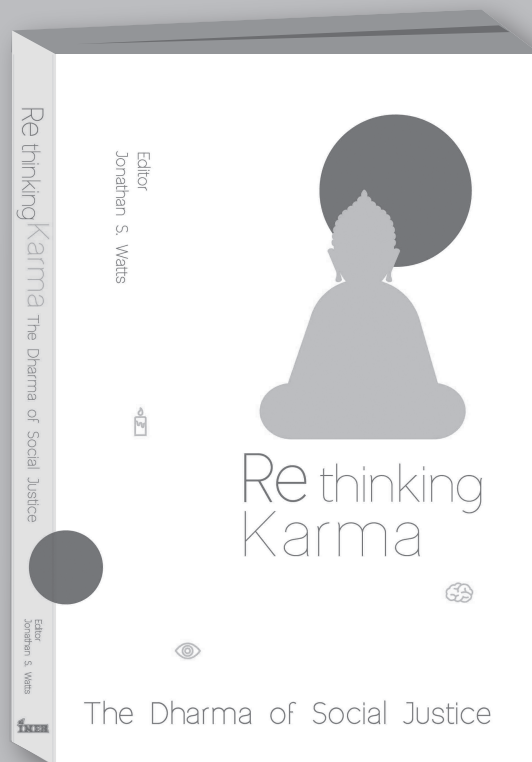


Rethinking Karma: The Dharma of Social Justice



New 2nd
Edition Reprint!
**Rethinking Karma:
The Dharma of Social Justice**
Edited by Jonathan S. Watts
(INEB Think Sangha – Director)
U.S. \$10 paperback 260 pages
Publisher: International Network of
Engaged Buddhists &
Think Sangha

TO ORDER

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 (INEB)
at > secretariat@inebnetwork.org

- What is a Buddhist response to political oppression and economic exploitation?
- Does Buddhism encourage passivity and victimization?
- Can violent perpetrators be brought to justice without anger and retributive punishment?
- What does Buddhism say -- or imply -- about collective karma and social justice?

Rethinking Karma addresses these questions, and many more, through the lens of the Buddhist teachings on karma. Acknowledging that a skewed understanding of karma serves to perpetuate structural and cultural violence, specifically in the Buddhist societies of South and Southeast Asia, the book critically reexamines the teachings on karma as well as important related teachings on equanimity (upekkha), generosity (dana), and "merit" (punna). The eleven authors featured in this volume are thinker-activists who have been deeply involved in issues of social justice at a grassroots level and speak from their own experience in trying to solve them. For them, these issues are seminal ones requiring deeper contemplation and greater sharing, not only within the Buddhist community at large but among all those who seek to bridge the gaps between our idealization of human harmony, our tendencies toward violent confrontation, and the need for greater social justice.

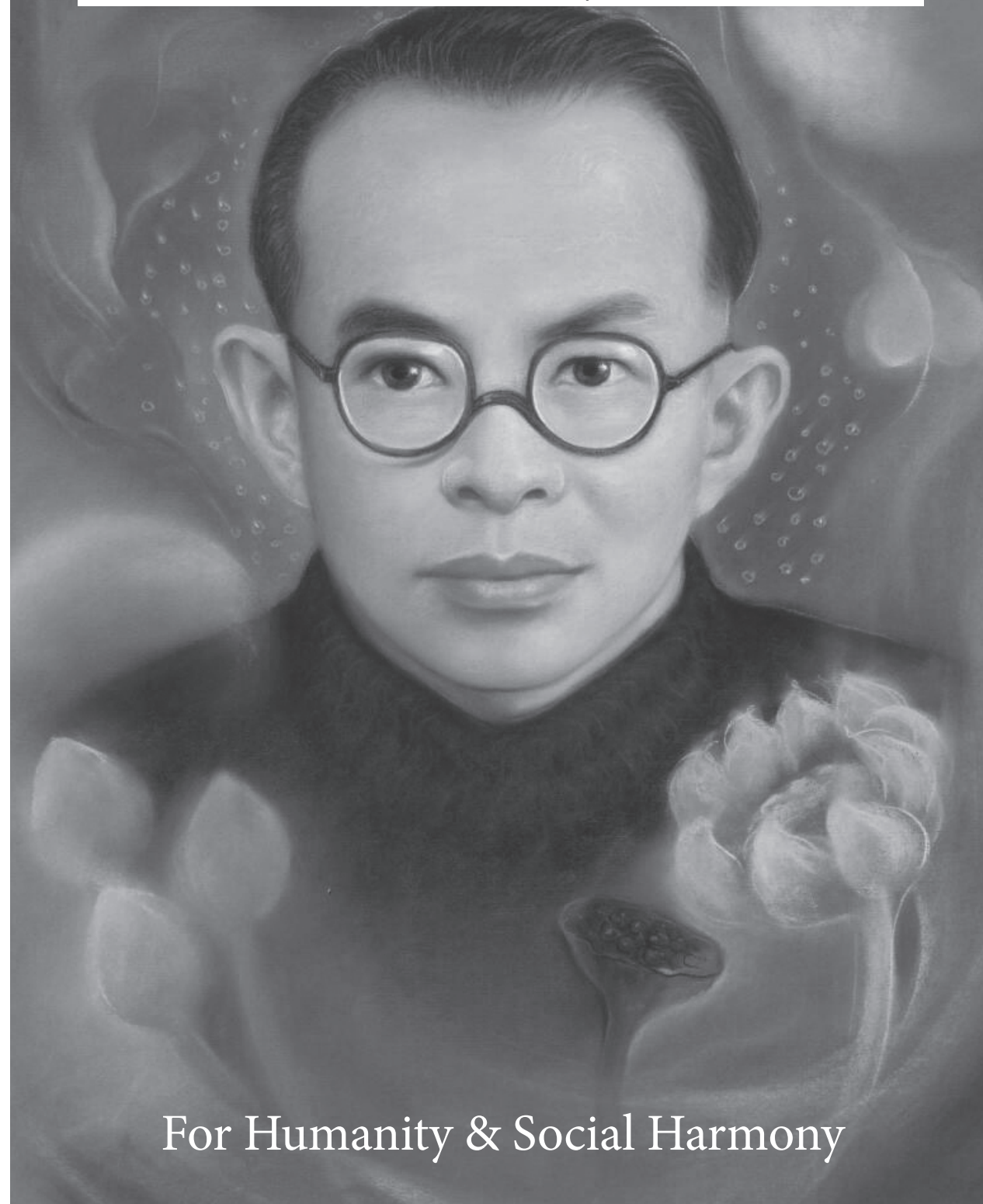
Featured Authors and Essays:

- Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: *Karma in Buddhism: A Message from Suan Mokkh*
- Santikaro and Pra Paisan Visalo: Goodness and Generosity Perverted: The Karma of Capitalist Buddhism in Thailand
- Min Zin: Burmese Buddhism's Impact on Social Change: The Fatalism of Samsāra and Monastic Resistance
- Ouyporn Khuankaew: Buddhism and Domestic Violence: Using the Four Noble Truths to Deconstruct and Liberate Women's Karma
- Mangesh Dahiwalé: An Awakened Vision: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's Struggle to Re-ethicize Indian Society
- David Loy: The Karma of the Rings: A Myth for Modern Buddhism?

SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.30 No.3

September - December 2557(2014)



For Humanity & Social Harmony

Publisher

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF
ENGAGED BUDDHISTS (INEB)

Editorial team

Sulak Sivaraksa (advisor)
Harsha Kumara Navaratne (advisor)
Somboon Chungprampree (editor)
Theodore Mayer (assistant)
Narumon Paiboonsittikun (assistant)

Cover

Chamkad Balangura
by Hongjorn Saneh-ngamjaroen

Lay-out

Surapong Petnamlai

Distributed by

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

Baht 100 per issue

Suggested annual subscription US\$50

Payment info:

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

Seeds of Peace

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

Seeds of Peace is published thrice annually
in January, May and September, in order to
promote the aims and objectives of the
International Network of Engaged Buddhists
(INEB) and its members around the world,
and the organisations under SNF including
Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and
the School for Wellbeing Studies and
Research.

3 Editorial Notes

4 100th Birthday Anniversary of Chamkad Balangura

6 Country Reports

6 Burma: Hatred as Politics in Myanmar

8 Burma: Burmese Farmers Need More Effective and
Offensive Strategies to Eradicate Land-grabbing

10 South-East Asia: The Plural Society and its Enemies

12 Sri Lanka: The Politics of 'Aluthgama'

16 USA: ENGAGED DIALOGUE: Buddhist Peace
Fellowship National Gathering

18 INEB

18 Social Harmony: International Buddhist Forum for a
Pluralistic Society

21 International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations
(BMF)

22 Japanese-Korean Buddhist Exchange Program on
Nuclear & Clean Energy *Jonathan S. Watts*

26 Most People in Myanmar Want Peace.... So Who is
Really Driving the Conflict? *Jill Jameson*

28 Buddhist Peace Fellowship National Gathering
Introduction for Joanna Macy & Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa
Alan Senauke

29 SEM

29 Spiritual Ecology: Is it a Possible Solution to the
Environmental Crisis? *Leslie E. Sponsel*

32 Sulak Sivaraksa

32 Buddhism and Environmental Movement in Thailand

36 Some Thoughts on Democracy

39 Observing Other Countries in Order to See Ourselves
More Clearly

42 Reflections on His Majesty's Accession to the Throne

44 Articles

44 Cross Ethnic Integration in the Andaman (CEIA)
Jane Rasbash

48 The New Bodhisattva Path *David R. Loy*

50 Obituaries

50 Forest Monk Leaves Gift of His Wisdom
Sanitsuda Ekachai

51 Letters

54 Book Reviews

54 Puey Ungpakorn: An Honest Siamese in a Class of His Own *Jordan Basherville*

55 The gist of Surapot Taweesak's book entitled "Buddhism, monarchy and democracy: A critical look through the lens of Sulak Sivaraksa, the Siamese intellectual." *Thanet Arpornsuwan*

58 Recommended Readings

Editorial Notes

I am on a flight taking my first trip to Alaska, sitting next to Ajan Sulak. We were invited by Buddhist and Sufi friends here to give talks on several issues: climate change, the political situation in Siam, and socially engaged Buddhism. We first met our friends from Alaska when they came to the World Sacred Music Festival in Chiang Mai in the year 2000. The idea for the festival was proposed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a way to employ the arts to create beauty for the sustenance of humankind during the coming age of the new millennium. Fourteen years after the music festival, our friendship still remains. Now it has borne new fruit in our trip and activities together, as well as in the fact that INEB will soon have another chapter of socially engaged Buddhists in Alaska.

Coming highlights of INEB activity in the last 4 months of this year are the INEB Advisory and Executive Committee meeting along with the International Buddhist Platform for a Pluralistic Society in Mandalay on the 25-29 November. Since violence erupted between Buddhists and Muslims in Burma in the past two years, INEB partners inside the country have focused on working to address this situation through a number of public events on interfaith collaboration. The idea has been to emphasize and to bring out the potentials for social harmony in the country. Our partners have faced some limitations, however,

in having their voice heard by the dominant majority established religion that is also influenced by the regime in the shadows. Therefore, we hope the interfaith forum will be an activity that helps to make clear the healing role of religion and how to live with friends who have different faiths.

The Buddhist-Muslim Forum core group met in Jakarta in August to share information and bring each other up to date on activities of the core group organizations. In addition, we had the chance to explore collaboration with the Indonesian government and ASEAN in working on this issue. Tentatively, we are planning to organize the 3rd Buddhist-Muslim Conference in Jakarta in early April 2015. The first of these Buddhist-Muslim conferences was held in Bangkok in 2006, and the second in Kuala Lumpur in November 2013.

We are also in the process of organizing the 1st Asia-Europe Socially Engaged Buddhists Gathering in Nagpur, India on the 12-14 February, 2015. This idea came from our first meeting organized by the European Buddhist Union in 2011 at Cadzand in the Netherlands. We hope we can carry on the process of getting together for a stronger friendship and to work together for the betterment of society.

The 2nd Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network Conference will be taking place in South Korea on 27-30 April, 2015. The Korean International Development Organizations have formed a working group to host this conference. One of the aims of this conference is to influence religious organizations in South Korea to take more responsibility for the work towards climate justice and sustainability. Another key aim of the conference is to provide a platform for faith-based and other practitioners from different countries to share their experiences, tell their stories, and learn from each other's failures and successes.

As Seeds of Peace moves towards its 31st anniversary, we are trying to maintain the quality and value of our journal as a way of reaching out to others as well as of "speaking truth to power." We have tried so far to operate at minimum costs. But we still face some difficulties in our financial situation. We now publish both in hard copy and online. For the hard copy, we are publishing 1,500 copies per issue, which costs about USD 2,000 for layout and design, printing, and postal fees. Each issue is sent out to roughly 1,000 subscribers and members and shared with interested parties and the public. There is a small number of readers who have been supporting us financially in this effort. I would like to thank those who have been generous in supporting us and encourage those who want to see us maintain the quality of this journal to offer financial support. For those who can do this, it will be much appreciated!

100th Birthday Anniversary of Chamkad Balangura

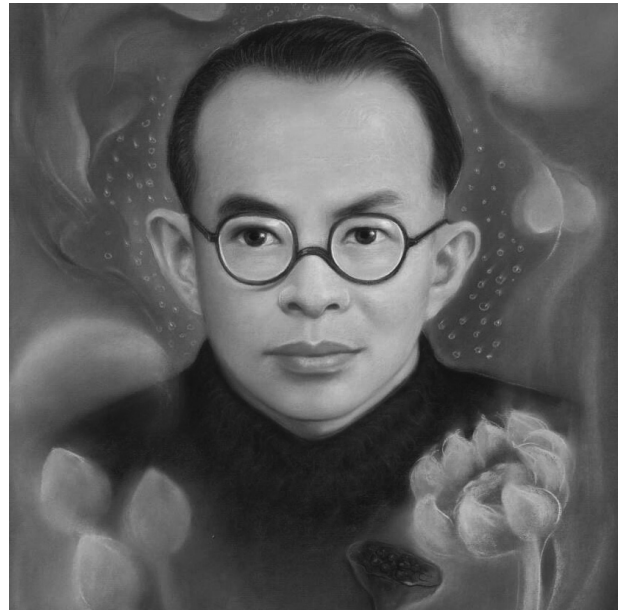
Kasidit Ananthanathorn

Chamkad Balangura (30 October 1914—7 October 1943) was the eldest son of Phya Padungwitthayaserm (kamchad Balangura and Khunying Rian Nikrothanon), the head of the textbook writing division of the Ministry of Education. A brilliant student, Chamkad won first place in the Siamese government scholarships examination and went to the University of Oxford to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

In 1935 while studying at Oxford he wrote the book *Philosophy of New Siam*. He was only 22 years old. In this book Chamkad argues that the 1932 Revolution brought a new era akin to the Renaissance to Siam. It liberated the people and their culture and brought Siam to the entrance of the modern world. He also proposed that Thai language and culture be improved in order to meet the standard of civilization.

When the Phibunsongkram government violated the principles and conduct of democratic rule, Chamkad courageously criticized the government in *Samaggi Sara*, the magazine produced by the Siamese Students Association in Britain. His intellectual responsibility angered Field Marshal Phibun who demanded an apology. Chamkad refused, and Phibun retaliated by barring him from employment in the government service.

Chamkad rallied Thai students in England who shared his concern about Siam's lack of democracy to set up an opposition party back home. When he completed his study at Oxford and returned to Siam, Chamkad joined hands with Tiang Sirikun, a former classmate from Wat Boworniwes School, to establish the "Save the Country" party. It was comprised of intellectuals



from Bangkok as well as provincial areas. Its raison d'être was to oppose Phibun's authoritarianism and promote democracy.

Furthermore, Chamkad and his wife Chalopchalai established Darunothayan School. The school's objective was not only to produce knowledgeable and quality students but also to cultivate in them the seeds of democracy and civic participation.

With the outbreak of World War II, Chamkad volunteered to fight against the Japanese occupation and used the "Save the Country" party as the nucleus of the Free Thai Movement in Siam. Pridi Banomyong, the Movement's leader, appointed him the Secretary-General. In undertaking daily and strategic matters, Chamkad was more than willing to go the proverbial extra mile. Pridi gave him an important assignment as secret envoy to Chungking (now Chongqing), Chiang Kai-shek's provisional capital, to develop

connections with the Allied powers in China; that is, to inform the Allies about the situation in Siam as well as the existence of the Free Thai Movement.

Thus in 1943—three years after being married to Chalopchalai—Chamkad went on a secret mission to Chungking. It was a very dangerous mission to say the least. But Chamkad was fully determined to undertake it. As his wife put it on the occasion of his 70th death anniversary: “Although many people protested against his decision to put his life on the line, I didn’t disagree with him because I knew that he would lead an unhappy life if he didn’t become a member of the Free Thai and undertake the assignment. He’d be happier dying for the country.”

Thot Puntumsen, a member of the Free Thai Movement, admitted that he was surprised to see this long-haired, philosophical, idealistic, unkempt, and bespectacled young man become an underground agent of the Free Thai Movement and a hero.

Chamkad successfully obtained Chiang Kai-shek’s recognition of the Free Thai Movement and guarantee that postwar Siam would remain an independent state. He also succeeded in building ties with the Free Thai Movement in England, which was led by Prince Subhasvasti Svasti. The two men were on good terms, and their working relationship helped to mend fences between the royals and the People’s Party. However, Chamkad had more limited success in securing cooperation from M.R. Seni Pramoj, the leader of the Free Thai Movement in the United States.

To cut a long story short, Chiang’s decision to recognize the Free Thai Movement helped

convince the US to do likewise. As a result, Siam was not treated as an enemy state after the war—to be militarily occupied or dismembered into northern and southern halves governed by the People’s Party and the monarchy respectively (as proposed by one Allied member). In sum, Chamkad’s Chungking mission was significant for the country’s postwar independence.

Unfortunately, Chamkad fell ill and passed away in China at the prime age of 28 years old. Medical diagnosis pointed to liver and gastric cancer. But Allied intelligence reports indicated the possibility that Chamkad might have been poisoned by Japanese or Chinese secret agents.

Chamkad Balangura serves as a powerful example of what a life authentically dedicated to country and humanity looks like. On the occasion of his 100th birthday anniversary, many individuals and organizations have held a number of commemorative activities as follows: a talk and a theatrical performance entitled “For Country and Humanity” at the Pridi Banomyong Institute; the reprinting of Chamkad’s *Philosophy of New Siam* and other writings by Text Publishing House; and special activities by the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and the Crown Property Bureau at the Ta Chang residence where Chamkad received the Chungking assignment and where his wife first heard the news of his passing from Prince Subhasvasti.

Hopefully, these activities will enlighten the Thai public, alert the people to the dangers of national chauvinism, capitalism and consumerism, help foreground the systemic violence and injustice in Thai society, and promote the collective struggle for the democratization of society.

Burma :

Hatred as Politics in Myanmar

By Kyaw Win (Asia Times), 2014

This month's tragic anti-Muslim violence in Mandalay has again revealed that dark forces are alive and well in Myanmar. The violence left two dead and many injured, causing damage to property and generating a climate of fear in the country's cultural and historic capital.

In the aftermath of the violence, the government has moved to crack down on hate speech but has also warned the media against making statements that could destabilize national security, saying that "action will be taken against those who threaten state stability."

Tellingly, however, no action has been taken against those responsible for triggering the Mandalay violence by spreading false rumors on social media, while journalists reporting on the riots have already been threatened with violence. In addition, some observers have noted that the violence has also had a secondary effect - it has successfully distracted public interest from a signature campaign calling for amendment to the 2008 Constitution.

Such patterns are finally leading more and more analysts to ask critical questions about the nature of recent anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar and the real motivations behind

it. Outside of Myanmar, reporting has been less critical, with some major media wires referring to the violence as 'sectarian'.

Such inaccurate diagnosis is not new, as international diplomatic and public opinion circles have tended to portray Myanmar's anti-Muslim violence as an unfortunate social consequence of transition from authoritarianism to democracy. In this view, it is the uncertainty of transition and the new freedom of expression that have given rise to fear of the Muslim minority and ultra-nationalist Buddhist extremism.

This definition, however, is misleading and has resulted in significant confusion both about the form of violence in question as well as its root cause. Indeed, from the point of view of many Myanmar Muslims, it appears to be a case of applying a perfectly sensible theory to the wrong context.

Such misconceptions not only ignore the reality of decades-long persecution of Muslims in the country, but they also absolve authorities of their historical responsibility for manufacturing, endorsing and permitting such violence, both directly and indirectly.

They also ignore the role played by Myanmar's

generals and their cronies in manufacturing Burman-Buddhist nationalist ideology and institutionalizing a culture of fear and distrust of minorities, including the Muslim community. Anti-Muslim violence is, in fact, not a new phenomenon, and has been stirred by the military and its proxies since 1981.

The misdiagnosis also ignores the fact that the military deliberately designed the 2008 constitution to maintain sufficient power to protect their interests and have historically exploited identity as a tool to divide and control the country's diverse population.

It also ignores the reality that many institutions, including some of Myanmar's Buddhist monasteries, have long been infiltrated by certain military actors and have served as sites for organizing support for the military and their vision of nationalism.

That much of the violence has been carried out by mobs that also involve ordinary people does not mean that it is purely a social phenomenon free from any political involvement. Indeed, this form of violence is neither new nor apolitical, as campaigns to spread public fear against Muslims and the mobilization of pogroms have been consistently carried out by Myanmar's military and their proxies throughout the decades of military dictatorship.

The reality is that the current anti-Muslim violence is sign of continuity with the past, rather than a break with it.

Mask of reform

President Thein Sein's government is not the first to employ divide and rule tactics through a variety of proxies, manipulating religion and ethnicity as a means of maintaining power.

In the 1960 general election, Prime Minister U Nu published in his manifesto a promise to declare Buddhism as the state religion if elected. As a result, he won a landslide election victory.

Thein Sein's government now appears to be using this old tactic to kill three birds with one stone- to divert public attention from Chinese interests, to avoid enacting constitutional amendments that would allow opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to become the country's next president and to attract voters ahead of the 2015 elections.

Since Thein Sein took office in 2010, he has faced three major challenges: public protests against Chinese projects, public protests to amend the 2008 constitution and public support for Suu Kyi. These challenges have coincided with the re-emergence of anti-Muslim violence across Myanmar. That can hardly be a coincidence.

Public opposition to mega-projects, particularly those backed by China, has grown since Thein Sein took office. While he won praise for suspending the Chinese mega-dam project in Kachin State in 2011, this was short-lived.

In August 2012, police used white phosphorus against peaceful demonstrators,

including monks and villagers at the Letpadaung copper mine. Another major Chinese project is the Shwe gas pipeline, which starts near Kyauk Pyu Township, Rakhine State and provides an important alternative route for China to much-needed energy resources should access through either the Malacca Strait or the South China Sea be blocked in a future conflict.

The second challenge is the growing public demand to amend the 2008 constitution, which many in Myanmar view as deeply flawed, undemocratic and designed by the junta to maintain the power of the army. Since early 2012, activists have been raising public awareness against the constitution and several public mass gatherings were organized to protest against the constitution and demand its amendment.

The third challenge is the outcome of the 2012 by-election, which placed the military-backed ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) on the horns of a dilemma. Although Thein Sein successfully convinced the international community to recognize him as a reformist, even receiving a peace award from the International Crisis Group, his party has not yet convinced his country's own voters.

On the contrary, members of the USDP are well known for their record of corruption and it is not surprising that Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party won a landslide victory at the 2012 by-election. The poll

result was alarming for the ruling party and has created anxiety about the upcoming general election in 2015. The ruling party and its military backers may have thus considered applying political tactics that had already been tried and tested.

Political scapegoats

As the government came under increasing pressure from these multiple challenges, a new wave of anti-Muslim violence emerged. Violence broke out in Rakhine State in June and October 2012 where Rohingya and Kaman Muslims were targeted.

Tensions between Muslims and Buddhists have historically been at their highest in Rakhine, with ethnic cleansing campaigns against the Rohingya occurring in 1942, 1978 and 1991, making it an easy target for igniting anti-Muslim violence. But anti-Muslim mobilization was not limited to Rakhine and was soon followed by hate-speech campaigns in Karen State at the end of 2012 that spread to other parts of the country. In March 2013, anti-Muslim pogroms erupted in Meiktila in central Myanmar.

Government and crony-controlled media have also played a dangerous role by portraying Rohingya as intruders from Bangladesh and Islam as a threat to Buddhism. They have succeeded in obscuring real problems such as land grabbing by the army, civil war and the use of rape as a weapon against

minorities. The majority of Buddhists are unaware that they are being brainwashed by the powerful cronies' media.

It is highly likely that many extremist Buddhist monks are agents of Myanmar's army and part of a vast propaganda machine. In a context where monks are the most revered figures in society, this strategy has proven highly effective and faces almost no opposition. Those who have spoken out against radical monks have been intimidated.

During the crisis, the inflammatory rhetoric of Thein Sein and his spokesperson Major Zaw Htay received strong support from Buddhist extremists. In a meeting with the head of UNHCR in July 2012, Thein Sein denied the existence of the Rohingyas, stating that they are illegal immigrants and should be sent to third countries or kept in concentration camps as refugees. His comments have directly put the lives of Rohingya into great danger, encouraged hatred against them and allowed the extremists to target them without condemnation by the wider public.

During a recent attack on Rohingyas, Zaw Htay posted provocative anti-Rohingya propaganda on his Facebook account in Burmese. Exercising scare tactics, he used the Rohingya Solidarity Organization, an organization known to be almost defunct for several decades, as a scarecrow, claiming that RSO members had crossed into Myanmar to invade Rakhine State and threaten the lives of

Buddhists. He also warned opposition parties and critics not to oppose government policy towards the Rohingya on the basis of human rights.

Anti-Muslim hate campaigns led by the radical 969 movement, including those led by Buddhist monk U Wirathu, have played a significant role in expanding the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya into generalized anti-Muslim violence across the country. U Wirathu has traveled across Myanmar giving anti-Muslim speeches without restriction and expanded an extremist network known as the Race and Faith Defense League, (Ma Ba Tha).

Bigoted boycotts

The biased judiciary, meanwhile, systematically grants impunity to the hate instigators, encouraging further attacks on Muslims. In return, these extremists promote the ruling party as a defender of Buddhism and Buddhist interests. Ma Ba Tha also largely opposes the amendment of the 2008 constitution, particularly the section 59(F) that bars Suu Kyi from becoming president because she was married to a now deceased foreigner.

A public declaration of anti-Muslim persecution was made on September 10, 2012 after a meeting between monks from all Buddhist sects in Karen State organized by the Alliance of Buddhist Custodians at Mae Baung Monastery in the state capital Hpa-an.

The declaration was mainly intended to segregate

Muslims from social and economic activities, including a drive to boycott Muslim-owned shops. In December 2012, the alliance declared it would fine anyone who breached the order and members of Ma Ba Tha began monitoring Muslim shops to implement the order.

The declaration openly challenges the rule of law and yet in spite of this there has not been a single response from Thein Sein's government. The President did not fail, however, to swiftly issue a statement defending U Wirathu when Time magazine published an edition with the monk on the front cover calling him 'the face of Buddhist terror'.

Tolerance of anti-Muslim violence was also apparent during the Meiktila pogroms in March 2013. Victims said that when police were requested to protect Muslims from deadly attacks they responded that orders were not given to stop the violent mobs. The mystery in that instance is who held the authority to give the orders and why these officials would allow the mobs to target Muslims.

At the same time, the organized manner in which the mobs targeted Muslims reveals that at least some among them were well-trained to carry out heinous crimes against humanity, such as the chopping and burning alive of 28 small children at an Islamic orphanage.

So far anti-Rohingya and anti-Muslim campaigns have successfully diverted

public attention from many issues: Chinese projects, land grabbing, the civil war in Kachin State, corruption, dubious multi-billion dollar property holdings by high-ranking generals, and calls to amend the controversial 2008 constitution.

Undoubtedly, the military will plan their every strategy carefully and execute every move deliberately. The result of the 2012 by-election could be used as a parameter to measure the USDP's chance of victory in 2015. The stakes are high, raising the potential for more distractive anti-Muslim mobilization, persecution and violence in the run-up to the polls.

While the international community invests millions in government institutions such as the Myanmar Peace Center, more must be done to hold the government accountable for the role it has played in supporting organizations and movements responsible for inciting hatred and violence. Allowing these deadly and divisive trends to continue is morally wrong and threatens to unleash new cycles of fear, violence and vengeance that will undermine the prospects of all of Myanmar's people and jeopardize stability across the wider region.

Burmese Farmers Need More Effective and Offensive Strategies to Eradicate Land-grabbing

Maung Day, 2014

In October 2013, the Irrawaddy Magazine reported about a riverside community in Dala in Yangon Region, which was bulldozed by the Burmese navy. The residents who farmed the land for generations suddenly found themselves homeless and landless. The Burmese navy took the land to expand their base. This is just one example of many tragedies. In today's Burma where 70 percent of the labor force depends on agriculture, land-grabs continue to grow. According to Murray Hiebert and Phuong Nguyen of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, one-third of Myanmar's 47 million rural residents are landless laborers, while others struggle to hold on to their land through indebtedness. It is estimated that 1.9 million acres of land were illegally transferred to private companies in the past 20 years and still, thousands of acres are being grabbed on a daily basis. Farmers have filed numerous complaints to the parliament and organized protests, but most of the

complaints have not been acknowledged and protesters have been arrested and jailed. These two approaches have failed because there is no structured co-ordination among different groups of farmers, they are not able to assert sufficient pressure on land-grabbers, and they don't have enough social support at national level. To eliminate land-grabbing once and for all, they must employ more effective and offensive strategies: (a) forming a strong national farmers' network (b) using offensive tactics such as civil disobedience tactics, and (c) bringing in support from different groups such as students, sangha, rights groups and lawyers' groups.

Over the past 50 years, the former military junta sold off a huge amount of farmland and mining areas to cronies and military conglomerates. Under the new government, land-grabbing has not stopped, but is increasing. The networking between the government and business people is very strong

Country Reports

and is severely damaging farmers' lives. Meanwhile, the communications among different farmers' groups are weak and random. Their protests are isolated and inefficient. Therefore, farmers from all over the country must unite and form a strong national farmers' network so that their voice is amplified and their actions are noticed. They should organize farmers' conferences all over the country and set their goals to pressure the government to ensure their land rights and reform the land laws. The network should organize exchange visits among different communities to share information, and also be responsible for organizing collective rallies. If one community is facing a land-grab, other communities must go to the community in trouble, stand for each other and show their strength to the government authority. The network must also make use of mass media as a means to disseminate information about the impact of land-grabbing—newsletters and community radios are a few good examples. Without a strong network and collective

effort, it will be extremely difficult for farmers to challenge the authorities and bring about the desired results.

There must be detailed plans for offensives—non-violent, but forceful and vigorous—on the authorities and land-grabbers. Farmers must get together through the network and plan offensive tactics that will push the authorities off their high horse and listen to what farmers want, and that will make the land-grabbers realize what they have done is unjust and exploitive. One effective tactic is to challenge the land-grabbers, the authorities and their family members. Their family members must be reminded what their parents or husbands or wives have done is destroying people's lives and livelihoods. In some cases, social boycott can be practiced, such as ostracism. Farmers should occupy the confiscated land, and refuse to move. In the face of violent evictions, farmers from other communities should join those in trouble and stand together against injustice and oppression. Strong civil disobedience is needed in such a society where

the jurisdiction is under the government's control. Other forms of tactics such as refusal to pay interest, refusal to buy seeds from the government and cronies' companies, guerrilla theatre to disrupt the official events and mock funerals can be used as well. Small groups should be formed and assigned different tasks to carry out the planned tactics. These activities should be organized—sometimes synchronized—as often as possible.

This farmers' movement has to happen at both local and national levels at once. The network must try to bring the anti-land-grabbing campaign to the national level by working with students, sangha, politicians, rights groups, lawyers' groups and so on. The involvement of students and Buddhist sangha in social movements dates back to the Burmese independence fight, and has always been crucial. Students can join anti-land-grabbing rallies while monks can both join the rallies and help mobilize people by preaching against greed and injustice surrounding land-grabbing. Groups like lawyers'

groups can provide technical help while NGOs and politicians can help with fundraising and lobbying. Public speeches and mass petitions can bring public attention to the cause and be used to make demands on the government. While farmers' participation is central to the movement, they need other groups to surround and support them.

Tragedies caused by land issues today are not just hurting farmers, but the democratization process of the country too as these tragedies are born out of cronyism and lawlessness fostered by the military over the past 50 years. To eradicate these nefarious legacies and to bring land security to millions of farmers, the anti-land-grabbing campaign must go beyond protesting and filing complaints. It has to be made powerful and effective by creating a strong national farmers' network, adopting offensive tactics, and joining hands with other groups and movements.



Suksit Siam

117-119 Fuang Nakorn Road, Bangkok 10200

Tel: 02-225-9536-8, Fax: 02-222-5188

email : suksit-siam@gmail.com

www.kledthaishopping.com

Open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Sunday.

English books on Engaged Buddhism are available.

South-East Asia :

The Plural Society and its Enemies

Jakarta, Singapore and Yangon, 2 Aug 2014

in MANDALAY in central Myanmar, another bout of bloody sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims recently left two dead and many injured. The riot was sparked by rumours that two Muslims had raped a Buddhist woman. The deaths brought to about 240 the number killed in sectarian clashes over the past two years. Most of the victims were Muslims.

Myanmar is just one of several South-East Asian countries recently forced to confront old questions of race and religion. In Malaysia, a prominent Malay Muslim leader, Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman, has been charged with sedition for accusing ethnic Chinese, a minority in Malaysia, of being “trespassers”. And in Indonesia the winner of the presidential election, Joko Widodo, or Jokowi, squeaked home after a huge early lead over his rival evaporated, in part because of unfounded rumours that he was a Christian Chinese rather than in fact a good Javanese Muslim.

These events may appear disparate, but they reflect a common thread running through the history of race and

religion in South-East Asia. Specifically, they reflect the legacy of those colonial territories which one British academic and colonial administrator, John Furnivall, first characterised as “plural societies”. The British and Dutch Asian empires that gave rise to such societies have long gone, but the consequences of their creation remain. Indeed, the concept of the plural society is more relevant than ever for understanding and even predicting the course of events in the region, and especially in Myanmar—or Burma, as it was when Furnivall lived and worked there.

Furnivall was a Fabian socialist who arrived as an administrator in 1902 and married a local Burmese. Though he left the colony in 1931, he returned in 1948 to advise the first post-independence governments as well. Furnivall’s original description of the plural society is very different from the way “pluralism” has come to be understood in the West. Rather than referring approvingly to a rainbow of ethnicities choosing freely to live together, Furnivall coined the term to criticise the imposition of immigrant races

on indigenous societies in the name of commerce and free trade. This occurred most obviously during the 19th century in the ports of the British and Dutch seaborne empires, in littoral cities such as Akyab (now Sittwe) and Rangoon (Yangon) in Burma, in Penang and Singapore of the Straits Settlements, and in Batavia (now Jakarta) on the island of Java, capital of the Dutch East Indies. Eventually more formal colonial rule was extended by conquest to the interiors of these places, carrying the plural society with it.

For the most part, the immigrants, often destitute, who poured into these territories under European rule were Chinese. But millions of South Asians, many of them Muslims, migrated as well, especially to Burma, then administered by Britain as part of its Indian empire. Indians migrated in large numbers throughout the Malay world. The immigrants often provided manual labour, in Malaya’s copper mines and rubber plantations, for instance. But they also contributed to the entrepreneurial zest and trading connections that helped to create the wealth and vitality of imperial entrepôts such as Rangoon and Singapore. Colonial Rangoon was a majority-Indian city by the 1920s. It boasted Armenian, Jewish and Chinese communities. The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, who was consul there at the time, described Rangoon as “a city of blood, dreams and gold”.

But as Furnivall saw

it, the wealth came mostly at the expense of the indigenous Burmans in Burma, the Malays in Malaysia, the Javanese in Java and so on. Indeed, many such groups felt themselves to be elbowed aside by foreigners who came in under colonial protection.

For all that the plural society produced wealth, for Furnivall it was essentially brittle and unstable, lacking in any “social will” or shared sense of community. “It is in the strictest sense a medley”, he wrote; the different races “mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market-place, in buying and selling.” He worried, therefore, about what would happen once the coercive power of the colonial authority was gone. Colonial protection was the chief impediment to immigrants being attacked by resentful indigenous peoples, or even clashing among themselves.

Post-colonial societies have been dealing with this worry ever since. Race riots in Malaysia and Singapore in 1969 pitted Malay against Chinese. They seemed to confirm Furnivall’s worst fears about “the whole society relapsing into anarchy” once the colonial power had gone.

Where it All Aegan

The new elites’ response was often to replace colonial authoritarianism with their own brand. In Malaysia and Singapore many of the old



Getty Images

oppressive laws from colonial days have been defended as the surest way to keep in check the resentments and antagonisms that follow from the plural society. In both places it has also, as a happy consequence, helped keep the same ruling parties in power since independence.

By contrast, the post-colonial military governments of Myanmar tried a different strategy. Rather than devising a way to cope with the plural society, they tried to dismantle it. The junta that seized power in 1962 expelled hundreds of thousands of Indians, Chinese and other non-Burmese in an attempt to smash the plural society and create an artificially homogenous Burman one. This, however, was even more coercive than the plural society it was meant to replace. The Burman-dominated military governments tried to impose a policy of “Burmanisation” on the country’s other ethnic groups such as the Kachin and

Karen, officially recognised as indigenous, provoking long-running civil wars.

That is how things stayed until the democratic reforms of the present government, initiated in 2011. A loosening of central control has seemed to lead to the “anarchy” between races that Furnivall had feared. In western Myanmar, the (Buddhist) Rakhine are finishing the ethnic cleansing begun in the 1960s. They are clearing what remains of the plural society, mainly Muslims, from Sittwe. In other commercial centres, such as Mandalay, where the plural society has limped on for decades, some Burmans, led by chauvinist Buddhist monks, are whipping up similar antagonisms.

Regrettably, a supposedly modernising Myanmar government is now supporting the chauvinists against the South Asians and Muslims. In a new democratic era it has an election to win. It faces annihi-

lation at the hands of Aung San Suu Kyi’s popular National League for Democracy in next year’s general election, so it is exploiting old resentments against the plural society for electoral gain.

The army-backed ruling party is supporting four pieces of legislation, proposed by the monks, to protect “race and religion”, implicitly that of the Burman Buddhist majority against an imagined Muslim takeover. The laws would make it very hard for people to convert to other religions or for Buddhist women to marry Muslim men. Thus the ruling party hopes to turn the election into a debate about Burman rights and privileges rather than democracy. It presents Miss Suu Kyi with a quandary. Many foreigners criticise the Nobel peace-prize winner for not standing up more for the Rohingyas in Rakhine and other Muslims. She knows that if she did speak out she would forfeit much

sympathy among Burmans and undermine her hopes of restoring democracy—and coming to power.

The generals’ strategy might help them, but it will jeopardise the vital contribution that industrious and commercially-minded immigrant communities could still make to the impoverished country. Yangon’s plural society, which prompted Furnivall to think about all this in the first place, was, after all, a precursor to today’s highly global cities, with all the riches that accrue to them. It is no coincidence that Burma’s precipitous economic decline followed the generals’ attempts to dismantle the plural society in the 1960s. Nearly all the evidence points to the benefits of diversity and immigration in terms of innovation and productivity. If the chief motivation for Myanmar’s generals to start reforming the country was in order to revive a decrepit economy, they ought to want a flourishing plural society, though without the former colonial coercion, more than anything else.

Sri Lanka :

The Politics of 'Aluthgama'

Kalana Senaratne, 22 July 2014



Photo: Paula
Bronstein for
The Global Mail

"The Muhammedans, an alien people, who in the early part of the 19th century were common traders, by Shylockian methods became prosperous like the Jews [...] What the German is to the Britisher that the Muhammedan is to the Sinhalese. He is an alien to the Sinhalese by religion, race and language [...] The whole nation in one day have risen against the Moor people. The causes are economic and spiritual..."

Anagarika Dharmapala, Letter of 15th June, 1915 (in A. Guruge, ed, *Return to Righteousness* (1991), p. 540-541)

The Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and its many monks take their 'professional' duty – the promotion of Sinhala Buddhism – quite seriously. And recently, they decided to

spread a bit of their Sinhala Buddhism, in Aluthgama, Beruwala and a few surrounding areas in Southern Sri Lanka.

Gnanasara Thera called his audience to finish off the Muslims if a single Sinhalese is touched. A singer, Madhumadawa Aravinda, invoked the lines of the late Tibetan S. Mahinda himi ("... es gedi walata hena gahalada sihalunne"). And the mobs did the rest. Around 4 people (Muslims) were killed, over 80 were injured, many houses and shops were torched, there was terror. Violent and forceful retaliation and defence came from the Muslim community. All of this occurred while the President and the Defence-Secretary were absent, away, overseas. Apparently the trend did not stop there, for reports

emerged of attacks directed at a mosque in Jaffna and the 'No Limit' store in Panadura as well.

What 'Aluthgama' represented has sought to be analyzed in many ways, and if you place inordinate attention on the single speech made by Gnanasara Thera before violence was unleashed, it would be difficult to forgive someone for imagining that this is largely about the BBS attempting to threaten the State, to capture the State, to promote a form of rule dominated by the monks and military. That, I believe, is a somewhat simple assessment of a very complex phenomenon; it is also not innocent, for in attempting to portray the BBS as a threat to the State, one not only misunderstands the nature

of the State but also helps (quite deliberately) the political leadership to evade responsibility. Portray the BBS as the singular threat, save the leadership.

But the BBS is the underside of Sinhala-Buddhism, and the natural culmination of this project was going to be a very violent one. And 'Aluthgama' is a political movement which reveals many things, not only about the BBS and the Sinhala-Buddhist project, but also about the character of the State, its biases and prejudices, and alas, about ourselves.

As a preface, however, I would add that my critique is not to be read as an endorsement of everything that is done by the Muslim community. As a critic of institutionalized religion (and certain religious-

customs and practices), in particular, I have absolutely no intention of taking the side of this or that religious group. But I do subscribe to certain political views, so I don't intend to make an 'objective' assessment, whatever that means. My concern is largely about critiquing and/or problematizing the politics of the community and the State I belong to, a politics dominated by the Sinhala-Buddhist community; irrespective of whether or not members of the Muslim community undertake a similarly self-critical exercise concerning their own community.

To return to the topic, four inter-related dimensions of 'Aluthgama' are of particular concern and reveal much about the BBS, about Sinhala-Buddhist politics, the State and ourselves.

BBS: a threat to the State?

One of the first questions we are made to ask is: is the BBS a threat to the State? I think the answer is 'no' and furthermore, it is also the wrong question, for a number of reasons.

For firstly, the BBS is best conceived as being part of the State in the sense that its ideology and project are part of the dominant ideology and project of the State, which have been carried out over the years by successive governments. It is a Sinhala-Buddhist outfit promoting the project of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism; and in a State that recognizes (especially constitutionally) the prominence of Buddhism, a majority never rushes to view

an entity such as the BBS as an aberration, an exception or a threat of any sort whatsoever.

Secondly, a group such as the BBS cannot exist or sustain its campaign without the support of powerful elements of the regime. But more importantly, it cannot do so with the backing of the regime alone. It has to have a strong sympathetic populace; and it has. I have been struck by the level of support and sympathy that the BBS and its broader political project have attracted, especially after the incidents in Aluthgama. And that's reason to worry. From the legal and business professionals, right down to the students at local (especially Southern) universities, the level of sympathy that is expressed in favour of the BBS is quite staggering, even while one is willing to critique the resulting violence. And this element of the debate needs to be vitally understood and remembered before anyone attempts to critique the BBS as being a threat to the State or the government.

Additionally, of course, it is not just the power of the politicians or of the people that makes the BBS strong and sustainable. It is the power of the robe as well; as Gnanasara Thera himself has stated.

Thirdly, I do not think that I heard anything new or strange or surprising from the BBS (especially Gnanasara Thera) in Aluthgama. At best, what I heard was simply the express articulation of what one thought the BBS

really stood for. And that's the only difference. And that rhetoric very clearly showed how well the current structure of the dominant arms of the State – the Army and the Police – conforms to the wishes of the BBS. When Gnanasara Thera screams approvingly that there is still a Sinhala Army (Sinhala hamudaawak) and a Sinhala Police force (Sinhala policiyak), he is giving expression to the idea that this is what it is, this is how it ought to be.

Fourthly, as for Gnanasara Thera's critique of the Rajapaksas and in particular the President, a keen observer would have detected the subtle changes in tone and expression. In other words, Gnanasara's critique of, say, Minister Rauf Hakeem, is far different from his critique of President Rajapaksa. And the claim that the Sinhalese have no leader is the standard Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist argument; that the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists are not entirely happy with certain post-war developments is not news. For example, Dr. Gunadasa Amarasekera's interesting *'Amathaka Wu Urumaya: Kawandayata Hisak'* (2011) is a book which is inspired by the understanding that the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist project is not being adequately realized in post-war Sri Lanka. This does not mean that they support Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa; Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism is neither too simplistic to jump mindlessly from one Rajapaksa to another, nor politically too dumb to openly challenge President Rajapaksa

and the State. So what we get in Gnanasara Thera's critique of the Rajapaksas is not really a challenge to the State or the government, but rather another version of that 'course-correction' message you get from the likes of Ministers Wimal Weerawansa and Champika Ranawaka. And while openly somewhat distanced from the BBS, come Cabinet meeting time, they too will defend 'Aluthgama' to the hilt; as they have done, already.

Fifthly, it is necessary not to underestimate the power of the State. It is a State that has tremendous military might; a State which is powerful enough to effectively suppress any movement if it really wants to. And it has every power to do so; legally, constitutionally, militarily, judicially or in any other imaginable way. The fact that it's not happening tells us precisely what the BBS is all about. And the BBS narrative is a narrative that the dominant part of the State wishes to agree with, and one the government endorses; for example, the recent statement ('Right of Reply') on the Aluthgama-violence by the government at the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council amounted to a classic acceptance of the BBS-version of events.

If so then what is the fundamental or preliminary question that 'Aluthgama' should make us ask?

That question is nothing but the following: is the BBS a threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist project? That's the preliminary question before all

else. And this is where one confronts the major challenge.

For firstly, every shred of evidence tells us that the BBS is not a serious threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist project. Where and how is it a threat when the dominant majority appears to be endorsing the project and is therefore 'silent'? Where and how is it a threat to Sinhala-Buddhism when the top leadership of the Sangha community appears to be unwilling to critique the BBS and its members so directly and openly? Where and how is it a threat when the likes of Ven. Sobitha are silent? And as I mentioned before, the level of support that the BBS garners within the majority community can be surprisingly high.

And secondly, it is challenging because this question can be answered mainly by the Sinhala-Buddhist community, given that it is the overwhelming majority. And as long as the majority community takes a lukewarm approach, it only goes to prove the obvious. [Another issue to be noted here is that in a State of this nature, what is striking is that the dominant majority gets to ask and answer such a question, while it also arrogates to itself the power to ask and answer a similar question affecting the other ethnic communities. So for example, whether a particular political party or entity is a threat to, say, Tamil nationalism is a question that the Sinhalese would rush to ask and answer even before their respective communities do so.]

So, in short, it is difficult to read the BBS as a threat to the State. And far more fundamentally, it is difficult to read it even as a threat to Sinhala-Buddhism. That the BBS is the underside of Sinhala Buddhism is best proven by the very statement of its leader, Ven. Kirama Wimalajothi who has a problem with the BBS, but largely (and perhaps only) with regard to the words its members use, with the manner of expression and articulation – and not the broader politics it stands for.

And if the BBS is not a threat, either to the State or to Sinhala-Buddhism, what it means to the Muslim people (and indeed, the Tamil people) is terribly damaging.

Rajapaksas: the Only Option!

Another dimension of the problem is that one political message that 'Aluthgama' seeks to popularize is perhaps that the political opposition in the country is absolutely powerless in the face of marauding monks, communal riots and violence. The Aluthgama episode did show how ineffective the opposition parties, especially the UNP was, in terms of at least getting the mainstream media to report on what was happening to Aluthgama (in fact, only a few laudable exceptions exist, such as The Daily Financial Times and Ravaya). Even some of its members were attacked by mobs. In other words, there is a famous question asked by the people in the South, even

by those who are very critical of the government. It is: but then who else can govern? ('wena kauda karanna inne?'). It is to this question that the BBS, perhaps unwittingly, provided an answer. That irrespective of the violence caused, you cannot even imagine a world without the current leadership.

And that question is almost always linked to the threat of violence, or impending violence, isn't it? It is almost as if Sri Lankans know that violence is around the corner and will come from somewhere (internal or external), sometime, anytime. But note, the question implies that the root causes are not really the concern here; rather the concern is about how that violence can be contained, managed. In other words, what's of concern appears to be how and who ensures that the situation is 'under control'. And the situation will be 'under control', the people seem to automatically answer, if the Rajapaksas are in control. Politically and policy-wise, the Sinhala Southern political establishment is no opposition to the government; such opposition comes only from the Tamil political leadership

A Challenge within Sinhala-Buddhist Nationalism

'Aluthgama' further challenges our understanding of the dynamics of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. There is a certain nebulous, post-modern, flavour to the brand of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism we are

witnessing today.

Take the BBS, for example. Its complexity arises in its ability to show that it is endorsed by the Sangha community but also critiqued by some of its members. The BBS we assume has clear support of the political leadership, but it has also bamboozled certain members of the public and political analysts by its critique of the Rajapaksas. Its rhetoric is deplored by many, its project gladly embraced by the very same people. It's a tremendous problem for co-existence, but is also considered by many within the majority community to be a necessary element in post-war Sri Lankan politics. Opposition (Sinhala) political parties would like to hate it, but their critique is often quite vague.

More interestingly, the BBS is helpful for certain Sinhala-Buddhist national parties to raise issues that might not have been raised before, but it is also constantly raising the nationalist bar making the high jump contest a challenging one. So the BBS not only challenges our understanding of the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist project, it is a challenge within the Sinhala-Buddhist domain, challenging others within that camp to show how much more Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist they are. It is a knot within a knot, a challenge within a challenge; and where parties and entities feel that they cannot meet this challenge (especially on religious issues), they would now attempt to overcome it by

being ultra-nationalistic on other issues, such as accountability and political power-sharing. Furthermore, given the complex internal politics of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, the strong defence of the BBS-version of 'Aluthgama' by Ministers Weerawansa and Ranawaka tell that the very arrest and banning of the BBS would be politically challenging for entities such as the NFF and the JHU.

Tamil: The Inconvenient 'Other'

Finally, the responses to Aluthgama and the solidarity that came to be shown by many via social media outlets reminded, I felt, the convenience with which this solidarity could be extended to the Muslim people, and not the Tamil people. It also showed how very differently we tend to address Tamil concerns about violence, atrocities, accountability.

The Tamil has for the most part been an inconvenient 'other' for the Sinhalese, whereas with regard to the Muslim people this has not been that explicit. Today, that the latter too is an inconvenient entity is a message that the BBS and many other entities have sought to suggest; of course, their ideological forefathers had done so many decades ago. But moments like this remind us that the underlying biases and prejudices, the structural and systematic violence that extends to the Tamils, their political aspirations, their lands, etc., ought to be seriously

acknowledged, discussed and critiqued by those Sinhalese who are more comfortable standing with the Muslims. For the accusation that *The Island* editorial (of 21 June 2014) makes – that "[t]oday, in the southern parts of the country in peacetime they are doing what the LTTE did to the Muslims in the North and the East" – is not just an accusation of spreading terror or conducting ethnic cleansing of the Muslims, but also one of a deeply rooted policy that couldn't have just emerged after the war in respect to the Muslims alone.

In short, the progressive Sinhalese forces need to stand with the Tamils as well as with the Muslims, just as they stand with their own Sinhala people, while recognizing the differences in how the State and its many structural prejudices get directed at these different communities and peoples.

Conclusion

In a country where the arrest of Gnanasara Thera, which ought to have been the most direct and simple thing to do in the presence of such glaring evidence of the said monk inciting violence and hatred, the absence of any such arrest (at least, to date) tells us what we need to know about this phenomenon.

It is not simply that some powerful official is behind the BBS. Rather, the very arrest of Gnanasara Thera is problematic for the government for reasons ranging from the understanding that

Gnanasara Thera did nothing wrong to the Sinhala-Buddhist cause (and that it is the BBS that is playing the reactionary/defensive role in the face of an ever expanding and ever threatening Muslim population), to the fear that there will be a strong reaction from the broader Sinhala-Buddhist electorate if any serious arrests were to take place. That tells much about the BBS, the State and the government.

For the legal issues that arise due to certain actions of Sinhala and Muslim religious and/or business entities, high-level dialogue and necessary legal action should be taken. But 'Aluthgama' is ideally the moment which calls for a commitment to a serious and radical restructuring of the State, by questioning the role and prominence afforded to the majority religion (and of course, the broader issue of 'religion' itself), about the unitary character of the state and its many serious limitations, about the role and place of different ethnic and religious communities within the country, about the space that exists for the development and realization of their political, economic and cultural freedoms and autonomy. But this moment might not be grasped, for the so-called concerned and moderate political, religious and policy-making intelligentsia in the country provides no serious challenge to the present structure and ideology of the State.

Why so? Because the dominant ideology of the State

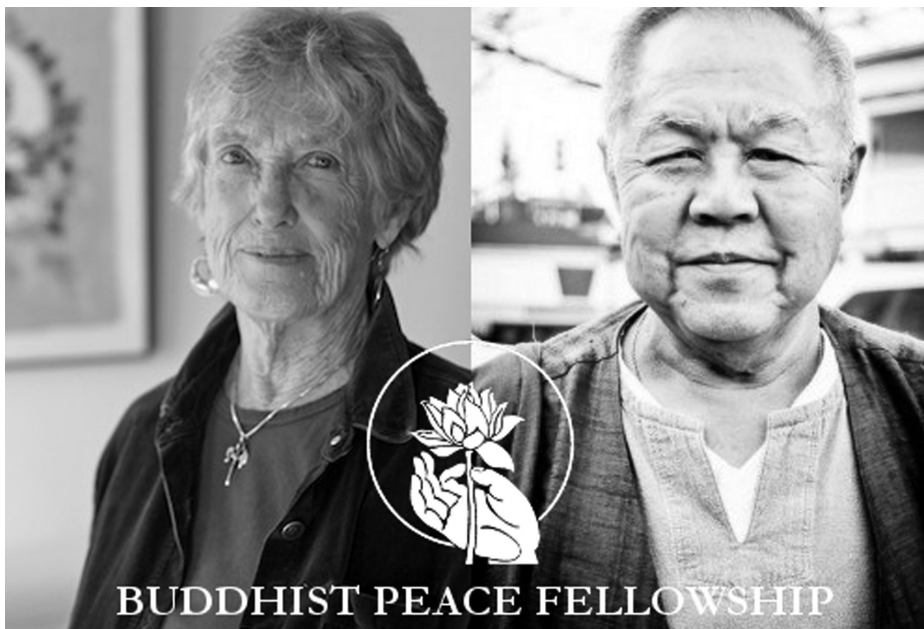
with the active help of groups such as the BBS has been successful in doing two things: first, in inculcating in the minds of the 'moderate' community that such radical change is actually impossible; second, through years of doing so, the State has created a community which has been made to realize that the little reform that they promote – which being terribly ineffective – is actually quite revolutionary.

So what happens as a result? What happens then is that after an 'Aluthgama', you begin to demand the same political leadership to hold the alleged perpetrators accountable. What happens is that when you realize after sometime that that was never going to work, you find that you are now pushed to engage in that fleeting but soothing palliative, that long forgotten conference on inter-religious harmony. What happens then is that you attend it, hear what wonderful things the Buddha, Christ or Prophet Muhammad had to say, come home happy (given that it was the moderate and politically-correct enterprise) but exhausted, and go to sleep. The next day you wake up to another 'Aluthgama'. And then? And then you find that before you could even think about it, the government had not only organized such a conference but has even been thoughtful enough to invite you to attend it.

USA :

ENGAGED DIALOGUE: Buddhist Peace Fellowship National Gathering

The Buddhist Channel, 3 Sept 2014



Eco-philosopher Joanna Macy and INEB founder Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa were the keynote speakers at the national gathering of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF).

OAKLAND, CA (USA) -- August 29, 400 people came together at First Congregational Church, by the shores of Lake Merritt, to commune with the wisdom and compassion of two senior luminaries of engaged Buddhism, Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa and Joanna Macy.

The multi-generational audience was a mix of the kind of people who'd stop on a freeway and help you get your car running: extraordinary, ordinary people, from across the US. The event inaugurated a weekend-long national

gathering of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF). Celebrating its 25th year, the fellowship's mission is to serve as a catalyst for socially engaged Buddhism. Its purpose is to help beings liberate themselves from the suffering that manifests in individuals, relationships, institutions, and social systems.

Eco-philosopher Joanna Macy, PhD, is a scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. A respected voice in the movements for peace, justice, and ecology,

she interweaves her scholarship with five decades of activism. She has created a groundbreaking theoretical framework for personal and social change, as well as a powerful workshop methodology for its application.

Thai activist, and co-founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa is a scholar, teacher, and renowned advocate for peace.

These two keynote speakers were introduced by Soto Zen priest and folksinger, Hozan Alan Senauke, Executive

Director of BPF from 1991 to 2001. Joanna Macy began by calling engaged spirituality "the work that reconnects." Acknowledging this as taking place in cultures that have nurtured the Dharma, she extended the frame beyond Buddhism – because being truly human means to be in resonance with all life.

Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa agreed, noting the Buddha was not a "Buddhist," nor was Jesus a "Christian." This path of ethics, wisdom, and social action cuts across social and

Country Reports

ethnic lines. That said, he emphasized a point fundamental to engaged Buddhist theory and practice: the Buddhist critique of the suffering self is applicable on more complex orders of organization, higher levels of scale. Social systems too manifest the inherent tendencies of the mind about which the Buddha preached, namely, fear, greed, and delusion (three poisons, at the root of needless suffering [dukkha]).

Joanna Macy added her observation that the drums of war are beating. More people are suffering. Despair exists in alarming proportions. Against that, she sets the need to live in peace, recognizing our true nature as brother and sister. Buddhism is a living practice of non-separation. The Buddha's teachings on *pratityasamutpada* dependent co-arising; dependent origination; interbeing show us our reciprocal relationship to each other, and to the natural world. When sidetracked and blinded by the three pollutants, we bring suffering on ourselves.

She recounted a turning point in her personal understanding of this. When she and her husband were living in India, serving in the Peace Corps, in the 1960s, they worked with refugees from Tibet. Only after some time did she ask how was it they were able to keep their humanity intact. The answer, *anatman* (nonself), had never sounded attractive, as if it were some kind of void. But now it became clear. She saw the refugees in herself, and herself

in the refugees. And this liberated her to immediate action – just as she was, without having to fabricate any “better” self to do so.

She then made a sharp rejoinder to a common pitfall. Taking a specific example – racism, for instance – some people will turn away saying, “That’s divisive.” She noted a pattern underlying this reaction, especially common in the West: a suspicion of attachment, a need to be detached so as not to be upset. With enthusiasm, she punctured this balloon by declaring, “I am very attached to life on earth!”

Many in the audience laughed when she warned against “premature equanimity.” Ego is what’s not to be attached to. The world is here to join with and work with us in our journey to find True Nature. Hers isn’t a sentimental feeling, either. Rather, it’s a result of Vipassana teaching us to notice our own emotions that come up when we study the world’s problems. Fear and rage are natural responses.

Ajahn then offered an illuminating reference to the Four Brahmaviharas. Upekkha (equanimity, inclusivity) is not possible without Metta (lovingkindness, true love). Metta teaches us how to love the self properly, and, in so doing, expanding our notion of self. With his signature sharp wit, he smiled and affirmed, “To love humanity is easy, to love self is difficult.”

Metta engenders Karuna (compassion). Karuna arises when you realize people

are suffering because of you. Then, when we share their suffering, with compassion, this gives rise to Mudita (sympathetic joy). Mudita teaches us not to hate the oppressor. Then Upekkha can arise, as a subtle, mature form of practice. From this grounding, we can oppose and overcome racism, sexism, and injustice. Thus can we confront such suffering (dukkha) mindfully, and trace its origins in the three poisons.

Ajahn also counselled

the gathering to “learn to be normal” – by applying sila (ethics). Otherwise we might succumb to the tendency to exploit self in the name of power, success, money. Letting go enables prajna (wisdom) to arise.

<http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=6,11989,0,0,1,0#>
 VAw3NmSSxoW

The Autonomous Spirit

An exhibition to celebrate the 80th Birthday
of National Thai Artist, Inson Wongsam

at the Bangkok Arts and Culture Centre
September 11th – November 27th 2014..

อินสนธิ วงศ์สาม : จิตวิญญาณอิสระ
จัดโดย ฝ่ายนิทรรศการ

หอศิลปวัฒนธรรมแห่งกรุงเทพมหานคร
12 กันยายน - 27 พฤศจิกายน 2557 ชั้น 9
เปิดนิทรรศการ 11 กันยายน 2557 เวลา 18:30 น.

INSON WONGSAM
The Autonomous Spirit

อินสนธิ
วงศ์สาม
ทำวิทยาน อิสระ



Social Harmony: International Buddhist Forum for a Pluralistic Society

Background and Rationale

Myanmar has become the site of widely documented anti-Muslim sentiment, which exploded violently in late 2012, and has continued sporadically since that time. This began with violence between Muslim Rohingya and Buddhist Rakhine, couched in rhetoric on citizenship, but clearly expressed its true nature in later violent clashes with wider Muslim groups across the country. This violence has coincided with the rise of a nationalist and strong anti-Muslim rhetoric spearheaded by monks, which has spread rapidly across Myanmar's predominantly Buddhist population, and now dominates any discussion on Buddhist-Muslim relations.

Initiatives by Buddhist moderates to calm the situation and promote space for dialogue and reduction in hate speech have been met with sharp and often accusatory responses. (The case of claims that the NLD is being sponsored by Muslim groups after statements condemning the violence; photo-shopped pictures of Daw ASSK wearing hijab, illustrate this point).

Interfaith responses by local and international groups have also been met with the same response, with many criticisms levelled against them, mostly with accusations of behind the scenes agitation and sponsorship from international Muslim organisations.

The rigidity of Myanmar Theravada tradition has also contributed to this tension. Isolated for decades from interaction with both neighbouring Theravadan and wider Buddhist traditions across Asia, Myanmar's tradition was also adopted and manipulated to validate the firm and myopic nationalism that upheld the State's grip on political and economic power for decades.

The situation has led to a relative stalemate, where threats to moderates and interfaith groups are hampering their ability to counter-balance extremist rhetoric, which is becoming increasingly mainstream. It remains clear there is an urgent need for inter-faith dialogue to stem the violence and build trust. Working from within the Buddhist community will be a key step towards achieving that, and an area where international Buddhists can contribute through an intra-faith dialogue.

INEB has consulted intensively with its network of partners in Myanmar – especially those working on peace issues (both ceasefire processes within the ethnic minority States, and Buddhist-Muslim violence). There has been common agreement that in order to move beyond the stalemate situation and likelihood for latent tensions to continue erupting into violence, critical dialogue must happen within the Buddhist community. There is agreement that INEB has a key role to play from within the

Buddhist community, to engage Myanmar Theravadin perspectives in a dialogue with global Buddhist perspectives (including from SE Asian Theravadin traditions), in order to explore and address the roots of the ongoing violence.

INEB has previously engaged on this issue during its Biennial Conference in Malaysia in 2013, specifically focusing on Buddhist-Muslim Dialogue. A closed door session with extremist and moderate monks and multi-faith lay people from Myanmar resulted in agreement for INEB to facilitate a fact-finding committee on relations between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar. INEB has also begun to be involved in inter-faith dialogue at the ASEAN level, by drawing prominent extremists as well as moderate Sangha members into regional level dialogues. As a Buddhist network, INEB holds a position of relative trust, which is vital for any attempts to be involved in any serious dialogue with Myanmar Buddhists.

As a network of Buddhist social activists from Asia and beyond, seeking to bring the diversity of Buddhisms together for contribution to a healthy, just and peaceful world, INEB is proposing to engage with the Buddhist community in Myanmar through critical intra-faith dialogue in order to address the prejudiced rhetoric and resulting violence against Muslims, and encourage harmony

across the diverse and pluralistic communities that are Myanmar.

Aim

To provide the space for critical dialogue on the fundamental non-violent teachings within diverse schools of Buddhism in order to address the causes of Buddhist-Muslim conflict and promote social harmony in Myanmar

Activities and Target Group

INEB is proposing three activity areas:

- Community-based Exchange (3 groups: Northern Shan, Southern Shan and Mandalay)

This activity will provide INEB's international Buddhist social activists with opportunities to learn and share experience with grassroots communities and organisations in northern Myanmar, including conflict areas. This will also be an opportunity to explore the diverse challenges facing Myanmar beyond religious violence. On conclusion of the visits, a reflection among the 3 groups will provide space for exploring

how the international Buddhist community can support these organisations and communities to deal with the issues they are facing.

Target group will be approximately 30 members from the INEB network

- Roundtable with Interfaith Leaders (Mandalay)

This session will be an important space for INEB's members to explore the challenges facing interfaith initiatives, and what role INEB can play at the international level in supporting these initiatives.

Target group will be:

- 30 members from the INEB network
- 15 representatives from active interfaith groups
- Public Forum (Mandalay)

Targeting Sangha, youth, NGO's and wider interested public, the forum will be a space for intra-faith dialogue, where INEB will contribute the diverse experiences and practices from its social and peace activist members from around the world. It will also provide the space to engage in

critical dialogue on Buddhist perspectives – to explore the current situation and ways to make it better, and to draw into the conversation the voice of the international Buddhist community. Media will also be a key target group for this activity, to ensure that discussions can move beyond the space of the forum. As part of the days' activities, cultural events will also be integrated into the programme in order to balance the intensity of the issues discussed.

Target group will be approximately 200 members from Sangha, youth groups, NGO's and interested public.

- Mandalay Division, Historical Buddhism in Myanmar and Monastic Schools, monks roles in education and development
- Southern Shan State, Buddhist Youth and Community Based Organizations on environment and education issues
- Northern Shan State, Monastic and Nunnery Schools for Social Engagement and Community Empowerment

| Date | Details | Venue |
|---------------------|--|--------------|
| 24 November 2014 | Arrive to Mandalay and travel to Pyin Oo Lwin | Pyin Oo Lwin |
| 25-27 November 2014 | Community-based Exchange (3 groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Shan State • Southern Shan State • Mandalay Division | |
| 28 November 2014 | Reflection and Preparation for Round table Exchange and Public Forum | Pyin Oo Lwin |
| 29 November 2014 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable with Interfaith Leaders • Public Forum "Social Harmony in Buddhist Perspective" • Myanmar and Siam Traditional Music Exchange | Mandalay |
| 30 November 2014 | Depart from Mandalay | Mandalay |



Expected Results:

- Deepening of understanding on Buddhist perspectives on peace and violence through experiences shared from the region
- Trust built to continue engagement in the process of dialogue between Buddhists and across faiths
- Exploration of ways to support

and engage with grassroots communities in conflict and post-conflict areas

Partner Organizations

- Interfaith Consortium, Yangon, Myanmar
- Metta Development Foundation, Yangon, Myanmar

- Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation, Yangon, Myanmar
- Socially Engaged Monastic Schools (SEMS), Yangon, Myanmar
- Spirit in Education Movement (SEM), Myanmar and Thailand
- International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), Bangkok, Thailand

LIGHT OF BUDDHADHARMA FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

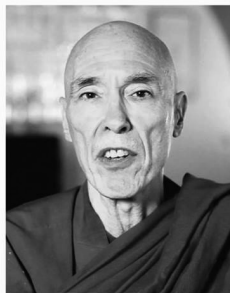
in association with
Mangalam Centers, Dharma College and the Nyingma Institute

FIRST INTERNATIONAL TIPITAKA CHANTING CEREMONY IN AMERICA

Dedicated to World Peace and Inner Harmony
Silent Peace Walk, Three Days of Chanting, Cultural Programs

DHARMA TALKS IN ENGLISH

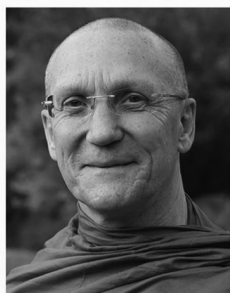
by Venerable Bikkhu Bodhi & Venerable Ajahn Pasanno Maha Thero



October 9th: Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi
Dharma College, 6-8 pm - 2222 Harold Way, Berkeley

PATH TO LIBERATION IN EARLY BUDDHISM

Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi is an American Buddhist monk originally from New York City. After living as a monk in Sri Lanka for 24 years, he now resides at Chuang Yen Monastery in Carmel, New York. Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi is a prolific writer of Buddhist essays and books. He has translated and commented extensively on the Pali suttas, including complete translations of the Majjhima Nikaya (with Bhikkhu Nyanamoli), the Samyutta Nikaya, and the Anguttara Nikaya. In 2008, he founded Buddhist Global Relief (BGR), a non-profit organization that provides relief from poverty and hunger among impoverished communities worldwide.



October 10th: Venerable Ajahn Pasanno
Dharma College, 6-8 pm - 2222 Harold Way, Berkeley

AWAKENING MIND AND MERIT: FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS, EIGHTFOLD PATH

Venerable Ajahn Pasanno Maha Thero took ordination in Thailand in 1974. During his first year as a monk he was taken by his teacher to meet Ajahn Chah, with whom he asked to be allowed to stay and train. One of the early residents of Wat Pah Nanachat, Ajahn Pasanno became its abbot in his ninth year. During his incumbency, Wat Pah Nanachat developed considerably, both in physical size and reputation. Spending 24 years living in Thailand, Ajahn Pasanno became a well-known and highly respected monk and Dhamma teacher. He moved to California on New Year's Eve of 1997 to share the abbotship of Abhayagiri with Ajahn Amaro. In 2010, Ajahn Amaro accepted an invitation to serve as abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Monastery in England. Ajahn Pasanno is now the sole abbot of Abhayagiri.



DHARMA TALKS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO PUBLIC
Donations are greatly appreciated
For a complete schedule call (510) 809-1025
or visit www.lbdfi.org



International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations (BMF)

www.buddhistmuslimforum.org



*Consultative meeting on
“Contemporary Issues in
Buddhist- Muslim Relations
in South and South
East Asia”, June 16, 2013*

Background & Introduction

On 16th June 2013, the International Network of Engagement Buddhists (INEB), the International Movement for a Just World (JUST) and Religions for Peace (RfP) organized a consultative meeting on “Contemporary Issues in Buddhist - Muslim Relations in South and South East Asia” at Rishso Kosei-Kai, Bangkok Dharma Centre, Bangkok, Thailand in partnership with American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Rishso Kosei-kai, Bangkok Dharma.

25 participants comprising Buddhist and Muslim religious leaders from South and South East Asia countries recognized the following challenges facing the two communities in the region as:

- Rise of extremism, hate speech, hate campaigns and instigation leading to religious discrimination and violence;
- Prejudice, fear and hatred caused by ignorance, misperceptions, stereotypes, negative impact of traditional

and social media, simplification and generalization of ethnic issues and communal pressures;

- Misuse of religion by certain religious, political and other interest groups and individuals;
- Socio economic dimensions of the conflict; and
- Spillover effects across the region. The participants also endorsed the Dusit Declaration of 28th June 2006 and committed themselves to implementing its shared action plan across the region.

The participants also pledged to engage in multi - stakeholder partnership with governments, inter-governmental bodies such as the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the United Nations.

Objectives of BMF

- To serve as a platform for intrareligious and inter religious initiatives in education & advocacy;
- To enable rapid reaction / solidarity visits / early warning / conflict prevention in the event of conflict;
- To develop and provide tools and materials for constructive engagement and strategic common actions, and;
- To develop the effective use of media for positive messaging, particularly via the social and alternative media

Contact information

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON BUDDHIST-
MUSLIM RELATIONS (BMF)

c/o International Movement for a Just
World JKR, 1258, Jalan Telok Off Jalan
Gasing, P.O. Box 288. Petaling Jaya, Selangor.
MALAYSIA

Vidyananda (KV Soon)
email: vidyananda@samma-ajiva.net

Japanese-Korean Buddhist Exchange Program on Nuclear & Clean Energy

Jonathan S. Watts



From July 3 to July 5, 2014, representatives of the Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB) visited South Korea to conduct a 3 day study and networking tour on the common crisis facing both countries on climate change, nuclear energy, and the challenge of clean, renewable energy. This tour was the first step in JNEB's International Project on Energy focused on learning from the Fukushima disaster and building "green temple communities". This project aims to expose foreign Buddhists, other religious professionals, activists, and media to the realities of nuclear energy in Japan and renewable energy initiatives by Japanese Buddhist groups and other religious organizations. Through sharing the perspectives, we wish to create an international network for sharing best practices on building "green temples" and "green temple communities". The project is part of INEB's larger Inter-Religious Climate and Ecology Network started in 2012. We felt that before initiating the

network in South and Southeast, Asia we needed to connect with Buddhist and civil society activists in East Asia, where nuclear energy has already been developed for some decades. South Korea, with a nuclear program dating back to the 1960s and presently operating 23 reactors located at 4 facilities with 5 more reactors under construction, was a natural starting point for building international solidarity. Through the support of Korean members of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), especially Ms. Junghee Min of Lotus World, we were able to have a very meaningful three day exchange.

Public Symposium with the Jogye Buddhist Denomination

Our tour began with a public symposium entitled "Japanese-Korean Buddhist International Seminar for No Nukes and Energy Paradigm Shift" sponsored by the Environmental Committee of the Jogye Buddhist Order, Korea's largest Buddhist denomination, at their International

Conference Hall in Seoul. Besides the support of Ven. Jang Myung, Chairperson of Environment Committee of Jogye Order, the symposium and much of the three day tour was supported by Prof. Ik Jung Kim. Prof. Kim is from the Department of Microbiology at Dongguk University as well as serving on the Nuclear Safety and Security Commission of South Korea.

Prof. Kim opened the symposium with a presentation on the situation of energy use in South Korea, emphasizing how nuclear energy and the development of nuclear power facilities in Europe and the United States have been in decline over the past decade, while the South Korean government continues to emphasize the safety and the low cost efficiency of nuclear energy. South Korea creates about 70% of its energy from fossil fuel power plants, 30% from nuclear reactors, and only 0.4% from renewable energy, which compares unfavorably to the global average of 20%. At the same time that South Korea has been ignoring renewable energy development, its electrical consumption has skyrocketed since 1995, from roughly 4,000 kWh per capita to 10,000 kWh per capita in 2010, far outpacing Japan (7,848) and other Western European nations.

Prof. Kim was followed by Ms. Wonhyung Chae, Director of the Institute for Buddhist Ecology, who introduced some of the activities of Korean Buddhists in this field, such as the Jogye Order itself, which in 2009 created a renewable energy study team and has promoted the reduction of energy and the use of renewable sources in its member temples. She also introduced the activities of other individual temples, such as Chonkuk temple which in 2005 installed solar and geo-thermal systems at their temple in Pohang City on the eastern coast; Munbin temple which installed 40kWhs of solar panels on the roof of their cafeteria in 2011; and Nae Won forest temple in Yangsan City in the southeast which is using 33,000 tons of biomass per year generated from forests in its area.

The final presentation was made by JNEB member, Rev. Hidehito Okochi. Besides his anti-nuclear work, he has rebuilt two temples of which he is abbot to generate their own electricity using solar panels and encourage low consumption and chemical free housing. Details of his presentation "Nuclear Power in Japan and Buddhist Activism for the Children and People of Fukushima" can be found at the JNEB website (www.jneb.jp) and in the

recent book *Lotus in the Nuclear Sea: Fukushima and the Promise of Buddhism in the Nuclear Age*.

Contrasting Visions of Energy Generation and Consumption

After a luncheon with the organizers and speakers, the JNEB team along with Ms. Junghee Min and Prof. Chae visited the Seoul Metropolitan Government's "One Less Nuclear Power Plant" center. Understanding the South Korean government's strong promoting on nuclear energy both within the country and overseas, we found it extraordinary that the government of Korea's capital city has an active and concrete campaign for the reduction of energy and the abolition of nuclear power. The reasons for this campaign begun in 2012 are: 1) fears for the energy security of the city amidst escalating electrical use; 2) the influence of the Fukushima disaster; and 3) concerns about the overall effect of global warming. The goal of the campaign is to cut energy use in Seoul by 2 million tonnes of oil equivalent (TOE) by the year 2014, which is equivalent to cutting out the need of the entire #2 reactor at the Wolsong nuclear power facility as well as 9.43 million barrels of oil and LNG. This plan also envisions the creation of 34,000 new green jobs through a 10 point action plan.

This exposure was totally contrasted the next day in our visit to the Wolsong Nuclear Power Plant on the southern coast near Kyungju City. The entire complex consists of 4 heavy water reactors built in cooperation with the Canadian government and two new light water reactors built by Samsung, plus one major used fuel disposal site. The tour began at the visitor's center and an informational video explaining, among other things, that South Korea's superior technology and virtual lack of earthquakes are reasons why a Fukushima-like incident will not happen here. The main section of the visitor's center is marked by an entrance that reads "ENERTOPIA". As in similar centers at Japan's nuclear complexes, this "enertopia" presents nuclear power in South Korea as one of the technological wonders of the world with children's cartoon characters attesting to its safety and efficiency. This message was made strong and clear as we moved onward to the main complex and the new #2 light water reactor building, where the entrances, doors, and walls were covered with messages emphasizing safety, technological development, and the promise of a future based on nuclear energy.



*An atomic superhero
tells of this*

*“wonderful energy and
beautiful future”*

While the complex is indeed a testament to the wonders of human engineering, the exaggerated style of information presentation became almost comic and led us to serious doubts. These doubts were increased when we learned that compared to Japan the Korean nuclear industry runs its reactors for long periods of time between shut down and inspection and that these offline periods are also significantly shorter than Japan's. The highlight of this cognitive dissonance around safety was the large fish farm built within the Wolsong complex. This fish farm raises a variety of species of fish from the coastal waters warmed by the high volume of heated water discharged by the reactors to cool their nuclear cores and donates to the local communities for consumption. This kind of situation brings into doubt the argument that nuclear power helps to combat global warming when reactors are themselves contributing to the change in oceanic ecosystems, as recognized by the World Nuclear Association.

One of the final impressions of our visit to Wolsong came from the special training center built for scientists and workers from the United Arab Emirates. On May 20, 2014 the South Korean government concluded an agreement to build 4 reactors with a 60-year life span in the UAE to be completed by 2017 by Hyundai and Samsung. The construction costs for this project will be US\$6 billion, reinforcing what we knew about nuclear energy in Japan: that it is a big business profitable to a number of vested political and economic interests at the top of the national power hierarchy. While the Shinzo

Abe administration in Japan is actively seeking to export Japanese nuclear technology despite constraints that have come up since the Fukushima incident, the South Korean government has shown a keen interest and ability to jump ahead of Japan in offering support for nuclear energy development in Finland, Indonesia, Vietnam, and China. In conclusion, Rev. Okochi feels that ultimately nuclear energy will be replaced and die out in Japan. What he is more concerned about is the export of nuclear technology to other countries, and more recently, the export of various military armaments. Japan's next focus seems to be on making money in this way, as the United States before them did. Prof. Kim responded that if Japan does not abandon nuclear energy, then it is very hard to get South Korea to initiate the change since they tend to follow Japan.

Final Conclusions from a Roundtable Reflection with Korean Civic Group Leaders

On the final day of our trip, we spent the entire morning in dialogue with Prof. Kim, Prof. Chae and some Korean civic group leaders working on the nuclear issue, who included: Jung Gil Ryu formerly from the Eco-Buddha circle of the Jungto Buddhist Group and now the Director of Wisdom Cooperatives; Prof. Pyong In Yi of the Department of BioEnvironmental Energy at Pusan National University; Mr. Sung Hyon Min who runs an anti-nuclear education center; Prof. Sung Soon Kim from Geumgang University; and Prof. Dogin Bae, a retired professor of sociology.

In reflecting on our time together, one of the critical common points of view was seeing how very powerful structures and cultures have been built around unbridled economic development, in which high levels of consumption fuel the need for high levels of electricity generation and the promotion of nuclear power. The structure is epitomized in what the Japanese called the Atomic Village - a constellation of vested interests of government bureaucrats, politicians, construction firms, major banks, and sympathetic academics and media. This culture is epitomized in the way the Japanese have combined together their education and technology ministries to develop public school textbooks and public relations in line with economic development and nation building. These are what Rev. Okochi and Buddhist writer David Loy have called the institutionalization of the 3 Poisons of greed in unbridled consumption and growth, delusion in the promotion of nuclear energy as safe and necessary, and anger in the building of competitive nation states on these two foundations with the potential to use nuclear technology for nuclear armaments.

A Buddhist response to such giant structures of Self (atman/atta) requires a comprehensive level of engagement. On a cultural level, Buddhists, hand in hand with other communities of faith, must expose the mis-education of our people who are taught that endless amounts of consumption and growth lead to individual happiness and national well being. However, this cannot take the form of simplistic, religious moral platitudes like it is sinful or deluded to be money and power hungry. A Buddhist vision, in particular, works towards developing a 3rd Noble Truth in the vision of a healthy and wholesome society and a 4th Noble Truth in the concrete pathways to such societies. In Japan, in terms of the 3rd Noble Truth, Prof. Jun Nishikawa, a leading development economist, has used Buddhist principals to develop a post-Fukushima development model, going far beyond the rather simplistic response of mainstream Buddhist institutions in their promotion of the Buddhist value of santuti (少欲知足), "know what is enough". In terms of



*Umyeon Dong:
A solar powered Catholic Church in Seoul*

the 4th Noble Truth, a few Buddhist temples in both Korea and Japan have begun to develop specific measures for not only consuming less but becoming self sufficient in their energy consumption. This is a localized measure that can have powerful effects on the larger system if more and more communities can develop decentralized forms of production and consumption promoting interconnected "nested economies" not dependent on the subsidized schemes of national and global vested interests.

JNEB and its Korean partners are looking to develop greater cooperation and exchange on these levels. While slow, incremental work is going on today to shift Japanese Buddhist denominations in this direction, we also hope to influence the Korean Buddhist community through further exchange with Jogye Order through the support of its Environmental Committee. On these foundations, we look forward to further outreach within East Asia and then throughout the entire INEB Network.

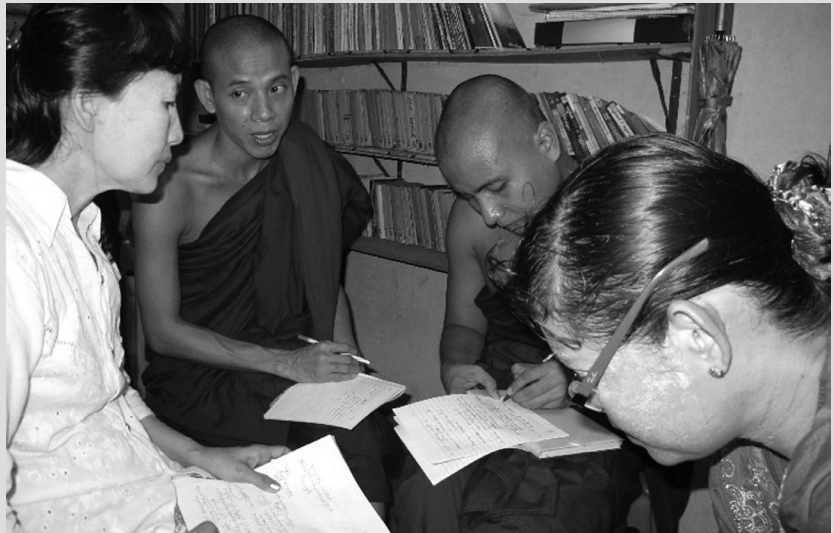
For the complete version of this report and much more on the issue, visit the JNEB homepage at: <http://jneb.jp/english/activities/buddhismnukes>

Most people in Myanmar want peace.... so who is really driving the conflict?

Jill Jameson, 13 August 2014

In recently facilitating peace-building training for several civil society organisations (CSO) for people from different parts of Myanmar, it was clear to me that most people want peace. Participants further said it was important to share this information with the international community, as well as communicating some of the behind - the - scene factors that are contributing to the recent violence. The root causes of the violence are extremely complex and historically based, so I will only offer a glimpse through the lens of these recent workshops.

Many civil society organisations, religious leaders and individuals are working to reduce 'hate speech', trying to see who is actually behind the violence, questioning the source of rumours, and working with inter-faith groups. A tool we use in the peace-building training - conflict mapping - is a way of depicting a conflict as perceived by the person mapping, using symbols to show who is involved and the relationships between each other. In this simple way, one can see where there is conflict or co-operation and we are provided with a means of exploring possible root causes. One participant highlighted the violence across Myanmar in connection with the China/ Myanmar Government oil and gas pipeline project where the pipelines cross Myanmar from Rakhine State to Lashio and on to China. Violence has occurred since 2012 in four places along the pipelines - in



Rakhine State, Meikhtilar and Lashio, and most recently in Mandalay. What is visible, and often reported in the media, are the outbreaks of violence which often focus on 'Buddhist-Muslim' conflict. What is not so often reported are the land confiscations or land acquisitions with little to no compensation associated with this project. Many people fear and have come to believe that Muslims will take their land, or that Muslims are funding any opposing perspectives to the government. It was also acknowledged in our workshops and by some civil society organisations that the government is trying to derail civil society and local communities along the pipeline through 'allowing' or possibly instigating communal violence. We heard how a powerful group which was formed by USPD (the majority political party) would seem to be doing the government's

bidding, although it is still not confirmed as to who is supporting these extremist groups, who come from outside on motor-bikes instigating violence.

A conflict map of the recent violence in Mandalay (above), was shared by a participant from the recent peace and photojournalism training. This map highlights 'Buddhist- Muslim' conflict following the familiar pattern of an extremist group of 'strangers' riding on motor-bikes into a town or city, spreading pamphlets and rumours, which are then further amplified by news on Facebook and through the media. The participant said it was assumed by most people that USDP is using 'Swan Arr Shin' (means person who has strength, like a superman) - as initiators of conflicts and to escalate these through rumours. Their strategy seems to be to kill only local people and those active in community



Buddhist Peace Fellowship National Gathering Introduction for Joanna Macy & Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa

Alan Senauke, 28 August 2014

My personal relationships with Joana Macy and Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa go back almost 25 years, when I began to work at Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Both were among BPF's founding figures and served on our Advisory Board. With all due respect I would say that Ajahn Sulak and Joanna, along with Robert Aitken Roshi were really the elders I turned to for regular advice. I continue to do so.

Joanna Macy is no doubt known to many from her books—among them: *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age* 1983; *Dharma and Development*; *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory* 1991; *World as Lover, World as Self* 2007; *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy*; and more...We also know Joanna for her brilliant and tireless teaching, most recently characterized as “The Work That Reconnects.” I think of her as an evangelist for a spirituality of true interconnection.

Joanna and I were recently talking about several aspects of her teaching relevant to BPF's continuing work. First, that her vision was forged in the dharma, in a deep immersion in several traditions of Buddhist practice. Second, that her immersion in the dharma took place in India, Sri

Lanka, Thailand, and elsewhere in Asia. Joanna recognizes where the dharma comes from and what we owe to our teachers and to the cultures that nurtured Buddhism. She is an internationalist, as was her late husband Fran Macy. And third that Joanna Macy's vision is not confined to an explicit kind of Buddhism. Buddhism is a tool she relies on, but Joanna's deepest principles are based in being truly human, which also means to be in resonance with all life on our planet.

Like Joanna, Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa—Ajahn is a Thai honorific meaning “teacher”—is one of my guiding teachers, leading me beyond my own practice in the Zen tradition into a vast forest of engaged Buddhism. Ajahn Sulak is, for me, among the most important and influential lay teachers of our time. His writing and advocacy stand on the shoulders of monastic and intellectual giants of East and West, and yet he is uncompromisingly and at times uncomfortably his own person.

I encountered Ajahn Sulak's writing around 1989 or 1990 when Parallax Press was publishing his landmark collection of essays, *Seeds of Peace*. This book affirmed my then-forming notions of engaged Buddhism, a Buddhism that recognizes

the value of all life; that understands that our social systems are themselves expressions of the three poisons—greed, hate, and delusion.

Two years later, in exile from Thailand after a military coup, Ajahn Sulak came to stay with my family in Berkeley for a time. And it was at my own doorstep that we said goodbye—him to stay at our home and me to join Ajahn's Sulak's circle at a conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, a network of dharma activists who have been my closest friends for more than twenty years.

Like Joanna Macy, Ajahn Sulak's teaching is rooted in what for many years he has called “Buddhism with a small b”—not a religion of rituals, institutions, and beliefs, but a path of ethics, wisdom, and social action across cultural, ethnic, and national lines. Though I love my teachers and tradition, it is clear to me that this is the practice that we need. And we recognize that the Buddha himself was not a Buddhist.

So I bow to Joanna Macy and Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa. I am honored to have them in my life as teachers and as friends. And I bow to all of you here tonight as sisters and brothers on the path.

Spiritual Ecology: Is it a Possible Solution to the Environmental Crisis?

Leslie E. Sponsel



As a generic category, spiritual ecology may be defined as a vast, complex, diverse, and dynamic arena of intellectual and practical activities at the interfaces of religions and spiritualities with ecologies, environments, and environmentalisms.

Spiritual ecology is premised on the observation that many societies are increasingly dysfunctional and maladaptive with their myopic obsession with consumerism driven by industrial capitalism. The latter is predicated on the false assumption

that unlimited growth is possible on a limited base. That base includes not only natural resources, but also the capacity of the environment to process waste and pollution.

Secular approaches to dealing with environmental problems and issues from the local to the global levels are absolutely necessary and have achieved significant success. However, clearly they have not been sufficient because very serious and urgent environmental problems and issues persist. Moreover, some environmental problems are getting

worse and new ones are being discovered. Increasingly it is becoming clear that treating the superficial symptoms of the continuing environmental crisis is just not enough. The additional factor of religious and spiritual approaches may help finally turn things around for the better, if not completely resolve the continuing dire environmental situation. Ultimately the environmental crisis is a moral and spiritual crisis in the way that many humans relate to nature. Increasing the market economy, industrialization, and

urbanization are among the more important factors alienating humans from nature.

Although spiritual ecology has deep roots, it has been developing mostly since the 1990s. It calls for fundamental rethinking about the ultimate causes and solutions of the ongoing and worsening environmental crisis. Spiritual ecology does not champion any particular religion, but in principle tries to facilitate all religions in developing greener individual lifestyles and societies that do not degrade the environment. Naturally, this also involves matters of justice and peace as well as environment, and all three often interrelated as emphasized, for example, in Roger S. Gottlieb's book *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future*.

The main principles of spiritual ecology are that it is necessary and potentially pivotal in dealing with many environmental problems and issues from the local to the global levels. It emphasizes the unity, interconnectedness, and interdependence of all beings and things, as does Buddhism as well as the Western science of biological ecology. Spiritual ecology is predicated on the spiritual, moral, and intrinsic values of nature. It advocates and facilitates respect, affection, and reverence for nature with caring stewardship and benevolent coexistence. These are among the common principles of spiritual ecology underlying the diversity among major religions. These shared

principles provide common ground for interfaith dialog and collaboration concerning the environment.

The three primary components of spiritual ecology are spiritual, intellectual (ideas), and practical (actions). The intellectual component encompasses scientific and academic matters; the spiritual includes some kinds of emotional aspects; and practical or applied refers to environmentalism or more specifically religious environmentalism. One or more of these three components may be involved to varying degrees in the work of any single individual or organization. The spiritual is the least studied and documented component, and it is usually only implicit in the literature. Yet spirituality underlies the environmentalism of many otherwise overtly secular individuals and organizations.

Spiritual ecology has been advanced by numerous international, interfaith, and/or interdisciplinary conferences, including in 1986, with the World Wildlife Fund in Assisi, Italy, producing The Assisi Declarations; in 1991, Spirit and Nature at Middlebury College; in 1996-1998, at Harvard University on ten different religions in relation to ecology, leading to the Forum on Religion and Ecology with its website and monthly newsletter; and in 2007, at the University of Florida for the inaugural meeting of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture.

Among the pioneering

scholars in spiritual ecology are Roger S. Gottlieb, John A. Grim, Bron Taylor, and Mary Evelyn Tucker through their publications and other activities. Tucker and Grim edited a series of substantial books from the Harvard conferences; Taylor was Editor-in-Chief of the benchmark *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*; and Gottlieb edited *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. Each of these scholars has also authored their own book on this subject.

By now it is clear that spiritual ecology is a very interesting and important new field of scientific and academic endeavors. It has accumulated a history, pioneer contributors, common concerns and identity, a foundational literature including two specialized journals, organizations, conferences, courses and even graduate degree programs, and the first generations of students. Spiritual ecology is being recognized increasingly by various sectors of the sciences, academy, religions, media, government, environmental and conservation organizations, and the public. The accelerating growth of spiritual ecology is reflected in a search of Google.com yielding 420,000 sites in 2004 and 8,580,000 in 2014, an exponential increase of more than 20 times within a single decade.

Spiritual ecology also has an activism component. Beginning in 1986, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) started developing the Interfaith Partnership for the Environment. Also, UNEP sponsors the global environmental

ethic called the Earth Charter and its implementation. In 1977, biologist Wangari Maathai started the Green Belt Movement. Members by now have planted more than 51 million trees in Kenya. In 1986, this expanded to 170 countries with the planting of more than 12 billion trees as a UNEP project. Since 1997, the Green Patriarch Bartholomew I, head of some 300 million Orthodox Christians, has led a succession of international, interdisciplinary, and interfaith symposia aboard ships sailing along major water bodies of the world in order to publicize and remediate pollution, among other initiatives. In San Francisco, California, Episcopalian Minister Sally C. Bingham launched Interfaith Power and Light promoting energy efficiency and conservation among other practical efforts in response to global climate change. Since 1998, this has spread to more than 4,000 religious centers in 40 of the states. Even the secular organization Worldwatch Institute in Washington, D.C., which monitors and publicizes environmental problems and issues, has turned to religions as an additional means to promote its ends since 2002. Other secular organizations have also done this, such as the World Wildlife Fund in affiliating with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation in Manchester, England.

Turning to international Buddhism, over several decades Joanna Macy has facilitated numerous workshops to empower individuals to become environmental

activists. David Loy and others developed the EcoBuddhism website which includes a Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change. In Thailand, Sulak Sivaraksa has organized conferences, workshops, and led other initiatives as well as published about environmental matters, such as in his recent book *The Wisdom of Sustainability: Buddhist Economics for the 21st Century*.

More information on all of the above aspects of spiritual ecology and much more can be found readily by searching the internet.

At the same time, there are numerous, powerful, and difficult obstacles standing in the way of spiritual ecology, especially the economic and political status quo which it critically challenges, and perhaps most of all, the discrepancies between religious ideals and individual actions. However, these obstacles may be reduced, if not completely resolved, by more education about the negative environmental consequences of the behavior of individuals and organizations. More people need to realize the long-term consequences of negative environmental behaviors, including their environmental legacy for future generations. Also, people need to commune with nature on a more regular basis as that can be a catalyst for spirituality and environmentalism.

In spite of serious obstacles, spiritual ecology has great potential and offers hope in promoting a

better future for the environment and in turn for humans that inevitably depend on it for their survival and well-being. The main reservation is whether this and other environmental concerns and actions will be enough in time to avert global catastrophe, especially with the phenomenon of global climate change which is already an increasingly serious and urgent reality. Nevertheless, this quiet revolution of spiritual ecology, which is nonviolent and lacks any single leader or central organization, is rapidly gaining momentum which is accelerating. It may yet help to reduce, if not completely revolve, the ongoing environmental crisis, hopefully changing the trajectory of humanity from ecocide to ecosanity.

Leslie E. Sponsel is a Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Hawai'i, and founded and directs the Research Institute for Spiritual Ecology (RISE). This article is a brief summary of a lecture in honor of Sem Pringpuangkaew invited for the Spirit in Education Movement in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 10, 2014. Sponsel's lecture was based on his book *Spiritual Ecology: A Quiet Revolution*. (This book includes chapters on Buddhist ecology, and on ecocide in Tibet since the Chinese invasion, occupation, and exploitation). For more information see <http://spiritualecology.info>.

Buddhism and Environmental Movement in Siam

In an OpEd piece in *The New York Times* in 2011, the monk Matthieu Ricard noted the dramatic impacts of climate change in the Himalayas, clearly visible from his hermitage in Nepal. He described the glaciers melting and the increasing drought faced by those who live in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan Plateau. These are people who may be unaware of the debates surrounding climate change in the world today, but whose lives are directly affected for the worse.

The effects of climate change in the Himalayas will extend far beyond the region. Many of the major rivers of Asia originate in the Himalayan mountains, bringing water and life to people in China, Southeast and South Asia. As the glaciers recede, less water will be available for these rivers, resulting in drought and agricultural decline throughout the region – including Siam, dependent on the waters from both the Salween and the Mekong.

But the environmental problems coming out of the Himalayas are among the least that Siam faces. The country – and its people – have to deal with air and water pollution, rapid deforestation, drought and soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and waste disposal, especially from electronics such as cell phones and computers, among other environmental issues. The most obvious cause of these numerous problems is the rapid economic growth Siam has undergone in the past few decades. This growth involved agricultural intensification, including a push for cash-cropping and mono-cropping, and increased use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides; urbanization and an increasing shift of population from the rural areas to the cities; and industrialization. These trends impact the condition of the natural environment as well as the lives of people who live within this environment.

One of the most creative responses to Siam's environmental problems draws on Buddhism, local culture, and Western environmental and scientific concepts. This approach is exemplified by a small

number of Buddhist monks, called “environmental monks” (in Thai, “phra nak anurak thammachat”), who undertake environmental conservation projects on the local level. The innovative ways in which they use the religion reflect the growing international movement known as engaged Buddhism. As with engaged Buddhists in other parts of the world, the Thai environmental monks are rethinking and reinterpreting aspects of Buddhist practice in response to ideas, concepts, and pressures introduced through the processes of economic globalization and modernization. Thus, the ancient philosophy of Buddhism, through their reinterpretations, is proving responsive to modern issues.

The goals of environmental Buddhism, based on both the ecological concept of interconnectedness found in deep ecology and the Buddhist concept of interdependent co-arising (*paticca samuppada*), emphasize modern, scientific methods and ancient religious principles. In this way, the environmental monks are neither “modern” nor “traditional.” The monks’ interpretations of religion and science, and tradition and modernity, do not fall into clear-cut categories, but rather represent a creative blend of approaches appropriate for a changing world. Their example complicates and highlights the tensions inherent in the environmental crisis itself, and the questions facing Thai society as it attempts to deal with the crisis. The presence of these monks challenges Thais at all levels of society to confront what it means to be modern or traditional, local or global, Thai, and even what it means to be Buddhist.

The real question is what lies at the heart of this push for growth. On the surface, the motivation appears to be coming from the government and its desire for improving the lives of its people. Numerous governments over time have made claims that they are helping the nation progress. They follow models from across the ocean, emulating the capitalist growth of the United States, for example. We have to ask, however, whether this is their genuine motivation. Many corporations are involved in the process of

economic development within Siam. These corporations stand to gain from industrialization, the intensification of agriculture, and the sale of chemical fertilizers.

From a Buddhist perspective, these are surface - level causes. The underlying motivation for most of these causes is greed – or at a minimum, selfishness. People with means don't think twice about filling their needs and wants, regardless of the impact on others and planet. This is reflected in unbridled consumerism. Matthieu Ricard commented,

“Unchecked consumerism operates on the premise that others are only instruments to be used and that the environment is a commodity. This attitude fosters unhappiness, selfishness and contempt upon other living beings and upon our environment. People are rarely motivated to change on behalf of something for their future and that of the next generation. They imagine, “Well, we'll deal with that when it comes.” They resist the idea of giving up what they enjoy just for the sake of avoiding disastrous long-term effects. The future doesn't hurt – yet.”

Ricard recognizes the problem of consumerism and how it impacts both people and the natural environment. His analysis is informed by Buddhism. There is a similar Buddhist response in Siam. Environmental monks look critically at the environmental problems the country faces and the suffering that they cause. They see that the cause of this suffering lies in the selfish desire or greed of human actors, ranging from business men who exploit natural resources and people to advance the economic standing of both their corporations and themselves, to poor rural farmers who consume material goods beyond their means as an indicator of social status.

This suffering manifests in harm to wildlife and nature, but also in increasingly difficult lives for urban dwellers, who face air, water, and noise pollution, crowded streets, and stress, and for rural farmers, who faced drought and floods, and become embedded in a cycle of debt as they pursue cash-cropping. The environmental monk, Phrakhru Pitak Nantakhun, consistently summarizes the primary problem faced by rural farmers in Nan Province in one word: “debt.” He has observed the promotion of cash - and mono-cropping by both corporations and the National Agriculture Bank. Farmers are encouraged clear new forest land for agriculture in the name of progress. They are advanced seeds and chemical fertilizers with the contract to repay these debts after

their harvest. Yet the companies hold farmers to strict crop quality requirements. Farmers are often not able to meet these requirements – based on specific crop size, amount, and quality. They make less money on selling their crops than anticipated and are unable to repay their debts for the seeds and chemicals. In response, the seed companies advance them more seeds, fertilizers, and herbicides. Thus continues a cycle of debt. Part of this cycle involves environmental destruction as well, as farmers often expand their fields, clear-cutting more land, to try to make up for their growing debt.

It is this suffering that motivates environmental monks most. They argue that since relieving suffering is the primary goal of Buddhism, they must act on immediate and material suffering as well as metaphysical suffering. Luang Pu Phuttapoj Waraporn, a highly revered, high-status monk in northern Thailand who undertook rural development work for over three decades, often stated that people who are hungry are not going to concentrate on meditation or spiritual practices that could relieve dukkha, often translated as suffering, on a deeper level. How these monks work towards this goal articulates a vision of an interconnection with the environment that fosters social justice, ecological caring, and spiritual progress.

The actions of these environmental monks emerged over time. While there were individual monks quietly caring for the environment surrounding their monasteries since at least the 1970s, the public was generally unaware of their actions, nor were they considered environmentalists. The first public expression of monks concerning the environment arose alongside the secular environmental movement in the 1980s as part of the protests against the construction of a cable car up Doi Suthep Mountain outside of Chiang Mai city. As part of this popular protest, a small number of monks joined in the critique of the cable car. They were not against the environmental consequences of the cable car per se, but instead were concerned about the potential damage to a sacred Buddhist site. They framed their involvement as a moral argument, based on relieving suffering, the interdependence of humans and nature, and the sangha's responsibility to society. Embedded in their involvement was a critique of rampant consumerism and economic development supported by the Thai state. They participated in the related debate surrounding conflicting environmental

narratives, particularly concerning the forest – who defines the forest, who can use its resources, and who has control of it.

The 1980s saw environmental protests, first against the Doi Suthep cable car, then against the Nam Choen Dam in 1988, which Jonathan Rigg describes as the “coming of age of the environmental movement in the country” (Rigg 1995:13). Monks joined with activists, NGOs, students, journalists, and others in these successful protests as environmental narratives took a key place in Thai politics. Later that year, devastating floods in southern Thailand killed over 300 people, leading the government to institute a ban on commercial logging in January 1989.

Also in 1988, Phrakhru Manas Natheephitak performed the first tree ordination to protect the forest in his home district in Phayao Province. Aimed at a local issue, Manas’s creative response set off a growing movement of tree ordinations across the country – Phra Prajak performed one in Dongyai National Park in 1989, and Phrakhru Pitak conducted the first of many ordination rituals in Nan Province in 1990, as two of the more prominent examples.

The tree ordination is a creative use of traditional rituals to promote the modern concept of conservation. While many Buddhist environmentalists worldwide point to aspects of the Buddha’s teachings that they see as supporting conservation work (such as the fact that the Buddha was born, enlightened, gave his first sermon, established several residences and meditation sites, and passed away in forests), there was no environmental crisis like the one we face today during the time of the Buddha. Scholars debate the degree to which the Buddha was concerned with people’s lives and conditions in this world as compared with aiding them in their spiritual goal of releasing themselves from worldly suffering, and whether environmental concerns have any scriptural basis. Yet Buddhism has evolved dramatically since the time of the Buddha, developing into many new forms as it spread. Tree ordinations and other environmental rituals are perhaps evidence of another way in which Buddhists have adapted their religious beliefs and practices to a new situation, one informed by global pressures and influences.

Buddhist environmentalism in Siam now goes far beyond the connections between the religion and the forest, even while these are often emphasized. The environmental rituals these monks perform bring

attention to the problems emerging from environmental destruction and its impact on people’s lives. But these rituals are more successful when combined with more practical actions including environmental education, integrated agriculture, protected community forests, and the creation of fish and wildlife sanctuaries. As a central tenet of their interpretation of Buddhism, environmental monks teach the responsibility of humans for the natural world.

As they engaged in grassroots projects and joined in public protests of large-scale economic development, these monks recognized the limitations of working alone: a monk cannot organize people and handle all the logistics of an environmental conservation project by himself. Nor can he justify his actions entirely on his own. Monks began to come together to discuss what “Buddhist environmentalism” should look like, and how to deal with the kinds of opposition they faced. Many environmental monks were supported in this process by national non-governmental organizations, most often the Thai Inter-religious Commission for Development (TICD) and Wildlife Fund Thailand (WFT), or local or regional lay groups. National NGOs sponsored numerous seminars in the early 1990s for monks engaged or interested in environmental activism. These NGOs reached out to monks in order to provide training for and facilitate dialogue and networking among activist monks. TICD organized Sekhiyadhamma, a network among activist monks that sponsored seminars and put out a regular newsletter about their work. The monks gained from these seminars in terms of building a support network and learning new techniques and knowledge. The seminars also increased public awareness of the activities of environmentalist monks, strengthening the impact of these projects as part of Thai civil society.

Through the seminars, environmental monks defined themselves as distinct from the larger Thai environmental movement. They discussed the meaning of using Buddhism for environmentalism, including the methods, philosophies, and implications. Coming together to share experiences, thoughts, questions, concerns and approaches led to a more cohesive movement among the monks and a formulation of an informal Buddhist environmental knowledge.

Through telling their personal stories and discussing successes and challenges incurred in activist work, the monks developed their own

environmental narrative. They framed their version of environmental degradation – primarily caused by rapid economic development and consumerism – in Buddhist terms, especially concepts of suffering, greed, delusion and anger, and co-dependent arising. The monks simplified the biophysical changes occurring, as well as the Buddhist philosophy that they applied. The main narrative produced through the seminars was the close relationship between the Buddha and the forest, justifying the monks' involvement in environmental issues and their critique of the state's development agenda.

The environmental crisis to which these monks are responding is the result of Thai society buying into global capitalism and rapid economic and industrial growth. The monks' response takes an ideological stance that critiques this form of modernization, arguing that capitalism and consumerism are pulling people away from spiritual practice. Capitalism, they argue, emphasizes greed, ignorance, and anger, the three root evils in Buddhism. The monks call for a return to religion and religious values as a guide for living simply and purely, with an emphasis on community-level society in which people care for each other and are sensitive to the impacts of their actions on others.

Environmental monks continue to work against forces they feel are potentially destructive to both society and the natural environment. They do not try to turn back time to some idealized past in which villagers supposedly provided for themselves and one another. Instead, they embrace alternative forms of development and modernity, borrowing concepts of ecology and sustainable agriculture

from the international environmental movement that can be adapted to fit Thai cultural settings.

These ideas are brought into Siam through a range of means. Academics, government officials, multinational businesses, Thai and foreign NGOs all act as conduits for transporting and transmitting ideas from the West into Thailand. These agents bring knowledge—NGOs in particular introduce alternative approaches to the mainstream emphases of the government. Activist monks translate this knowledge into forms the Thai people, especially villagers, can use. As a result, they also translate and transform Buddhist practice, tying Buddhist principles with social justice and the natural environment in ways that did not exist in the past. Given Siam's cultural identification with Buddhism, such public changes in how Buddhism is understood and practiced also modify what it means to be Thai.

These examples of the environmental monks illustrate the ongoing adaptability of Buddhist principles and practice. The Thai people, as active players in the modern world, look to their religion for guidance regarding how they should live in a rapidly evolving world. Buddhism, when interpreted through the lenses of social justice and social welfare, has become a positive, active force in Thai society for dealing with modernity on its own terms.

A lecture delivered at Hsuan Chuang University, Taiwan
<http://animaethics.hcu.edu.tw/eng/index.html>
on 27 April 2014.

I would like to thank Sue Darlington <sue.darlington@charter.net> for kindly drafting this speech for me.



Sulak Sivaraksa's lecture on Chamkad Balangura's century

The title Chamkad Balangura, a great leader in
The Free Thai Movement during World War II

On Thursday 30th October 2014 at 7.30 pm

at The Siam Society
131 Asoke Montri Road (Sukhumvit 21),
Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Some Thoughts on Democracy



In 1939 Field Marshal Phibun Phibunsongkram declared 24 June of every year to be celebrated as the National Day and ordered the construction of the Democracy Monument along with the nearby National Celebration Bridge. It was in that year that the country regained full independence in the international society in large part due to the hard work of Pridi Banomyong. Efforts to bring an end to extraterritoriality and treaty constraints that hindered the country's legal autonomy had been underway since the time of absolutism. But it was Pridi who made the successful breakthrough. And he was awarded with medals of the highest order for this great feat. His wife was also awarded the aristocratic title of "thanpuying."

The government thus placed great importance on 24 June. It even came up with the "National Day" song. According to this song, which was popular at the time, the revolution was a great event that marked the advent of modern constitutional democracy in the country. Thai people have freedom and rights along with happiness because the country now enjoys full independence.

24 June became a national holiday along with 10 December, the Constitution Day. However, after Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat overthrew Phibun in a military coup he changed the National Day to be

observed on 5 December, the King's birthday. Eventually, Sarit suspended the Constitution, but 10 December was still a public holiday. The field marshals were long dead and gone, but General Prayuth Chan-ocha has taken full control of the country no less than they had. To what extent will the present military junta be faithful to the spirit and potentials of the 1932 Revolution, which was carried out by the People's Party whose leader was General Phraya Phahonphon Phayuhasena (Phot Phahonyothin)?

The country's first constitution was promulgated on 27 June 1932. Clause 1 of the constitution explicitly states, "The supreme power in the country belongs to the people." King Rama VII found this idea too 'progressive' but since he lost all royal powers he had to accept it grudgingly. However, the king managed to ask the People's Party for a compromise to label the new constitution "provisional." The country's "permanent" constitution later came into effect on 10 December 1932. Despite its subsequent turn to dictatorship, the government acted in accordance with this constitution—even during WWII when the country was under Japanese occupation.

When WWII ended, the Allied powers didn't treat the country as an enemy state because the Free Thai Movement had opposed the Japanese during the

war. Pridi declared the end of the war on 16 August (which was later observed as “Peace Day”), and the Allies recognized the country’s independence and sovereignty (despite initial British objection).

In the early postwar years, the country experienced a brief democratic interlude. The military dictatorship was overthrown. The People’s Party embarked on the drafting of a new constitution, which was more inclusive in the sense of being less harsh on the royals and sought to put a limit on its own power. For instance, it would no longer have the power to appoint half of the members of parliament. The new constitution received royal endorsement by King Rama VIII in 1946. It was fully democratic by any standard. All MPs now had to come from national elections. The Lower House would elect members of the Upper House, which would act as a check and balance on the former. The 1946 Constitution was quickly ripped apart and replaced by another one in the following year. MR Seni Pramoj played an important role in the drafting of the 1947 Constitution. To cut a long story short, the Democratic Party collaborated with a number of military leaders to tear apart the previous constitution and eradicate real democratic movements from the country. The country re-tilted toward royalism and absolutism in spirit as well as substance. A Supreme Council was established, and it became the basis of the Privy Council at present. In short, is the Privy Council a symbol or a remnant of absolutism?

Simply put, every successful military putsch after 1947 was generally followed by the drafting of a new constitution. And the constitution drafters were all legal experts who had kowtowed to the powers that be, depriving the people of any real and meaningful power. As such, they could only come up with fake democracy. The signs are on the wall. We cannot expect much from the post-2014-coup constitution. Furthermore, as long as we fail to recognize Pridi’s role in constitution-drafting it will be difficult to reclaim the emancipatory potentials of democracy.

Turning to India, the independence movement asked Ambedkar to head the drafting of the constitution. Ambedkar was a Dalit and was not even a member of the dominant Indian National Congress party (which

was like the People’s Party of India at the time). The two leading figures of the Congress were Gandhi and Nehru. Both felt that Ambedkar was more suitable for this task than they were, and therefore Ambedkar became the father of the Indian Constitution. It must be pointed out that the Indian Constitution has never been torn apart. Nor has there been any military coup in that country.

After converting to Buddhism, Ambedkar claimed that the Buddhist Sangha is a true model of democracy or more precisely the first democratic community in the world. It is egalitarian and non-exclusionary. It is open to everyone and anyone regardless of caste. The Buddha created the Sangha as a community of equals, and equality is important for democracy. Bhikkhus and bhikkhunis are individuals who are in search of a noble life—a sublime, celibate and chaste life. They have rejected lay life, which entails compromises with violence and exploitation on a daily level, to live in a noble community based on equality, solidarity and freedom from greed, hatred and delusion.

Ambedkar argued that the motto of the French Revolution or “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” was not universal enough. He pointed to the violence of the French Revolution and contended that Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity cannot flourish in the absence of peace.

Ambedkar also insisted that the Sangha the Buddha established was democratic because he did not teach his followers to blindly believe or obey him. The Sangha served as a forum to raise questions and doubts, to talk and debate, and to arrive at any decision based on majority or consensus voting, depending on the context of the circumstance.

My simple question is this: do our constitutional drafters understand this basic message despite claiming to be (devout) Buddhists? And NCPO justified the seizure of power under the pretext of protecting Nation, Religion, Monarchy and People. How do the junta figures plan to cope with the decaying condition of Buddhism in the country?

Since our ruling elites have long been attracted to the West, they surely know that Athens was the birthplace of democracy in the Occident. But Plato, the city state’s foremost philosopher, had objections

for democracy. *The Republic* by Plato is a classic, and it is a must-read for any student of Western philosophy—no matter one agrees with it or not. His ideas on politics and government have long been influential in Europe to this day. On the other hand, members of the American ruling class, who trailblazed in democracy in the modern world, looked more toward Rome than Athens for inspiration. For instance, this can be easily seen in the neoclassical architectural style of the United States Capitol.

Cicero was greatly influenced by ancient Greek philosophy and adapted it to his Roman society. He argued that there are “three basic systems of government: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Each has its strengths and weaknesses and it is the unique distinction of Rome to have devised a constitution which combines elements of all three. Scipio’s personal preference is for the good king, father to his subjects, but the tendency towards tyranny is hard to eradicate. So a moderate and well-balanced form of government is a combination of the three—simple good forms are preferable even to monarchy. Through Scipio’s mouth Cicero concluded, “The government was so administered by the Senate that, though the People were free, few political acts were performed by them, practically everything being done by the authority of the Senate and in accordance with its established customs, and the Consuls held a power which, though only of one year’s duration, was truly regal in general character and in legal sanction. Another principle that was most important to the retention of the power by the aristocracy was also strictly maintained—namely, that no act of a popular assembly should be valid unless ordered by the Senate.” If we replace “Senate” in the quote above with “Army” we will have a good description of Thai politics in the wake of the coup.

In his biography of Cicero Anthony Everitt writes, “This theory of the mixed constitution had a great influence on the development of European political thought during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It retained its appeal until the eighteenth century and the emergence of modern democracy.”

Ages ago when I was studying political philosophy in the UK, my professor affirmed to me that England had been successful in government

because it had cleverly combined the three systems of government of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. However, we can see that as democracy took the better of monarchy and aristocracy, it mutated into something increasingly authoritarian and inequalitarian. We can see this in Thatcher’s neoliberal revolution in the UK. And although Blair was from the Labour Party, he was essentially a Thatcher in pants.

Turning to America, Emmanuel Saez writes, “In the US, the richest 10 percent increased their share of total pretax income from about 33 percent in the late 1970s to 50 percent by 2012. The top one percent alone now captures more than 20 percent of total income, double the share they received before the Reagan years.” And here we have still to look at the other indicators of inequality in the US.

Since our ruling elites like to refer to the US and UK as models of democracy, let me conclude this short article with the words of the late Tony Judt. Judt was a leading intellectual who grew up in the UK and passed away in the US. I hold him in the greatest esteem as a socially responsible intellectual. Judt stated, “Democracy is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a good, open society. I don’t want to come across as excessively skeptical about democracy: as someone having a preference for the aristocratic, liberal societies of the nineteenth century. But I do want to make an (Isaiah) Berlinian point. We simply have to acknowledge that some earlier non-democratic societies were in certain respects better than later democracies.” And “The tendency of mass democracy to produce mediocre politicians is what worries me. The vast majority of the politicians of the free societies of the world today are substandard. Whether you start with Britain and make your way to Israel, or you start with France and make your way to anywhere in Eastern Europe, or you start in America and make your way even to Australia. Politics is not a place where people of autonomy of spirit and breadth of vision tend to go.”

23 June 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/sulak.sivaraksa> and some parts of this article were delivered at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Washington D.C. on 16 September 2014

Observing Other Countries in Order to See Ourselves More Clearly

.....

A hallmark of democracy is the space for free and open debate such as the parliament. In parliament, the opposition is not necessarily the enemy of the government. Parliament is a place to discuss or to speak (*parler*). Thus in England there are Her Majesty's Leader of the Opposition as well as Her Majesty's Government. Both sides work on behalf of the monarch. The monarchy is a neutral institution. It serves as a linchpin of opposing sides. In times of crisis, the monarchy may however play an ameliorating role despite lacking concrete political, military and economic powers. Rather it will draw upon the forces of ethics, virtue and tradition.

In England, the monarchy had clashed with the aristocrats and landed gentry. Eventually, it had to compromise and make the necessary adjustments. Hence in 1215 the Magna Carta, which limited the monarch's powers and proclaimed that the king's will was not arbitrary, was issued. The Magna Carta is an important part of the development of constitutional law in England.

In England, the king justified his absolute power through the concept of divine right. The absolute monarchy in England was also backed by the Roman Catholic Church. The king of England had to accept papal authority and hierarchically he was under Rome. As Rome's authority waned and European states became stronger many conflicts erupted. These conflicts often took religious forms, especially after the Protestant movement.

Henry VIII of the House of Tudor rejected both Protestantism and papal authority. He led the separation of the Church of England from the pope and the Roman Catholic Church and established Anglicanism, which can also be called Anglo-Catholic in distinction to Roman Catholic.

Political and religious conflicts marred England until the end of the Tudor dynasty. Since the Tudor dynasty had no successor the throne passed to the House of Stuart. The country reconverted to Roman Catholicism. More importantly, Parliament became much stronger (although the vast majority of people remained disempowered). The landed gentry and aristocrats dominated Parliament. They wanted to make Parliament sovereign, not the monarch, culminating in a civil war between the two sides. (Can we also understand the recent political turmoil in the Thai kingdom in this light?) In the end, the king was beheaded and a republic or Commonwealth of England was established.

The Commonwealth was short-lived, and the monarchy was ultimately restored. But Parliament opposed a return to absolute monarchy—hence the beginning of constitutional monarchy or the monarch playing a symbolic role under the unwritten constitution. The phrase “Crown in Parliament” is used to mean that the king is a symbol of Parliament. The government must be accountable to Parliament. In an elaborate ceremony the monarch must participate in the State Opening of Parliament and give a speech. Since the monarch's speech is drafted by the

government and essentially outlines its legislative agenda for the coming year, after the monarch leaves Parliament the opposition will begin to criticize the speech heavily.

Any bill passed by Parliament must go through both the upper (aristocracy) and lower (commons) houses. Although this practice is essentially symbolic, we must not forget that when it comes to government symbols are very important.

In reality, the history of the English monarchy is not smooth and tidy. After the Stuart dynasty, the throne passed to different houses, including the Hanover dynasty. Of course, considerations of blood and lineage were important, but acceptance by Parliament was also a crucial factor. Parliament despised Roman Catholicism. The monarch had to proclaim allegiance to Protestantism—although Anglicanism itself was a pragmatic and ingenious blend of Catholicism and Protestantism.

Parliament opted for constitutional monarchy to hedge against political instability, seeing the fate of the French republic as a case study. England found it more than enough to overthrow the monarchy once. When the throne passed to a German monarch who could not speak English, Parliament had to rely on a capable Cabinet of Ministers that was increasingly independent of the monarchy. The House of Lords and the House of Commons had to closely cooperate in governing the country. Eventually, the latter became the dominant political power.

Many British monarchs behaved improperly. They often indulged in worldly pleasures and were not as talented, educated and capable as many government officials. However, things began to change for the better from King George V onward. George V was the grandfather of the present Queen of England. He had a simple demeanor. With the outbreak of WWI, Britain's declaration of war on Germany, and the rise of anti-German sentiment in England, King George who was of German descent changed the name of his dynasty to the House of Windsor (from the House of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha) after an old castle and symbol of the English monarchy of the same name.

King George V was the first cousin of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. When the Tsar sought exile in Britain after the Bolsheviks toppled his dynasty, King George refused, fearing negative political consequences that might undermine the British monarchy.

After George V the throne went to his eldest son Edward VIII. King Edward was flamboyant and led a high-flying life. He perceived himself as bright and capable as any good politician and he was indifferent to court protocol and constitutional conventions. He wanted to be politically active. However, when King Edward wanted to marry a divorced American socialite, English politicians asked him to abdicate in order to marry, arguing that under Anglicanism he could not marry a divorced woman and remain king.

When Edward VIII abdicated, the throne passed to his brother who became King George VI. He didn't possess leadership qualities and was a stutterer. But he was humble, lived simply and had a great queen. The monarchy thus became popular again. The present Queen of England has attempted to follow the footsteps of her father.

But times have changed. The younger generation no longer holds the monarchy in great awe. The media openly criticizes royal expenses (especially those funded by taxpayers). The monarchy is also accused of being too attached to outdated ceremonies. For instance, when Diana, Princess of Wales, divorced Prince Charles she was stripped of the title Her Royal Highness. However, since she was popular among the people, the prime minister representing popular sentiment had to ask the monarchy to continue treating her as a member of the Royal Household.

Although older than our King, the present Queen of England has been willing to make the necessary adjustments and alter the role of the monarchy to facilitate its preservation.

II

Burma was a British colony. To add insult to injury, Burma was treated as part of India. An important

figure in the movement for Burmese independence is Aung San. He was a great military leader as well as statesman. The ethnic problems in Burma are perhaps far more complicated than in our country. Aung San had thus wanted Burma to be a federation. He asked a Shan prince to serve as president while he would be premier. Unfortunately, he was assassinated before assuming the premiership. U Nu thus became the country's first prime minister.

U Nu governed Burma in accordance with the British parliamentary system. Since he didn't possess Aung San's leadership qualities, Burma's politics were eventually in turmoil. The more U Nu acted as a good Buddhist devotee, the more dissatisfied the ethnic minorities and non-Buddhists became. Worse, Burmese monks also demanded special privileges. When U Nu couldn't save democracy and stabilize the country, he asked Ne Win, a military commander, to step in and impose a dictatorship for a temporary period.

The Romans had done likewise. Rome was governed by two Consuls, each counter-balancing one another along with the Senate and the citizens. However, in times of great crisis or political deadlock a dictator could step in to clean the house. When the job was done he would return back to normal, civilian life. And republicanism would be restored. Rome had relied on this political tool several times.

In the wake of the Second World War, democratic Britain appointed Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy of India. Lord Mountbatten was charged with the task of directing the transition of British India to independence within the time frame of one year. In other words he had to act like a dictator to secure British India's quick independence. He succeeded.

Turning back to Burma, the people were quite satisfied during the early years of the Ne Win dictatorship. Ne Win also stepped down and restored democracy in the country. But under the leadership of U Nu, things began to fall apart again. Ne Win seized power once again, declaring that "parliamentary democracy was not suitable for Burma." And this time there was no reversion to democracy. Burma became a hermetically sealed country under a

dictatorship.

Thus far the NCPO chief has received more praise than criticism, especially among those who believe that an honest, accountable, and effective military junta is as good as or even better than a corrupt and hollowed democracy. If NCPO gradually allows for greater freedom in various dimensions, it will score even more points. But if NCPO is truly smart, it will try to find ways to rearticulate freedom beyond the freedom of capital and the freedom to consume as is prevalent in the mainstream. This is no small feat. Moreover, if NCPO is able to make higher-level education institutions as well as the military as a whole responsible, accountable and transparent, it will be even further applauded. For instance, will NCPO allow public scrutiny over the defense budget?

But it is fanciful to expect NCPO to create a new order that serves as a real alternative to the present status quo, socially, economically and politically. That NCPO will impregnate Thai society and give birth to a new, 'perfect' democracy midwived by a bunch of legal scholars who have assisted every recent military dictatorship in the country is simply a sick joke.

Is this perhaps the disavowed but real desire of NCPO? Is NCPO secretly hoping never to succeed, to always miss the target, so as to justify extending its hold on power? NCPO declared that it will be disbanded by the end of 2015. But isn't this already too long?

Lord Mountbatten needed just one year to secure British India's independence. On the other hand, Ne Win never succeeded, and therefore he had the pleasure of being in power for decades in order to accomplish his task. Will NCPO incline more towards Mountbatten or Ne Win? Let me end this article with a sincere warning: "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely."

7 July 2014 on <https://www.facebook.com/sulak.sivaraksa>

Reflections on His Majesty's Accession to the Throne

.....

9 June 2014 marked the 68th anniversary of His Majesty the King's accession to the throne. All Thai citizens should know how to appropriately celebrate this auspicious occasion. That is, as His Majesty's loyal subjects we should strive to find ways to think, speak and act that contribute not only to our well-being but also the long-term stability of the monarchy as an institution under the Constitution and in accordance with democratic principles. In other words, it is about venerating the monarchy through noble deeds.

Since the NCPO had usurped our sovereign power, we hope that they know what they are doing as the King's loyal subjects. I have no intention of serving the NCPO, but I will speak to the military junta as a *kalyanamitta*; that is, with honesty and sincerity. I hope that some of my advice will enable the NCPO to act in accordance with their claims thus far.

For starters, let me make the following broad suggestions.

1. Hard power may be needed for conquest and self-protection, but the hegemon must look after the interests of those who depend on it in order to secure their alliance instead of promoting only its own interests.

2. When people are insecure they feel the need to belong to a group. The extent that a group tolerates diversity or sees it as the enemy is crucial.

3. It is easier to use nationalism to crush diversity than it is to rely on diversity to drive back nationalism.

The last point deserves special attention. Let's look at the practice of paying respect to the national flag and anthem twice daily. On television the following message always appears before the national anthem is played: "The national flag and anthem are symbols of Thai-ness. We should stand

straight and pay respect to the national flag in unity with pride in our independence and the sacrifices made by our ancestors."

A naïve question is: Are these words sincere? We should be proud of our ancestors. But which ones? We should respect their deeds and sacrifices. But whom have we forgotten? Are we even aware that there is such a thing as the Thai Peace Day? On 16 August 1945 Pridi Banomyong, then Regent to King Rama VIII, declared the end of WWII and annulled the dictatorial government's declaration of war on the US and Britain, contending that it did not reflect the spirit of the Thai people (as opposed say to the opinion of the majority of the Thai people). Pridi's declaration as well as the sacrifices of members of the Free Thai Movement helped to 'save' the country from being designated as an enemy state to be occupied by the Allied forces in the wake of WWII. But have these figures been truly respected in Thai society compared to say a number of militarist leaders?

Another question is: Isn't the practice of paying respect to the national flag a product of the country's fascination with fascism prior to and during the Second World War? Didn't the militarist government copy this practice from fascist states like Germany, Italy and Japan? When the war ended these states terminated this practice partly in the name of democratization. But why hasn't the Thai kingdom done so too?

The opening line of the Thai national anthem can be interpreted as ethnic chauvinism or national exclusivism. It focuses on the homogeneity of the Thai flesh and blood. But this message is inaccurate, if not outright false. The country is comprised of many other ethnic groups such as the Malay Muslims in the southernmost border provinces.

In Volume 2 of the journal *Education Review* there's a thought-provoking article on the practice of respecting the Thai national flag. It can serve as a

starting point to rethink this practice. However, local authorities have kept a watchful eye on Netiwit Junrasal, one of the journal's editors.

Likewise, many other constitutional monarchies have stopped the practice of playing the royal anthem in theaters before showing a film. But we still act as if we don't know about this change elsewhere. Has any Thai government—whether military or civilian-led—given serious thought to any of the abovementioned issues?

II

Based on the ideas of the historian Bernard Bailyn, "Historiography had three phases: (1) heroic history, in which individuals are up at the centre and imbued with moral qualities; (2) whig history, in which the personalities and the flow of events is presented through a chain of inevitable constructs; and (3) neutral type—[Bailyn] called it tragic history—in which the historian has no status in the outcome." Juxtaposed this view with that of Jeremy Tenglow who writes that "Spanish culture is heavily influenced by two recent trends: the more common 'mythologizing'... An extreme example of this is to elevate the drama to a realm of fantasy; and the second is painstakingly present of authenticity."

Now if we watch any installment of the film Naresuan we will easily arrive at the conclusion that it is sheer mythology. We will get a more 'authentic' version of King Naresuan if we read the latest issue of *Pacayasara* magazine or *Journal of the Siam Society*, vol. 101 (2013).

The NCPO has set up a committee to reform the national curriculum by placing more emphasis on two subjects: history and civic duty. Again, whose history are we talking about? Whose history will be taught? Will the taught history subjects lean more toward mythology or authenticity? As for civic duty if we don't begin by respecting the rights of young people, teaching this subject will simply be a form of mass indoctrination. Whose civic duty? The civic duty of a good and obedient citizen under a military dictatorship more than that of an independent and thinking person guided by Dhammic Socialism?

In the wake of the 1932 Revolution, the leader of the military wing of the People's Party invited Prince Wan Waithayakon to serve as the government's

special and trusted advisor despite the fact that most royals and royalists still greatly despised the People's Party at the time. The government as well as the people thus greatly benefited from the prince's multi-talents. The NCPO leader should steal a leaf from the People's Party and appoint a number of internationally renowned Thai academics to help shake up the country's national curriculum. I propose the following names: 1) Pasuk Phongpaichit, 2) Charnvit Kasetsiri, 3) Nidhi Eoseewong, 4) Suthachai Yimprasert, and 5) Suda Rangkupan. Of course, none of these individuals are NCPO cheerleaders. But that's the whole point. And when it comes to education reform Rajanee Thongchai is an indispensable name. These individuals should be joined by political figures such as 1) Jaran Ditapichai, 2) Nititorn Lamlua, and 3) Suriyasai Katasila. And Seksan Pasertkul must not be left out too.

I'm quite glad to learn that the NCPO leader found the time to compose a song. It shows that he has an appreciation of Beauty. And if he is able to guide it towards Goodness, then my hat's off to him. But Beauty and Goodness must be directed by Truth. Truth will emerge when there is antagonism, when the people have the opportunity to challenge, dissent, oppose, and why not revolt. Truth will emerge when the people are able to express themselves freely in public without fear of reprisal from local authorities or the police.

Here the NCPO chief has a lot to learn from another military figure who was also a general and who loved to compose simple poetry, General Phot Phahonyothin. The latter was an honest and straightforward person who devoted his life to the well-being of the people and democracy. If General Prayuth follows Phot's footsteps then he likewise will be remembered as one of the country's greatest generals.

I shall end this article with the following words. A sound is what occurs in one's mind; music is a person who understands ethics. Ethics means seriousness on principles. And as Wendy Doniger puts it, "[L]ife is short, but the fight for freedom of speech is long." "To ban or burn a book you regard as blasphemous is what fascist bigotry is always about."

19 June 2014, <https://www.facebook.com/sulak.sivaraksa>

Cross Ethnic Integration in the Andaman (CEIA)

Jane Rasbash (CEIA works in partnership with Ecologia Youth Trust
and is funded by the UK Big Lottery Fund)



They may leave Myanmar willingly yet most migrant workers are treated as commodities trafficked to fulfil orders from employers with little access to rights and entitlements. As South East Asia moves towards ASEAN with freedom of movement for workers CEIA are working in five southern Thai provinces working towards migrant worker empowerment.

Unregistered, unrecognized and unable to ask for help migrant workers from Myanmar (Burma) were last in line for relief efforts after the tsunami hit the Andaman coast of Thailand in December 2004. Migrants working in the hotel construction and fishing industries fared particularly badly. Six months after the tsunami the abbot of a Thai monastery acting as a depository for bodies held in refrigerated containers said the vast majority were Burmese, most likely unregistered and no-one to identify

them. After the tsunami Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation (SNF) a Thai NGO, arranged for Myanmar monks to offer Buddhist ritual to support the grieving process. Word spread fast and the monks drew thousands of migrant worker when they held ceremonies. Some engaged Buddhist monks introduced community organization to mobilize migrant workers who faced difficult conditions from employers, brokers and government officials. In 2008 SNF initiated an ongoing programme to empower migrant workers, address the inequalities faced

and the deeply embedded racism in both Thai and Myanmar people. Coordinated by CEIA a branch of SNF the programme contributed to bringing human trafficking issues to the National Thai Agenda. This was largely through advocacy efforts for relatives of victims of a high profile incident in April 2008. 54 migrant workers suffocated in a lorry in Ranong whilst being trafficked from Myanmar to an employer in Phuket who had put in an order for workers.

The programme also supports the emergence of migrant worker groups and networks to access rights, interact fairly with government officers and negotiate with employers. CEIA also initiated several legal kiosks and clinics where migrant workers get advice from lawyers and an emergent Andaman Lawyer network working with both Thai and Myanmar lawyers to further address injustices.

Southern Migrant Centre, Phang Nga

Up a rough track behind the near-by tourist beaches of Khao Lak another world exists. In a shanty hamlet where migrant workers live a small library building proudly displays the SMC - Southern Migrant Centre banner. A strategy of these marginalised groups is to use innocuous libraries for community organising so the more radical activities are less obvious to authorities and employers who want to keep migrant workers under their control. SMC is a hub of activity with computer, legal, health-care and Thai/English language training as well as social/cultural events. SMC have connected with the Labour Department, near-by hospitals and schools to access informal education and healthcare. There is a bi-monthly legal clinic where CEIA lawyers advise migrant workers exploited by employers and local officials. As well as work place mistreatment there are trafficking issues and registration challenges. A migrant worker mentioned:

‘There can be problems because our contract is for a specific task e.g. rubber tree cutting. Then the employer asks you to do something else or moves you to a different area so you do it. Then the police harass you and ask for money because you should not be doing that job or be in that place’.

SMC and CEIA are lobbying for improved registration conditions to expand areas migrant workers can work in and the types of work they are allowed to do. The SMC vision is to be an inspiring beacon for migrant

workers in Southern Thailand. It was encouraging to see hope in their eyes and strength in their voices as they told us of their efforts.

Migrant Worker Development Association, Ranong (MWDA)

‘If we can strengthen communities we may not need to expand our work’

MWDA is a well-established group with around 160 migrant worker members based in Ranong Town. With the Myanmar Border a 20-minute boat ride away they offer support to new and returning migrant workers as well as those working in Ranong Province. They have a strong networking base linking with migrant workers around Thailand and are interested in spreading awareness on ASEAN as the majority of MWs don’t know about this. In partnership with CEIA and World Vision MWDA run a Legal Clinic with Myanmar and Thai lawyers to support migrant workers and provide human rights information. The most important impact of CEIA on MWDA is the legal advice and training for migrant workers. They now know their rights and are able to make choices. They understand what ASEAN is and their upcoming rights to move freely to other countries

Plan Toy Migrant Worker Group, Trang

The eco-friendly migrant worker accommodation and library where we met the Plan Toy migrant workers group were sure signs this is not a run of the mill employer. The ‘natural air cooling’ system designed by the factory and special roofing material mean the buildings stay cooler unlike sweltering under corrugated iron that is the usual migrant worker plight. Plan Toy are an eco social enterprise and exemplary employer who make eco-toys from recycled rubber wood in a state of the art factory outside Trang. They employ over 800 workers including some 150 migrant workers mainly from Myanmar. The vibrant workers group is well organised with 42 members. The small library is a hub for activities including training, coordination between workers and Plan Toy management, cultural activities and networking with workers from other factories. The library has educational and dharma books as well as novels. The migrant workers download books and make CDs for workers who cannot read. The factory supports

local festivals that workers organise themselves inviting workers from near-by factories. At Sonkran (Thai New Year) the workers invited a Myanmar Buddhist Monk to lead ceremonies. Bi-monthly a CEIA Thai Lawyer runs an informal legal kiosk at the library to advise workers. Issues addressed include sick pay, time-keeping concerns and education on rights and entitlements. The offer to bring a Myanmar lawyer to give legal support and update about the situation in Myanmar was met with great interest. Plan Toy have good policies the migrant workers are on minimum wage (300 baht per day) same as Thai workers, have free accommodation (3 to a room in the eco-huts) and can speak out at factory meetings (through translation). The factory set up a fishpond and organic vegetable gardens that are cared for by the migrant workers. A few migrant workers are permitted to attend regional and national CBO summits. CEIA are working with the Plan Toy migrant workers and management group to facilitate an 'in house' Workers Association that has potential to reach out to other near-by factories. It is encouraging that migrant workers are empowered to negotiate with the management and meeting with a reasonable response. However there is some way to go a migrant worker opined:

'we feel equal in work but not outside work --- factory policy is good but not the personal attitudes of Thai staff'

CEIA are considering a joint Thai / Myanmar focus group to address the deeply embedded negative perceptions. It is a long slow process for attitudinal change and significant in the Trang vicinity migrant worker issues are also being picked up by community radio stations and the local authority is piloting supporting health care access for migrant workers.

Migrant Worker CBO Networks

Migrant workers organise themselves in different kinds of groups like SMC and Plan Toys. In Phang Nga there are also several Cremations Groups. These gritty groups have sprung up in response to fights and killings over gambling, debts and other conflicts that proliferate in some of the rough construction sites and fishing piers where migrant workers live and work. They collect and care for bodies found enabling proper Buddhist funeral rites for some of more than 100 unfortunate workers who have died in the last two years. It is not enough for these groups to work in isolation. In Phang Nga led by SMC the first migrant



worker CBO network was formed with Cremation Groups and work related / library groups linking together to support each other. Their vision is an international network where migrant workers from Myanmar can collaborate and look after each other in the ASEAN era. CEIA include migrant workers representing the network in local and national advocacy creating a channel for their voices to influence opinion. Some attended the ASEAN and International Labour Organisation (ILO) meetings on migrant worker issues sharing about their situation. In a significant statement of empowerment it was encouraging to hear one of the migrant workers say -

'we were not afraid when we joined the ILO meeting in Bangkok even though we are migrant workers'!

These meetings are campaigning for ratification of ILO 87 – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and ILO 98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention. By having the right to organise themselves migrant workers are empowered to stand up for their rights. Through CEIA migrant workers are in dialogue with the Phuket Trade Unions who have agreed to set up a Legal Clinic in Phuket and advise and endorse migrant worker networks. They are also endorsing the Plan Toy Workers Association by advising on employer-employee relations.

A migrant worker said ‘some employers treat us badly and we cannot stand the conditions however we now realise that when ASEAN comes there will be the option to move to other countries or return to Burma where the situation is improving’.

It was encouraging to hear them really questioning whether it is worth staying in Thailand – they are empowered and educated to consider options and realise how difficult their situation is.

Thai - Myanmar Lawyer Network -Kaw Thauang
Perhaps the most surprising support mechanism for migrant workers to access rights and entitlements is the emergent Thai – Myanmar Lawyer Network. Kaw Thauang in southern Myanmar is a short, bumpy boat ride from Ranong and the CEIA made the crossing to meet with Myanmar lawyers, law students, the President of the Provincial Lawyer Association and the Provincial Prosecutor. The Myanmar officials told us there had been a Thai/ Myanmar Business network but not lawyers. They agreed that as Myanmar opens up and the upcoming ASEAN era it is a good time to initiate cross border lawyer collaboration and for Myanmar lawyers to become part of the emergent CEIA Andaman lawyer network. It is very helpful to migrant workers to have access to lawyers from both Thailand and Myanmar. Migrant workers need support before they leave Myanmar to prepare them and after they return to deal with issues faced. There also needs to be accurate information available in Thai and Myanmar languages in Kaw Thuang and Ranong and actions agreed included dual language information on law relating to migrant workers in Thailand, widely available helpline numbers, and human trafficking training for migrant workers before they leave Kaw Thauang.

Next Steps – Cross Border Initiatives Supporting ASEAN workers

As ASEAN becomes established in 2015 the time is ripe for initiatives supporting rights and entitlements for migrant workers. A cross border lawyer network working closely with the emerging migrant worker networks is an exciting example of mechanisms that can reduce the injustices economic migrants face. As a significant next step CEIA invited the Myanmar officials and lawyers to Ranong for training and further discussion towards establishing the lawyer network and further develop cross border legal support for migrant workers. Proposed follow on actions include further development of the Andaman Lawyer Network, expansion of the Legal Clinic in Ranong, strengthening Migrant Worker CBO networks in Thailand and establishing a similar one in Kaw Thuang. The Plan Toy ‘in house’ Workers Association endorsed by the Phuket Trade Unions is an exemplary model for other employers. By bringing these mechanisms together there is potential to not only support access to rights and entitlements for migrant workers but also a body to research amendment of laws in Thailand and Myanmar and identify recommendations for ASEAN Migrant Worker Law.

Did you renew your subscription?

May we remind our readers to renew your subscription or help others who cannot afford to pay for *Seeds of Peace*, so that the publication will be available to all who seek something to read beyond that provided by the mainstream mass media. The suggested rate is USD 50.00 per year. If you can support more, we would be very grateful for your generosity. Your money will go to support INEB activities for grassroots people in SE Asia.

The New Bodhisattva Path

David R. Loy

Unless you're on long retreat in a Himalayan cave, it's becoming more difficult to overlook the fact that our world is beset by interacting ecological, economic, and social crises.

Climate breakdown, species extinction, a dysfunctional economic system, corporate domination of government, overpopulation—it's a critical time in human history, and the collective decisions we have to make during the next few years will set the course of events for generations to come.

Yet the more we learn about our situation, the more overwhelmed and discouraged many of us become. The problems are so enormous and intimidating that we don't know where to start. We end up feeling powerless, even paralyzed.

For those inspired by Buddhist teachings, an important issue is whether Buddhism can help us respond to these crises. As Paul Hawken points out in *Blessed Unrest*, there are already a vast number of large and small organizations working for peace, social justice, and sustainability—at least a million and perhaps over two million, he estimates. The question is whether a Buddhist perspective has something distinctive to offer this movement.

Historically, churches and churchgoers have played an important part in many reform movements, for example, the anti-slavery and civil rights campaigns. But much, perhaps most of the impetus in the West for deep structural change originates in socialist and other progressive movements, which traditionally have been suspicious of religion. Marx viewed religion as “the opiate of the people” because too often churches have been complicit with political oppression, using their doctrines

to rationalize the power of exploitative rulers and diverting believers' attention from their present condition to “the life to come.”

This critique applies to some Buddhist institutions as well—karma and rebirth teachings can be abused in this way—but at its best Buddhism offers an alternative approach. The Buddhist path is not about qualifying for heaven but living in a different way here and now. This focus supplements nicely the customary Western focus on social justice and social transformation. As Gary Snyder put it half a century ago, “The mercy of the West has been social revolution. The mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both.” We need both because when we do not acknowledge the importance of individual transformation, social transformation is repeatedly subverted by powerful elites taking selfish advantage of their position. Democracy may be the best form of government, but it guarantees nothing if people are still motivated by greed, ill-will, and the delusion of a self whose well-being can be pursued indifferent to others' well-being.

We need both personal and social transformation so we can respond fully to the Buddha's concern to end suffering. The Buddha emphasized that all he had to teach was suffering and how to end it. This implies that social transformation is also necessary in order to address the structural and institutionalized suffering perpetuated by those who benefit from an inequitable social order.

Is there something specific within the Buddhist tradition that can bring these two types of transformation together in a new model of activism connecting inner and outer practice?

Enter...the bodhisattva.

According to the traditional definition, the bodhisattva chooses not to enter the state of perfect peace, nirvana, but instead remains in samsara, cyclic existence, to help all sentient beings end their suffering and reach enlightenment. Instead of asking, “How can I get out of this situation?” the bodhisattva asks, “What can I contribute to make this situation better?” Today, more than ever, we need to understand the bodhisattva path as a spiritual archetype that offers a new vision of human possibility.

Wisdom and compassion are the two wings of the Buddhist path, and we need both to fly. “When I look inside and see that I am nothing, that’s wisdom. When I look outside and see that I am everything, that’s love. Between these two my life turns” (Nisargadatta). Wisdom is realizing that there is no “me” separate from the rest of the world, and compassion is putting that realization into practice.

The vision of socially engaged Buddhism is to help develop an awakened society that is socially just and ecologically sustainable. It seeks to open up new perspectives and possibilities that challenge us to transform ourselves and our societies more profoundly. This brings us to the bodhisattva’s path as a new archetype for social activism.

Bodhisattva activism has some distinctive characteristics. Buddhism emphasizes interdependence (“we’re all in this together”) and delusion (rather than evil). This implies not only nonviolence (violence is usually self-defeating anyway), but a politics based on love (more nondual) rather than reactive anger (which separates them from us).

The basic problem in our society is not rich and powerful bad people, but institutionalized structures of collective greed, aggression, and delusion. The bodhisattva’s pragmatism and non-dogmatism can help to cut through the ideological quarrels that have weakened so many progressive groups. And Buddhism’s emphasis on skillful means cultivates the creative imagination, a necessary attribute if we are to construct a healthier way of living together on this earth, and work out a way to get there.

Yet those attributes do not get at the most important contribution of the bodhisattva in these difficult times, when we often feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenge and are tempted to despair. The bodhisattva’s response? I am reminded of the motto of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: “The difficult we do immediately.

The impossible will take a little longer.” According to the classical formulation, the bodhisattva takes a vow to help liberate all living beings. Someone who has volunteered for such an unachievable task is not going to be intimidated by present crises, no matter how hopeless they may appear. That is because the bodhisattva practices on both levels—inner and outer—which enables one to engage in goal-directed behavior without attachment to results.

As T. S. Eliot put it, “Ours is in the trying. The rest is not our business.” The bodhisattva’s job is to do the best one can, without knowing what the consequences will be. Have we already passed ecological tipping-points and human civilization is doomed? We don’t know. Yet rather than being intimidated, the bodhisattva embraces “don’t know mind,” because Buddhist practice opens us up to the awesome mystery of an impermanent world where everything is changing, whether or not we notice it. I grew up in a world defined by a “cold war” between the USA and the Soviet Union we all took for granted—until communism suddenly collapsed. The same thing occurred with South African apartheid. If we don’t really know what’s happening, how do we really know what’s possible, until we try?

The equanimity of the bodhisattva-activist comes from nonattachment to the fruits of one’s action, which is not detachment from the state of the world or the fate of the earth. What is the source of this nonattachment? That question points to the fruits of the bodhisattva’s inner work. The Diamond Sutra says that we cannot lead all living beings to liberation because there are no living beings to liberate. The bodhisattva realizes shunyata, emptiness—that dimension in which there is nothing to gain or lose, no getting better or worse—but is not attached to that realization. As the Heart Sutra emphasizes, forms are empty, and emptiness is form. Emptiness is not a place to dwell that is free from form; it is experienced only in the impermanent forms it takes, the forms that constitute our lives and our world.

For the Buddhist activist these are the two dimensions of practice—form and emptiness, personal transformation and social transformation, opposite sides of one coin. As Nisargadatta might put it, “Between these two the bodhisattva’s life turns.” Our world needs both.

Forest monk leaves gift of his wisdom

Sanitsuda Ekachai



The late Luang Por Khamkhan Suwanno. (Photo by Vichai Napua, Lampathao Group)

When Luang Por Khamkhan Suwanno drew his last breath as dawn broke on Saturday, the country not only lost a great meditation master, but also a socially conscious monastic who dedicated his life to saving the forests and the livelihoods of the poor.

"If nature is destroyed and people are still hungry, monks have little chance of saving their souls," the forest monk once told me during an interview many years ago.

After 46 years in the monkhood, Luang Por Khamkhan succumbed to lymphoma at Sukhato Forest Monastery in the mountainous area of Tambon Tha Mafaiwan in Chaiyaphum's Kaeng Kroh district. He was 78.

Over the past seven months, the meditation master used his approaching death as a dhamma exercise for his disciples. It was a chance to contemplate on impermanence and non-self. Equally important, it was an opportunity to strengthen

mindfulness which is a necessary tool to transcend both negative and positive changes in life.

It was not the only precious lesson his life had to offer.

For those who followed his meditation teaching, they may well find their own path to inner peace. For those who learned from his life, they may well find the answer to problem-plagued Thai Buddhism.

Growing up in a frontier community plagued by lawlessness and hardship in the Northeast, the young Khamkhan discovered early in life that the monkhood was his calling. He became a disciple of the late meditation master Luang Por Tean Jittasupo who taught the inculcation of mindfulness through hand movements.

Forest monks normally concentrate on their meditation. But he believed village folks couldn't free themselves from worldly desires while they were not free from hunger.

To ease their hardship, he set up a rice bank, a temple nursery, a village co-operative shop, and a community fish pond. He convinced local villagers to restore forest that had been destroyed by state logging concessions and cassava plantations. When the forest returned, so did a source of free food and herbs.

When roads and electricity brought new temptations to his village, he taught villagers how meditation could provide spiritual immunity, how a proper lifestyle free of vice and superstition could save their community.

He also taught a new concept of merit-making. "Merit-making is being good to others and making others happy," he told me. "You don't have to make merit by giving alms to monks."

Fulfilling one's duty to oneself and others is also a form of merit-making, he added.

"I also don't preach heaven and hell. I talk about here and now. Hell is here if we are constantly quarrelling," he said.

I still remember the amiable Luang Por vividly. He didn't have an iota of the seriousness associated with a meditation guru. Instead, he radiated a happy energy and friendly kindness with his broad smiles. Even when he was not speaking, there was always a soft smile on his face and his eyes twinkled.

His hands and feet were rugged from hard work. Unlike city monks who are waited on to the point of being pampered, he led his monks in building shelters, fetching

water from ponds, or other labourious work in the temple.

His “activism” attracted a big following among university students in the 70s. He was accused of being a “red” monk, a Communist. But his sincerity was his shield.

One of his students is now a highly respected conservationist monk and advocate of Sangha reform, Phra Paisal Visalo.

One the Tha Mafaiwan community’s biggest threats came from state tree farm projects in the guise of reforestation programmes. Secondary forests are cleared so areas can be leased to tree farm investors. The villagers are evicted and their source of foods destroyed.

Phra Paisal and the villagers have the blessing of Luang Por Khamkhian to stage dhamma walks every year to protect the forests in the area.

Besides saving forests, Luang Por encouraged villagers to grow vegetables to cut food expenses and protect themselves from toxic farm chemicals. Everything he did gave a favourable atmosphere for people to practise dhamma. “Teaching dhamma and meditation is still my main goal,” he said.

Monks, he said, cannot deny social responsibility. “We are also to blame if the villagers are trapped in indebtedness. It is our duty to show the way.”

How I wish more monks followed Luang Por Khamkhian’s way.

link:<http://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/428931/forest-monk-leaves-gift-of-his-wisdom>. View our policies at <http://goo.gl/9HgTd> and <http://goo.gl/ou6Ip>. © Post Publishing PCL. All rights reserved.

Dhamma Park Foundation

The Dhamma Park Gallery
209/2 Bahn Pasang Noi, Tambon Bahpan,
Ampur Meung, Lumphun, Thailand

July 7th 2014

Dear Ajahn Sulak,

Inson told me that you did not know that a very nice article about you by Matteo Pistono had been published in the May-June issue of *Resurgence*, so I am sending you mine. The photograph of you is a good one too.

Ever since the Coup I have been waiting for the Lion to roar. I was well rewarded when Moo forwarded your very succinct and readable account of the state of Politics in Siam. I only hope the Generals will find time to read it, mark, learn and inwardly digest.

It is very disappointing that reform of the education and Sangha systems are not on the priority list. Without the former, it is unlikely that benign military dictators will be more successful than their predecessors. I remember that some years ago you were teaching Poetry classes to students at the Military Academy. I wonder if any solidier poets have emerged?

Holding up the example of Phraya Pahon as an exception to the rule shows that the possibility still exists if Generals Prayuth can emulate his example. It is unfortunate that he is unable to “wow” his audiences.

I have always thought that preachers, teachers and those who really want to communicate with the general public should spend part of their training at Drama School.

Your reference to the frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico reminded me of one of the projects I wanted to promote a few years ago, to encourage the establishment of Asoke Pillars in the capital cities of all the provinces in Siam. They would be suitably adapted and relevant to contemporary society to attract people to visit them in peaceful natural surrounding.

I approached the owner of SEFCO Cement Co who was on our committee and he was not averse to the idea of my initial suggestion that it would be a wonderful advertisement for them if he could construct one at the site of his major construction sites as his company specialises in Foundations. The pillars would incorporate the Highway code of right Livelihood (The Noble 8) helping to re educate those who aspire to and those who have been consumed by the values of a consumer driven society.

Do you think this is a good idea if so would it be the right time to encourage it? I would be very grateful for your advice.

Another ideas was in a survey completed some time ago for Mahidol University on how we applied ethics in our activities at Dhamma Park and also inviting suggestion as to how ethics and manners could be improved in Thai society. I sent it complete to Moo for SEM, he thought it was interesting and Vorani also and asked me to concentrate on aspect for consideration for Op Ed. In the BKK post. Bugged down with responsibilities here I failed to do this. Here it is again.

The Eightfold Path is Right Education

School could adopt the Wheel of right Conduct as a Highway Code, for their journey through life, a code of honour and make it an essential component of their policy. Dhamma Bikes and T shirts could be supplied. Children love the bright colours and they will attract attention to the meaning.

Teachers should follow the path and provide good role models for the children. Teachers should be trained to understand the meaning, purpose and value of the code to honour and give opportunities to learn new ways to inspire children to follow them and enable them to make wise choices as a result.

The National Ideology of upholding The Nation, Religion and Monarchy

Children and adults are expected to follow this ideology to preserve National Identity and ensure Social Conformity. Beaureaucratic directives without a clear moral code to follow are only partially conducive to positive self development. Moral Conformity is implied but cannot be taken for granted, it needs to be encouraged but not imposed, to preserve freedom of choice.

The Dhamma Bike Project

We have been unable to continue to promote the Dhamma Bike project, due to lack of funding and support although it attracted sufficient attention to merit the first award from The Nation's Multi Media Group for representatives from each province in Siam. Many reasons for this unfortunate situation. Again the Tour de France is under

way. My dream of the Tour de Thailand on Dhamma Bikes still seems absolutely relevant now that moral ethic are no longer politically out of favour. Do you think the time is ripe now?

The Dhamma Park concept and the Dhamma Bike project can be adapted to any country where people are seeking ways to develop justice and peace in society to restore the ideals of goodness truth and beauty, moral ethics, the arts, holistic education and sustainable science.

With no one to help promote these ideas, no power base or influential friends to encourage them, they may remain in the wilderness. Perhaps I am deluded and should just give up hoping that they might be a useful contribution to the positive development of society?

Now there is no one to drive the engine to keep the Foundation going so we are stuck in a siding, rusting until Inson's Great Exhibition has taken place. Dhamma Park is a useful background and he says he wants it to continue but the dynamic is now entirely concentrated on his works of art which are at last being given the recognition they so richly deserve.

I retired officially as deputy President in 2011 but there is no one to replace me and I still have to do what little I can to keep interest in Dhamma Park and what it stands for, going.

You wrote a letter of support for the Dhamma Park Project many years ago, saying that I was one of the lone voices crying in the wilderness. Now I can no longer cry. I sound as if I have laryngitis! My vocal cords were irrevocably squashed by the respirator which saved my life.

It is good to know that you are still growling and I hope the Generals will take heed and History will not continue to repeat itself adversely.

I hope you continue to maintain your good health and vigour, and look forward to hearing from you, if you can find time!

With all Good Wishes
In the Dhamma

From
Venetia

J. Victoria Bawtree

4 rue Saint Mary, 04300 Forcalquier, Alpes de Haute
Provence, France

Tel: (33) 04 92 75 25 19 Email: jv.bawtree@orange.fr

22 June 2014

My dear Sulak,

I have to thank you so much for arranging to have sent me "*Seeds of Peace*" for so many years. And I have to say that they have been a great help to me in my efforts to combat our vicious consumer culture, devoid of all spirituality. One continues the fight, in what little ways one can, more from habit than from hope. But as Gramsci said, pessimism of the intellect, but optimism of the will. S..... have!

Now in my 80th year, I have decided to sell my large old house, much as I love it but I find it increasingly difficult to manage financially and physically. I have to move and above all downsize (which must be also a Buddhist concept, no?) Among other things that have to be disposed is my little library - many books and periodicals going back for decades. I am trying to find a home for them but as most of them are in English, this is problematic here.

So, dear Sulak, I have to ask you kindly to suspend the sending of "*Seeds of Peace*" as by the end of this year I shall no longer be at this address (although where I shall be I do not yet *Know*).

I hope this finds you in reasonable health and that the recent turbulence in your country will finally settle itself and not disturb you and your work too much.

In solidarity and in memory of times past,

Victoria

P.S. I did appreciate Matteo Pistono's article on your thoughts and deed?? SOP of No.29

August 28, 2014

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

Last weekend, I made my first visit to Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, on a four-day retreat for people of color. While there, in our free time, I sat under the trees and sky, by the streams and natural hot springs, and read your powerful words on the dangers of consumerism, which you've been organizing to transform for many years - maybe as long as I have been alive!

Your words touched me so much, I am excited to share them with others, and as a humble gift to you, here is a small stone from the mountains of Tassajara, near the Shrine to Suzuki Roshi.

Thank you for everything!
In Dharma,

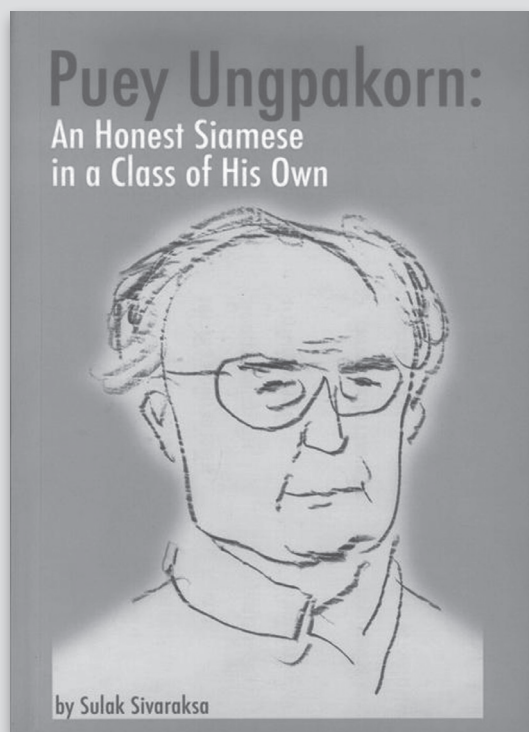
Katie
Co-directors of Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Dear A.J. Sulak,

Words cannot express our gratitude for your wisdom, vision, inspiration and true Dharma spirit in our world and in the world of engaged buddhism. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for being here!

With love and in Dharma,

Dawn
Co-directors of Buddhist Peace Fellowship



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

Jordan Basherville

Upon his return to Thailand from exile during the latter part of the 1970's Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa was interviewed about his friend in exile Puey Ungpakorn. After the interview was published, Sulak felt that it inadequately captured his thoughts and feelings about Puey. Not long after this, he was commissioned to write more about his friend and penned a lengthier, spirited and wide-ranging defense of Puey. The resulting book, originally released in 1979, *Puey Ungpakorn: An Honest Siamese in a Class of His Own* has been recently translated into English and republished. The book offers Sulak's interpretations of a number of events as well as controversies surrounding his friend. The text also serves as an important personal counter narrative to the specious rumors and falsehoods that were spread about Puey at the time.

The book is divided into a series of succinct chapters that are composed in an accessible, colloquial style. The topics cover Puey's involvement in the arts and charity

work, his academic career, and the events that shaped Puey's reputation in the public eye. Puey's remarkable life includes membership in the Free Thai Movement that opposed Japan during World War II, a Ph.D from the London School of Economics, tenure as Governor of the Central Bank of Thailand and rector of Thammasat University. He was also the recipient of the 1965 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service – an award that highlighted his exemplary personal conduct, public service and reputation.

Although this publication is ostensibly about Puey, and Sulak's views of his good friend, the text is multilayered and provides important insights into Suak's life and thought. In one illuminating anecdote, Sulak relays a conversation he had with Puey in which Puey felt that to be a Buddhist was to be an agnostic. Sulak agrees and remarks that "as long as we have yet to achieve enlightenment and realise truth, we are always in doubt" (70). Despite its title, and

frequent praise of its subject, the work is not a hagiography. As to be expected, Sulak has no problem pointing out any shortcomings and disagreements he has with his late friend. To cite one such example, Sulak critiques his friend's lack of a personal meditation practice and felt that more mental training could have prevented certain mistakes that Puey made.

Sulak previously described a few key highlights of his close relationship with Puey in his English-language autobiography *Loyalty Demands Dissent*. Sulak's newly translated *Puey Ungpakorn* stands solidly by itself yet also serves as an excellent supplement to Sulak's autobiography. It elaborates on his time spent with Puey, including noteworthy historical events they experienced together, while outlining the kind of personal qualities Sulak values in others. Sulak portrays Puey as a principled, incorruptible progressive who aspired to help Thailand develop and improve the lives of those in need. Puey also valued quality education,

the importance of critical thinking and viewed the improvement of the Thai education system as the cornerstone of virtuous societal development. He was also a staunch proponent of democracy and of a just society free of the corroding effects of mass inequality and corruption.

Sulak describes a number of Puey's many positive qualities and illustrates them through a series of short anecdotes that Sulak and others were privy to. Much of this book consists of a rejoinder to the fictions

and innuendo spread in the mass media and elsewhere about Puey. This work also serves as Sulak's defense of himself against similar prevarications and rumors. It therefore offers an important look into what both men were forced to deal with during the political turbulence of the 1970s.

One of the more important messages Sulak tries to impart through this text is to implore his fellow citizens to recognize morally upstanding individuals and to honor and respect them. Sulak writes that

failure to do so will be detrimental to society and that "Siam will never move towards santi pracha dhamma" (126). Although those looking for a comprehensive look at Puey's life and work should look elsewhere, this book will be of value to those seeking a deeper understanding of Puey's character and the importance he had in shaping Thai society. It will also interest those desiring to know more about Thai history and of Sulak's life, activities and thought.

The gist of Surapot Taweesak 's book entitled

" Buddhism, monarchy and democracy:

A critical look through the lens of Sulak Sivaraksa, the Siamese intellectual."

Thanet Arpornsuwan



In this book we have dealt with the theoretical concepts, critical history and recommendations regarding the institutions of Buddhism, the monarchy and democracy. We can summarise as follows:

Firstly, regarding Buddhism, Sulak views the substance of Buddhist teachings as about understanding the human condition and the true nature of everything subject to natural law. If the basics of the human condition are understood, it will help us to comprehend suffering in our own lives and in that of society, as well as the complex origination of social, economic, political and cultural problems and how to solve them. Suffering of individuals and society is connected and arises from the principle of causality; therefore liberation of the individual and of society is also linked. The paths to spiritual and social liberation are mutually supportive, requiring learning how to transform greed into generosity, hatred and anger into love, delusion into wisdom. This arousing of consciousness can also change unjust and violent social structures to create a giving, loving and wise society. In a decent life and a decent society, individuals live to learn and work towards awakening of consciousness for changing unjust sociopolitical structures into ones which foster both internal and social liberty and peace.

The substance of Buddhism, according to Sulak, emphasises morality for both individuals and rulers and the creation of a social system or culture of liberty, equality and fraternity as apparent in the original sangha. This substance can be applied to present-day society; therefore, Sulak sees Buddhism's idea of the ideal human and social condition as corresponding with and supporting democracy. This is because Buddhism teaches individuals to see the value of freely using their own reasoning and encourages the growth of an ideal society based on liberty, equality and fraternity rising above greed, anger and hatred and delusion that arise both in our hearts and that dominate our society and culture.

Despite all this, throughout history right up to today, Buddhism has been used to justify elitism, authoritarianism, capitalism and consumerism. It has been deliberately interpreted to serve these four things by intellectuals from the ruling class, the sangha, educational institutions and the mass media. The result has been destruction rather than positive progress. To remedy this situation, Sulak suggests we go back to the true substance and meaning of Buddhism to learn about the human condition and apply this knowledge to transform our lives and society for the better.

As for the sangha, it must distance itself from state power and vested interests and needs to keep pace with the trickery of capitalism and consumerism. It must have tolerance of different faiths and cultures and be able to govern itself under the monastic code of conduct, as well as being the voice of conscience and virtuous companion of the ruling class and society in general. Buddhists as a whole need to adopt the humanistic substance of liberty, equality and fraternity present in the core of Buddhist

teachings to support democracy, justice and peace in Thai and global society. Individual change and social change should walk hand in hand, walking the path of non-violence.

Secondly, regarding the monarchy, Sulak's opinion is that it has been created and justified by a mixture of Brahmanistic and Buddhist beliefs. Brahmanism has placed the monarch in a sacred and inviolable position of a god-king (*devaraja*), but this monarch's rule is justified by their role as a *dhammaraja* or *sommuti deva* who follows the Buddhist moral code as required of rulers.

However, Brahmanistic and Buddhist political philosophies are fundamentally at odds with one another. The former exalts the monarch above ordinary people, while the latter regards the monarch as simply being another ordinary person whose (ethical) rule is justified by the consent of the governed. This clash has resulted in the historical reality during the feudal and absolutist eras deviating from Buddhist ideals. The *dhammaraja* concept has failed more than it has succeeded and has been used as political propaganda rather than its principles being adhered to in its intended form.

After the 1932 revolution, the royalist faction used the *dhammaraja* concept to justify the monarchy's cultural hegemony and in their political struggle to restore royal power and influence to an even greater extent than before. The results were exaggerated advertising of the supposed wonderful qualities of the monarchy and an abnormal harshening of the penalty for lese-majesty that contradicts the trends of the modern democratic world which aims towards greater freedom and equality. In addition, the monarchy's relationship with the military and the Crown Property Bureau has led to it being

intertwined with enormous power and vested interests. The monarchy is also frequently used as an excuse for military coups, making Thailand's path to democracy rocky and full of obstacles.

Sulak recommends that the monarchy should distance itself from the military and that the Crown Property Bureau should be the National Property Bureau. The ten virtues of righteous rule should not be used in exaggerated glorification of the monarchy's merits, but should instead be used to encourage the monarchy to be accountable in line with democratic principles. There should be no lese-majesty law and the monarchy must not continue to support a sociopolitical structure containing greed, anger and hatred and delusion. It should reform along democratic lines, as its British, Swedish and Japanese counterparts have done.

Lastly, concerning democracy, Sulak points out that in theory, democracy has a complex meaning. Because of this, systems of government which are in fact complete opposites (liberal democracy and social democracy (socialism)) can fall under the same umbrella term. Whereas theorists see liberal democracy as being true democracy due to its guarantee of people's rights and freedoms, Sulak argues that this model is not truly democratic, as it is prone to domination by free market capitalism in deciding government policy and in the content of mass media. To add to this, global capitalism in the form of multinational corporations encroaches on the political and economic sovereignty of various countries.

As for Siam, despite calls for a parliamentary system since Rama V's reign which led to the Palace Revolt of 1912, democratisation has only taken place relatively recently, in the 1932 revolution, turning the formerly

absolute monarchy into one under the constitution. However, this system was only really present during Rama VIII's reign, as the king was young and his regent ensured its preservation. The royalist faction, bent on restoring royal power since Rama VII's reign, finally succeeded in the 1947 coup. The mode of government called 'democracy with the monarch as the head of state' first appeared in the 1949 constitution, while the 1957 and 1958 coups hailed in the Sarit Thanarat era, in which the monarchy was portrayed as the focal point of the nation's hearts. This is still the case now.

In Sulak's opinion, the struggle between the democratic and royalist factions, from the People's Party to the student and popular movements during the times of 14th October 1973 and 6th October 1976, has nonetheless failed to bring about democracy in its true sense, thanks to Thai democracy being under the control of feudalism and influential monetary politics. The 'liberal' Western democratic model supports capitalism and consumerism and is therefore not truly liberal.

Sulak argues that democracy as suitable for Thai society must be free from the grip of feudalism and monetary politics and from the tide of global capitalism and consumerism. This democracy must be politically, as opposed to economically, liberal. All institutions, including the monarchy, must be transparent, accountable and open to criticism. Under this system, the people are the true holders of power, participating in politics through free and fair elections, referendums and other types of power distribution. It is important that the state is not under the influence of free market capitalism so that the winner-takes-all idea does not prevail. Instead, the state must

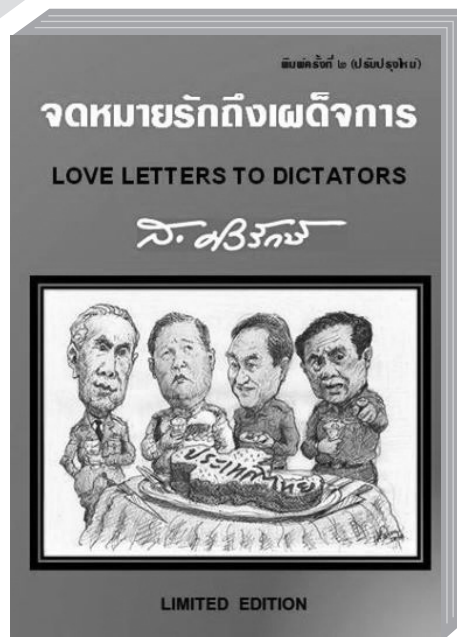
make economic policies to help the poor, disadvantaged and ordinary people who are oppressed and exploited so that they may be educated and have a decent quality of life and human dignity equal to everyone else in society.

According to Sulak, the democratic culture of village societies in the past, as well as the substance of Buddhism and the democratic nature and traditions of the original sangha can be applied to foster democracy in the above sense. This is especially so with respect to internal transformation in conjunction with transformation of social structures into ones founded on justice. Adherence to non-violence as prescribed by Buddhism is necessary for Thai society in its struggle during times of great change such as the situation we are facing now.

Sulak has enabled us to see the complexity of the concepts behind Buddhism, the monarchy and democracy and the practical problems arising from the governing institutional elite. In Buddhism this group is the sangha, while in the monarchy it

comprises the royalist faction and the monarch and their role. He explains the ongoing evolution of the push for democracy, marked by key events such as the 1912 Palace Revolt, the 1932 revolution and the events of 14th and 6th October, as well as the complexities of ideologies and the actors involved. Whether Sulak's attempted enlightening of Siam exposes the problems in depth and in a comprehensive manner, how much his work, mixed in with personal opinion, deviates from conventional scholarly output, and the validity of his proposed alternatives are issues which we must continue to debate.

What is undeniable is that Sulak's critiques have made an important contribution in encouraging and backing Thai society's freedom to use reasoning in all circumstances, the right to think freely and the right to have a reasonable and just government. This contribution bears great significance for the slow birth and stumbling progress of Thai society's very own renaissance.



Love Letters to Dictators

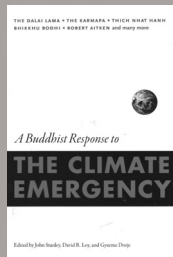
Limited edition
by Sulak Sivaraksa,
(2nd published)

Recommended Readings



Youth for Peace: 10 Year of Peace Activism 2001-2011

Publisher : Youth for Peace, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.



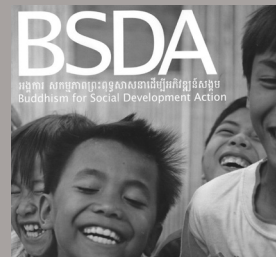
A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency

Editor : John Stanley, David R. Loy and Gyurme Dorje
Publisher : Wisdom Publications, Boston, U.S.A.



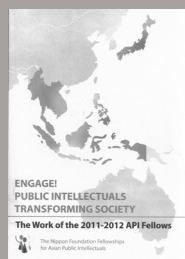
Annual Report 2013: American Friends Service Committee

Publisher : AFSC Development, Philadelphia, PA, U.S.A.



BSDA: Buddhism for Social Development Action

Publisher : BSDA: Buddhism for Social Development Action, Kampong Cham, Cambodia.



Engaged Public Intellectuals Transforming Society: The work of the 2011-2012 API Fellows

Publisher : API Regional Coordinating Institution, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand.



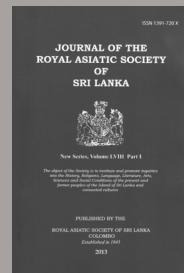
Green Quotations

Publisher : JU Publishing house, Yangon, Myanmar.



129th Topics: 2014 International Conference on "Animal Liberation, Animal Rights, and Equal Ecological Rights: Dialogues between Eastern and Western Philosophies and Religions"

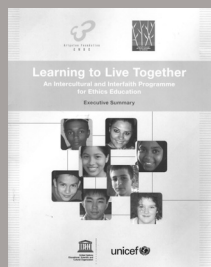
Publisher : HongShi Buddhist Cultural and Educational Foundation, Taiwan.



Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka

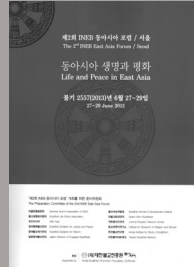
Editor : Hema Goonatillake

Publisher : Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka, Colombo, Sri Lanka.



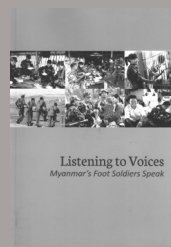
Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education, Executive Summary Edition

Publisher : Arigatou International, Geneva, Switzerland.



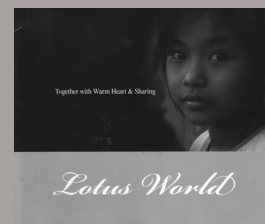
Life and Peace In East Asia: the 2nd INEB East Asia Forum/ Seoul, 27th-29th June 2013

Publisher : Buddhist Solidarity for Reform (BSR), Seoul, South Korea.



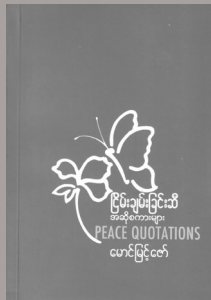
Listening to Voices: Myanmar's Foot Soldiers Speak, First Edition

Editors : Quinn Davis, James O'Keefe and Amelia Breeze
Publisher : The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), Cambodia.



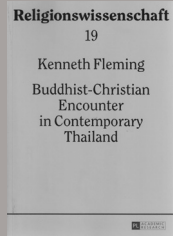
Lotus World: Together with Warm Heart & Sharing

Publisher : Lotus World, Siem Reap, Cambodia.



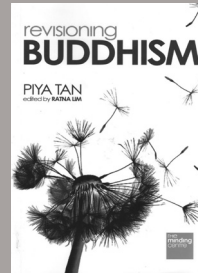
Peace Quotations

Publisher : JU Publishing House, Yangon, Myanmar.



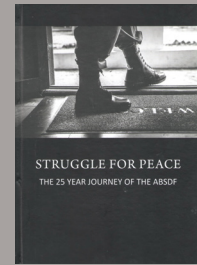
Buddhist-Christian Encounter in Contemporary Thailand

Author : Kenneth Fleming
Publisher : Peter Lang GmbH Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, Germany.



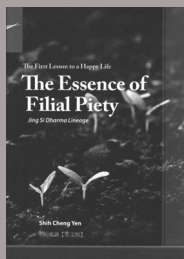
Revisoning Buddhism: An inspired re-look at the Buddha's example and teachings

Author : PIYA TAN
Editors : Ratna Lim
Publisher : The Minding Centre, Singapore.



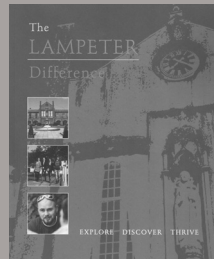
Struggle for Peace: the 25th year journey of the ABSDF

Photographer : Kannan Arunasalam
Publisher : The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), Cambodia.



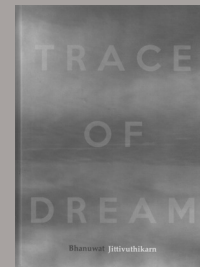
The Essence of Filial Piety: The first lesson to a Happy life

Author : Shih Cheng Yen
Translation : Tzu Chi USA Translation Team
Editor : Tzu Chi USA Editorial Division
Publisher : Jing Si Publications, Taiwan.



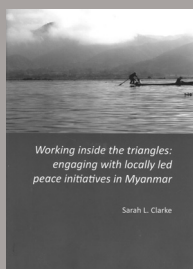
The Lampeter Difference: Explore, Discover and Thrive

Publisher : Faculty of Humanities, University of WALES Trinity Saint David, Lampeter Campus, Ceredigion, UK.



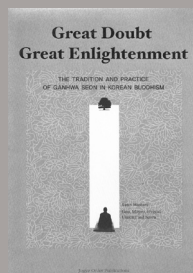
Trace of Dream, a prayer for the forgotten land

Photographer : Bhanuwat Jittivuthikarn
Publishers : Published in conjunction with exhibition: Trace of Dream, a prayer for the forgotten land, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, People's Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand.



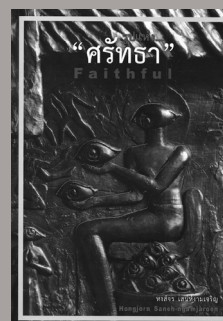
Working inside the triangles: engaging with locally led peace initiatives in Myanmar

Author : Sarah L. Clarke
Publisher : The Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Cambodia.



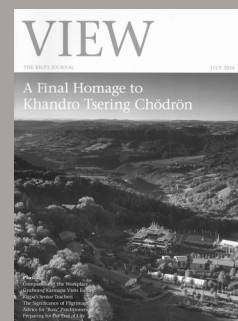
Great Doubt Great Enlightenment

Author : Seon Masters Gou, Muyeon, Hyeguk, Uijeong, and Seoru
Publisher : Jogye Order Publication



Faithful

Artist : Hongjorn Saneh-ngamjaroen



VIEW THE RIGPA JOURNAL

Editor : Andy Fraser