about dangers that did not exist. It was easy to do because 9/11 made us fearful, and fearful people are more susceptible to manipulation.

Traditionally rulers used religious ideologies to justify their power. In pre-modern Europe the Church supported the “divine right” of kings. In Buddhist societies karma was sometimes used to rationalize the ruler's authority and the powerlessness of his oppressed subjects: your present social status is a consequence of your past deeds. In modern secular societies, however, acquiescence must be molded in different ways.

According to Alex Carey, the twentieth century was characterized by three important political developments: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of propaganda as a way to protect corporate power against democracy. Although corporations are not mentioned in the Constitution – the founding fathers were wary of them -- corporate power began to expand dramatically towards the end of the nineteenth century, so successfully that today there is little effective distinction between major corporations and the federal government. Both identify wholeheartedly with the same goal of continuous economic growth, regardless of its social or ecological effects. We are repeatedly told that any unfortunate consequences from this growth obsession can be solved with more economic growth.

The liberation of collective attention

Who should decide what happens to our attention? Rowe concludes that we need a new freedom movement, to “battle for the cognitive commons. If we have no choice regarding what fills our attention, then we really have no choice at all.” From a Buddhist perspective, we also need an alternative understanding of what our attention is and what alternative practices promote its liberation. What does it really mean for awareness to be here-and-now, deconditioned from attention traps both individual and collective? Is awareness to be valued as a means to some other end, or should we cherish its liberation as the most valuable goal of all? David Auerbach: Because computers cannot come to us and meet us in our world, we must continue to adjust our world and bring ourselves to them. We will define and regiment our lives, including our social lives and our perceptions of our selves, in ways that are conducive to what a computer can ‘understand’. Their dumbness will become ours.

Professor Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah

(January 16, 1929 - January 19, 2014)

Sulak Sivaraksa



Professor Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, a pioneer in the field of anthropology of Buddhism passed away on 19th January 2014 at the age of 85.

He was a Tamil, born in Sri Lanka. Tambiah's academic career began in his homeland, he graduated in Sri Lanka and then moved away to fulfil a teaching post at Cambridge

University, afterwards at University of Chicago and finally at Harvard University.

Professor Tambiah's major contributions to Buddhism were *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults of Northeast Thailand* (1970) and *World Conqueror and World Renouncer* (1976). Students and intellectuals who have studied Buddhism in Siam would have used these classics as background research. When there was a crisis in Buddhism in Sri Lanka he published *Buddhism Betrayed* (1992), which led to a ban preventing him from entering the country.

At Cambridge he was engaged in an intellectual conversation with Venerable Sateatphong Punyavanno who was at the time a student at the university. After Venerable had left a monastic's life he released *Phutta Vajhana Jak Thammaboada* (Buddha's own words from Dhammapada), in Pali, Thai and English. Professor Tambiah was kind enough to write the foreword.

Tambiah was known for his warmth and friendliness with students and friends. In terms of an academic career, he was praised for his inventiveness in anthropological research. However there was a minor mistake and slight confusion in Tambiah's innovative approach as he attributed 'Phra Racha Kahna Title', that was comparable to a high-ranking monk, to Venerable P. A Payutto. Such title was not historically accurate.

I have always got along with him since Cambridge, Chicago and Harvard. Whenever Tambiah happened to give lectures in Siam he always had time for me. When I suffered from a political ban, which prohibited me to return home, Tambiah was most morally supportive and showed great compassion in looking after my wellbeing.

Prior to his death Tambiah had sustained a physical illness for a long period of time. As a friend I feel a great sense of loss from his departure. Though Tambiah was not a Buddhist, I have arranged for a Metta Generating Ritual that is a Buddhist practice, for the purpose of sending loving kindness to a dear kalyanamitra.

Rev. Kinjiro Niwano

(October 19, 1940 - March 9, 2014)



Rev. Kinjiro Niwano, chairperson of the Niwano Peace Foundation and a councilor of Rissho Kosei-kai, died March 9 of interstitial pneumonia.

Funeral services were held March 12-14 in the Horin-kaku Guest Hall at Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters in Tokyo. Some 8,000 people attended, including bereaved family members, officers and staff members stationed at Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters, ministers and members of the organization's Dharma centers nationwide, and leaders of other religious and political organizations. At the main funeral service, on March

14, Rev. Mitsuhiro Fukata, president of Ennokyō, and Rev. Masataka Uchida, a former chair of Rissho Kosei-kai's Board of Trustees, delivered eulogies. Following a reading of condolence messages, President Nichiko Niwano delivered a speech, thanking everyone present for their support and friendship for his younger brother.

Rev. Kinjiro Niwano was born in Tokyo in 1940 as the second son of Rev. Nikkyō Niwano, founder of Rissho Kosei-kai. After graduating from Nihon University, he served the organization from 1965. In 1969 he was promoted to director of the Youth Department and devoted himself to the training of youth members.

As director of the Youth Department, he also led a peace mission

to the Philippines, where he took part in memorial services for the war dead and had exchanges with young Filipinos. He promoted construction of the Friendship Tower in Bataan, symbolizing friendship between Japan and the Philippines.

A movement called "Ichijiki o sasage ichiyoku o sessuru undō" (Giving up one meal and suppressing one desire) by the Shinto organization Shoroku Shinto Yamatoyama, based in Aomori Prefecture, inspired Rev. Kinjiro Niwano's advocacy of the Donate-a-Meal Movement.

In 1975 he became director of Risho Kosei-kai's General Affairs Department. From 1969 to 1997 he served also as a trustee of the organization. When he was chair of the Board of

Directors of Kosei Gakuen and principal of Kosei Gakuen Boys' Junior and Senior High School and of Kosei Gakuen Girls' Junior and Senior High School, he greeted pupils at the school gates in morning, to encourage them. Furthermore, as executive director and chairperson of the Niwano Peace Foundation, he actively communicated and honored people of faith around the world. He was also a trustee of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan). He had strong connections with people in various fields and made great contributions to society both within and beyond Risho Kosei-kai.

Rev. Niwano always stressed the importance of studying the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. He was a faithful

Lotus Sutra devotee who wrote in a notebook his reflections on what he had learned and about his spiritual progress. In daily conversations with his colleagues and fellow members he explained the Law of Dependent Origination in plain language.

Rev. Niwano attended ceremonies at Dharma centers throughout Japan. During cordial meetings with members, he leavened with humor his discussions of the essence of the Dharma and Founder Niwano's life and spirit. His cheerfulness and open-heartedness attracted many people. Rev. Niwano wrote two series of essays on Founder Niwano in the Kosei Shimbun newspaper, later published as two books.

Professor Dr. Vichian Wattanakhun

(August 9, 2473 - March 22, 2557)

Sulak Sivaraksa



Khun Vichian Wattanakhun was a fine example of an honest civil servant for younger generations of professionals at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During his career Vichian was placed at various foreign locations including Paris and Tokyo.

He was an important alumnus of the political science department at Thammasart University. As a northern city worker he still cultivated so much faith in Buddhism. Vichian fully trust-

ed in the teaching of Venerable Bohdirangsri of Watpanthong monastery, Chiang Mai.

When Anan Panyarachun was a prime minister he invited Vichian for ministerial positions. The first invitation was for an assistant foreign minister and the second was to fulfil the role of the minister of Ministry of Justice. When he took up the second he had to deal with false accusations and legal implications

which caused him a great deal of emotional set back.

When UNESCO still had some credibility, some friends and I put forward Pridi Panomyong for a UNESCO's outstanding individual award, but another group of well-connected people also suggested The king's mother honor. At the time the Siam representative felt the award ought only to go to The Royal mother. However Vichian managed to convince the committee that Pridi was just as worthy and in the end two people were awarded that year.

Vichian was knowledgeable, capable and humble. One could look up to him as an inspiration for how to lead a good life. Though his departure from the world is unavoidable and a natural process of life, Vichian's contribution and renowned reputation ought to be forever remembered in Siam.

Her Royal Highness Princess Sirindhorn will attend Vichian's cremation ceremony at Wat Mongkhut on Sunday 30 March at 18.30 pm.

Miss Sumalee Viravaidya

(October 3, 1938 -
March 28, 2014)

Sulak Sivaraksa



Sumalee may not have been as famous as her brother but Sumalee's valuable contribution to Thai society was just as extraordinary. As a young journalist her articles, which were widely accepted among Thai as well as foreigners, courageously displayed an admirable standpoint in promoting social justice. Apart from caring for social wellbeing she was also profoundly interested in the area of culture and religion.

Sumalee was a dear friend of Mrs. Josephine Stanton, the wife of the first American Ambassador in Siam after the Second World War

(prior to this we only had an American Ministry). They took yoga and went to retreats at Suan Mokkh and Watbovorn monasteries together. The latter was where the now deceased Somdet Phra Nyansamvara (Suvadhano) taught the two women, prior to becoming the last supreme patriarch.

After the uprising on 14 October 2516 Ajhan Sanya Thammasak invited her to be a part of a committee responsible for the drafting of the new constitution. Sumalee's first American husband was very caring, loving and understanding of who she was but sadly he passed away. They had a daughter together. Later on she married a German and the couple produced two sons. The marriage, however, was not as happy as the first and eventually they separated.

I knew her reasonably well. When Sumalee was living in Germany if she heard I was passing through she would ask to meet for long chats during my various transits at the airport. I was happy to talk. I once asked if she could translate literature by Prince Damrong into English. She kindly took on the project. When I was a board member of Siam Society's committee I organised a cultural excursion, to what was then recognised as the kingdom of Laos, Sumalee also joined.

Recently from 20-27 March 2557 she was on another excursion in Burma with my family. We took a

boat trip that lasted three days and nights, along the Irrawaddy River from Banmaw, Kachin State and ended at Mandalay, which was the old capital city. She personally mentioned that the trip brought her great joy and happiness. She was happy to be around good friends for the entire week. She loved watching the view along the river, appreciated a chance to shop at local markets, and felt a sense of gratitude for various visits to monasteries.

On 27 March at four in the morning Sumalee participated in a Burmese daily ritual of washing Phra Mahamayamuni's face. The abbot of the monastery then invited us for a local breakfast of Mandalay's noodles before he blessed us with the same holy water that was used on Phra Mahamayamuni. Afterward we left the country to fly direct to Suvanaphum airport. Sumalee kindly invited the entire group for a meal at her house after our return to exchange pictures and to celebrate the trip. However as the Lord Buddha warned us life is subjected to impermanence she died of cardiac arrest on 28 March 2557.

We cannot meet again as Sumalee had made a will to donate her body to the Red Cross. However her children have invited friends and family to a merit making ritual for Sumalee at the house on 5 April.

We will forever remember her friendship and goodness.



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Dear Sulak,

I have the pleasure of having just finished reading your book on Dr. Puay. Page after page of Dr. Puay, whom I knew nothing about, and this includes your balanced assessment of his very human weaknesses. He was certainly a unique and first class human being. Thank you very much. I noticed only three places where you might want to expand or change. The first is Dr Puay as a father to his children. John (Jon) is, in many ways, very much like his father. He is honest, non-combatant, was elected as a Senator and always helping out on different good human rights causes. Dr Puay must have been very proud of him. I don't know much about the second son Peter but I am sure you do. Unlike his father the youngest one is quite different. He is very committed to an ideology. Maybe half a paragraph on him would be nice.

Finally on Soedjatmoko, I think he started out as a liberal idealistic youngster, but later on more or less he went down the drain. I knew him quite well. Also his elder daughter was my student at Cornell. He came from a middleclass family. I think his father was a doctor in Central Java, but socially he moved up the ladder as he married an aristocratic girl who was a real snob and quite authoritarian. Soedjatmoko was a favorite of western bureaucrats, academics and others because he had excellent English, was very polite, and pro- both UK and the US. However he was quietly into Javanese magic. He was not much of a public intellectual. I cannot remember any important book he wrote, and today he is forgotten.

The astonishment started around 1965, when he adamantly refused to protest about the ghastly massacres in that year. I knew one of his young followers, who died around 1969 at a volcano oozing poison gas. He was a very brave kid. A really wonderful Chinese boy that refused to change his name. Yet he was the first and only person in Soedjatmoko's circle to make the protest public, even though he was anti-Sukarno and the Communists. Soedjatmoko was sent to Washington as an Ambassador, but so far as I know he did not do much.

He used his international connections to get the post of rector at the UN University in Japan, but it was a disaster. He had no gift for management, new ideas or authority. Then he learned that his daughter was going to marry a nice young American scholar, whom I also knew from Cornell. He flatly refused to approve the marriage or even turn up for the marriage, I think, in Bandung. Then he had the heart attack that killed him. He hated the idea that his Javanese daughter would marry a white man. So much for liberalism and internationalism. I can think of plenty of intellectuals who are or were far more impressive than he was. I think he was always under the shadow of the ex- Prime Minister Sjahrir, who was a lot more inspiring and wrote some interesting books. Finally he never discussed about the brutal Suharto dictatorship.

Benedict Anderson

March letter from John Ralston Saul
International President, to the PEN membership.

April 22, 2014

Dear PEN Members, Dear friends,

I hope you won't mind a more personal monthly letter. I am just back from Burma, now Myanmar, for the first time in a quarter century. From 1980 through much of the '80's I was often there, in different guises, writing on the terrible situation. The military dictatorship, in power since 1962, had dragged a naturally rich country down into poverty. They had somehow removed Burma from the map of the world. It was hard to visit, legally or illegally. The maximum stay was one week. Rangoon – now Yangon – was crumbling. Almost no one wrote about the situation in the media or in books – a handful of Burmese in exile, like Wendy Law-Yone; a Swedish journalist out of Bangkok, Bertil Lintner; a few others including myself. None of us were welcome after a few critical articles.

This return visit was of course quite different. I met with our former Writers in Prison case, Aung San Suu Kyi, and had a long complex discussion with senior government officials. Most important, I spent a lot of time with the members of our remarkable new Myanmar PEN Centre led by Dr. Ma Thida, another former PEN case, as were Myo Myint Nyein, and Nay Phone Latt, both also on the Centre's Board.

There is no denying that much has changed. There are independent publications and publishers. There are new roads and buildings, including an entire new capital city, and investments of all sorts, in part from returning exiles.

Free speech is of course a more fundamental yet delicate element of any civilization. It requires fair laws, governmental restraint, solid public structures and independent enforcement.

Last year PEN International's Publisher's Circle held a workshop in Yangon to help emerging Myanmar publishers. This March we took up these issues again. I was travelling with John Makinson, Chair of Penguin Random House, Jo Lusby, head of Penguin in China and for part of the time Marketa Hejkalová of Hejkal publishing, member of the PEN International Board.

It was clear from our meeting with Myanmar publishers that they feel held back by a shortage of literary translators – whether to and from international languages or among internal languages. Translator programs exist to help on this front and we agreed to focus on this. We also sat down for a day with PEN members to hear about their situation, with many thanks to the British Council.

Ma Thida took me to meet U Win Tin, in hospital, the great journalist who had spent 19 years in terrible conditions in prison for his part in launching the democracy movement in 1988. In his mid 80's, calm, speaking with an optimistic clarity, he has been a remarkable model for others. For all of us. A moment ago, while writing these words about my few days in Myanmar, I learned that he had just died. And yet he is fixed in my mind as one of those rare examples of humans whose strength of character, ethical solidity and intellectual clarity, allowed him to rise above suffering and so be able to stick to his course.

One of PEN Myanmar's most important initiatives is to travel in groups to small towns and cities and invite

local writers to come to a public place and read their works. We went in the back of a truck to Shwepyitha Township. A small library filled up with old and young, women and men. We all sat on the mats, legs folded underneath. One after another, people rose, many who had probably never thought it possible to stand in public and read their work. This was the most moving, and yes, uplifting moment of my trip to Myanmar.

People are probably tired of hearing me say that literature and freedom of expression are one and the same thing. Inseparable. And that free expression is as much about reading as writing, listening as speaking. Yet, there it was, all wrapped together in a tiny library in a provincial town in Myanmar.

* * *

We flew to Naypyidaw, the rather surreal new capital. John Makinson, the Canadian Ambassador Mark McDowell, Nandana Sen and myself, met first with the Minister of Information, Aung Kyi, and the Deputy Minister, Ye Htut. Both are key figures in the changes underway, Aung Kyi was the Government's initial link to Aung San Suu Kyi. And Ye Htut is the principle voice of the government, constantly engaging in public argument. It was a long and complex meeting. PEN International's messages had to do with problems in both the press Law and the new Printers and Publisher's Law; with the existence of criminal libel Law based on a 1861 British Law. Libel should not be a criminal offence. There is a need for an access to information law. The copyright law is weak. Myanmar needs to sign the international copyright law. Four journalists have been arrested under a 1923 secrets act in confusing circumstances. The case should simply be dropped. And we discussed at length the shutting down of access to Rakhine State where there are ethnic problems and violence.

On all of these fronts there were reassurances or disagreements. But it was a proper conversation and we will continue to press these issues. Our central message is that reforms work when they are fair, clear, firm. Transparency is the key.

Finally, we had a good meeting with Aung San Suu Kyi in her parliamentary office. Of course there are now a multitude of political issues on the table. But having

been involved in the initial taking up of her case when she was first detained, I felt this meeting was in one sense the completion of a circle.

What will happen next is quite a different matter. All of us must be careful not to draw rapid conclusions about the situation in Myanmar. It would be foolish to deny that there have been enormous improvements. On the other hand, the military have ceded no essential element of power. And so things could go either way. Our obligation is to keep working with our colleagues on the ground for a strengthening of fair laws impartially enforced. And transparency.

* * *

From Yangon I went to Bangkok to see our Thai PEN Centre and to meet some of the new generation of Thai writers.

But first a few words on two of Thailand's most remarkable figures, with whom I became friends almost forty years ago. Sulak Sivaraksa is thought of as the leader of the Engaged Buddhists movement in South East Asia. He is a wonderful writer of Buddhist philosophy aimed at social justice and peace. Over the decades he has been arrested, in disfavour, spoken out against dictators at great risk, in exile, unjustly charged by military strongmen and, of course, a PEN Honourary member. He lives in Bangkok, but by chance when I was in Yangon he was there, celebrating his 81st birthday. He remains as forceful as ever, still speaking up and writing for causes which parallel the PEN Charter. Still unbending, unstoppable. And it was an honour for me to make the toast to him at the celebration organized by the Myanmar literary figure, Ko Tar.

In Bangkok I stayed in Klong Toey slum with Father Joe Maier, the wonderful slum priest who has

worked with Buddhist monks and Imams for half a century in this enormous dock area. He created the first AIDS hospice in Thailand, runs schools, health programs. Above all, he has always stood up for these people. He also publishes stories about the slum dwellers.

Thanks to the publisher, Trasvin Jittidecharak, I was able to sit down with some of Thailand's successful younger writers, translators and publishers, including Uthis Haemamool, who is the incoming editor of *The Writer*, an important literary magazine. Others included Zakariya Amataya, Pahd Pasiigon and Anuk Pitukthanin.

The next day I met with Thai PEN. It is a busy centre which concentrates on literary criticism and plays a role in an important literary prize, the S.E.A. Write Award. For some time the leadership of the PEN Centre has been made up of senior academics. I had a fascinating conversation with the current president, Professor Thaweesak Pinthong and two former presidents, Professor Soranat Tailanga and Professor Trisilpa Boonkhachorn. We talked about the importance of building up a regional approach involving Thai, Cambodian and Myanmar PEN. There is a dramatic need for cooperation and mutual support. There are refugee questions, free expression questions, translation challenges, the need for exchanges and other kinds of mutual support. The Myanmar and Cambodian Centres are fully engaged at the international level and we hope that Thai PEN will engage with them in a balance of writers, publishers, and academics of all generations on those essential literary and free expression issues.

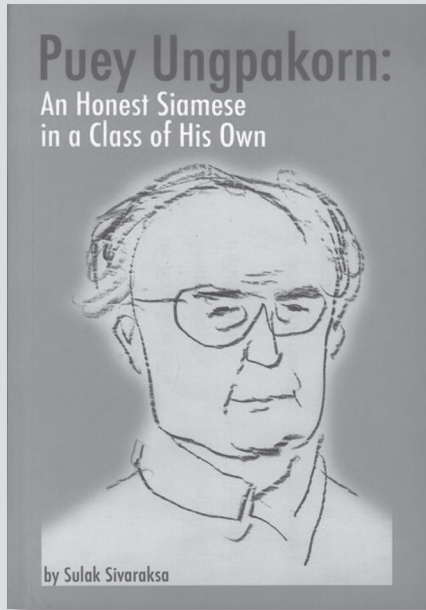
*Best wishes to you all,
John Ralston Saul
International President*

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Puey Ungpakorn: An Honest Siamese in a Class of His Own

Robert McCloy

In being asked to review this very recent English translation of Sulak Sivaraksa's significant and controversial publication in honour of Puey Ungpakorn, first penned in Thai in the 1970s, this writer is both flattered and challenged. He is flattered because he is aware of others more suited to the role but challenged because of ignorance of so much of the culture and circumstances that surrounded its original publication and reception. Nevertheless, in responding, an admittedly imperfect insight is offered from someone who has known Sulak from his very first day in a small and isolated British university in the 1950s, who has observed and sometimes puzzled over his adventuresome career, both admiring his courage and, out of friendship, fearing for his fate as moth-like he ventured so close to the flame.

Reading this new text, I was familiar with the broad history, and the positions of the book's two principal characters, for in truth, here is a narrative as much about Boswell as Johnson. The book does not purport to be a comprehensive bibliography of Puey Ungpakorn but quite palpably strives and succeeds in

being a tribute to the author's hero. There can be no doubting the latter's commitment and sincerity in his cause. Vividly revealed are the author's encounters with its hero. The basic format consists of a number of essays focusing upon aspects of Puey's life. The narrative portrays two larger than life characters with much in common: attendance at a Roman Catholic school in Bangkok, higher education in the United Kingdom, extensive travel and living in the West, all of which, leaving, one supposes, profound effects. In this it is possibly significant that Puey, in a formative period, found himself in a large metropolitan institution, Sulak, by contrast, in a small isolated rural college. Thereafter, the former accepted the larger contexts in which he operated, whilst Sulak was more openly sympathetic to the thesis that small was beautiful. Whilst, as amply demonstrated in the book, they closely collaborated in much, and shared experiences, including duly their government's obloquy, there were significant differences of view, borne on Puey's part, one suspects, with tolerance, good humour, and occasional exasperation; and by

Sulak, with an overriding and justifiable conviction that here indeed was an honest, if sometimes disingenuous, Siamese in a class of his own.

A powerful picture is painted of Puey, in finance ministry and as Bank of Thailand governor, as a quintessential mandarin, as he would be described in Britain: an orderly man, with an expansive imagination putting a premium upon careful execution, minimizing conflict, tolerating dissent, and avoiding hyperbole, rancour and excitement. In this his devoted admirer, neither by character nor intention, sought fully to emulate. For him a less oblique style was fashioned: a combative language wherein spades were rarely shovels.

A strand in the narrative is Puey's pragmatism. Possibly a product of his studies at the London School of Economics and, no doubt subsequently, in wrestling with the daily problems of trying to effect change as a civil servant, he clearly realized that it was essential to focus upon what was possible rather than that which, in an ideal world, would be preferable. This is not to suppose that matters of principle were of no account but was possibly attributable to a recognition

that there could be a range of understandings and that opposition was not necessarily always attributable to venality. Puey's tolerance, of which Sulak gives eloquent testimony, would seem to go hand in hand with such pragmatism. Now it has to be admitted that for some, who are not charged with the burden of making things happen, such is the stuff of compromise. Such a charge, as the text makes clear, was actually, but unfairly in this writer's opinion, levelled at Puey when he assumed responsibility as a university rector. The ivory tower academic and the polemicist can sometimes more easily affect less pragmatism at the price of sometimes achieving less. That Puey increasingly, nevertheless, felt the pain of reconciling the achievable with the desirable is brought out in the narrative.

The economic model alluded to in the narrative is what one might expect of a gifted scholar educated in the London School of Economics of his time. It placed a premium upon a conservative discipline of balanced accounts but favoured state expenditure on infrastructure. In overall impression, it had much in common with the economic approaches of many western states of the period. Puey's support of highway construction opening up the north of Thailand, to which Sulak refers, is a significant example. In practice, his policies, whilst palpably intended to encourage general prosperity, alleviate poverty, and effect a more equitable distribution of wealth, necessarily helped to stimulate consumerism, the cruder results of capitalism, and the compromising of local communities. These latter consequences may not have been anticipated and, possibly, could not have been avoided. However, they certainly drew, as the text makes clear, the Sulak's censure.

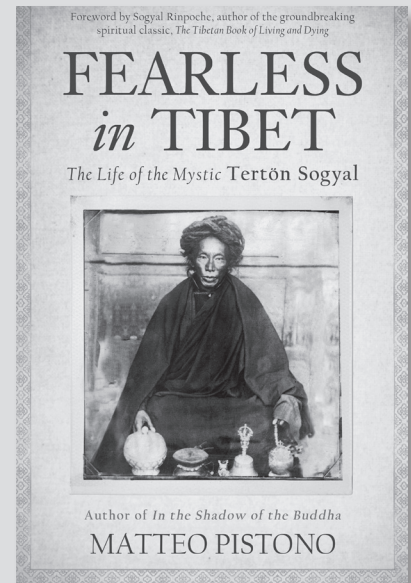
That Puey was sorely tested by the regime, as it resorted to

authoritarian measures, there can be little doubt. As Sulak makes clear, Puey placed his faith in the form of democracy practised in the United Kingdom and northern Europe. Notwithstanding, this was not a form of democracy best suited to Thailand, in Sulak's judgement. What Sulak argued for was a democracy rooted and executed in the very local community. How far that could ever be a practical model remains, for the moment, an unanswered question. Puey favoured a democracy based upon, and being played out in, the nation state, however elusive that was proving to be.

The Puey portrayed looks to a future, one wherein there will be assured development. It is an optimistic modern view, albeit the past is to be respected, the monarchy honoured as a central feature of the state, and Buddhism cherished as a binding moral force. Sulak, by contrast, seems to go beyond that position: modernism has brought, in tall order, consumerism, domination by the western world, and a crude form of capitalism. For him a return to an earlier order, where the individual can more easily find a place in a small localized community imbued with Buddhist values, would be a better goal. Puey's reservation concerning Sulak's attachment to an earlier style of Siamese attire is possibly a reflection of their differences.

The translation does full justice to Sulak's immediate and direct style of expression in castigating others and in self-mockery. The appendices offer a very useful backcloth, including a letter from Puey's secretary at the Bank of Thailand, which includes a particularly poignant story, of a biblical character, of a blind woman receiving support from Puey. Overall, here is an important contribution, in the English language, to an understanding of developments in Thailand in the last century and of two of its key actors.

Fearless in Tibet: The Life of the Mystic Tertön Sogyal



Nineteenth-century Tibetan mystic Tertön Sogyal was a visionary, whose mastery of meditation led him to be a revered teacher to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Known for his deep spiritual insights and service to the nation of Tibet, Tertön Sogyal's ability to harness the power of the mind was born of both his profound understanding of the Buddha's teachings and his unique experiences, all the while striving for peace against tremendous odds. His life is an example of courage and diligence appreciated by spiritual practitioners of all traditions; and his practical instructions on meditation and opening one's heart—amid conflict, uncertainty, and change—are as relevant today as they were during his lifetime.

Fearless in Tibet, the first comprehensive work in English on Tertön Sogyal, captures the essence of his teachings and his inner world of visions and spiritual realizations. It also brings to life the challenges he faced during his early yogic training and his efforts to promote harmony between Tibet and China.

Pulitzer Prize winning biographer, Kai Bird has written of *Fearless in Tibet*, “Fifteen years in the making, Matteo Pistono has written a lyrical biography of Tertön Sogyal (1856-1926), the most powerful tantric master of his era. Pistono’s gracefully written stories are evocative and magically playful. But his rendition of Tertön Sogyal’s journey is also critical to understanding the fate of Tibet.”

Sharon Salzburg calls *Fearless*, “an epic tale of great spiritual practice...a gem for anyone interested in Tibetan Buddhist practice” and the eminent Tibetan translator Erik Pema Kunsang said the book “is filled with stories and poetry centering around the most profound topics in our human civilization.”

Combining riveting storytelling and Tertön Sogyal’s profound instructions, Matteo Pistono takes you on a journey through the mystical past that reveals practical inner guidance for today’s challenges. You will see the power of transforming negativity into opportunity, letting go of attachments, becoming present, and embracing impermanence. This intricate tapestry of intrigue and spirituality will infuse your path with timeless wisdom and inspiration

Silent no more

A brilliant survey of the cultural and political history of the Isan region

Bangkok Post, 17 Mar 2014

Why have Northeasterners become such enthusiastic supporters for Thaksin Shinawatra, the Pheu Thai party and the red-shirt movement? Charles Keyes first arrived in the Northeast in 1962 as a research student in rural anthropology. After the 2010 crackdown on red shirts in Bangkok, he realised he had to rethink all he had learned and written about the region over the last 48 years. This book is the result.

Keyes tells the story from the micro-viewpoint of the village and the macro-level of the region. The Maha Sarakham village he first studied in the 1960s was almost self-sufficient, very isolated, poor in material terms, bound in the little world of kinfolk, the village temple and the annual rice-growing cycle.

Its transformation has been overwhelming. From the 1960s, villagers enthusiastically embraced the national project of “development”. At first they diversified into many new commercial crops. Before long they found migration for work to be a better strategy — to Bangkok, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, anywhere. Now almost every adult, male and female, works outside the village for some period. With the money, families

have built urban-style houses, connected to the world through television and the internet, and switched to urban consumption patterns. Shops and service businesses have popped up along the village street to service this demand, giving the place an urbanised air. Keyes says the people are now “cosmopolitan villagers”.

The first northeastern migrants in the 1960s discovered that people in Bangkok looked down on them, regarding them as backward and stupid. The sense of injury at this discovery is a theme of the songs from that era. Despite the massive transformation of the region in the 50 years since, these views persist. In 2009, a Bangkok university professor called Northeasterners the “ignorant poor” and “stupid”, incapable of being any-

FINDING THEIR VOICE

Northeastern Villagers and the Thai State

Charles Keyes



thing better than petrol station attendants. Yellow-shirt protesters held up signs calling them “buffaloes”. The same views have been repeatedly voiced from protest stages over recent months. Bangkokians are revealing their own ignorance about their own country. That selfsame sense of injury, of course, now cuts even deeper.

The macro of Keyes’ story traces the truculent history of Isan, the name of Siam’s Northeast in the late 19th century.

In early years, the region was a refuge for people fleeing the rule of Lao kings. After the region was captured by Siam and submitted to a new form of centralised government in the late 19th century, rebels promised to throw out these new rulers and usher in a utopian age. When parliaments were introduced after 1932, northeastern MPs spearheaded opposition to rule by generals and domination by Bangkok. Several were murdered.

From the 1960s, government worried that communism would flow into the northeast from Laos and Vietnam. To counter this “Isan problem”, the government stepped up both development and surveillance. The arrival of more police, local officials and development workers in Isan meant more instances of petty oppression. Keyes argues that communism failed to profit from the resulting resentment because the imported Maoist variant never adjusted to the values and concerns of the local population.

After the Cold War ended, the Northeast became another battlefield between the state and the local people over control of natural resources, especially forests and rivers. Keyes suggests that villagers rejected schemes like the Pak Mun Dam because they represented “an elitist and urban-centred approach to development” at odds with the villagers’ concept of development “shaped by their Buddhist-derived ideas of moral community”.

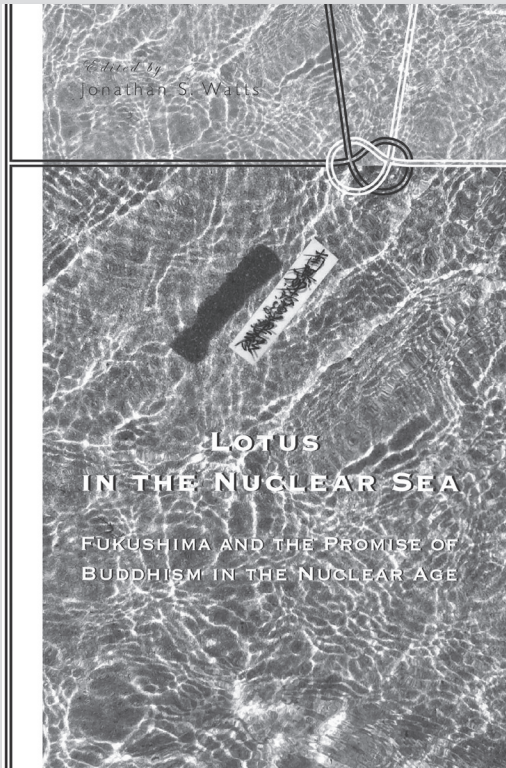
In 1967, Keyes wrote *Isan: Regionalism In Northeastern Thailand*, which is now considered a classic of its era. Here he updates the story but leaves its core message unchanged. Through flight, revolt, parliamentary activism, environmental campaigns and street protests, Isan people have simply been struggling for a fairer deal from the state. As their experience and horizons have widened, the meaning of *ban hao*, “our home”, has broadened from the village to the region. Keyes now uses the term “ethnoregionalism”, referring to the newly cultivated sense of Isan as a region with a distinct history, culture

and politics.

Since 2000, Isan people have discovered the power of the vote to achieve their desire for a fairer deal. Thaksin may not be the perfect leader for their aspirations, as he is neither a native of the region nor a good representative of the Buddhist morality which, Keyes argues, underlies the Isan people’s conception of fairness. But politics is the art of the possible, of choosing between the available alternatives. When Thaksin was overthrown, Northeasterners spearheaded the biggest mass movement in Thai political history as a continuation of “their quest to have a voice in a democratic polity”.

Keyes concludes by arguing that the political assertiveness of Isan is part of Thailand’s transformation “into a pluralist polity in which diverse interests are accommodated through a democratic system” and that Northeasterners “will continue to play a major role in the reshaping of the Thai polity to accommodate all citizens in the country”.

In the few months since this book was written, Thai politics has done another somersault. These ructions will continue. This book charts the social and intellectual changes underlying one major element of this turbulence, and is thus necessary reading for understanding current and near future Thai politics.



Lotus in the Nuclear Sea: Fukushima and the Promise of Buddhism in the Nuclear Age

published by the International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC)
Yokohama, Japan

US\$12.00

In the West, order through amazon.com

In Japan, contact the editor at ogigaya@gmail.com

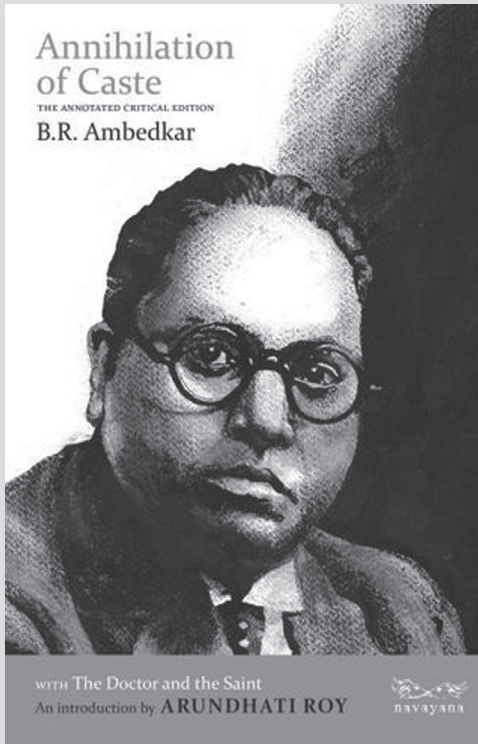
In the rest of Asia, contact the office of the International Network
of Engaged Buddhists at secretariat@inebnetwork.org

featuring Joanna Macy, David Loy, Harsha Navaratne, Pra Paisan
Visalo, Rev. Taitso Kono (chief priest of Myoshinji Rinzai Zen),
Rev. Tetsuen Nakajima, Rev. Hidehito Okochi & the voices of the
Buddhist priests and social activists of Fukushima

Natural disasters follow an eternal cycle of creation and destruction, and sentient life has learned how to rebuild after mother nature runs its course. Nuclear disasters, being “man made”, follow no such cycle, extending into a distant future that imprisons life and prevents it from restoring itself. *Lotus in the Nuclear Sea* begins with the stories of the people of Fukushima and their unending struggles amidst the neglect of the Japanese authorities. The volume then documents the slowly increasing engagement of Japanese Buddhists to

confront the crisis. The final section offers deeper reflections and analysis on the problem of nuclear energy by Buddhists from both Japan and other countries. This is the first publication of such an extended analysis of nuclear energy by Buddhists, including essays by pioneer Joanna Macy, environmentalist David Loy, Asian Buddhist development leaders Harsha Navaratne and Pra Paisan Visalo as well as Japanese Buddhist activists Rev. Tetsuen Nakajima and Rev. Taitso Kono, Chief Priest of the Myoshin-ji Rinzai Zen sect. From

touching the suffering of the people of Fukushima to delving deeply into the problems of nuclear energy to “quenching” (nirvana) the greed-anger-delusion of nuclear energy through building lifestyles and cultures of “sufficiency” (samtusti), *Lotus in the Nuclear Sea* takes us on a journey through the Four Noble Truths of nuclear energy.



The Doctor and the Saint

Arundhati Roy, 26 March 2014

Ambedkar's point is that to believe in the Hindu 'shastras' and to simultaneously think of oneself as liberal or moderate is a contradiction in terms.

What Gandhi and Ambedkar said and did continue to have an immense bearing on contemporary politics, says the writer in her Introduction to the just released *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition*. Exclusive excerpts.

What Gandhi and Ambedkar said and did continue to have an immense bearing on contemporary politics, says the writer in her Introduction to the just released *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition*. Exclusive excerpts.

Annihilation of Caste is B.R. Ambedkar's most radical text. It is not an argument directed at Hindu fundamentalists or extremists, but at those who considered themselves moderate, those whom Ambedkar called "the best of Hindus"— and some academics call "left-wing Hindus". Ambedkar's point is that to believe in the Hindu shastras and to simultaneously think of oneself as liberal or moderate is a contradiction

in terms. When the text of *Annihilation of Caste* was published, the man who is often called the 'Greatest of Hindus' — Mahatma Gandhi — responded to Ambedkar's provocation.

Their debate was not a new one. Both men were their generation's emissaries of a profound social, political and philosophical conflict that had begun long ago and has still by no means ended. Ambedkar, the Untouchable, was heir to the anti-caste intellectual tradition that goes back to 200–100 BCE. Gandhi, a Vaishya, born into a Gujarati Bania family, was the latest in a long tradition of privileged-caste Hindu reformers and their organisations.

Putting the Ambedkar-

Gandhi debate into context for those unfamiliar with its history and its protagonists will require detours into their very different political trajectories. For this was by no means just a theoretical debate between two men who held different opinions. Each represented very separate interest groups, and their battle unfolded in the heart of India's national movement. What they said and did continues to have an immense bearing on contemporary politics. Their differences were (and remain) irreconcilable. Both are deeply loved and often deified by their followers. It pleases neither constituency to have the other's story told, though the two are inextricably linked. Ambedkar was Gandhi's most formidable adversary. He challenged him not just politically or intellectually, but also morally. To have excised Ambedkar from Gandhi's story, which is the story we all grew up on, is a travesty. Equally, to ignore Gandhi while writing about Ambedkar is to

do Ambedkar a disservice, because Gandhi loomed over Ambedkar's world in myriad and un-wonderful ways.

The Indian national movement, as we know, had a stellar cast. It has even been the subject of a Hollywood blockbuster that won eight Oscars. In India, we have made a pastime of holding opinion polls and publishing books and magazines in which our constellation of founding fathers (mothers don't make the cut) are arranged and rearranged in various hierarchies and formations. Mahatma Gandhi does have his bitter critics, but he still tops the charts. For others to even get a look-in, the Father of the Nation has to be segregated, put into a separate category: Who, after Mahatma Gandhi, is the greatest Indian?

Dr. Ambedkar (who, incidentally, did not even have a walk-on part in Richard Attenborough's Gandhi, though the film was co-funded by the Indian government) almost always makes it into the final heat. He is chosen more for the part he played in drafting the Indian Constitution than for the politics and the passion that were at the core of his life and thinking. You definitely get the sense that his presence on the lists is the result of positive discrimination, a desire to be politically correct.

The fact is that neither Ambedkar nor Gandhi allows us to pin easy labels on them that say 'pro-imperialist' or 'anti-imperialist'. Their conflict complicates and perhaps enriches our understanding of imperialism as well as the struggle against it.

History has been kind to Gandhi. He was deified by millions of

people in his own lifetime. Gandhi's godliness has become a universal and, so it seems, an eternal phenomenon. It's not just that the metaphor has outstripped the man. It has entirely reinvented him. (Which is why a critique of Gandhi need not automatically be taken to be a critique of all Gandhians.) Gandhi has become all things to all people: Obama loves him and so does the Occupy Movement. Anarchists love him and so does the Establishment. Narendra Modi loves him and so does Rahul Gandhi. The poor love him and so do the rich.

He is the Saint of the Status Quo.

Gandhi's life and his writing — 48,000 pages bound into ninety-eight volumes of collected works — have been disaggregated and carried off, event by event, sentence by sentence, until no coherent narrative remains, if indeed there ever was one. The trouble is that Gandhi actually said everything and its opposite. To cherry pickers, he offers such a bewildering variety of cherries that you have to wonder if there was something the matter with the tree.

For example, there's his well-known description of an arcadian paradise in *The Pyramid vs. the Oceanic Circle*, written in 1946:

Independence begins at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world... In this structure composed of innumerable villages there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles. Life will not be a pyra-

mid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village... Therefore the outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.

Then there is his endorsement of the caste system in 1921 in *Navajivan*. It is translated from Gujarati by Ambedkar (who suggested more than once that Gandhi "deceived" people, and that his writings in English and Gujarati could be productively compared):

Caste is another name for control. Caste puts a limit on enjoyment. Caste does not allow a person to transgress caste limits in pursuit of his enjoyment. That is the meaning of such caste restrictions as inter-dining and inter-marriage... These being my views I am opposed to all those who are out to destroy the Caste System.

Is this not the very antithesis of "ever-widening and never ascending circles"?

It's true that these statements were made twenty-five years apart. Does that mean that Gandhi reformed? That he changed his views on caste? He did, at a glacial pace. From believing in the caste system in all its minutiae, he moved to saying that the four thousand separate castes should 'fuse' themselves into the four varnas (what Ambedkar called the 'parent' of the caste system). Towards the end of Gandhi's life (when his views were just views and did not run the risk of translating into political action), he said that he no longer objected to inter-dining and intermarriage between castes. Sometimes he said that

though he believed in the varna system, a person's varna ought to be decided by their worth and not their birth (which was also the Arya Samaj position). Ambedkar pointed out the absurdity of this idea: "How are you going to compel people who have achieved a higher status based on their birth, without reference to their worth, to vacate that status? How are you going to compel people to recognise the status due to a man in accordance to his worth who is occupying a lower status based on his birth?" He went on to ask what would happen to women, whether their status would be decided upon their own worth or their husbands' worth.

Gandhi never decisively and categorically renounced his belief in chaturvarna, the system of four varnas. Still, why not eschew the negative and concentrate instead on what was good about Gandhi, use it to bring out the best in people? It is a valid question, and one that those who have built shrines to Gandhi have probably answered for themselves. After all, it is possible to admire the work of great composers, writers, architects, sportspersons and musicians whose views are inimical to our own. The difference is that Gandhi was not a composer or writer or musician or a sportsman. He offered himself to us as a visionary, a mystic, a moralist, a great humanitarian, the man who brought down a mighty empire armed only with Truth and Righteousness. How do we reconcile the idea of the non-violent Gandhi, the Gandhi who spoke Truth to Power, Gandhi the Nemesis of Injustice, the Gentle Gandhi, the Androgynous Gandhi, Gandhi the Mother, the Gandhi who (allegedly) feminised

politics and created space for women to enter the political arena, the eco-Gandhi, the Gandhi of the ready wit and some great one-liners — how do we reconcile all this with Gandhi's views (and deeds) on caste? What do we do with this structure of moral righteousness that rests so comfortably on a foundation of utterly brutal, institutionalised injustice? Is it enough to say Gandhi was complicated, and let it go at that? There is no doubt that Gandhi was an extraordinary and fascinating man, but during India's struggle for freedom, did he really speak Truth to Power? Did he really ally himself with the poorest of the poor, the most vulnerable of his people?

"It is foolish to take solace in the fact that because the Congress is fighting for the freedom of India, it is, therefore, fighting for the freedom of the people of India and of the lowest of the low," Ambedkar said. "The question whether the Congress is fighting for freedom has very little importance as compared to the question for whose freedom is the Congress fighting."

In 1931, when Ambedkar met Gandhi for the first time, Gandhi questioned him about his sharp criticism of the Congress (which, it was assumed, was tantamount to criticising the struggle for the Homeland). "Gandhiji, I have no Homeland," was Ambedkar's famous reply. "No Untouchable worth the name will be proud of this land."

History has been unkind to Ambedkar. First it contained him, and then it glorified him. It has made him India's Leader of the Untouchables, the King of the Ghetto. It has hidden away his writings. It has stripped away the radical intellect

and the searing insolence.

All the same, Ambedkar's followers have kept his legacy alive in creative ways. One of those ways is to turn him into a million mass-produced statues. The Ambedkar statue is a radical and animate object. It has been sent forth into the world to claim the space — both physical and virtual, public and private — that is the Dalit's due. Dalits have used Ambedkar's statue to assert their civil rights — to claim land that is owed them, water that is theirs, commons they are denied access to. The Ambedkar statue that is planted on the commons and rallied around always holds a book in its hand. Significantly, that book is not *Annihilation of Caste* with its liberating, revolutionary rage. It is a copy of the Indian Constitution that Ambedkar played a vital role in conceptualising — the document that now, for better or for worse, governs the life of every single Indian citizen.

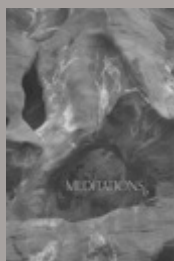
Using the Constitution as a subversive object is one thing. Being limited by it is quite another. Ambedkar's circumstances forced him to be a revolutionary and to simultaneously put his foot in the door of the establishment whenever he got a chance to. His genius lay in his ability to use both these aspects of himself nimbly, and to great effect. Viewed through the prism of the present, however, it has meant that he left behind a dual and sometimes confusing legacy: Ambedkar the Radical, and Ambedkar the Father of the Indian Constitution. Constitutionalism can come in the way of revolution. And the Dalit revolution has not happened yet. We still await it. Before that there cannot be any other, not in India.

Recommended Readings



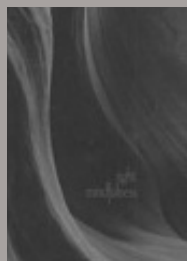
Skill in Questions: How the Buddha taught

Author : Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff)



Meditations 6: Dhamma Talks

Author : Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff)



Right Mindfulness: Memory & Ardency on the Buddhist Path

Author : Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff)



With Each & Every Breath: A Guide to Meditation

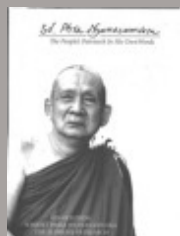
Author : Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff)



Politorbis, Vol.2/2011 No.52

Editor of Issue : Simon J A Mason and Damiano A Sguaitamatti

Publisher : Swiss FDFA and Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich



Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara: The People's Patriarch in his own words

Text derived from His Holiness' written works: What did the Buddha Teach, Rudiments of Mental Collectedness, Faith in Buddhism, The Mind-city, A guide to Awareness and Miscellaneous articles

Publisher : Wat Bovoranives Vihara Bangkok 10200, Thailand



Forgotten genocides: oblivion, denial, and memory

Editor : René Lemarchand

Publisher : University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA



Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India

Author : Ananya Vajpeyi

Publisher : Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England



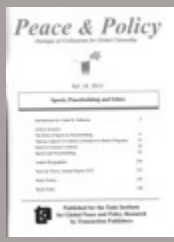
Outputs of Thalban Research project in Saybouri district, Savannakhet province, Lao PDR

Publisher : Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC), Lao PDR



The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science

Author : Henri Bortoft
Publisher : Lindisfarne Press and Floris Books, Edinburgh, England



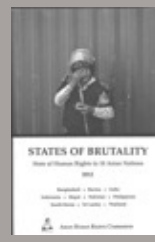
Peace and Policy: Dialogue of Civilization for Global Citizenship, Vol. 18/2013 "Sports, Peace Building and Ethics"

Publisher : Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research



Nelaisv's formos

Editors : Kultu'ros Barai



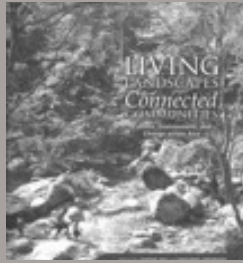
States of Brutality: State of Human Rights in 10 Asian Nations 2012

Publisher : Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), Hong Kong, China



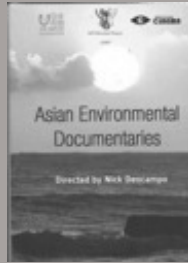
Mother's Spiritual Museum

Publisher : Mother's spiritual museum, Sathorn, Bangkok, Thailand



Living Landscapes, Connected Communities: Culture, environment, and change across Asia

Editors : Justine Vaz and Narumol Aphinives
Publisher : Areca Books, Penang, Malaysia



Asian Environmental Documentaries

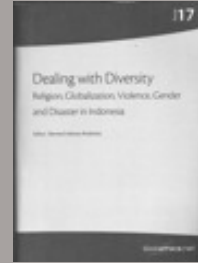
Director : Nick Deocampo

Copyright : The Nippon Foundation and Center for New Cinema, 2012



U T H (Man In Law, Law in man), Burmese version

Author : U Tun Kyi



Dealing with Diversity: Religion, Globalization, Violence, Gender and Disaster in Indonesia

Editor : Bernard Adeney-Risakotta
Publisher : Globethics.net International Secretariat, Switzerland



Community Spirit Forestland Right Update, Issue: Saturday, March 8, 2014

Editor : Dam Trong Tuan
Publishers : Livelihood Sovereignty Alliance (LISO), Vietnam



Golden Land: Burma/ Myanmar-100years

Photographer : Christine Scherman and Birgit Neiser
Publisher : Wolfgang Stein and Birgit Neiser for the State Museum of Ethnology Munich



Perspectives: Political Analyses and Commentary, Issue 2, January 2014
"More or Less? Growth and Development Debates in Asia"

Publisher : Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung e. V.



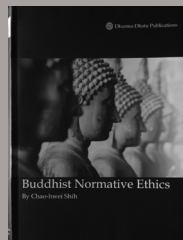
The Moon Princess: Memories of the Shan States

Author : Sao Sanda
Editor : Narisa Chakrabongse
Publisher : River Books Co., Ltd, Bangkok, Thailand



Curtain of Rain

Authors : Tew Bunnag
Publisher : River Books, Bangkok, Thailand



Buddhist Normative Ethics

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



You hold the whole world in your hands: In gratitude for religions for Peace on the occasion of the 9th World Assembly, Vienna, November 20-22, 2013

Publisher : Religions for Peace Organization, New York, U.S.A.



Freedom of Religion and rights of Religions Minorities: CCIA Study Report

Publisher : World Council of Churches Publication, Switzerland.

3 - 27 July 2014

A special Exhibition

"Trace of Dream"

3 - 27 July 2014 at Peple's Gallery
2nd Floor, Bangkok Art and Culture Center
Opening Reception on 6 July 2014 at 17:00

In honor of
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ร่องรอยแห่งแรงบันดาลใจ
Trace of Dream

โดย ภานุวัฒน์ จิตตวิภูการ by Bhanuwat Jittivuthikran



10 July 2014



The 20th Annual SEM (Sem Pringpuangkaew) Public Lecture

Spiritual Ecology: Is it a possible solution to the environmental crisis?

on the 10 July 2014, at SNF Office, Klongsan, Bangkok

Co-Presentation by Dr. Leslie Sponsel, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University of Hawaii at Manoa and Director of Research Institute for Spiritual Ecology (RISE) www.spiritualecology.info and Dr. Poranee Natadecha-Sponsel, Associate Director of Research Institute for Spiritual Ecology (RISE) and volunteer mediator for the Mediation Center of the Pacific in Hoholulu

For more information, please visit www.semsikkha.org, www.sem-edu.org

29-31 August 2014

BPF National Gathering
29-31 August 2014 ,
Oakland, California



● Featuring Keynote speakers Sulak Sivaraksa and Joanna Macy

Wisdom. Awareness. Action. Together.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship upcoming National Gathering is being held August 29-31 in Oakland, CA at East Bay Meditation Center. The conference will start off with keynote speakers Joanna Macy and Sulak Sivaraksa -- all the way from Siam. The goal of the Gathering is to meet face to face to deepen our practice in social justice and spiritual waking through:

- Hands-on training in nonviolent direct action
- Dharma practice & collective healing strategies
- Dialogues on climate justice, anti-racist organizing, economic inequality, and more
- Community with wonderful political Buddhists & friends

To learn more about early bird specials and how to qualify to attend, please visit: <http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/gathering/>

21-22 September 2014

Interfaith Summit on Climate Change 21-22 September 2014 in New York



As part of a global effort to mobilize action and ambition on climate change, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is organizing a Climate Summit on 23 September 2014 in New York (<http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/>). In order to highlight the specific contributions that faith traditions bring to the international climate debate, the World Council of Churches and Religions for Peace will organise an Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, to be held in New York 21-22 September 2014. International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) will be one of the co-sponsors of the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change (ISCC)