

SEEDS OF PEACE

Vol.37 No.1

January - April 2564 (2021)



Moving Forward in Solidarity

Publisher

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF
ENGAGED BUDDHISTS (INEB)

Editorial team

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

Cover

'Solidarity' - Tibetan calligraphy by
Jamyang Dorjee

Lay-out & Cover Art

Surapong Petnamlai

Distributed by

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

Suggested annual
subscription \$100USD

Payment info:

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

Seeds of Peace

666 Charoen-Nakorn Road,
Klongsan, Bangkok 10600 Siam
Tel. (662)860-2194
Fax. (662)860-1277
coordinator@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 organizations under SNF including
the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)
and the School for Wellbeing Studies
and Research.

Editorial Note **3**Country Reports **4**

- Bangladesh: 2020 Annual Report on Human Rights Situation
in CHT **4**
Siam: Anti-Myanmar Hate Speech Flares Over Virus **5**
Siam: Young Women Take a Frontline Role in Thailand's Protests
/ *Hannah Beech and Muktitia Suhartono* **6**
Tibet: Congress Passes Key Legislation Supporting Tibetans'
Aspirations, Rights **10**

INEB **14**

- Congratulations to Venerable Pomnyun Sunim on receiving
the Niwano Peace Prize / *Harsha Navaratne* **14**
Mindful Action Executive Summary **15**
Medical Materials Donated by JTS Korea for Myanmar's Front
Line Health Care Workers during COVID-19 **18**
Small Grant Guidelines for Female Sangha Initiative
For Social Transformation in Southeast Asia **20**
Workshop for Spiritual Leaders on Reducing Demand for
Wildlife Products **22**
Statement on Faith in Action for Children **26**

Sulak Sivaraksa **29**

- Thailand Protests are 'Justified': Scholars Weigh in on Unrest
/ *Toru Takahashi* **29**

Articles **32**

- 37th Niwano Peace Prize Awarded to Venerable Pomnyun
of South Korea / *Rev. Susan Hayward* **32**
An Urgent Appeal for Peace: We Must Choose Coexistence
Over Mutual Destruction / *Ven. Pomnyun Sunim* **35**
The Pitfalls of "Crazy Wisdom"
/ *Hans-Gueter Wagner* **38**
E-Waste Hazard Management / *Dusita Saokaew* **42**
Ecology Monks in Thailand Seek to End Environmental
Suffering / *Kiley Price* **44**
Thoughts and The Environment / *Tensin Palmo* **48**
Zen Buddhists Oppose the Death Penalty **51**

Atisha Interfaith Council Bangladesh Launches

Interfaith Leadership Development Project

/ Sanat Kumar Barua **53**

Obituaries **55**

Online Myanmar Library Founder

David Arnott Dies **55**

Honoring Venerable Luangphor

Viriyang Sirintharo **55**

His Eminence the fourth Chokgyur Lingpa **56**

Sojun Mel Weitsman **57**

Letters **58**

Congratulations to M.R. Saisavadi Savasti On Her 90th Birthday!



We congratulate M.R. Saisavadi Savasti on celebrating her 90th birthday and wish her continued happiness and good health. In 1984, she and other sisters generously donated the 34 rai of land to the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation. Her mother, Princess Samur, wanted the land to be used for something spiritual, a Buddhist contribution to world peace and personal growth. The ashram is named in honor of her parents, Prince and Princess Wongsanit. The Wongsanit Ashram has been the campus for our alternative education community where many people have benefitted from their learning experience through the years and continue to do so.

Editorial Note

Dear Friends and Readers,

2021 is beginning with new opportunities for expanding our work in the region.

We have been collaborating USAID Wildlife Asia, WildAid Thailand, the Thai Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), FHI60 and the Sekhiyadhamma network and Wat Chak Daeng to reduce the use of wildlife products and will have two more workshops in 2021.

We congratulate our dear friend Venerable Ponmyun Sunim on receiving the 37th Niwano Peace Prize. Thanks to Susan Hayward for sharing the background for Venerable being selected to receive the award. Venerable, in his acceptance speech, makes an urgent appeal for peace and to choose coexistence over mutual destruction.

We thank JTS Korea for their generous donations to several initiatives including the new Female Sangha Initiative for social transformation in Southeast Asia. This women's empowerment initiative was announced at the end of December 2020, and proposals are due January 31, 2021. JTS Korea also donated medical materials for health and medical workers in Myanmar. Our partner, Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation coordinated the distribution activities in Yangon. More information is available in this issue.

One of INEB's earliest friends, David Arnott, passed away in December 2020. David established the Online Burma Library which was one of the most valuable repositories for all things related to Burma since it was established in 2001. David was one of INEB's earliest members and is said to have birthed the concept of Buddhism with a small 'b'.

As usual, the articles cover a range of interesting topics from managing E-waste, to American Zen Buddhists opposing the death penalty, and thoughts and the environment from Himachal Pradesh, India.

We look forward to 2021 and send our best wishes for everyone's health, safety and prosperity through the year. Please refer to our website for updates – <https://inebnetwork.org/>



Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (United Peoples Party)

Central Office: Kalyanpur, Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

2020 Annual Report on Human Rights Situation in CHT

Due to non-implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord properly and fully, the human rights situation in the CHT had reached a critical stage in 2020. Eminent citizens of the country said at various events marking the 23rd anniversary of the CHT Accord in 2020 that the expectations created in 1997 through the signing of the CHT Accord have turned into frustration and anger as the Accord has not been implemented even in 23 years and the Jumma people are being ruled, exploited, deprived and oppressed.

In 2020, there were 139 human rights violations by the army, BGB and police. In these incidents, 3 people were extrajudicially killed, 50 were arrested illegally and 49 were detained for time being, 54 were beaten and harassed and 6 of them were seriously injured, 104 houses were searched and 25 houses including 20 temporary shops were vandalized, three times of blank shots had been fired in different areas to create panic. Despite the extreme calamity and crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, the repression and military operations of the army, BGB and law enforcement forces in the CHT did not

stop and the land grabbing and eviction of Jumma people by the state and non-state parties continued. Communal tensions had been spread by the Muslim settlers led by the ultra-communal and ultra-nationalist organisation named Parbatya Chattagram Nagorik Parishad (CHT Citizens' Council) with the help of the army, the administration and the ruling class. The conversion of Jumma people to Islam had been intensified by some radical and anti-Jumma Islamist groups.

16 Jumma women and children were subjected to violence by Bengali settlers including a member of army and there had been 47 incidents committed by the Bengali settlers, land grabbers, Rohingyas and security forces over the forcible occupation of land belonging to the Jumma people and land disputes. In these incidents, 17 Jumma villagers were injured, 3 communal attacks took place, 839 families were affected due to land grabbing, 3,036 acres of lands were invaded.

Terrorist activities were carried out by the Reformist and UPDF (Democratic) armed terrorist groups who were deployed by the army in various places of three hill districts.

There had been 100 human rights violations by these army-backed terrorist groups in 2020. In these incidents, 21 people had been killed, 50 had been abducted, 17 had been beaten and harassed, 8 had been threatened with death, and cases had been filed against 82 members and supporters of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS). Besides, 12 houses had been set on fire by the Mog Party.

Intensifying the Suppression in the Crisis of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2020, like other regions of the country, the deadly COVID-19 pandemic also hit the CHT. The lockdown to prevent coronavirus infection had led to food shortages in the CHT, as in other parts of the country. At the risk of their lives, the Jumma youths returned to their homes in Khagrachari, Rangamati and Bandarban districts from mid-April onwards. In the midst of such catastrophes and crises, the operations of the army, BGB and law enforcement agencies in the CHT did not stop, land grabbing and eviction of the Jumma villagers by the state and non-state actors also did not stop.

In August, Baghaihat army zone of 12 Bir Bengal, Baghaihat BGB zone of 54 battalion and Marishya BGB zone of 27 battalion in Baghaichari stopped the rice distribution program of UNDP allotted for the Corona pandemic. In August, a member of the Panchhari BGB zone in Panchhari upazila raided a temporary market in the Taraban Church area of Chengi Union and destroyed 15-20 shops belonging to Jumma vegetable sellers.

Please note that this is a condensed version of the entire report which has the following sections: Implementation of CHT Accord and Anti-Accord Activities of the Government; Criminalization of Jumma Rights Activists; Propaganda and Restrictions on Freedom of Expression and Assembly; Land Grabbing and Eviction from Land; Violence against Women;

Conversions to Islam and Communal Activities by the Fanatic Groups; and Military Support and Indulgence to Armed Terrorist Groups. The entire report can be found at PCCJSS - <https://www.pcjss.org/annual-report-on-human-rights-situation-in-cht-in-2020/>



Siam

Anti-Myanmar Hate Speech Flares Over Virus

Published : 25 Dec 2020

Writer: *Reuters And Bangkok Post*

“Wherever you see Myanmar people, shoot them down,” read one Thai comment on YouTube after a surge of coronavirus cases among workers from Myanmar.

The outbreak, first detected at a seafood market near Bangkok, has prompted a flare-up of such online hate speech as well as questions over the treatment of millions of migrant

workers.

“Myanmar people are being labelled for spreading Covid-19, but the virus doesn’t discriminate,” said Sompong Srakaew of the Labor Protection Network, a Thai group helping migrant workers.

Shifting sentiment had real consequences, he said, with workers from Myanmar, previously known

as Burma, being barred from buses, motorcycle taxis and offices.

One of the many incendiary comments on social media seen by Reuters called for infected migrant workers to remain untreated and punishment for people that brought them into the country.

The rhetoric reflects a global pattern since the start of the pandemic of foreigners being blamed for spreading the virus.

The independent Social Media Monitoring for Peace group said it found hundreds of comments classified as hate speech on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

“The comments included racist language aimed at triggering discrimination and promoting nationalism,” said the group’s Saijai Liangpunsakul.

After Reuters flagged some posts, Facebook said it had removed several for violating hate speech policies. Twitter said it was looking into the issue. YouTube did not respond to requests for comment.

Not all the social media traffic has been negative, with some Thais defending the Myanmar workers.

The outbreak was first detected

Migrant workers stand in front of the closed Central Shrimp Market in Muang district of Samut Sakhon province on Sunday.

(Reuters photo)



last week at a shrimp market at Samut Sakhon, barely 35 kilometres from central Bangkok.

Since then nearly 1,300 infections linked to the market have been found while thousands of people have been quarantined.

“We feel really sad that we Myanmar workers are being blamed,” said Nay Lin Thu, a 35-year-old worker from Myanmar who has now volunteered to help others.

“We are told ‘this happened because of you Myanmar.’ Mostly we do not respond but some of us couldn’t contain their anger.”

Officially, Thailand has nearly 1.6 million Myanmar workers, but the real figure is higher because of illegal immigration. Most migrants are labourers or work in service industries.

“Thai people won’t take the jobs they are doing,” Taweessilp Visanuyothin, of the Covid-19 taskforce, said as he pleaded for tolerance in a televised broadcast. “Today they are our family... Both Myanmar and Thai people are Buddhists.”

A video clip of a Myanmar migrant worker wiping his tears while listening to Dr Taweessilp went viral on social media.

Thailand has traditionally been seen as tolerant of foreigners, but a historic enmity has been revived on social media with references to the 18th-century destruction by Burmese forces of Ayutthaya, capital of what was then known as Siam.

Myanmar has suffered a much more severe coronavirus outbreak,

with over 2,500 dead from nearly 120,000 confirmed cases compared with 60 fatalities from over 5,800 cases in Thailand.

How the new cases first appeared in Thailand is unclear.

Panpimol Wipulakorn, director-general of the Department of Mental Health, urged Thais to give migrant workers moral support and not blame them for the new wave of infections in the kingdom. Cooperation will help curb the virus, he said.

A Myanmar woman in a clip circulated online said no one knew who imported the virus into the kingdom, adding her compatriots love Thailand as much as Thais.



Siam

Young Women Take a Frontline Role in Thailand’s Protests

Women, many of them students, are speaking out against a patriarchy that controls the military, the monarchy and the Buddhist monkhood, Thailand’s most powerful institutions.

Hannah Beech and Muktitu Suhartono, 24 Sept 2020,

The New York Times - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/24/world/asia/thailand-protests-women.html>

BANGKOK — As tens of thousands of people have gathered for a series of pro-democracy protests in Thailand in recent weeks, their ranks have been dominated by an emerging political force: young women.

Many of the earliest and most vocal organizers of the rallies have been female students. At recent protests, women appeared to make up the majority of participants, too.

While the demonstrations are

aimed at urging Thailand’s old guard to embrace new ideas, they have also addressed concerns that often don’t make it to the national stage. Many of them are specific to women, including abortion, taxes on menstrual products and school rules that force girls to conform to an outdated version of femininity.

Most of all, women are increasingly speaking out against a patriarchy that has long controlled the military, the monarchy and the Buddhist monkhood, Thailand’s most powerful institutions. They have joined a broader range of voices calling for greater say in a country where democracy has been in retreat, though the challenges for women remain steep even within the protest movement.



Thousands of protesters gathered in front of the Grand Palace in Bangkok on Saturday.

Credit - Adam Dean for *The New York Times*



"I shouldn't be afraid to say that men have almost all the power in Thailand," said Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul, one of the protest movement's leaders.

Credit - Adam Dean for *The New York Times*

"The monarchy and the military have all the power in Thailand," said Panusaya Sithijirawattanakul, one of a core of female students who have galvanized the political opposition. "I shouldn't be afraid to say that men have almost all the power in Thailand."

The protests are rooted in resistance to the military, which most recently carried out a coup in 2014. The generals who led the putsch said that protecting the palace from critics was one of their major reasons for doing so.

The government's stance on women's issues in particular has galvanized some activists. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, the coup leader, who retained his position after disputed elections last year, has dismissed the idea of gender parity, even though he serves as the head of a national committee dedicated to that ideal.

"Everyone says that we have to create justice, women and men have equal rights," he said during a speech on vocational training in 2016. "Thai

society will deteriorate if you think this way."

Mr. Prayuth, a retired general, said that women had authority over the home.

"Outside the house, we are big," he added, of men. "At work, we have the power."

Such notions have irked women.

"The male supremacy society has been growing since the coup," said Chumaporn Taengkliang, a co-founder of Women for Freedom and Democracy, a political alliance that has helped spearhead the anti-government rallies in Bangkok.

That needs to change, Ms. Chumaporn added.

"Women are not taking the back seat," she said. "They are the front line."

It's a phenomenon happening not just in Thailand. In Belarus, hundreds of women were arrested last week while marching in Minsk to protest the return to power of the country's strongman, President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko. And in

the United States, women and girls are often at the forefront of Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality.

In some ways, it should not be novel that women are helping to lead the protest movement in Thailand, which by some measures is one of Asia's most equitable societies for women. It gave them the right to vote in 1932, one of the first countries in the region to do so. More Thai women than men go to college. They make up 45 percent of the labor force. About 40 percent of private enterprises are headed by women, higher than the global average.

But women lack a voice in institutions like the military and the palace. Their political representation is paltry. Women occupy just 14 percent of the seats in Parliament. (That, at least, is better than after the 2014 coup, when only 5 percent of the legislature was female.)

Although female warriors in Thailand's history were famous for



Chumaporn Taengkliang, another protest leader, called for destroying “the male superiority structure under the monarchy” at a recent rally.

Credit - Amanda Mustard for *The New York Times*



Jutatip Sirikhan, a student at Thammasat University in Bangkok, was arrested this month for her involvement in the protests.

Credit - Amanda Mustard for *The New York Times*

having helped repel foreign invaders, the nation’s top military academy does not accept women. Last year, the Royal Thai Police Cadet Academy, which had been open to women for about a decade, effectively closed its doors again to female applicants.

Women have taken part in previous protest movements. A core of so-called aunties, many from rural areas ignored by Bangkok’s ruling elite, were integral to an opposition force called the Red Shirts, who occupied downtown Bangkok for weeks before a bloody crackdown in 2010.

But in protest leadership, women had been mostly absent.

“In previous democracy movements, it was almost all men,” said Jutatip Sirikhan, a student at Thammasat University in Bangkok who was arrested this month for her involvement in the current protests. “Until now, Thailand has not had a gender political movement.”

The involvement of social-

media-savvy young women has shifted the tenor of the current protests. Many are well-educated daughters of the middle and upper middle classes, and they wonder why the #MeToo movement has bypassed Thailand.

They have brought their defiance to some of the country’s fanciest private girls’ schools, raising their hands during school assemblies in a defiant, three-fingered salute from the “Hunger Games” books and movies rather than paying respect to the national or royal anthem. Many of them are bound by school rules on hairstyles, uniforms and even underwear that they consider invasive.

As the rallies this summer grew bigger, women took to protest stages to criticize a persistent wage gap and denounce what they call rape culture. They decried the government’s classification of feminine hygiene products as cosmetics, which could make them liable for higher taxes.

They highlighted abortion laws that, in their view, fail to give women control over their own bodies by restricting the procedure to cases in which physical or mental health is compromised. And they spoke out against beauty contests, popular in Thailand, which they said dismissed women as demure, decorative objects. (A beauty queen who expressed support for the pro-democracy rallies was denounced online for having dark skin.)

“The young generation today has the vocabulary to name what’s wrong with society when it comes to gender issues,” said Duangthai Buranajaroenkij, an expert in gender studies at Mahidol University in Bangkok. “When I began studying gender, most people in Thailand didn’t even know to use a gender lens to look at things.”

During an overnight rally last weekend, the largest since the 2014 coup, female speakers took aim at the patriarchal traditions of the Thai



A portrait of King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun was under guard during the protests last weekend.

Credit - Adam Dean for *The New York Times*



Sirin Mungcharoen said she was mocked by male activists for promoting feminism and L.G.B.T.Q. rights as integral to democracy.

Credit - Amanda Mustard for *The New York Times*

royal palace. Succession laws specify that the crown must go to a male heir. The Privy Council, a select group of advisers to the monarch, is all-male.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun has been married four times. Two of his previous wives were purged. Last year, the king stripped titles from his royal consort, a position akin to an official mistress that, until he brought it back, had not existed since before the country abolished absolute monarchy in 1932.

The consort had been accused of “misbehavior and disloyalty against the monarch.” But this month, the palace announced that she had been reinstated to her former position. It is not clear why.

On a protest stage in front of the Grand Palace on Saturday night, Ms. Chumaporn, the co-founder of Women for Freedom and Democracy, raised an issue that is rarely discussed in a country where criticism of the king can earn people

up to 15 years in prison. (The king was not at home because he spends most of his time in Germany.)

“We ask you to add one more point,” Ms. Chumaporn said, to cheers from the crowd. “That is to destroy the male superiority structure under the monarchy.”

But the weekend rallies also showed that a movement powered by many leaders is now coalescing around fewer individuals — and most are men. Of the 18 keynote speakers on Saturday, only three were women. (Ms. Panusaya did present a protest letter meant for the king, however.)

One of the male speakers was Attapon Buapat, an activist who said that “women, honestly speaking, are a nosy gender,” to even greater applause than Ms. Chumaporn received. “That’s why God cursed women to have a weak body in order to effectively reduce their meddlesomeness.”

In a Facebook post, Mr. Attapon

later apologized, saying he had not “considered the subtlety of this matter.”

Sirin Mungcharoen, a student leader at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, said she had tried to promote feminism, along with L.G.B.T.Q. rights, as integral to democracy. When she did, some male activists who had been fighting alongside her began mocking her, she said.

Meanwhile, online harassers have been making fun of her appearance. They passed around her picture and said that her hair, dyed blond, made her look like a loose woman. She went off social media.

“They could not see that one person could work on the issue of democracy and women’s rights at the same time,” Ms. Sirin said. “Thai society is still very patriarchal.”

Tibet

Congress Passes Key Legislation Supporting Tibetans' Aspirations, Rights

International Campaign for Tibet, 21 December 2020



Congress today passed a bill that will dramatically upgrade US support for Tibetans in key areas, including by sanctioning Chinese officials if they try to appoint the next Dalai Lama.

The Tibetan Policy and Support Act is now expected to be signed into law by President Trump.

The House previously passed the TPSA by an overwhelming margin in January. The bill also had strong bipartisan support in the Senate. However, due in part to the unprecedented challenges this year, senators were not able to bring the legislation to the floor in time for a vote, so they included the TPSA in the spending bill that Congress passed today, Dec. 21, 2020.

The bipartisan TPSA will launch

a new era in US policy on Tibet, a historically independent country in Central Asia that has become one of the least free places on Earth under the repressive rule of the Chinese government.

What the Bill Does

Building on the landmark Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, the TPSA will:

- Make it official US policy that the selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including a future Dalai Lama, should follow the desires of the Tibetan Buddhist community and the instructions of the current Dalai Lama—who is now 85—with no interference from the Chinese government.
- Sanction Chinese officials if they

carry out their plans to appoint their own Dalai Lama in the future. These sanctions could include having their assets frozen and their entry to the US denied. The State Department will also have to work at the international level to build support for Tibetan Buddhists' freedom to choose their own leaders without government interference.

- Address water security and climate change in Tibet, which is warming nearly three times faster than the global average and provides water to more than 1 billion people across Asia. Under the TPSA, the US recognizes the strategic importance of the Tibetan plateau and the threat that climate change poses to it. The secretary of state will have to pursue collaboration with China and international institutions to monitor Tibet's environment and support the Tibetan people's efforts to preserve it. The secretary will also have to encourage a regional framework on water security.
- Strengthen diplomatic efforts through the office of the special coordinator for Tibetan issues in the State Department to push for a negotiated solution between the Chinese government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama.
- Forbid China from opening a new consulate in the US until China allows a US consulate in Lhasa, Tibet's capital city. In July, China

forced the US to close its consulate in Chengdu, which serves as a major gateway to Tibet, after the US forced the closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston.

- Formalize funding for humanitarian projects for Tibetans inside and outside Tibet until at least 2025.
- Require the secretary of state and secretary of commerce to work with US businesses and individuals to make sure their business activities in Tibet follow the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- Commend the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people for adopting a democratic system of government in exile.

Reps. James McGovern, D-Mass., and Chris Smith, R-N.J., introduced the TPSA in the House in September 2019.

Sens. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., and Ben Cardin, D-Md., introduced the TPSA in the Senate.

What it Means

The TPSA represents a major upgrade to US policy on Tibet, as well as a direct challenge to China's continuing repression of the Tibetan people.

• Succession of the Dalai Lama

Tibetan Buddhists believe that when the Dalai Lama passes away, he can choose to reincarnate in order to benefit humankind. In 2011, the Dalai Lama—who is the 14th in his line—delivered a statement laying out his views on reincarnation,

saying he believed that Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhists should decide whether it's necessary to continue the institution of the Dalai Lama after he dies. The statement also says, "It is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives ... to meddle in the system of reincarnation."

Despite this, the Chinese Communist Party absurdly continues to insist that it must approve the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. In 2007, China introduced new rules for the selection and appointment of reincarnate lamas, giving the government authority over the entire process. Chinese officials have said they will use this authority to appoint a future Dalai Lama.

In 1995, after the Dalai Lama recognized a six-year-old boy in Tibet as the reincarnated Panchen Lama—one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism—the Chinese government kidnapped the child and his family. In his place, China appointed a "fake" Panchen Lama who now serves as a mouthpiece for the Communist Party, including on official trips overseas. Fears are high that China will follow a similar process for the appointment of the next Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama has said that if he does reincarnate, he will do so in a free country like India, where he has lived in exile since China's conquest of Tibet in the 1950s. He

has also said that nobody will respect a future Dalai Lama appointed by the Chinese government.

• Water Security and Climate Change in Tibet

As the source of several of the largest river systems in the world, Tibet provides water to more than 1 billion people downstream. The TPSA identifies many of the environmental crises taking place in Tibet under China's rule, including melting glaciers and a rate of warming that's nearly three times the global average.

According to a study released this year, China used its dams on the Mekong, which originates in Tibet, to prevent the flow of water downstream in 2019, contributing to a devastating drought in Southeast Asia. Chinese dam construction is also forcing thousands of Tibetans to relocate against their will.

The TPSA requires the secretary of state to encourage a regional framework on water security and to pursue collaboration with China and international institutions to monitor the environment on the Tibetan plateau. The secretary will also have to engage China and NGOs to promote the participation of Tibetan nomads and other Tibetans in the development and implementation of grassland management policies in Tibet in order to utilize their indigenous experience.

The bill says that development projects supported by US and

international financial institutions and organizations should not incentivize or facilitate the forced relocation of Tibetan nomads.

• **Diplomatic Support**

Highlighting the need for a US diplomatic presence in Tibet, the bill mandates that the Secretary of State “not authorize the establishment in the United States of any additional consulate of the People’s Republic of China until such time as a United States consulate in Lhasa, Tibet, is established.”

In addition, the TPSA expands the role of the special coordinator for Tibetan issues in the State Department.

• **Support for Tibetans**

The TPSA allows for the allocation of development assistance funds for the skilled development, entrepreneurship and cultural preservation of Tibetan exiles in South Asia. It requires the secretary of state to urge the government of Nepal to honor its “Gentleman’s Agreement” with the UN high commissioner for refugees regarding the rights of Tibetans in Nepal.

The TPSA also describes the democratic transformation of the Tibetan system of governance in exile. It commends the Dalai Lama “for his decision to devolve political authority to elected leaders in accordance with democratic principles.”

The bill says the Central Tibetan Administration represents and

reflects the aspirations of Tibetan people around the world.

Momentum in Tibet Support

The passage of the TPSA caps a historic period of US government action in support of Tibetans.

- In 2018, Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which takes direct aim at China’s policy of preventing American journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens from entering Tibet, even though Chinese citizens can travel freely throughout the United States. RATA was the most important Tibet-related legislation in over a decade.
- In July 2020, the State Department implemented RATA by denying entry to the US for the Chinese officials responsible for keeping Americans out of Tibet. This marked the first time in history the US had banned Chinese officials over their actions in Tibet.
- In September 2020, then-Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden released a statement saying “a Biden-Harris administration will stand up for the people of Tibet.” In the statement, the now-president-elect promised to meet with the Dalai Lama; insist China allow access to Tibet for US citizens; and work with US allies to pressure China to restart direct dialogue with Tibetan representatives toward achieving genuine autonomy for Tibet.

- Biden also pledged to sanction Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses in Tibet and expand Tibetan language services at Radio Free Asia and Voice of America.

- Last month, the House passed a bipartisan resolution promoting autonomy for Tibetans and offering them support on a number of issues they face under Chinese rule.
- The resolution also urges the “swift enactment” of the TPSA, stresses the urgency of addressing the climate crisis on the Tibetan plateau and determines that it “would be beneficial to continue years of bipartisan and bicameral engagement with the leaders of the Tibetan people,” including between members of Congress and the Dalai Lama.
- Outside the US, five UN human rights experts and expert bodies wrote to the Chinese government in August, urging China “to ensure that Tibetan Buddhists are able to freely practice their religion.” The experts noted that Tibetans’ religious freedom included the right “to determine their clergy and religious leaders in accordance with their own religious traditions and practices.”

Over the past year, the European Union’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, has said the EU opposes any interference in the Dalai Lama’s succession by the

Chinese government. Officials in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands have expressed similar positions.

The TPSA's Journey

The success of the TPSA is due in part to Tibetan Americans and other Tibet supporters, who sent more than 26,000 petitions to members of Congress through the International Campaign for Tibet.

Tibet supporters also visited and called their legislators' offices to urge their support for the bill as part of ICT's virtual Tibet Lobby Day in March 2020 and its mini-Lobby Day last autumn.

In June 2020, ICT Chairman Richard Gere, the world-famous actor, social activist and philanthropist, testified at a Senate

subcommittee hearing and urged senators to support the TPSA. Gere said the Dalai Lama's succession "can't be allowed to be controlled by the Communist Party, but only by Tibetan Buddhists."

Learn More About the History of the TPSA »

Now that Congress has passed the TPSA, ICT will seek to advance similar legislation in other countries.

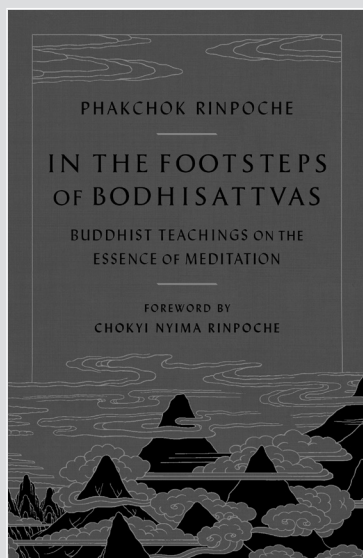
Quote from the International Campaign for Tibet: "By passing the TPSA, Congress has not only upgraded its overall support for Tibet, but specifically laid a marker down on the global stage declaring that the international community will not accept China's interference in the Dalai Lama's succession and will oppose China's human rights

abuses in Tibet for as long as they continue. China's plan to appoint the next Dalai Lama is the culmination of its decades-long effort to destroy the Tibetan people's unique religion, culture and identity, as well as their sacred and globally important environment. We thank the United States for its bold leadership and look forward to other countries adopting their own versions of this legislation."

Source: <https://savetibet.org/congress-passes-key-legislation-supporting-tibetans-aspirations-rights/>

S

Recommended Reading

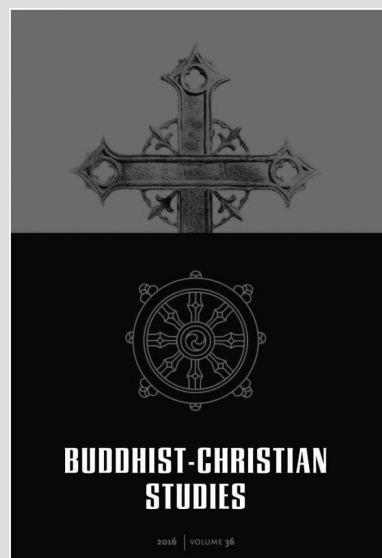


In The Footsteps of Bodhisattvas

Author: Phakchok Rinpoche

Buddhist-Christian Studies
2016/Volume 36

Editors: Thomas Cattoi &
Carol Anderson



Congratulations to Venerable Pomnyun Sunim On Receiving the Niwano Peace Prize



I am so happy to send our greetings to most Ven. Pomnyun Sunim on this great occasion of receiving the Niwano Peace prize.

Niwano peace prize is given to honour a person who devotes his/her life for the cause of peace building. Nominated by world religious leaders and intellectuals and also with a long screening exercise, the peace Award was given to great achievements of some of the world leaders who have contributed not only for their own country and people - but also to encourage more and more people to follow such great personalities and their spiritual journey.

Among those great personalities Ven. Pomnyun Sunim is so special for the International Network of Engaged Buddhists family.

His courageous peace journey started from the Korean peninsula and was spread across Asia without any discrimination. Similar to a Buddhist monk and a follower of Gautam Buddha, he has contributed to multiple ethnicities and religious communities in many countries. The work he has done in India is extra-

ordinary. He himself worked as a volunteer by walking from one village to another as the monks journeying barefoot. Among these villages are mostly disadvantaged communities. His work has been given tremendous support and happiness to those communities.

Every time we had a disaster in my own country, Sri Lanka, he personally visited and worked with us as partners.

Every year young Buddhist monks from India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and China used to visit Ven. Pomnyun Sunim and the Junto Society. Every one of them were so impressed with his contribution to his country. Especially, in terms of building peace between North and South Korea.

Today we are living in a world with so much uncertainty! Most people are lost! They do not have hope for tomorrow. Poverty, conflict, climate crisis and the newest pandemic like the corona virus!

Let me congratulate most Ven. Pomnyun Sunim on this great moment of accepting the Niwano Peace Prize!

Greetings and blessings from Sri Lanka!

Harsha Navaratne

Chairperson, of the Executive Committee

International Network of Engaged Buddhists

Executive Summary

Mindful Action: COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund

By INEB Staff

Introduction

By mid-April 2020, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) had issued a statement regarding the COVID-19 pandemic calling for compassionate action around the world. INEB's universal appeal was to maintain communal harmony and offer loving kindness to all human beings everywhere.

How INEB's Mindful Action Fund Came About

INEB, in close collaboration with its members and partners, designed a process to respond to the emerging situation which included forming an emergency relief fund as a resource to help the most vulnerable groups from affected countries in INEB's network

Where the Emergency Relief Activities Took Place

INEB's partners and members were spontaneous and generous when it came to setting up the Mindful Action COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund that has directly benefitted persons in 5 countries in the South and Southeast Asia region. Originally the relief activities took place in 4 countries – Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Nepal. Cambodia was added in response to the extreme flooding conditions taking place in Battambang province which further exacerbated the pandemic.

The Mindful Action Fund made small grants (between 1,000 and 5,000 USD) available immediately after applications were reviewed and approved. All applicants conducted needs assessment which helped them to prioritize their relief efforts. Most funds were awarded in May and June 2020; some organizations applied for a second phase of funds based on decisions by a group of INEB's Executive Committee members. Most applicants were from INEB partner organizations where they were already working with local communities.

Funds were also awarded to some new organizations outside INEB's network for the first time based on recommendations from our Executive Committee members.

The relief activities could be implemented more quickly because the partners had a local presence with access to communities where they were known and trusted. They also had relationships with local authorities through which they requested and received necessary authorization and permits needed to access communities to distribute relief assistance.

Emergency Activities - What Was Distributed and Who Benefitted

All the Mindful Action partners relief activities focused on addressing the most needy and vulnerable groups in the areas where they were working. Many partners helped persons who had lost their livelihoods or had no income that were living in containment areas, or otherwise were confined to their homes. Emergency activities were prioritized to support a range of needy persons: women led-households; extremely poor persons living on the margins of society; migrant workers; persons vulnerable to domestic and gender-based violence; Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Chin and Rakhine states of Myanmar; students and teachers confined on campuses of monastic schools; orphans; persons displaced by flooding conditions in Bangladesh, India and Cambodia; children at risk of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation; pushcart vendors and more.

Distribution was strategic and varied depending on the situation. Some activities and supplies were distributed in central locations with social distancing in place. In other situations, staff and volunteers distributing relief supplies went to people's homes where visits were made by boat, on foot, by car and motorbike.

The core emergency response activity was to provide basic food and some hygiene supplies. The relief activities varied depending on the partner's capacity and access to communities. In addition to distributing food supplies, some relief activities: reached out to inter-faith communities; provided medical support through transportation, medication and supplies; provided accurate information about COVID-19 through translating it into local languages and distributing information to the public, trained local leaders and workers, and held mass campaigns that increased awareness; offered telephone counseling; distributed blankets and mosquito nets; and reduced the possibility of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence through story-telling sessions and books distributed.

The partners also were aware of the psycho-social impact of the pandemic in local communities. Their reports included observations of how local people were coping and their general temperament. They also commented how people's spirits were lifted when they received food which relieved some of their stress. Some partners did provide telephone counseling, medical transportation and basic medical assistance which addressed physical and some psychological needs.

Also, some donors provided funds that were to be used to address specific needs. Arigatou International provided funds for IDP children in Rakhine and Chin state who were at risk of gender-based violence and sexual harassment. JTS Korea provided more than 110,000 medical materials (six types of PPE and COVID-19 test kits) to Myanmar with a shipment arriving at the Yangon seaport from Korea late in December 2020.

The partners' matching funds and in-kind donations included reusable cloth masks, clothing and household items, blankets, public awareness about COVID-19. Ultimately, the partners' additional resources of matching funds and in-kind expanded the entire relief effort and reached more people in need. The Mindful Action Fund contributed to a larger scale relief effort which made every dollar go further in each of the five countries.

Overall, the actual number of direct beneficiaries and household exceeded the estimates from the proposals

by 41%. The total number of partners participating in the emergency response was 17 with a total number of 22 proposals funded; 29,834 direct beneficiaries received emergency relief. The numbers of indirect beneficiaries are believed to be much higher than the direct beneficiaries.

The medical materials and COVID-19 tests donated by JST Korea were distributed to two locations in Yangon which has been the epicenter of the second phase of COVID-19. The donation directly benefitted 1,070 patients, 431 medical staff (doctors, nurses and other staff) and 204 volunteers. Again, many more persons will indirectly benefit from these materials and tests which are ensuring that the health care workers, volunteers and patients health and safety has been addressed.

Challenges and Risks

The pandemic, in most locations, made living situations that were already difficult, much worse.

Having difficulties with logistics and communication were common themes. The situation was fluid, sometimes the locations where supplies were to be distributed had to be changed because the conditions changed. The partners faced many challenges including: delays distributing relief supplies while waiting for required authorizations; extreme weather conditions during the rainy season where roads were wiped out and flood waters were high; and increased transportation costs which doubled in some locations. Many times supplies were limited or not available with costs fluctuating. In some cases, police blocked access to communities. Volunteers and staff were more at risk of the virus when distributing supplies; and too often local people resisted wearing masks. Chin and Rakhine states of Myanmar were still experiencing an internet blackout that began in June 2019, making communication in and out of the refugee camps nearly impossible, in addition to armed conflict that displaced the local population.

Sometimes there was tension within communities when some families received relief supplies, while others did not. The reality for the staff and volunteers delivering the emergency supplies was that the need was always greater than the emergency relief provided. A quote

from Nagajunar's report captures this the best: "There is no glorious or extremist needs of the communities. The communities only need the basic food to survive to feed their children and old people."

Medical materials and COVID-19 test distributed in two locations in Yangon, Myanmar, had unique challenges, most of which were securing the requisite permits from government authorities.

Summary

As stated previously, the Mindful Action Fund supported larger emergency relief efforts taking place in all five countries that helped to provide food, basic nutrition and some hygiene supplies which helped stabilize people's lives during the pandemic. The persons receiving emergency assistance had no safety nets, or social and economic support system as they were from unorganized sectors – migrants, landless communities (beggars, rag pickers, iron mongers, persons selling by

the roadside, brick layers and numerous types of day laborers), those with limited resources.

Report is organized by country within which each partner's activities are described. Country maps show where the partner organization's location and where relief activities took place. Many partners conducted emergency relief activities in other locations which are shown on the Mindful Action country partner maps. Each Mindful Action partner relied on their extensive networks which included civil society organizations, religious groups, and government officials among many others.

This was a first experience for INEB to collaborate on an emergency relief effort of this size which was possible through the trust, strength and responsiveness of its entire network.



International Network
of Engaged Buddhists

January 31, 2021

Dear Alan,

We send you our congratulations and best wishes on becoming installed as the Abbot of the Berkeley Zen Center. We believe that as Abbot you will continue the work guiding the teachings which begun many years ago with the BZC.

In addition to your history and experience with the BZC, we respect your deep practice of Soto Zen Buddhism and commitment to socially engaged Buddhism in the many capacities through which you have served over many years both in the United States and internationally.

We recognize that your constant devotion to socially engaged Buddhist has taken various forms, for example, as past president of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association, through the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, as founder of the Clearview Project, and your presence through training and in other capacities in various parts of Asia including India and Myanmar, that focus on bridging divides across ethnicities, race and religion.

We send our very best wishes as you begin the new year as Abbot of the Berkeley Zen Center.

With metta,

Sulak Sivaraksa

Founder, INEB

Harsha Nararatne

Chairperson, INEB's Executive Committee



Medical Materials Donated by JTS Korea for Myanmar's Front Line Health Care Workers During COVID-19



Overview

Yangon has been, and continues to be, the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar. JTS Korea generously donated more than 110,000 medical materials worth \$130,000 USD to support health workers and medical professionals working in the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar. This distribution was the first emergency response involving a shipment which traveled across international waters. We acknowledge and respect JTS Korea's and Kalyana Mitta Development Foundation's (KMF) ability to make this possible through their dedication and commitment to the emergency response effort.

KMF coordinated the multi-step process of receiving materials at the seaport and distributing them. The process involved acquiring necessary authorizations through the Myanmar Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS) and other relevant ministries. Additionally, KMF assisted JTS by purchasing COVID-19 Antigen Test Devices in Yangon, Myanmar. The distribution activities involved KMF collaborating with the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) and its volunteers to deliver

the medical materials to the Phaung Gyi COVID-19 Treatment Center (Phaung Gyi MTC) and South Okkalar Specialist Hospital in Yangon. MCC has been providing volunteer services to COVID-19 treatment centres and hospitals in Myanmar during the pandemic.

Distribution Process

After being notified by JTS Korea in October 2020, KMF conducted a rapid survey with its partner MCC. The Phaung Gyi MTC and the South Okkalar Specialist Hospital were selected to receive the medical materials based on the survey's results.

Various approvals from Myanmar authorities were needed to receive the items from Korea. Separate approvals were needed to purchase the COVID-19 test kits. KMF coordinated primarily with MOHS to receive the required permission. MOHS also facilitated the process with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Health Laboratory (NHL) and the Central Medical Store Depot (CMSD).

FDA checked the list of donated items, of which 6



items were approved, but the NHL did not approve the Genedia W COVID-19 Ag test kits JTS wanted to donate. Consequently, JTS decided to buy the PANBIOTM COVID-19 Ag Test Rapid Devices in Yangon. KMF coordinated with the Sea Lion Company to purchase these tests, and contacted FDA and MOHS for the (one time) importation permission. MOHS contacted the Ministry of Planning Finance and Industry for the tax exemption, otherwise the tax may have cost 4,600 USD on the 6 types of imported items. CMSD assisted by providing their import license and making all the clearances at the Yangon Seaport. CMSD worked with Ministry of Transports and Communications and Customs for all the logistics, clearances, and other processes at the Yangon seaport. CMSD further helped KMF receive the distribution permission from their Clearance Department and Distribution Department to assure the distribution was carried out as planned. MCC contacted the Phaung Gyi MTC and South Okkalar Specialist Hospital about the donation process and provided necessary information for the distribution plan.

The cargo ship from Korea took 4 weeks before arriving at Yangon's seaport on 19 December 2020. On December, 30 and 31 2020, MCC assisted KMF with their volunteers and the Myanmar Red Cross delivered the boxes to the Phaung Gyi COVID-19 MTC and South Okkalar Specialist Hospital. Only designated medical persons were allowed to receive the test kits. More than 110,000 individual items were donated.

The successful distribution was made possible with the cooperation and collaboration of JTS, KMF, INEB, MCC (and its volunteers), and MOHS and all government agencies, in addition to the frontline healthcare workers

and volunteers at the two locations. The types of donated items included: 30,000 (KF94) Breathe GO Yellow Dust Protective Masks; 30,000 latex powder free gloves; 10,008 disposable protective coveralls; 10,200 shoe covers; 10,000 face shields (glasses); 10,000 face shields (film); and 10,000 PANBIOTM COVID-19 Ag Test Rapid Device.

Challenges

Although, the bureaucratic government system was complex, time consuming and stressful, the government employees' proactive assistance helped the distribution to be successful. KMF and MCC also prepared to address challenges and further subsequent waves of COVID-19 when developing the distribution plan. KMF and MCC staff and volunteers were at risk of becoming infected. In fact, between April and December, 13 youth among the volunteers did become infected with the virus.

Beneficiaries at the Epicenter

Since Yangon is the epicenter during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, most people received treatment at the Phaung Gyi COVID-19 MTC which opened in April 2020. Their medical staff were from Yangon, as well as from hospitals in other states and regions. Since August 2020, Phaung Gyi MTC had approximately 1,000 patients, which were more serious cases. South Okkalar Specialist Hospital had approximately 70 COVID-19 patients, as well as other patients. MCC coordinated with Christian youth from various parts of Myanmar to volunteer at both locations since April 2020.

Persons that directly benefited from the donated medical materials included: 1,070 patients, 431 doctors, nurses and other staff, in addition to 204 volunteers. Many more persons indirectly benefitted from the donated medical materials which include the families of all the direct beneficiaries and the general population of Yangon.

Small Grant Guidelines for Female Sangha Initiative For Social Transformation in Southeast Asia

January - October 2021

Funded by



Coordinated by



Overview

Southeast Asia is one of the most religiously diverse regions on earth with Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, animists, and more. Women make up at least half of the population. Yet, due to patriarchy and institutionalized oppression which is present in all societal structures, including religions, their full participation and contributions to a harmonious and vibrant society are effectively limited.

Women-led socially engaged Buddhist work has not been a focus of any male-lead Buddhist institutions and work. Women's problems were created and sustained by social structures and a practice of gender inequality and misogyny. This perpetuates societal imbalances, structural violence and unnecessary suffering.

With this in mind, we need to embrace a different worldview, methodology and commitment to create justice and equality that is inclusive and intersectional. It is a worldview based on a power-sharing culture, that sees and trusts every human being as equal in their rights, their wisdom, and their ability to lead change regardless of their sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, class, caste, age, ordained or lay.

The Female Sangha Initiative for Social Transformation in Southeast Asia is an opportunity for women throughout Southeast Asia to design and implement small projects that will address some of their immediate needs in their local communities.

Proposals may address social inequities and other issues within Buddhism such as:

- Poor education
- Structural oppression
- Materialism
- Monopolization of Buddhism by monks
- Patriarchy

Initiative Funded by JTS Korea

JTS Korea has generously provided 50,000 USD to INEB for this initiative in keeping with JTS Chairman, Venerable Pomnyun Sunim's vision to empower Buddhist women (both lay and ordained) throughout Southeast Asia. The projects would create space for Buddhist women to participate more freely and actively in social activities that contribute to an environment and society within which equality for women is valued and actualized.

The Project's Design and Goal

The goal is of empowering Buddhist women to engage more fully with social issues locally, regionally, and globally with values guided by the Buddha-Dharma.

These guidelines have been developed by the INEB Secretariat in consultation with some of INEB's Advisory Council and Executive Committee members, and JTS Korea. The project is designed to build close

collaborations and networks among Buddhist women, both lay and ordained, within their community, country and within the region so that they can support each other to be actively involved in contributing to a just and peaceful society.

Objectives

- To improve the quality of life and equal participation of Buddhist women through increasing their opportunities for fully engaging in community life by supporting and nurturing diverse sustainable models for community living
- To improve education for Buddhist women, both monastic and lay
- To support women working toward pluralistic harmonious societies with women at the core.

Grant Themes may include:

- Capacity building for women and gender equality
- Uplifting the status of women in organizations and communities
- Piloting sustainable community models
- Women led peacebuilding initiatives promoting religious pluralism

Amount of Funds Available

Applicants may request up to 5,000 USD as startup funds. Applicants may be non-profit organizations or groups.

Including matching funds in the proposal will increase the likelihood of receiving funding approval.

What this Initiative will Not Fund

While not a definitive list, we will not fund requests for the following:

- Capital projects (the purchase, construction or renovation of buildings and related facilities)
- Individuals
- Fundraising events
- Equipment
- Salaries

Project Eligibility Criteria and Scope

The funds are available to applicants in Southeast Asia, across all Buddhist traditions, at the grassroots level, among untouchables, as well as other marginalized communities.

Applicants must have bank accounts into which funds can be transferred.

Small Grant Selection Process

Approximately 10 successful applicants will be selected by a Screening and Selection Committee.

INEB will contact the finalists and conduct a telephone interview with them.

Coordination and Technical Support

INEB staff will coordinate the initiative and communicate with the projects throughout 2021.

Timeline

Activity	Date
Announce funds are available	December 2020
Proposals submitted	January 1 – 31, 2021
Proposals reviewed and selected for funding	February 1 – 28, 2021
Announce applicants selected & funds awarded	February 28, 2021
Project implementation	March - August, 2021
Mid-Term report	May 31, 2021
Final report	August 31, 2021
Consolidated Final Report	October 2021

Contact Information

International Network of Engaged Buddhists
666 Charoen Nakorn Road, Klongsan, Bangkok 10600
Thailand

Email:

- **Somboon Chungprampree**, Executive Secretary - secretariat@inebnetwork.org
- **Opor Srisuwan**, Project Coordinator - compassion@inebnetwork.org

Workshop for Spiritual Leaders on Reducing Demand for Wildlife Products

October 21, 2020

Wat Chak Daeng, Bang Krachao



Group photo of workshop participants in the dhamma hall of Wat Chak Daeng.

Credit Wansiri Rongrongmuang



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



*International Network
of Engaged Buddhists*



**ช่วยสัตว์ป่า
WILDAID**

The workshop was a collaboration between the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), USAID Wildlife Asia, WildAid Thailand, the Thai Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP), FHI60 and the Sekhiyadhamma network and Wat Chak Daeng. This event was the first time that Buddhist spiritual leaders were brought together to learn about how monks and nuns can be key influencers in Thailand's national effort to end the use of wildlife products, in addition to ending killing animals to use their products (skin, teeth, ivory, meat, etc.) for so-called spiritual protection. The day long workshop was held at Wat Chak Daeng, Samut Prakan, Thailand.

Workshop Objectives

The workshop aims to strengthen the capacity and commitment of monks and nuns from key temples in Bangkok and northern Thailand to:

1. Echo key messages of the two spiritual beliefs campaigns and respond to questions from people visiting temples and others with whom they come in contact
2. Provide information regarding the negative impact of consuming endangered species based on findings from USAID Wildlife Asia Thailand 2018 Consumer Research and other relevant research studies
3. Develop messages aligned with USAID Wildlife Asia's campaign messages that will be relevant in their particular temple and similar settings
4. Speak authoritatively and explain why use of

ivory, tiger and other amulets derived from endangered species are not in line with Buddhist teachings.

Participants

The participants were 20 Buddhist monks and 10 nuns from the Sekhiyadhamma network and Wat Chak Daeng. These persons were invited because they will be the key influencers to bring the message to stop using wildlife products and stop killing wildlife. Other persons in attendance included persons from each of the coordinating organizations and presenters totaling approximately 40 persons.

Workshop Agenda and Methodology

Workshop topics included:

- Update on how Thailand is tackling the illegal trade of wildlife products such as ivory and tiger parts
- Introduction to USAID's Wildlife Asia activities and campaign regarding spiritual beliefs pertaining to wildlife products
- Campaign in collaboration with WildAid – “A Good Life is Free of Killing”
- Discussion of the role of Buddhist spiritual leaders – monks and nuns – in disrupting illegal wildlife trade and consumption in Thailand
- Adapting messages to reduce demand for ivory and tiger products based on spiritual beliefs
- Small group discussions and presentations

The presentations were spoken in the Thai language with some PowerPoint content in English.

Opening Remarks by Saroj Srisai, Ecosystems Management and Trade Specialist, USAID, welcomed coordinators, monks and nuns in attendance. Saroj clearly stated that their focus is to reduce the demand for wildlife products – no ivory, no tiger amulets. The US government policy and intention is to reduce wildlife trafficking, and production of wildlife products. Thailand is a primary distribution hub for the trafficking of wildlife products. Also, Thai people believe wildlife products have spiritual powers.

Further opening remarks were made by Phra Maha

Pranom Dhammalangkaro, Abbot of Wat Chak Daeng hosting the workshop. Venerable abbot his insights and broad perspective about living in harmony with nature. He said power comes from meditation, not the belief that power comes from the ivory or an amulet. The power is from the heart or the spirit. This is why the wildlife products are not needed. The good energy comes from right thoughts.

When wildlife are killed, lives are taken and policies are broken. The abbot urged everyone not to kill and in order to experience metta, loving kindness.

The abbot continued by talking about trash and garbage, and how killing still takes place when animals consume it and die on land and in the oceans and rivers, such as whales and many other animals. Animals are killed intentionally and unintentionally, directly and indirectly. We eventually see the consequences of trash. This is why Wat Chak Daeng has an extensive trash management system and teaches the youth how to recycle trash.

If these 2 types of killing can be reduced, then the wildlife will flourish. We need to have compassion for the natural world in order to live in harmony with it.

Session 1 - Update on how Thailand is tackling the illegal trade of wildlife products such as ivory and tiger parts by Sadudee Punpugdee, Director, Ivory Sub-Control Division (CITES), Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).

Session 2 - Introduction of USAID Wildlife Asia Activity, Spiritual Beliefs re Wildlife Products and Spiritual Beliefs campaigns - “No Ivory, No Tiger Amulets” by Chinnapat Chin, USAID Wildlife Asia.

Session 3 - Campaign in collaboration with WildAid – “A Good Life is Free of Killing” by Nuthatai Chotechuang, Thailand Representative, WildAid.

The WildAid campaign called “A Good Life Free of Killing” focuses on ending wildlife trade and illegal poaching in China, Vietnam and Thailand, and specifically to reduce the demand for ivory and animal meat in Thailand. The campaign is directly addressing the false beliefs that ivory protects people from evil, will give a good life, a better life. This campaign challenges



Small groups of nuns and monks
Credit Wansiri Rongrongmuang



Small group presentation
Credit Wansiri Rongrongmuang

people to be responsible for their actions, not to rely on amulets. Some Thai celebrities are supporting this campaign and have appeared in videos, signs on buses and other media messages. Now they want to actively involve more ordinary people in this campaign that can raise awareness about these issues at the local community level with nuns and monks as key influencers to share this message with society. The key message is Think, Feel and Act.

A consumer survey asked questions about their beliefs and killing wildlife. Have you asked yourself why you would have to take or exploit a life in order to have a better life? The message is not to exploit another life for yourself.

Session 4 - Discussion on role of Buddhist monks in disrupting illegal wildlife trade and consumption in Thailand by Ven. Win Siri Wattano and Dr. Surin Onprom.

The session included the following topics:

- Relationship between monks and wildlife, the role of monks
- Role of monks in campaign against use of wildlife parts
- Buddhist principals regarding use of wildlife parts
- “Jataka Sutra” (Buddhist holy scripture teaching) on the virtues of wildlife
- Case studies of temples and wildlife conservation in Thailand
- Q & A

Session 5 - Adapting messages to reduce demand

for ivory and tiger based on spiritual beliefs by Chinnapat Chin, USAID Wildlife Asia.

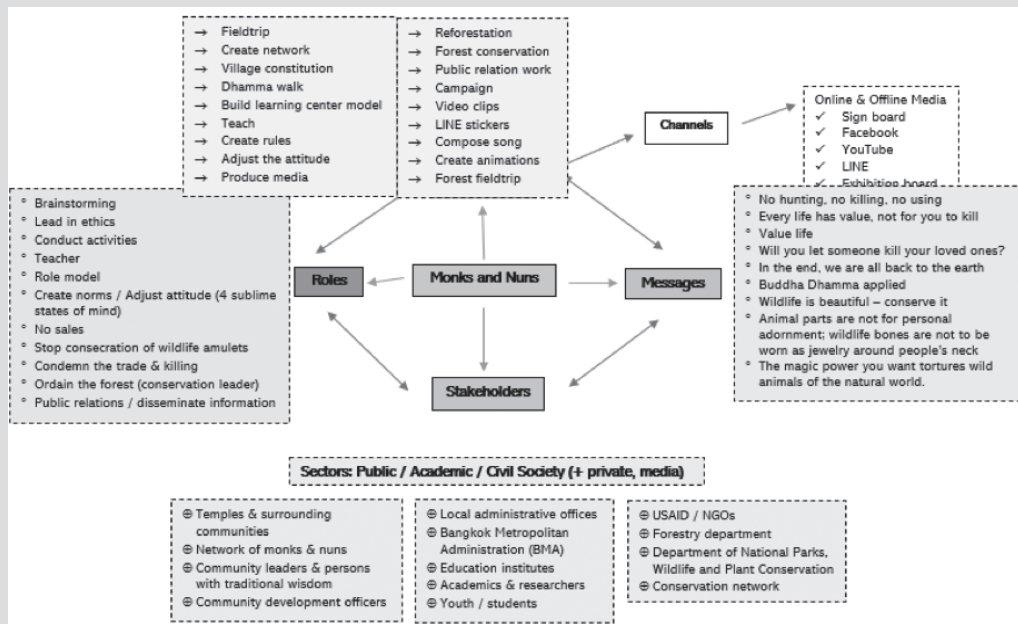
- Recap of spiritual beliefs campaign messages – Wisdom, Purity, Compassion. It makes no sense to think that wearing amulets carries the essence of the Buddha or that they are auspicious. Spread compassion with your heart to animals and the environment.
- Use channels to reach the target audience through touchpoints in daily life. Consider: where the target lives, how they travel or commute, where they work, what they do in their free time, where they worship, what they read and who they listen to.

Outcomes and Summary of Participants' Small Group Discussions

Small groups were asked to brainstorm their key message, their target group and the channels to use that examined the following areas:

- The role of the monks and nuns in wildlife conservation and avoiding the use of wildlife parts
- Agencies involved in supporting monks and nuns in conservation efforts to end the trade of wildlife parts
- Integrate messages in teachings for monks and nuns

The five small group discussions were very productive as monks and nuns sat together to more deeply examine the issue and how specific approaches can be used to reduce the use of wildlife products and killing wild animals in their communities.



Small group discussion summary diagram

Credit Wansiri Rongrongmuang

Wansiri Rongrongmuang summarized the small group presentation in a diagram that showed monks and nuns roles, linking to the teachings and Buddhist principles, and their target groups of public, academic, and private sectors, as well as civil society. The content of the campaign aims to raise awareness, not selling or using, and public relations. The groups suggested several options for activities and what can be done through campaigns, conservation camps, idea adjustment, comic books, as well as online and offline media.

Next Steps

In closing Ven. Phra Win asked for feedback about how to improve this situation. One maechi raised the concern about how to address the conflict between humans and wild animals, especially elephants eating and destroying plants on farmland. Another example raised in an earlier session asked focused on some persons livelihood that depended on hunting wildlife. How to prevent harming wildlife, while at the same time preventing use of wildlife products and killing them is a real life dilemma which raises the larger issue of how to peacefully coexist with all of nature.

Some suggestions were:

- To have a resource center available for the monks and nuns
- Separate the issues into local, national, regional, and international
- How to move forward from this meeting, moving as a network. Understanding the issues more deeply needs to take place in order for a network to have a long term impact.
- Link to existing networks, e.g., community forestry; form solidarity with them.
- Requires a long-term commitment in order to bring about changes in thinking about the false belief in the power of ivory and tiger products
- Bring these issues to the sangha in 16 provinces of northern Thailand. Present the summary of the small group discussions to the sangha.
- Work on other issues as a team such as protecting peacocks.

It was generally acknowledged that the first meeting with Buddhist spiritual leaders was a good beginning for initiating the wildlife campaigns, and more collaborations with USAID are planned for 2021.



Statement on Faith in Action for Children

Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Greatly concerned by the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of children around the world, we, the participants of the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children, have issued this Statement.

We are children, young people and religious leaders from more than 53 countries, who, together with representatives of the United Nations, international, national and grassroots organizations, and diverse experts, gathered November 16-20, 2020, for the online Global Week of Faith in Action for Children organized by Arigatou International and partners.

Children and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Children of all ages have been among the most vulnerable to the damage and disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated the challenges that prevent children, especially those most vulnerable, from enjoying their rights. Children themselves tell us – and research confirms – that they are suffering grievously from the loss of family members to the pandemic, a serious disruption of school life, an alarming increase in various forms of violence against them, a noticeable deepening of poverty, the devastating impact the pandemic is having on the adults in their lives, as well as the divisive and, at times, competing narratives and misleading information about how to stay safe during

the pandemic.

Children who were already disadvantaged by poverty and more vulnerable are being affected even more gravely, and their very development and even survival are threatened. Many experts predict that the Covid-19 pandemic will have a variety of long-term impacts with lasting negative consequences for their mental health, socio-emotional growth, and spiritual well-being. In particular, we are concerned that the spiritual well-being of children is not often considered in education, psycho-social support or social protection programs.

Children are the priceless treasure of humanity and the inheritors of the earth. The potentially irreversible damage to children's lives we are witnessing is not only unacceptable in and of itself; it also puts the future of humanity at greater risk. Yet, sadly, children continue to remain largely invisible and absent in the global community's responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also wholeheartedly affirm that children have a unique and essential role to play, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, in building a better world – a world where the human dignity of each and every person is recognized and respected. To this end, it is imperative that we all work together in solidarity to transform the divisions, inequities and injustices in all of our societies.

Children's Proposals

We, the children and young people who participated in this Global Week, have shared our ideas and insights, helping to shape this Statement. The following summarizes many of our proposals:

- Listen with an open heart to us, talk with, support and motivate us in these challenging times.
- Create ways to continue to stay in contact with us despite the disruptions, be creative to ensure that none of us feels isolated or unsupported, even if we cannot connect using technology.
- Help us to find coping mechanisms, and find ways to foster our imagination and creativity even during the lockdown.
- Since many of our brothers and sisters have no access to daily nutritious meals, support the most vulnerable families, including with financial support and nutrition.
- Support parents and caregivers so they can cope with the “new normal,” so they can better help us. We know that parents want to support us, but sometimes they do not know how.
- Make more opportunities for dialogue with parents, but also within faith communities and schools. As children, we look up to adults and would like to share our feelings, fears and dreams with them, but there is a need to improve communication.
- Let us explore the world peacefully because we are born to explore. While exploring the world we children can know what is wrong and what is right.
- Provide access to education to all children, without discrimination of race or ethnicity.
- Education must teach us to be good people and teach us about faith.
- Provide support to children victims of violence.
- Offer support for distance learning, particularly for those who do not have computers or internet at home.

Joint Commitment to Action

Informed by the children's proposals and our extensive dialogue over the past five days of the Global Week, we share a compelling determination to rise to the challenge of our times – to meet the ethical obligation to embrace solidarity, work together as one, and honor our innate interdependence and interconnectedness as human beings in all that we do. Toward this end, we, children, young people and religious leaders from more than 53 countries, who, together with representatives of the United Nations, international, national and grassroots organizations, and diverse experts, have agreed upon a set of collective actions.

We pledge to redefine the term, “new normal.” We will not yield to a pandemic-driven existence of isolation, deprivation, and disease. Instead, we will seize the opportunity provided by this crisis to promote the fundamental changes needed to ensure that each and every child – no matter their socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, religious background, or other factor – can grow and fully develop by helping to shape a more compassionate, just and sustainable world.

We collectively commit to the following actions:

1. Fulfill the Panama Commitments on Ending Violence Against Children, which consist of a set of 10 promises made by diverse religious leaders, children and young people, and representatives of civil society and faith-based organizations, at the Fifth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) held in Panama City in 2017.
2. Jointly implement evidence-based strategies to address the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on children, thereby contributing to economic strengthening, supporting parents and caregivers, challenging harmful norms condoning violence against children and strengthening those that affirm children's dignity and advance child sensitive social protection.

3. Promote child participation in all decisions that impact children and work hand in hand with them to create spaces and opportunities for joint solutions for the issues that affect them, focusing on areas of education including nurturing spirituality, prevention of violence against children and ending child poverty.
4. Be accountable to children in the implementation of our joint actions.
5. Listen to the advice of scientific and health experts to ensure that we share accurate health information on how to keep people safe, address religious and faith-related concerns, and promote the safety and protection of children and our communities.
6. Strengthen collaboration and coalition-building at the local level among religious communities and among FBOs, CSOs, multilateral organizations and grassroots and religious communities.

Endorsed by:

- Arigatou International
- Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

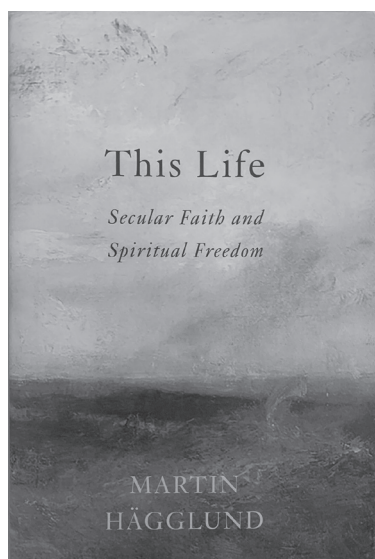
- Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace
- International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID)
- International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Norwegian Church Aid
- Parliament of World's Religions
- Pastoral da Crianca
- Religions for Peace
- Scholas Occurrentes
- Shanti Ashram
- UNICEF
- World Council of Churches
- World Vision International

Joined by:

- Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG/VAC)
- Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI)
- World Bank Group

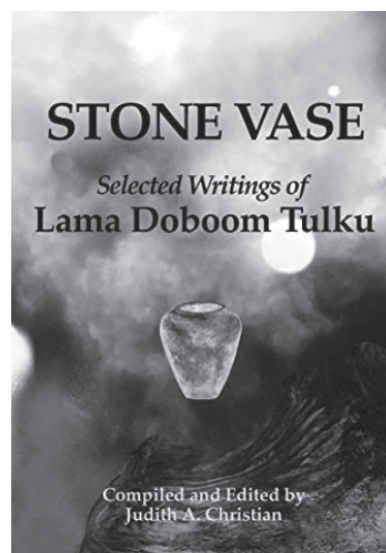


Recommended Reading



This Life
Secular Faith and Spiritual Freedom

Author: Martin Hägglund



Stone Vase

Author: Lama Doboom Tulku
Compiled and edited: Judith A. Christian

Thailand Protests are 'Justified': Scholars Weigh in on Unrest

Sulak 'very proud' of activists;
Suehiro notes emphasis on social justice

Toru Takahashi, Editor-in-Chief,

Editorial Headquarters for Asia, 31 October 2020

Source: Nikkei Asia - <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/Interview/Thailand-protests-are-justified-scholars-weigh-in-on-unrest>



Thai social activist Sulak Sivaraksa (left), and Akira Suehiro, professor at Japan's Gakushuin University, discussed the Thailand protests with Nikkei.

The protests rocking Thailand have resulted in a number of demands against the powers that be, including amendments to the constitution, reforms to the monarchy and the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, who first came to power in a military coup.

Sulak Sivaraksa, Thailand's foremost Buddhist scholar, is no stranger to activism himself, having several times run afoul of Thailand's draconian lese-majeste law forbidding perceived damage or insult to the monarchy.

When Nikkei interviewed Sulak in his home on Oct. 20, he said the time has come to discuss reforms to the monarchy, and the scholar offered warm praise and advice to the youth-led protests.

Akira Suehiro, professor at Tokyo's Gakushuin

University, elaborated on how anti-government protests have evolved in Thailand over the years, culminating in the current movement fueled by disillusionment with the status quo.

Edited excerpts from their interviews follow.

Sulak Sivaraksa, Thailand's foremost Buddhist scholar and social critic:

Q: How do you see the demands from the protesters?

A: In my opinion, the demands are justified because Prayuth, although he claimed that he came from a democratic system, in reality is still in a dictatorship. The Future Forward Party has won 80 [legislative seats], but Prayuth tried everything to destroy that party, and he



Many young people can be seen in the current protests in Thailand.

refused things such as an amendment to the constitution.

Prayuth as prime minister must take all responsibility, but he often refers to [King Maha Vajiralongkorn]. I think that was really unwise for the prime minister.

In a constitutional monarchy, the king can do no wrong. Everything the king does, the prime minister must take responsibility.

That's why people now become angry even with the monarchy, because I think Prayuth brought the monarchy down.

Q: How does this student uprising compare with those from the past?

A: This is the first with not only college or university students but also schoolchildren. They are very articulate, and what they say also makes sense. They did not use wild accusations. I am very proud of them.

In the [student-led uprising in the 1970s], no schoolchildren were involved.

Now students have come out of the mainstream, so I am proud of those young people [who came out], not only in Bangkok but also in the provinces, too.

Q: What is your opinion on monarchy reform?

A: Now is the time that we must confront the monarchy directly and [determine] how we can make the

monarchy survive appropriately. In the old days, I was the only one who was speaking, but now [the sentiment] is widespread. People feel that if the monarchy is not accountable and if there is no criticism, the monarchy may not even survive, unless the monarchy benefits the people.

Q: How do you see Thailand's lese-majeste law?

A: [The late King Bhumibol Adulyadej] said that anybody who brought lese-majeste cases to the court meant those were to harm him personally and undermine the monarchy. The late king said that.

But no government ever implements the king's wish, despite the fact they say they're all loyal to the throne.

Q: Is the king listening to the protesters?

A: I don't know how much [the king] is aware of the demands so far. He remains quiet ... I have heard from reliable sources that the king is very concerned about young people, and I even heard that he also told Prayuth to handle the situation wisely and carefully, but Prayuth did not implement [the response] as the king wished.

Q: What is your advice to protesters?

A: I tell them that I admire what they are doing, but I also caution them not to be impatient and not to use bad

language -- in particular with the monarchy.

Whatever they express, they should do so with respect and use proper language, because once they make one mistake regarding the monarchy, the public will turn against them.

You have certain extreme elements harming them already. But so far, the public is with them.

Akira Suehiro, Professor at Gakushuin University in Tokyo:

To understand the political unrest in Thailand, one needs to compare it to large-scale anti-government demonstrations in the past.

The pro-democracy movement in the 1970s took place against the backdrop of the Cold War, and it aimed to realize social justice within the context of a class struggle.

The demonstrations in the early 1990s, after the Cold War ended, sought to clean up government, which had been frequently criticized as corrupt.

The period starting from 2006 had reciprocal demonstrations by the camps loyal to former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and those staged by his detractors. The back-and-forth revolved around whether

you liked Thaksin, the democratically elected leader who mixed money with politics.

Now the goal is social justice. While tensions between the U.S. and China loom in the background, they are not as big of a factor as the Cold War was. The slowdown in economic growth is a more pressing concern.

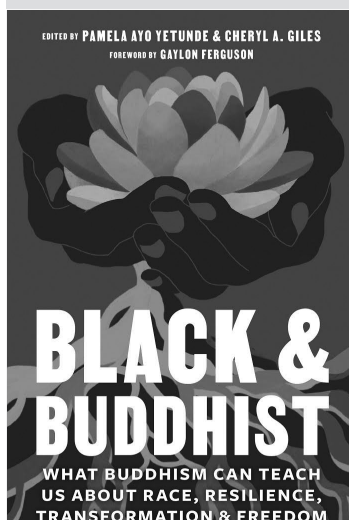
In South Korea, younger people who have given up on finding a job, getting married or buying a house for economic reasons are referred to as the "N-po Generation." A similar thing is happening in Thailand. A generation that has lost hope, that feels trapped economically and socially, is expressing their dissatisfaction in the form of student protests.

Developments in communication methods have bolstered this trend. Social media and smartphones have given people access to a flood of information that the media do not report. While protests in the past were concentrated around Bangkok, they are now being held simultaneously across the country.

The demands for royal reform are revolutionary. But actually updating the constitution is almost like a regime change, and is easier said than done. It will take a long time to change the system.

S

Recommended Reading

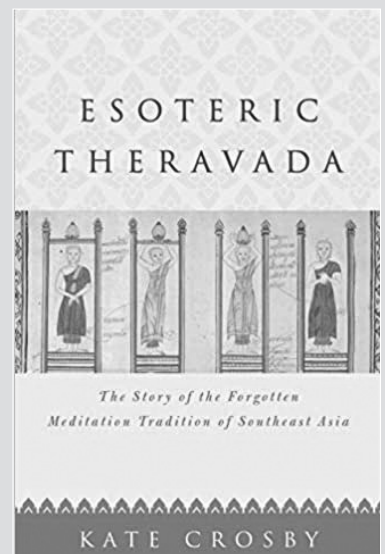


Black & Buddhist

Edited: Pamela Ayo Yetunde & Cheryl A. Giles

Esoteric Theravada

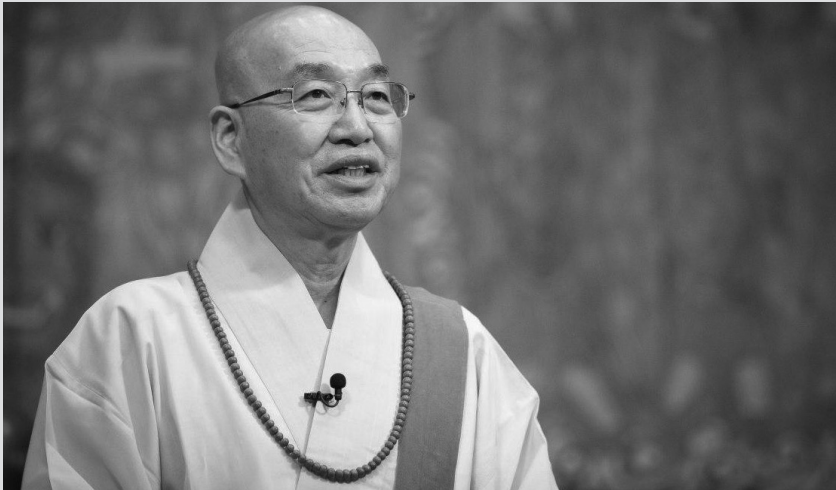
Author: Kate Crosby



37th Niwano Peace Prize Awarded to Venerable Pomnyun of South Korea

Reason for Selection

Rev. Susan Hayward



Your excellencies, distinguished leaders, honorable guests, respected recipient of the 37th Niwano Peace Prize, and friends and family from around the world who join together virtually today in celebration:

As the chairperson of the Niwano Peace Prize Committee, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you the winner of the 37th Niwano Peace Prize, Zen Master the Venerable Pomnyun of South Korea. This award is offered in recognition of Venerable Pomnyun's extraordinary humanitarian work, his environmental and social activism, and his inspiring effort to build relationships of trust and good will between those of different faiths and cultures as a central component of his work for peace. Venerable Pomnyun's work serves as a poignant illustration of the Buddhist ideals that inspire it.

Before I introduce our distinguished honoree, let me take a moment to say a word about the history of the Niwano Peace Prize and the process of selecting its winner.

The Prize was first established in 1983 to honor and encourage individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to interreligious cooperation. Through celebrating these exemplars of peace, it seeks also to inspire and encourage similar efforts worldwide.

The Prize is named in honor of the founder and first president of the lay Buddhist organization Rissho Kosei-kai, Reverend Nikkyo Niwano. For Rev. Niwano, peace is not only the absence of conflicts between nations and groups, but also a dynamic harmony in the inner life of individuals, as well as in communities, nations, and the world. Seeing peace as the goal of Buddhism, Rev. Niwano devoted much of the second half of his life to promoting peace in the world, especially through inter-religious dialogue and cooperation. We are so very grateful for the legacy Rev. Niwano bestowed to humanity.

And at a time when our world is under such extraordinary strain, how meaningful it is to pause to celebrate incredible peacebuilders who are motivated by their spiritual and cultural traditions to do such good in the world, often at great personal cost. Hearing about the work of people like Venerable Pomnyun is a balm during troubled times, and I am appreciative to the Niwano Foundation for lifting up these individuals and their stories to inspire the world. Far too often, these humble religious peacebuilders do their work without recognition.

But we must celebrate and encourage these peacebuilders, as our collective humanity depends on it. The forces of violence, exploitation, and prejudice are powerful in our world. The global pandemic we are collectively facing, I fear has only strengthened these negative trends. But we must do more than celebrate peacebuilders like Venerable Pomnyun – we must join together with them to reduce suffering worldwide. It is only in this way that all of humanity – as well as the earth itself, which suffers with us – will survive and thrive.

Let me say a word about the careful process that led our committee to select Venerable Pomnyun as the 2020 winner of the 37th Niwano Peace Prize.

Every year the Niwano Peace Foundation solicits nominations from people of recognized intellectual and religious stature around the world. In the nomination process, some 600 people and organizations, representing over 125 countries and many religions, are asked to propose candidates. Nominations are rigorously screened by the Niwano Peace Prize International Selection Committee. The Committee presently consists of eight religious leaders from around the world, all of whom are themselves involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

In making the final decision, the Committee carefully considered the criteria of Niwano Peace Prize winners: peace orientation, spirituality and religious faith, commitment to interreligious cooperation, and the breadth and depth of activities advancing peace.

As is always the case, the work of the Niwano Peace Prize Selection Committee was both challenging and inspirational. There were many deserving candidates and organizations. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the International Selection Committee and the Secretariat for their insights, careful judgement, commitment, and hard work. The committee members all inspire me and I am glad to work closely with them.

Now, let us turn to learn more about the incredible individual we have gathered today to celebrate, the winner of the 37th Niwano Peace Prize.

Venerable Pomnyun was born in 1953 to a farming family in rural South Korea and at age 16 entered the Buddhist monkhood. At 35 years old, Ven. Pomnyun founded the Jungto Society, a community based on the teachings and principles of Buddhism and dedicated to addressing modern problems that drive suffering, including environmental degradation, poverty, and violent conflict. Members of Jungto Society are taught to appreciate the interconnectedness of all living things and to contribute to the well-being of the global community through developing internal peace and acting compassionately toward others.

Ven. Pomnyun has worked for peace both at home on the Korean Peninsula and abroad. His organization Good Friends seeks to ease the suffering caused by famine and natural disasters in North Korea through humanitarian aid and inter-religious advocacy, while the research institute he founded, Peace Foundation, produces insights aimed at encouraging Korean unification. His international aid organization, Join Together Society, has sought to eradicate poverty and hunger through humanitarian relief and sustainable development initiatives in North Korea, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, and beyond. In 2019, Ven. Pomnyun traveled to Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh to deliver 100,000 stoves to Rohingya Muslim refugees who had fled violence in neighboring Myanmar.

His EcoBuddha initiative encourages greater awareness of environmental degradation and encourages

lifestyle choices to reduce overconsumption and ease one's negative environmental impacts. Ven. Pomnyun's efforts encompass different methods of peacebuilding, from advocacy that includes letter writing campaigns and peace rallies, to crisis response and humanitarian relief, to research that can surface policy prescriptions to address the root causes of conflict and advance sustainable peace. As is clear from this brief summary of his work, Ven. Pomnyun's efforts to build peace are substantial, respond to critical needs, and are offered across both geographic and figurative borders – like those of race and religion – in ways that affirm the interdependence of all beings. In this way, Ven. Pomnyun has contributed immensely to the cause of inter-religious cooperation and peace, in keeping with the mission of the Niwano Peace Prize.

Ven. Pomnyun believes that work for peace must include two dimensions. First, the cultivation of happiness and equanimity internally through meditation and study to reduce mental suffering. Second, individual and collective action to transform society so as to reduce the suffering that is caused by external, structural factors. It is only through a balanced and simultaneous effort to address both inner and outer peace that a true and sustainable peace can be built. His grounded and confident commitment to understand and apply Buddhist teachings shapes and drives his work for peace and illustrates the transformative power of spiritual values and commitment to the hard work of building peace. His internal practice of the Buddha dharma is reflected in the evident joy and warmth he manifests as he pursues peace in a world that sorely needs it.

The Niwano Peace Foundation commends his tireless contribution and achievement, and it is with great pride that the 37th Niwano Peace Prize is awarded to Venerable Pomnyun.

Once more, congratulations on your important work and contribution to global peace and justice, dear Venerable.

Many thanks to all for your presence and witness at

this significant moment of the 37th Niwano Peace Prize presentation ceremony today.

May you all go in peace today, fed and inspired by this celebration for your own work of peace. Shalom, Salaam, and Shanti with you always.

Thank you.



2020

I say goodbye
To a wonderful year
Where I learned
To listen to the silence in me
And the seagull's chant over the Seine.

A year
Where my heart opened
With blissful tears and
The laughter of pain
To the boundless love
in the world around me.

A year
Where so many souls have departed
To dance at a different tune
That we do not know
And into which we will merge
When our time has come.

A year
When people's wisdom has prevailed
Over the anger of loss.
And hope was born
for a better world
if we persevere.

Oh 2020
I came to love you
When I embraced you
with gratitude for the past
and the acceptance of tomorrow.

Stefan

Paris, 31 December 2020

Acceptance Speech on the Occasion of the 37th Niwano Peace Prize

An Urgent Appeal for Peace: We Must Choose Coexistence Over Mutual Destruction

Ven. Pomnyun Sunim



First of all, I would like to express my deepest respect to Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of The Niwano Peace Foundation and a pioneer in making peace a reality. I also would like to pay deep respects to the officers, trustees, and staff of the Niwano Peace Foundation, who have had tremendous impact through their untiring efforts to promote world peace with interfaith dialogue and support the peacemaking efforts by non-profit organizations.

I am truly honored to be selected as the recipient of the 2020 Niwano Peace Prize. I offer my sincere gratitude to the International Committee of the Niwano Peace Prize for bestowing such an honor on me. I also would like to thank Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand, a respected Buddhist philosopher, activist, and co-founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, for nominating me for this prize.

I clearly recall that this was the same prize that was awarded in 2000 to Dr. Kang Won Yong of South Korea

as the 17th recipient. Dr. Kang inspired me with his Christian vision for peace and was a critical influence in my decision to dedicate myself to this path. Sharing this recognition with Dr. Kang is a greater honor than I can possibly express.

This internationally renowned prize is a huge encouragement not only for me but also for all my colleagues at Jungto Society who have worked with me tirelessly for the past 20 years to promote peace. In addition, I would like to share this honor with both

known and unknown people who are working for the cause of peace around the world even today.

Jungto Society strives for the goal of fostering “Pure Mind, Good Friends, and Clean Earth” grounded in our understanding of the inextricably interconnected nature of the world based on “Dependent Arising (Pratītyasamutpāda).” Pure Mind means everyone can live a happy life by cultivating one’s mind. Good Friends means we can create a peaceful world by recognizing that human relationships should be based on mutual balance and harmony rather than on conflict and competition. Clean Earth means that we need to preserve the beauty of nature based on the recognition that rather than being a target for conquest, nature is the foundation of our lives that we need to coexist with. By promoting “Pure Mind, Good Friends, and Clean Earth,” Jungto Society works to create a world that is good for all of us to live in - in other words, Jungto. This is the core of the Jungto movement we have been engaged in for the past 30 years.

The Niwano Peace Foundation, although based on Buddhist teachings, has led the way to peace through interfaith cooperation. In my own humble fashion, I have worked with leaders in other faith traditions over the last twenty years to provide humanitarian support to North Korea and encourage peace efforts on the Korean peninsula. My organizations have also supported the Dalits in India, civil war refugees in Afghanistan, and the indigenous and Muslim groups in the Philippines. I have come to realize that underlying the hunger, disease, illiteracy, and abject poverty suffered by these peoples are conflicts and hostilities. Without resolving the underlying hostilities, neither humanitarian support nor human rights can be achieved or sustained.

If all the religions of the world could come together and act for the cause of peace based on mutual acknowledgment and understanding of our differences, the conflicts and hostilities we see in the world today would be greatly reduced. Peace can only take root when we let go of hostilities. Peace can only blossom in soil enriched with deep respect and understanding of one another. Peace without such reconciliation cannot be achieved.

As a Buddhist, the life of the Buddha was the primary model for me to follow and base my actions on.

Brahmanism already existed as a leading religion in the Buddha’s time, while Upanishad served as the primary guiding philosophy. However, Brahmanism had become overly formalized and Upanishad so abstract that neither was able to resolve the suffering in people’s everyday lives. The greatness of the Buddha lies in his overcoming the limitations of such religions and philosophical traditions and finding a new way: The Middle Way (Madhyamā Pratipat).

The Middle Way (Madhyamā Pratipat) is a new path that leaves the two extremes of “pleasure” obtained through fulfillment of desires and “asceticism” that suppresses desires. The Middle Way (Madhyamā Pratipat) is a practice methodology that does not get caught up in any prejudices or ideologies, but seeks out the truth and escapes all sufferings and agony by asking, “What is the truth?”

All of humankind wants to live a free and happy life, but only a few have achieved it. It is because people mistakenly believe that the road to happiness is paved with satisfying their desires. The Buddha teaches that only when we are free from our own desires can we attain true freedom and happiness. Everyone has the right to live a happy life. Freedom and happiness are the dreams all humankind wants to achieve. In order to make that dream come true, I would like to share the three things we must first realize based on the teachings of the Buddha.

First is Peace.

I hope that dialogues and cooperation will focus on activities that oppose all wars and support peace irrespective of ideology, religion, or nationality. South Korea is one of the countries at the highest risk of war. 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of the tragedy of the Korean War. Should there be another war on the Korean peninsula that potentially leads to the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of nuclear plants, humankind itself will face an apocalypse. On the other hand, establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula will provide a vital stepping stone that leads to peace in Asia and the entire world. Peace in the world is not possible without peace on the Korean peninsula.

Second is the Environment.

The global climate crisis cannot be solved by

environmental activists alone. The destruction of the environmental ecosystem in developing countries are rooted in various hostilities and conflicts. We must take immediate action to resolve the climate crisis, transcending differences in ideologies, religions, ethnicities and nations. Consequences of the climate crisis are increasing and imploding into national security emergencies, food shortages, pandemic, and even uncontrollable wildfires. It is clear now that no country or individual is safe from the disasters of the climate crisis. This is truly a crisis of civilization. We have to get away from the consumption-driven civilization in which living well is defined by producing more and buying more. Humanity is at a crossroads between the path of sustainable development and self-annihilation. No global citizen's safety and security can be guaranteed without tackling climate change.

Third is resolving Structural Inequalities.

Structural inequalities are embodied by hunger, disease, illiteracy, and discrimination. When I first began humanitarian aid for the children of North Korea, many people were adamantly against it. They asked me, "Why are you helping the enemy?" And they warned me, "The rice we send them will come back to us as bullets." However, I firmly believe the hungry should have food, the sick should be treated, and children should be educated irrespective of ideology, religion, or gender.

Hunger, disease, and illiteracy are the biggest symptoms of endemic structural inequalities in human society. Providing food to the hungry, medicine to the sick, and shelter to refugees are the most pressing matters that should be addressed. Furthermore, no one should be discriminated against on the grounds of race, gender, class, religion, or ethnic origin. Or based on disability, sexuality, or refugee status. All human beings are equal in their innate dignity. Absolute poverty in some parts of the world is the result of a global inequality. Addressing it cannot be the responsibility of any one nation; it's the responsibility of the humankind. Justice is the social action that you take to overcome discrimination and support equality. Justice without action is mere wordplay.

The world is facing a huge crisis with the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of whether you live in an advanced country or developing one; whether you live in the

northern or southern hemisphere; whether you live in the East or West; whether you are a Christian or Buddhist; there is no place on earth that is safe from COVID-19. Collective action at a global scale is essential. Unfortunately, each nation is only looking out for itself and passing the blame and responsibility to other countries. The real danger is not the virus but the dissolution of the collective "We" in the face of common danger; this has become the biggest obstacle to resolving the pandemic. However, in the face of crisis, we humans have often gone past our limits to perform miracle-like feats to ensure our survival. We can do so again as long as we work together based on hope and faith in one another.

It is no longer possible to attain peace just for one particular region, religion, or nation.

It is no longer possible to achieve safety just for one particular region, religion, or people.

Resolving the issues of peace, environmental conservation, and structural inequality and preventing the spread of infectious diseases are urgent tasks to which all humanity must jointly respond. Therefore, collective action by countries and religions around the world is more important than ever. To this end, if peace activists and political and religious leaders from all over the world cooperate together, even the most difficult problems can be solved. When people come together, miracles happen.

To emphasize,

In terms of peace, nations must coexist peacefully without the threat of war.

As for the environment, people must coexist in harmony with nature.

To resolve structural inequality, structural violence must be eradicated so that different genders, races, and social classes can coexist peacefully.

The essence of my message today is peace. We must choose coexistence over mutual destruction.

May all living beings be happy and peaceful.

I would like to thank everyone here. Last but not least, I would like to extend my deepest respect and gratitude to the Niwano Peace Foundation for this precious opportunity.

The Pitfalls of “Crazy Wisdom”

Hans-Guenter Wagner

In recent years there has been a growing number of scandals in Western Buddhist communities. Once highly respected masters were accused of sexual abuse of their followers and the improper use of the donated money available to them. One argument frequently heard in defense of such behaviour was that of *crazy wisdom*, i.e. truly enlightened beings were no longer bound to the moral standards and rules of behaviour valid for everybody. This article gives a short review about the role and appearance of crazy wisdom in different Buddhist tradition followed by some elaborations on its doctrinal implications and a final conclusion.

The Crazy Saint

The idea of *crazy wisdom* is inseparably connected with the image of the crazy saint who appears as a respected figure, but often as someone who displays questionable moral behavior. Crazy saints are not a cultural peculiarity of Tibetan Buddhism, but can also be found in other Buddhist traditions. In the Zen schools there are stories about cats cut into pieces in the name of deep religious instruction¹, or about young novices whose index fingertips were chopped off to trigger enlightened experience.² However, the type of a Buddhist master beyond ethics and moral is a peculiarity of Mahayana Buddhism. In early Buddhism there was a strict focus on keeping vows and moral obligations without exceptions. Rule violations were not tolerated, and vow breakers expelled from the order. With the emergence of the “Greater Vehicle” a moral relativism came up, as in the name of higher aspirations, rules became more flexible,

and some could even be broken. This phenomenon emerged in various forms in the countries of Mahayana Buddhism.

Wonhyo and Uisang in Korea

In Korea there is a famous legend about the befriended monks Uisang (625-702) and Wonhyo (617-686). While Uisang was a pious person, Wonhyo was widely known as a regular visitor of brothels. When both spent some time in a secluded meditation retreat with their huts next to each other, one evening a young beauty appeared on the premises and asked for permission to stay overnight as she had lost her way. Uisang snubbed her, but his friend allowed her to enter his hut. The girl immediately took a hot bath and asked Wonhyo to enter the bathtub too. When he followed her request, the legends tells us, an unimaginable blessing came over him, his skin get a

¹ See, for example, Roshi Philip Kapleau: Nansen kills the Cat, in: Zen Bow, Winter 2018, Vol. XL, No. 4.

² See, for example, Wagner, Hans-Guenter (2007): Wie die Wolken am Himmel. Die Lyrik des Chan-Buddhismus, Frankfurt/Main: YinYang Media, p. 179.

golden colour, and the bath-tub turned into a huge lotus blossom. In this moment the beauty transformed into the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. Attracted by what happened next to him, Uisang approached the scene and also dared to enter the bathtub. As soon as he had lost his awe and immersed into the water, he turned into a Buddha.³ Here the breakage of the monk's vow is seen as a way to sudden enlightenment.

Ji Gong and Sun Wukong in China

In Chinese Buddhism we find also stories about monks (or literary figures) whose breakage of their vows is justified by higher causes. In Wu Cheng'en's famous Buddhist novel "Journey to the West"⁴, Sun Wukong, the monkey king, accompanied his master Xuan Zang to India in search of new Buddhist scriptures. During their journey they encountered many dangerous situations in which Sun Wukong mostly used tricks and deceptions to escape in order to accomplish their mission successfully, while the monk always underestimated real risks and assessed situations only from his ivory tower perspective.

Another crazy saint of Chinese Buddhism was the monk Ji Gong (1148-1209) who is still well-known for his eccentric lifestyle. Some call him the "mad monk" or the "Robin Hood" of China. The iconography portrays him with a jelly bag cap and a mischievous smile, holding a bottle of wine in one hand, and a magic fan in the other hand. He is well known for eating meat (while all other Chinese monks were strict vegetarians) and drinking alcohol. One of his sayings is popular till today: "Wine and meat through the intestines passes, (while) Lord Buddha within my heart remains."⁵

Ikkyū in Japan

A crazy saint in Japanese Buddhism is Zen master Ikkyū (1393-1581) who lived two hundred years after Ji Gong.⁶ The unconventional monk became famous for his critic of the Zen establishment of his time and as an author of erotic poetry. From records from his time we know that he visited brothels where he did not only indulged into his passions, but also instructed the prostitutes in the teachings of the Dharma. In the year 1420, he attained his enlightenment triggered by the shrill scream of a crow while meditating on a boat. Afterwards he walked through the country, often accompanied by artists and poets. He was in love with the blind singer Mori, and for some time also the abbot of a monastery, a role he played only reluctantly.

Up until the present, for many Japanese children Ikkyū is a paragon worth following as he had always been able to trick teachers and rulers. Many animated film present famous stories of his great and audacious deeds. As a Buddhist master he is someone where the spirits divide: While for some Ikkyū is a unique embodiment of enlightened spontaneity and immediacy, other deem him a drunkard and fornicator.

Crazy Wisdom of Tibetan Provenience

In Chinese and Japanese Buddhism the paradigm of crazy wisdom is often used in order to circumvent inflexible regulations or to solve moral dilemmas. Eccentric monks like Ji Gong or Ikkyū gained the image of alerters against a corrupt Buddhist establishment. They often appear as manifestations of the humorous and folksy elements of Buddhism. But only in Tibet, the

³ See Faure, Bernard (1998): *The red thread: Buddhist approaches to sexuality*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 5 et seq.

⁴ Wu Cheng'en: *Journey to the West*, Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1993.

⁵ To the life and deeds of Ji Gong, see, for example, Luo Weiguo (1994): *Fojiao Zhishi Yibai Ti*. Hangzhou: Zhejiang Chubanshe, p.22 et seq.

⁶ To Ikkyū's life see, for example, Jon Etta Hastings Carter Covell (1981): *Unraveling Zen's Red Thread: Ikkyū's Controversial Way*, Hollym Intl.

figure of the crazy saint plays a decisive role in the transmission of the (tantric) teachings.

The well-known Tantra master Chögyam Trungpa (1939-1987), for example, heaped great praise on it: “Crazy wisdom ruthlessly cuts through spiritual materialism to discover ‘basic sanity,’ or innate wisdom.”⁷ Later it came out that Trungpa and his successors had abused many women (and men), and the concept of crazy wisdom was used to legitimize their actions. Lying and sexual abuse, even causing the death of some followers, were excused by their devotees with reference to the guru’s *crazy wisdom*. All his actions were interpreted as an emanating of his transcendental generosity. As former followers later revealed, some people were even willing to provide their wives and daughter for the guru’s pleasure as a part of their devotional practices.⁸ This was only possible, because people believed in their “crazy masters” as the manifestation of a superior being: “To regard the guru as an ordinary person is a perverted attitude. Not matter what the guru does, you must accept it as a teaching.”⁹

While in other Asian countries crazy saints are at best considered barely tolerable, or viewed as bizarre figures on the fringes of religion whose sculptures can only be found at the remotest corners in the temple halls, in Tibetan Buddhism crazy wisdom is no longer a faux pas, but an indication of highest spiritual realizations. From Milarepa to Chögyam Trungpa and Sogyal Rinpoche, we find the propagation of a new ideal: the unpredictable guru blessed with the siddhis of supreme enlightenment and enabled to look deep inside the bottom of the heart of each devoted disciple.

Crazy wisdom of that kind functions as a doctrinal

instrument of power, to ensure the internal stability of those groups whose members believe in it as a guiding principle. It is indeed difficult to understand why so many modern and well-educated Western people were willing to subject themselves to masters that promise wonderful and blissed state of realization as reward for giving up common sense.

The Creation of Immunity Against Criticism

The protective shield of crazy wisdom immunizes the master against each and any criticism, and entitles him to behave like a feudal ruler. Any resistance against his omnipotence is seen as a severe sacrilege. Over the centuries there has been a growing number of legends which in bloomy phrases praise those masters who by unconventional methods instruct their disciples allegedly to transform their egos, whereby sexual connotations often play an important role. But while the crazy masters outside Tibet had hardly followers and also no famous disciples who followed their footsteps, in the *Land of Snow* they often attracted large crowds of believers who devoutly worshipped them. And the pious disciples were entitled to receive a privileged corner in their teacher’s mandala. Many circumstances made such a development possible.

All Asian societies of the past were feudalistic, but in Tibet the backwardness was most pronounced. There was brutal serfdom and alphabetism. Apart from the social and economic conditions, the cultural background was also different. In China, Buddhism had to hold its ground against traditional Daoism and Confucianism, and in Japan against Shintoism, the new religion from

⁷ Trungpa, Chögyam, *Crazy Wisdom*, Boston: Shambala Publications, 1991, p.5.

⁸ Regarding Trungpa’s life-style and his environment see Bell, Sandra (2002): *Scandals in Emerging Western Buddhism*, in: Charles Prebish/ Martin Baumann (Ed.): *Buddhism beyond Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 230-242.2002; see Chandler, Christine, A. (2019): *Enthralled: The Guru Cult of Tibetan Buddhism* (Second Edition). North Charleston: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, pp.176 et seq.

⁹ Stephan Butterfield, quoted from Bell 2002, p. 233.

India had to prove that it was in line with the prevailing moral standards. Any escapades with crazy saints would have put the credibility of Buddhism into question and could only happen at the lunatic fringe of religious life. In Tibet, however, there were no such religious competitors. The traditional Bon religion formed no barrier against the idea of crazy wisdom. In the Tibetan population there was already a strong belief in faith healers and magic performance of all kind. In such a cultural environment, spiritual beliefs not in line with reason and common sense were more easily accepted.

A Dangerous Separation of Morality

An implication of crazy wisdom is the questionable splitting of holiness and morality. Obvious misconduct is justified by higher purposes: Sexual abuse is reinterpreted as “skillful means” to break the students “ego” and to release him or her from former emotional ties. The enlightened Bodhisattva who kills an evil doer actually commits a meritorious deed as he did not only rescues the lives of other people, but also spares the evil doer the fruit of negative post-mortal karma. While in early Buddhism holiness is the result of a life-time of proper moral conduct, supplemented by the practice of meditation and wisdom, the crazy saint is advocated by his followers as an enlightened being beyond all those moral rules and standards valid for mere mortals. The source of his adoration is located in the sphere of the extra-mundane. This is a far cry away from the rationality of the teachings of the historical Buddha. As a result, the authority of the original scriptures and their convincing power is replaced by the belief in the magic powers of a so-called “True Vajra Master.” Critical voices call crazy wisdom rather a form of consecrated fraud than a supreme enlightened lifestyle.

We Live in an Age of Charismatic Disillusionment

Many people, who once followed masters of crazy wisdom, in the meantime realized that their openness and trusting had been cruelly exploited financially and sometimes sexually. Most victims needed many years to solve their entanglements. Fallen from the highest into the deepest of human experience, not even a few turned their back on Buddhism afterwards. As one outcome, all around the West the original euphoria about Buddhism evaporated, and with each new scandal the former projection of Buddhism as a religion so much superior to other beliefs diminishes more and more. We live in an age of charismatic disillusionment. It is worthwhile to reconsider why the historical Buddha once avoided to determine his personal successor, but at the end of his life only announced: “Be an island unto yourself.”¹⁰

The Wisdom of Ancient India

The idea of a saint who rid himself from all obligation can already be found in the teachings of the various life stages in the Indian Yoga tradition. But to attain that stage, you first had to successfully accomplish all the stages of a religious disciple, a householder and a family head. Only after the fulfillment of all social and family commitments, and not sooner than the birth of the grandchildren, you were allowed to withdraw from the world as wandering *samnyasin*. And only those who reached an age of one hundred years were released from all obligations, i.e., they could live as crazy saints and as natural as a little child. The ancient Indian were very smart and foresighted people. At an age far more than hundred years one cannot make much mischief in the land any more.



¹⁰ DN26 Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta, in: <http://www.palikanon.org/en/sutta-pitaka/transcribed-suttas/majjhima-nikaya/141-mn-87-piyajtika-sutta-born-from-those-who-are-dear.html> (12.5.2020).

E-Waste Hazard Management

Dusita Saokaew

18 November 2020

Source: CGTN – Environment - <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-11-18/E-waste-hazard-management-VwuLv1zax2/index.html>

For the past few years, Phra Chayaphat Kuntaweera, a Buddhist abbot, has watched helplessly as more than two dozen waste-processing factories opened up around his temple. His temple, in Chachoengsao, a province in south-central Thailand, has become a dumping ground for e-waste or electronic waste. It was once a peaceful, agricultural town, but has now become a town engulfed by factories constantly burning the discarded innards of the modern world.



Fumes from burning factories have become something that the monks at Boonyaram temple have to live with. For any visitor to the temple, the fumes are enough to cause dizzy spells. All the monks have experienced sickness – coughing, nose bleeds and intense headaches.

Phra Chayaphat Kuntaweera and the residents have no idea what is in the smoke: plastic, metal, who knows? All they know is that it smells potent, it makes them feel sick, and they breathe it in every day.

“This used to be an agricultural region. The environment was good. People lived off the land,” he said. “I don’t know how poisonous factories were able to open here. We are afraid to use the water because we don’t know how dangerous it is.”

Phra Chayaphat Kuntaweera, a Buddhist abbot, has been inhaling the toxic fumes from the nearby e-waste factories for the past few years. He believes his overall health has deteriorated from exposure to the fumes. /CGTN

His temple is looking to relocate, farms around e-waste “dumpsites” are facing environmental destruction and residents have been complaining of poor health.

Within the mountains of e-waste piled up in the factories are hundreds of toxic substances – lead, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury, which seep into the environment, contaminating land, air, and water.



The focus of this new e-waste recycling technology is to extract high-value metals, ranging from rare-earth elements to gold, silver and platinum. /CGTN

The dangers are real and the consequences are frightening.

Water tests conducted in the province by environmental group, Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH) found toxic levels of iron, manganese, lead, nickel and in some cases arsenic and cadmium.

“Places close to the recycling places are badly contaminated with heavy metals. There has been lead accumulation in their blood,” EARTH’s director, Penchom Saetang, said. “Many school children found lead accumulation in their body. There are some deformed or under development of the brain system of the school children.”

According to the UN Global E-waste Monitor 2020, in 2019 alone, the world generated 53.6 million tonnes of e-waste. Each year, the total amount of electric and electronic equipment the world uses grows by 2.5 million tonnes. Phones, microwaves, gadgets, laptops – if it has a power or battery supply it’s likely to join a growing mountain of e-waste after use.

For several years, Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia have become destinations for shipments of electronic waste. Last year, Thailand banned the import of foreign e-waste but its enforcement and restrictions have so far been lax.

But progress is being made, at least, in terms of innovation. Thailand’s Ministry of Industry have developed new technologies that enable the extraction of

rare-earth metals from recycled industrial and household waste to serve high-tech industries.

The process of extracting rare earth metals is complex and products need to be tackled on a case-by-case basis. But if it can be done on a large scale, the Department of Primary Industries and Mine believes it could be an industry that could potentially be extremely lucrative for Thailand, offering vast opportunities for jobs and innovation.

“We calculate that 1kg of e-waste has a value of two U.S. dollars. If you can estimate that we have around 500,000 tonnes of e-waste per year, that is maybe \$1 billion per year that we can get from the e-waste industry,” Wisanu Tabtieng, Director General of the Department of Primary Industries and Mines, said.

It’s a bitter irony that the e-waste mountains in Thailand’s provinces actually contain a fortune. And with that, Thailand is faced with a tough challenge – navigate its way out of a looming e-waste crisis, protect its people and environment, while also reaping the profits of becoming a global e-waste recycling hub.



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.

Ecology Monks in Thailand Seek to End Environmental Suffering

Kiley Price

13 August 2018

Mongabay - <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/08/ecology-monks-in-thailand/> |



An ordained tree wrapped in the orange robes of a Buddhist monk found in a forest of Chiang Mai, Thailand. Image by Kiley Price.



A young Thai girl follows three novice monks in the collection of the morning alms, in which they accept donations of food and drink to the temple from residents throughout the village of Chonburi.

Photo by Kiley Price.

- At a time when Pope Francis is calling upon religious leaders to step up as environmental advocates, Thai Buddhist monks are answering the call. Through rituals like tree ordinations, monks are integrating Buddhist principles into the environmental movement in order to garner support from their followers and encourage sustainable practices.
- Although Buddhism is typically a religion famed for its detachment from society, ecology monks believe that their religion is inherently tied to nature.
- With such an immense amount of influence in villages throughout Thailand, Buddhist monks are utilizing their position to add a unique moral dimension to the environmental movement. However, rituals alone are not enough.

As development in Thailand is increasing, so is deforestation. Acres of forests are cleared for contract farming, habitats are torn down to make room for new factories, and soil is eroded, causing massive flooding during the rainy season.

But amid the environmental wreckage, some trees remain untouched. These trees are wrapped in iconic bright orange robes and deemed sacred, protected from harm and destruction. These trees have been ordained as monks.

At a time when Pope Francis is calling upon religious leaders to step up as environmental advocates, Thai Buddhist monks are answering the



Phrakhu Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsuri, an ecology monk, at his farm in Surin, Thailand, where he follows the philosophy of sufficiency economy by planting many different types of crops.

Photo by Kiley Price.



Phrakhu Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsuri giving a speech on the importance of trees and stopping deforestation to the villagers of Surin, Thailand.

Photo by Kiley Price.

call. Through rituals like tree ordinations, some monks in Thailand are integrating Buddhist principles into the environmental movement in order to garner support from their followers and encourage sustainable practices.

Dr. Susan Darlington, professor of anthropology and Asian studies at Hampshire College in the U.S. and author of the book *The Ordination of a Tree*, explains that protecting trees is a form of merit-making, an important practice in Buddhism. By accumulating merit through performing good deeds, Buddhists are ensuring a better next life and taking a step closer to reaching enlightenment and, ultimately, Nirvana.

“Making merit is extremely important for Thai Buddhists,” Dr. Darlington said. “They see [tree ordination ceremonies] as an act of making merit, which can help with rebirth and, in some cases, having a better life now.”

One of the primary goals in the Buddhist religion is to end suffering, and the forests of Thailand are certainly suffering.

“There are places in Northern Thailand, particularly in Nan Province, where there has been a lot of deforestation, so the watersheds areas fill the water with mud, silt, and pesticide runoff causing more severe flooding in the rainy season and more severe drought in the dry season,” said Gordon Congdon, the Conservation Program Manager for WWF-Thailand. “In many ways, climate change is amplifying problems that are already existing.”

Leaders of Society

With over 90 percent of the Thai population practicing Buddhism, monks hold an influential role as leaders to whom people look for guidance in all aspects of life.

“They become the leader that people would trust,” said Dr. Chaya Vaddhanaphuti, a geography professor at Chiang Mai University whose PhD studies focused on climate change. “If I asked the farmers who they would choose to trust between government officers and the monks, they would choose the latter.”



Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, a Buddhist temple found at the top of the Doi Suthep Mountain in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Photo by Kiley Price.

With such an immense amount of influence in villages throughout Thailand, monks are utilizing their position to add a unique moral dimension to the environmental movement. However, rituals alone are not enough.

Although Buddhism is typically a religion famed for its detachment from society, ecology monks believe that their religion is inherently tied to nature. Buddhist monks like Phrakhu Ajan Somkit, who is based in Nan Province in northern Thailand where deforestation is an issue of major concern, are entering the political sphere to consult with government officials on environmental initiatives and rights for rural farmers. Other monks, like Phrakhu Win Mektripop, an ecology monk based in Bangkok, are trying to find more sustainable solutions to everyday problems by implementing solar panels in temples and helping villagers create cheap huts out of mud and natural materials.

“When the Buddha was born, he was born under the tree. He was enlightened under the tree. His first sermon was under the tree. We can see that most of his life was related to the forest,” said Phra

Win. With a master’s degree in environmental economics from Chulalongkorn University, Phra Win understands how important agriculture is to the rural population of Thailand.

As Thailand shifted from a low-income to an upper-income society in less than a generation, however, sustainability hasn’t exactly been the focus of the country’s economic development. For instance, big companies like CP All Public, which owns over 10,000 7-Eleven stores in Thailand, are taking advantage of the rapid pace of growth by contracting rural farmers to mass-produce monocrops like maize and rice.

“They plant corn, they harvest it, they sell it to the big company and earn just about enough to pay off their debt,” said Congdon. “It creates this vicious cycle of dependency on the large companies and the farmers never get ahead, which leads to more and more deforestation.”

Seeing no other options, these farmers continue unsustainable practices that are stripping the soil of valuable nutrients and plunging them deeper into debt. However, ecology monks are working to provide an alternative that is beneficial to both the environment and the people.

Education

Another of the most harmful environmental issues in Thailand is simply a lack of knowledge.

“When I lived with the farmers during my PhD studies, they never used the term climate change,” said Dr. Vaddhanaphuti. “However, they knew that the climate had changed from how it was affecting their farms.”

In order to help teach rural farmers about the environment, Phrakhu Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsuri, a prominent ecology monk based in Chiang Mai, developed an alternative farming school through his temple in Chonburi called the Maab-Euang Meditation Center for Sufficiency

Economy. With 49 full-time students this year, Phra Sangkom mixes Buddhist concepts of personal reflection and a theory called “sufficiency economy.” This theory was developed by the previous Thai king, Bhumibol Adulyadej, and encourages subsistence farming, self-sufficiency, and a detachment from material goods.

Along with teaching classes at his school and working in the field, Phra Sangkom often travels throughout Surin and Chiang Mai on speaking tours to bring his philosophy directly to the people. Each speech typically has over 100 attendees, he says.

“If the people understand that the jungle gives them oxygen, water, good food, medicine, and clothes, do you think they are going to help protect it?” Phra Sangkom asked as he gestured to his own farm, which was filled with mangoes, bananas, rice, and more. “Of course!”

Enemies and Allies

Ecology monks like Phra Sangkom have been marked as leading environmental advocates in Thailand, but some have also been marked with a target on their back.

As their environmental influence spreads throughout Thailand, monks are helping to obtain more community forest rights for indigenous people and farmers, which takes land away from both the government and logging and oil companies. Some monks have been prosecuted by the Thai government for their controversial activism. Others have been assassinated, like Phrakhu Supoj Suvacano, an ecology monk involved in trying to prevent the land around a meditation center in Chiang Mai from being converted into a tangerine farm.

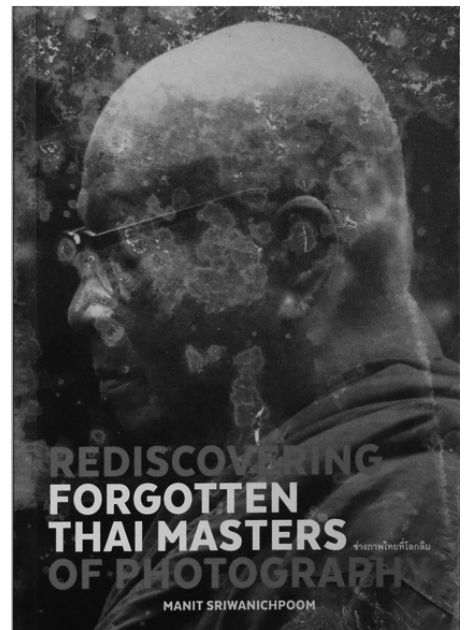
Even in the face of these threats, many ecology monks continue their work, which has started to receive help and support from other outlets, like local universities and NGOs.

“We are figuring out how we can bring the Buddhists who are just sitting and meditating out into the world to deal with the suffering,” said Somboon Chungprampree, executive director of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, an organization which is working to connect activist Buddhists and non-Buddhists from all over Asia. “There is not just personal suffering; there is social and environmental suffering out there and people need to figure out how they can help as a Buddhist.”

Kiley Price’s reporting in Thailand was sponsored by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting in Washington, DC.



Recommended Reading



Rediscovering Forgotten
Thai Masters of Photography

Author: Manit Sriwanichpoom

Thoughts and The Environment

Tensin Palmo



Nuns study in Guru Padmasambhava
Room at DLG Nunnery



Torma Blessing for the Garden

The opening line of the *Dhammapada* states that everything is preceded by the mind, made up of mind. We live in a world of thought - everything which we perceive within and without depends on our consciousness. Without that we are like a corpse. Thought is not restricted to just inside our bodies but radiates out in all directions, permeating and influencing our environment, everyone we meet and the very air we breath.

Some years ago I lived in the hills near to the medieval town of Assisi where, in the sacred sites long associated with St. Francis, despite the blatant commercialism and hordes of tourists, there is an almost palpable aura of spirituality which affects even casual visitors. On several occasions I have met with people who relate how, as casual tourists visiting Assisi on the way between Rome and Florence, quite unexpectedly they experienced intense feelings of peace, joy or spiritual insight. These experiences sometimes altered the course of

their lives.

Likewise, many seek the sanctuary of certain temples or churches which seem to radiate peace and holiness. On account of the devotion manifested by pilgrims - despite the outer surrounding chaos - once one enters the gates leading to the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya, one is in an atmosphere of deep tranquillity and inspiration. It is an almost tangible blessing. So, also, throughout the ages in all countries people have sought the company of saints and sages, because just to be in their presence brings

blessings and a sense of peace, even if they never say a word. The grace is beyond our conceptual mind to grasp at and is something experienced on a much deeper level of our being which can be known but not expressed.

In contrast when one visits somewhere like Auschwitz it is not necessary to know its dreadful history in order to feel overwhelmed by the heaviness and despair that permeate the atmosphere. Who has not experienced walking into a room where there has been great sorrow and being swept by a sense of oppression?

Since the time of the Buddha it has been a traditional practice to send thoughts of loving kindness (metta/maitri) throughout the universe to all sentient beings wishing that they may be well and happy. “Sentient beings” means any creature with consciousness whether visible or unseen. Visible creatures include not just humans, but all types of animals which live on or under the earth, in the sky or in the oceans and rivers. It also includes the insect kingdom. Unseen creatures means inhabitants of the various heavenly realms, hell realms, ghost realms and nature spirits and so forth.

So, when we send out thoughts of loving kindness, we are including all the beings on this planet and then outwards to encompass all the inhabitants of other planets and other realms of existence. In this classification plant life is not included although nature spirits are. This is because traditionally plants were not considered to have consciousness. However, it seems that plants do respond to thoughts and words. Plants flourish under loving care in an environment where thoughts of love and nurturing are directed to them or one speaks to them nicely, and in the same fashion they will wither or grow in a sickly manner where they receive angry thoughts or harsh words. However, whether this is the plant itself reacting or

the spirit attendant on it would be difficult to say.

From a Mahayana Buddhist perspective ultimately everything which we experience both within us and outside, is an expression of our mind. This means that we can know nothing except through the mind. Everything which we perceive through our senses – eyes, nose, ears, tongue, body and mind itself – depends on consciousness. For example, the eye organ perceives an object which is received through the eye consciousness and interpreted through the mind. Where there is no consciousness, there is no perception. This includes the sixth sense of mind itself with its thoughts, memories, concepts, emotions and the endless play of our inner world.

Apart from this interaction of senses, their object and consciousness nothing can be known, so we see how very subjective our relationship with the exterior universe actually is. In addition, everyone has experienced how mood swings seem to alter the world around us. We are feeling depressed and everything seems grey and heavy. We fall in love and the gloomiest day is bathed in sunshine.

If we are in fact swimming in a world of mental energy, then it makes sense to see that this energy is as positive as possible. Negative thought forms will evoke a negative response both within us and without. This has practical repercussions as we can see in our world today which is so dedicated to the cultivation of the three poisonous attitudes of greed, ill will and confusion. Since our intentions are at the root of our actions, an action motivated by greed and selfishness is not likely to bring about peace and harmony. Man’s greed and rapaciousness, conjoined with a basic lack of foresight or responsibility, has resulted in the tragic plight of our constant wars and conflicts, devastated environment and the wild imbalances in weather conditions and so forth. These disasters originated

in our untamed minds. According to ancient Indian thought, the natural world, including crops, weather, livestock etc., flourish when the people live in harmony and keep basic ethical conduct. Diseases, droughts, floods and other disasters will increase where the morality of the inhabitants has broken down and natural laws are no longer respected.

Sometimes the present world seems drenched in darkness and ignorance, given over to self-gratification and self-absorption (even in the so-called “spiritual” circles) and never was the need for genuine wisdom and what His Holiness the Dalai Lama calls *Universal Responsibility* more urgent. In this darkness even a small light can shine a long way. Our thoughts do influence the environment for good or ill. Therefore, it is up to us to see that at least our contribution is positive. One person can affect so many and accomplish so much. Each of us in our own way has the responsibility to uplift our

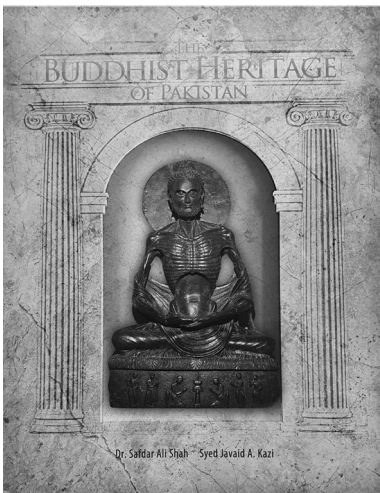
surroundings and whomsoever we have contact with. No one can do it for us. If we each try to sincerely develop a good heart then everything partakes of the benefit.

Therefore, since we live within the kingdom of the mind, it makes sense to create therein a peaceful and harmonious realm. If we want to bring happiness to ourselves and others we must start from where we are. A well-tamed mind brings happiness, and an untamed mind brings sorrow and chaos. It is as simple as that. Ultimately the choice is our own.

Venerable Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo is an Honorary Advisor to INEB and founder of the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery in Himachal Pradesh, India.

S

Recommended Reading

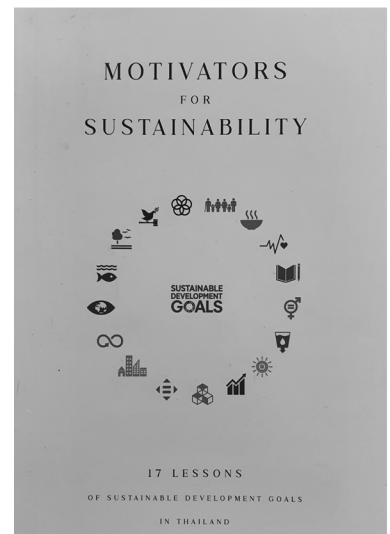


The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan

Author: Dr. Safdar Ali Shah
Publisher: Mansoor Rashid

Motivators for Sustainability

Editor: Mingkhwan Ratanakoch
Publisher: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand



Zen Buddhists Oppose the Death Penalty

Soto Zen Buddhist Association



Abolish the Death Penalty and Halt All U.S. Federal Executions

I vow not to kill. Not killing life, the Buddha seed grows.

Transmit the life of Buddha and do not kill.

—Eihei Dogen Zenji

Introduction

The United States, which has the largest number of incarcerated citizens of any country in the world, also has arguably the largest number of condemned prisoners. Presently there are roughly 2,600 men and women on state and federal “death row.” On the average, more than ten years elapse between sentencing and execution, but in many cases, inmates spend twenty or more years facing the prospect of a state-inflicted death.

The letter below is a statement of opposition from the Soto Zen Buddhist Association, the largest organization of Zen priests and teachers in the West. As mentioned in the text, it was written in opposition to the system of capital punishment as a whole, and in response to barbaric rule changes proposed by the federal government for upcoming executions, permitting the use of electrocution and firing squads.

—Hozan Alan Senauke

Every version of the Buddha’s ethical precepts begins with this principle: Do Not Kill. Buddha and all the great spiritual teachers — Jesus, Mohammed, the Hebrew prophets, Gandhi — tell us that life is sacred; that violence only begets violence. The logic of cause and effect, karma and its fruit, are inescapable even when you dress them in the emperor or president’s clothes of punitive and retributive justice.

On November 25, 2020 the U.S. Justice Department announced new regulations allowing for the use of new, or rather, old methods for federal executions, including the firing squad and electrocution. According to *The New York Times*:

Last week, the Justice Department announced that it plans to execute three more inmates on federal death row. If the administration does so, along with two other executions already scheduled, it will have put 13 prisoners to death since July, marking one of the deadliest periods in the history of federal capital punishment since at least 1927...

As Soto Zen Buddhist priests and teachers, as people of faith, we vigorously oppose state-sponsored murder and this rush to punish. We see capital punishment as the enactment of a cruel and primitive urge for vengeance draped in the fabric of legality. We believe that capital punishment degrades and brutalizes our society by teaching violence in reaction to violence.

The harm of capital punishment does not just fall on the person put to death, but on our whole society — on guards and technicians, wardens, governors, on families of victims, and on each of us allowing this barbarism to go forward in our name.

Capital punishment is the cutting edge of America's penal system. Social scientists, clergy, politicians, and communities of color all know that this is a broken system, although it is remarkably effective for sowing the seeds of violence. We see no evidence or statistics that capital punishment serves as an effective deterrent to crime. Resting on a foundation of inequality, based on racism and privilege, capital punishment cannot be fixed. Let's end it now, everywhere!

People of faith and conscience wish to build a new system of justice based on love, restoration, and redemption. Let those be the lights that guide us. We believe that social and personal transformation are always possible, and that even wounded people can change and contribute to society. While it is true that people reasonably expect protection from those who—by reason of mental illness, and extreme physical or psychological trauma — prey on others, the great majority of all prisoners are capable of transformation. This is our understanding of human nature. As for the handful who must be restrained or separated for their own protection and the safety of others, even these prisoners must be afforded life, a humane environment, and the possibility of meaningful work. We believe that there is no fair or practical way to arrive at a sentence of death.

What is our work? Organize against the death penalty in your communities, in your centers and

temples. Study and talk about the death penalty; debate it with your friends. Write to the U.S. Attorney General and the President—outgoing and incoming—and speak your opposition and convictions. When federal or state executions are scheduled, join with sisters and brothers of all faiths sitting at the prison gates to bear witness. This is important. We must speak for humane policy and compassion with our bodies.

Verse 129 of the *Dhammapada*, Shakyamuni Buddha's early teaching, says: "All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill." May we live with this awareness and save all beings.

- We ask the U. S. Federal Government to immediately halt all planned Federal Executions.
- We ask for a Nationwide moratorium on Federal and State Executions.
- We ask for our legislatures to reform the justice system to be one of restoration and redemption.

Action Items and Information on the Death Penalty

- <http://deathpenaltyaction.org/take-action>
- <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/tell-congress-abolish-the-federal-death-penalty/>
- <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/death-penalty/>
- <https://action.aclu.org/petition/stop-federal-executions>
- <https://catholicsmobilizing.org/take-action-stop-federal-executions-1>

Signed, The Board of Soto Zen Buddhist Association and more than 100 North American Zen teachers

S

Atisha Interfaith Council Bangladesh Launches Interfaith Leadership Development Project

Sanat Kumar Barua



Atisha Interfaith Council Bangladesh (a project of the Atisha Dipankar Peace Trust Bangladesh) is launching a project in Bangladesh on capacity-building and leadership development in Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). The Interfaith Council is technically and financially supported by the EU funded SEA-AIR project Southeast Asia: Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief with implementing partners Finn Church Aid/the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Sathirakoses Nagapradipa Foundation (International Network of Engaged Buddhists-INEB), World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), Islamic Relief Worldwide and Religions for Peace (RFP).

The Atisha Interfaith Council Bangladesh (AIFC Bangladesh) is a collective faith-based initiative to build and equip multi-religious actions for advancing inter-religious dialogue and communication from a peacebuilding platform based on nonviolent principles. The AIFC Bangladesh embraces and supports different religious groups, and faith practitioners to uplift positive initiatives for the common good locally in Bangladesh, with a regional and global impact that can benefit many people. It also focuses on uplifting religious actor's roles to prevent negative impacts from polarization, religious nationalism, armed conflicts, and more. The

initiative upholds norms that safeguard humanity, leaves no one behind in terms of religious identity or beliefs, and generates love and compassion.

The Interfaith Council launched a number of programs on interfaith sustainable leadership development training, intra-faith and inter-faith dialogue, and interfaith solidarity visits under the initiative. In November 2020, the Council hosted Interfaith Leadership Training for fifty multi-religious and civil society actors from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian communities. The day-long training program was held at Caritus, Bangladesh, Chattogram Center, where it was presided

by the project holder Dr. Dibakar Barua and conducted by Sanat Kumar Barua. The Atisha Dipankar Peace Trust Bangladesh chairman Professor Tushar Kanti Barua highlighted the importance of the training program by the Interfaith Council, which may the first organized Interfaith Leadership Training program with 12 lessons on various issues to connect the actors with Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), peace building and development policies in the Chittagong division. The training session was inaugurated by the national 'EkushyPadak'awardee Professor Dr. Bikran Prasad Barua. The training modules were designed for the multi-religious actors, peace activities, youth and women including minorities and persons from ethnic backgrounds for capacity building and leadership development.

The Council core member and SEA-AIR Interfaith Fellow Professor Mr. Masum Ahmed was the lead facilitator with other council members from different

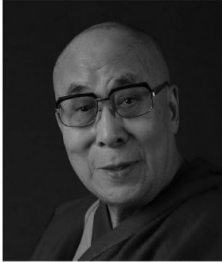
religious communities also facilitating. The training topics focused on strengthening understanding and inter-faith relationships through dialogue and peacebuilding through nonviolent means, the significance of communication, inclusiveness and other topics related to living in harmony with the environment. The training sessions were equipped with multi-faith initiatives for developing sustainable interfaith leadership in Bangladesh. The workshop supported an interactive learning experience for participants in an open friendly and stimulating environment where they learned new concepts on FoRB issues, peacebuilding, development policies, inclusion with climate justice that will enable them to build sustainable inter-faith communities for ensuring peaceful and harmonious coexistence. The Council conducted two intra-faith dialogues with the senior Buddhist and Hindu community leaders on Interfaith Sustainable Leadership Development in December. The next two dialogue sessions will be held with the Muslim and Christian leaders in January 2021.

The Atisha Interfaith Council Bangladesh welcomes support for developing an institutional shape to continue its current and future activities. The Council believes it will bring positive contributions on religious majority-minority dynamics in South Asian countries and (re) build trust among inter and intra religious groups and inter-faith leadership development for a sustainable peace which supports prosperity and harmony for Bangladesh, as well as benefitting all of humanity.

Sanat Kumar Barua, Coordinator-Atisha Interfaith Council Bangladesh, SEA-AIR Interfaith Fellow and Executive Committee member, International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONFERENCE

**Tisikkha/Trisiksha (The Three Trainings)
In Pali and Sanskrit traditions of Buddhism**



His Holiness The Dalai Lama

5TH-6TH MARCH 2021
0900AM-1600PM (GMT+5:30)

INAUGURAL ADDRESS & OPENING SPEECHES



Most Venerable
Makulawa Wimale
Mahanayake Thero



Most Venerable
Bhikshu Jing Yao



Samdech Preah
Moha Sangharajha
Bour Khy

Technical Session I
Sis-sikkha / Sikkha (Exclusively for monastics)

- Ven Abbot Geshe Tashi Tsering
- Ven Dr Prof Khammai Dhammasani
- Ven Tshen Tam Duc
- Ven Ajahn Brahmali
- Ven Geshe Jangchub Choesden

Technical Session II
Trisikkha/Trisiksha (Theory and Practice for the lay audience)

- Dr Damenda Porage
- Ven Prof Medagampitpe Wijithadhamma Thero
- Ven Prof Bhikshu Chao-Hwei Shih
- Assistant Prof. Dr Sarath Chandrasek

Technical Session III
Samadhi-sikkha/Samadhi-Siksha

- Ven Dr Dhammapala
- Ven Associate Prof Rangama Chandavimala
- Ven Yongey Mingur Rinpoche
- Ven. Prof. Mitsuwatthe Wimalagnana Thero

Technical Session IV
Purika-sikkha/Purika-Siksha

- Prof. Asanga Tikkanatne
- Ven Anil Saliya
- Venerable Thaly Phap An Dr. Thu Pham
- Dr Geshe Thupten Jinpa
- Ven Dr. Divulapetse Wimalananda Thero

Inaugural address by His Holiness the Dalai Lama with opening speeches by Samdech Preah Moha Sangharajha Bour Khy, Most Venerable Makulawa Wimale Mahanayake Thero, Most Ven Bhikshu Jing Yao, followed by a dialogue of Buddhist teachers and scholars of the Pali and Sanskrit traditions to discuss and share their experiences in the "three trainings" (Tisikkha/Trisiksha) on how the Buddha taught us to manage and train our minds to lead a peaceful and happy life.

Organised by:



www.palisanskrit.com | admin@tibetanbc.org | +65 8428 5307

Sign Up using this QR Codes

Sangha Public



Online Myanmar Library Founder David Arnott Dies

THE IRRAWADDY, 8 December 2020



David Arnott in Mae Sot in December 2016. / Yuzo Uda

David Arnott, the founder of the Online Burma/Myanmar Library and a staunch supporter of democracy and human rights movements in Myanmar, died on Monday in the Thai border town of Mae Sot, which has been his home since 2004. He was 77.

Born in England, Arnott will be remembered for establishing the OBL, a non-commercial, open database of information from multiple contemporary and historical sources on Myanmar.

The library is often a starting point for those studying the country with approximately 50,000 websites and links to documents, of which about a quarter are in Burmese.

The site has around 100 categories, such as health, land, economy, environment, law and constitution, foreign relations and history. The library said it is “by far the largest single source of organised” online material on Myanmar.

It says it is the only site with digital versions of Myanmar’s government-controlled daily newspapers in Burmese and English dating back to 2003.

The latest upload to the site was on September 26.

OBL grew out of the Burma Peace Foundation, which was co-founded in London in 1987 by Arnott to

mediate during the country’s armed conflicts.

It provided information and contacts to the United Nations and supported democratic activists that lobbied the General Assembly. The library was launched in October 2001 and moved to Mae Sot in 2004.

Larry Jagan, a Thai-based journalist who follows Myanmar, said he was deeply saddened, describing Arnott as “a tireless campaigner for justice in Myanmar and a very dear friend”.

He posted on Facebook that Arnott was valuable contact to understand developments, especially behind the scenes, on innumerable international issues, especially human and workers’ rights.

“Always accessible, always informed and always erudite. Rest in peace,” Jagan said.



Honoring Venerable Luangphor Viriyang Sirintharo

7 January 1920 - 22 December 2020

Even at 100, Meditation Master Luangphor Viriyang Continues to Make a Difference to the World

by Wichit Chaitrong, *The Nation*, 9 February 2020



Photo : Wat Dhammamongkol

Meditation master Luangphor Viriyang has turned 100, but his physical and mental health allow him to continue teaching mindfulness meditation to both Thais and foreigners.

Venerable Luangphor Viriyang Sirintharo, the abbot of the Wat Dhammamongkol in Bangkok, celebrated his 100th birthday on January 7.

Luangphor Viriyang was born on January 7, 1920 in Saraburi province, in central Thailand, and entered monkhood when he was still a boy, with a vision to help others across the globe.

His spiritual life as a Buddhist monk has been an extraordinary journey for himself and beneficial for large numbers of people both in Thailand and abroad.

When he was young, he worked so hard to support his family that he fell seriously sick. He collapsed and could not get off his bed.

“Luckily, I had learned some meditation before I became severely ill so I could keep my spirits up,” he recounted to his devotees who had gathered on his centenary on January 7.

He said he pledged to help the world if he recovered from the illness. So, after the recovery, he entered monkhood as he thought that would be the best way to help other people.

When he entered monkhood, he said he was groomed by some really good mentors. The most influential one was the late venerable Luangpu Mun, whose influence on meditation practices remains felt even today in Thailand and abroad.

He recounted that during World War II, he and his first Buddhist monk mentor, Achaan Gong Ma, had gone on a three-month trip from Chanthaburi province in the eastern part of Thailand to Sakon Nakhon province in the Northeast to meet Luangpu Mun, walking most of the way.

After spending four years with Mun, he was assigned to travel to Bangkok in order to spread the meditation practice in the capital.


Luckily, one family donated land to build

the temple in Phra Khanong district, today known as Wat Dhammamongkol on 101 Sukhumvit Road.


He has become one of the great meditation masters, who has taken the knowledge to ordinary people. Once he said that he used to teach meditation to monks but he found that when they left the monkhood the knowledge of meditation also disappeared. He said that was the reason behind his move to take meditation practices to the public at large.

He has taught thousands of people via his temple and affiliated temples in Thailand, Canada and recently in the United States.

S



कानिङ शेद्रुप लिङ गुम्बा संगठन तथा विकास कोष
Ka-nying Shedrub Ling Monastery
३३. ३८३/०५६/०५९



December 18, 2020

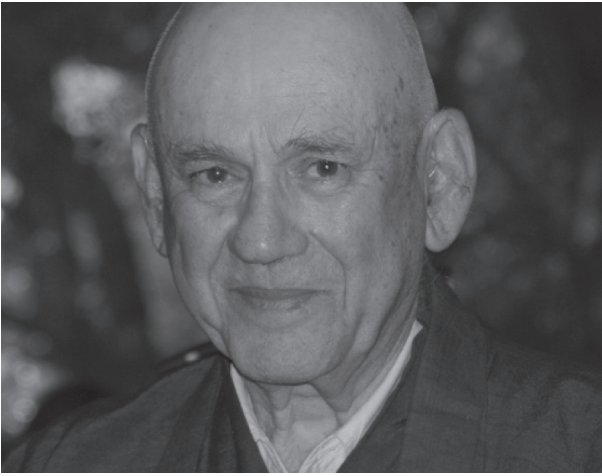
Dear Dharma Family,

This morning at 12 minutes past 10 am, Singapore time, His Eminence the fourth Chokgyur Lingpa, Kyabje Tsikey Chokling Mingyur Dewey Dorje Rinpoche passed gently into parinirvana. Rinpoche was 68 years old. When Rinpoche passed away, all of his brothers and family were gathered around him. Rinpoche remains in tukdam. For the benefit of all beings, we earnestly and steadfastly pray for Rinpoche's rebirth.

With love,
Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche

Sojun Mel Weitsman

1929 - 7 January 2021



With great sadness the sangha of Berkeley Zen Center announces that Hakuryu Sojun—White Dragon/Essence of Purity—Mel Weitsman peacefully passed from this world to the Pure Land of Buddhas and Ancestors at home on Thursday, January 7, 2021. He was ninety-one years old.

Sojun Roshi's clear and steady leadership made BZC a beacon for Buddhist practitioners and other spiritual seekers in the East Bay and more widely in the U.S. With a strong circle of dedicated Zen students, as guiding teacher and abbot at BZC for fifty-three years, Sojun created a place where rigorous daily sitting practice was integral with people's life of family, work, and service. He often spoke of BZC as a kind of "one room schoolhouse," where each person could find the necessary teachings for their position in life. Anyone could knock on Sojun's office door and he would readily invite them in.

Born in Los Angeles in 1929, Sojun Roshi's broad life experience included a stint in the Marines, years of art study and abstract expressionist painting, augmented by work as a house and boat painter, cab driver, and teacher. When he met Suzuki Roshi his life work was transformed. He embraced the practice of zazen and the task of

sustaining the dharma of zen, given to him by his teacher Shunryu Suzuki Roshi.

At the instruction of Suzuki Roshi, Sojun founded Berkeley Zen Center in 1967. He was ordained a year later in the attic zendo he had established on Dwight Way in Berkeley. Suzuki Roshi died in 1971. In 1984, Sojun received dharma transmission from Suzuki Roshi's son, Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi, abbot of Rinso-In Temple in Japan, and he was installed as BZC's first abbot in 1985. In declining health, he stepped down as abbot in October 2020, assuming the position of Founding Dharma Teacher.

From 1988 to 1997, Sojun served as co-abbot of San Francisco Center, where he had begun his Zen practice in 1964, helping to stabilize SFZC through a period of transition while still guiding Berkeley Zen Center. He continued as Senior Dharma Teacher at SFZC until his death. He was also one of the founding teachers of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association and the American Zen Teacher's Association.

Sojun Roshi was deeply respected in the Zen community—in the U.S. and in Japan. His own warm embodiment of Suzuki Roshi's "ordinary mind" was a path of steady and determined practice, the luminous quality of "nothing special." Although Sojun had more than thirty transmitted dharma heirs leading Zen centers around the U.S., and more than 200 lay ordained Zen students, he was most at home in the community of Berkeley Zen Center, which continues to thrive.

Sojun Roshi is survived by his wife Elizabeth Horowitz, their son Daniel, and uncountable disciples and students across the United States and around the world. Cards and letters can be sent to Liz, Daniel, and the BZC sangha c/o Berkeley Zen Center, 1931 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94703.





THE DALAI LAMA

STATEMENT

As an avowed campaigner for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, I welcome the fact that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has now been ratified by fifty countries and will come into force from January next year. This is indeed historic and augurs well for the future of humanity. It is a step in the right direction to finding more enlightened and civilized arrangements for resolving conflicts.

I have no doubt that this treaty's coming into force will contribute to even more concerted efforts to do away with these dreadful weapons and secure genuine and lasting peace in our world. It is my belief that our generation has arrived at the threshold of a new era in human history. Because we are all interdependent, our vast and diverse human family must learn to live together in peace. I commend the United Nations and the concerned member states that have made this treaty possible. It is an act of universal responsibility that recognises the fundamental oneness of humanity.

The world has now taken the first positive step towards a more peaceful future, but our ultimate goal should be the demilitarization of the entire planet. I believe this is feasible if proper plans are made and people are educated to their advantages. Since the first step, the intention to eliminate nuclear weapons has been taken; ultimately total demilitarization can be achieved.

A nuclear-free world is in everyone's interest. The reality today is we need to rely on mutual understanding and dialogue to resolve conflicts. Therefore, I take the opportunity to urge all governments to work to implement this treaty, so that the world becomes a safer place for us all.

26 October 2020

I am writing this note to convey my best wishes and prayers for the new year, 2021.

Year 2020 has passed with many unpleasant experiences, such as Covid-19 pandemic, violence, conflicts, natural disasters, and many other things. As we all know that all these problems are human creations, as a direct result of greed-based globalized consumeristic competitive lifestyles of so-called post-modern civilization. The present situation is an indication of much more serious challenges that are awaiting ahead, which is threatening the existence of all living creatures on this planet earth. It is high time to think about and do everything which is possible within our capacity.

We cannot expect a miracle transformation in human society will emerge by itself, nor we have the ability to bring such change immediately. Nevertheless, as a responsible individual, we must think about what we can do by ourselves at the personal level to create a constructive seed, which may cause to sprout some betterment in the future, and also dissociate ourselves from the cause of global destruction. At the same time, we may try to persuade the people around us to whom we have some relation and influence.

Therefore, I would like to recommend that we should consider how we can adopt a non-violent and eco-friendly lifestyle through the practice of localization, need-based utilization of commodities, self-sufficiency, no competitive way of living and cultivating unconditional loving kindness to all sentient beings.

By this way, we might be able to create a better self, through which, we may hope for a better we and better world. With this request, I wish you a very happy and meaningful new year.

Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche

<https://www.facebook.com/Samdhongrinpoche%20/photos/a.573660972687336/3521075141279223/?type=3>
<https://samdhongrinpoche.com/en/>



Samdhong Rinpoche

627 Leyden Lane
Claremont, CA 91711
Christmas, 2020

Dear Alan,

I write as a prisoner who is enjoying his imprisonment. I am currently not allowed to leave my rooms, but I have all I need, plus a computer that connects me to the world by zoom. Wonderful helpers bring me too much good food to eat and to check on my health. My imprisonment is to protect us all, which, just as restrictions were being eased, turned out to be of heightened importance.

I am overwhelmed with blessings in my old age. Whereas my ideas and proposals were usually ignored outside of China, now there is interest. I have promoted Whitehead's philosophy and cosmology as providing a basis for a healthy world, and people yawned. This summer I taught an online course on Whitehead's most difficult book, *Process and Reality*. I hoped for fifty takers. A thousand signed up. There are four organizations I helped to found to promote the process perspective and the ecological civilization for which it calls. They are all doing important work, and there have been real breakthroughs to celebrate.

My work is especially with the local one. It was founded as the Claremont Institute, but it shared that name with a very different organization, and on the occasion of a magnificent celebration of my 95th birthday last February, the name was changed to the Cobb Institute. Of the four, it is the only membership organization, and it has attracted talented and committed people.

Our annual family gathering is now being postponed from Christmas to my 96th birthday. I have four married (or partnered) sons, five grandchildren, and six great grandchildren. I am impressed that my grandchildren's generation has learned that parenting is a fully shared role. It works.

Someday, on a less fractured planet, people may note 2020 as the year ecological civilization began. At least we learned life could change. Cities, including neighboring Pomona, are now leading in transformation. My Christmas prayer is that we will embrace the newness symbolized by the birth of a savior.

With Christmas love,

John B. Cobb, Jr.



International Network
of Engaged Buddhists

January 11, 2021

Dear Alan,

You are in our thoughts and are sending our condolences to you on the recent passing of your dharma teacher Sojun Mel Weitsman at the Berkeley Zen Center. It is wonderful that you worked so closely with him through the years and know that he will be missed.

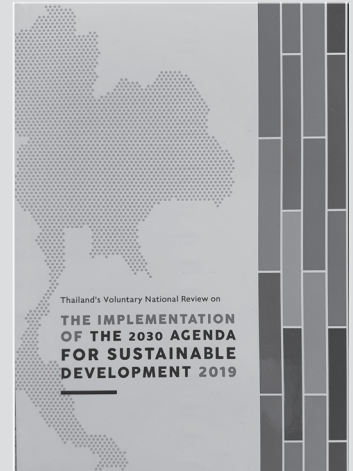
Our thoughts go to everyone at the Berkeley Zen Center, particularly your family and the Weitsman family.

With metta,

Sulak Sivaraksa
Founder, INEB

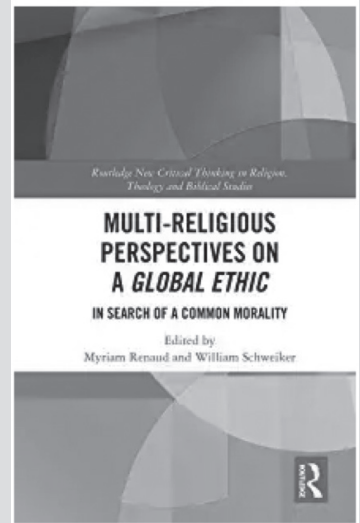
Harsha Navaratne
Chairperson, INEB's Executive Committee

Recommended Reading



The Implementation
of the 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development 2019

Publisher: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of
the Kingdom of Thailand



Multi-Religious Perspectives
on A Global Ethic

Edited: Myriam Renaud &
William Schweiker

งานปาฐกถาเสวนาพริ้งพวงแก้ว ครั้งที่ 27
เสาร์ที่ 13 กุมภาพันธ์ 2564 เวลา 15.00 – 18.00 น.
โถงชั้นล่าง เรือนร้อนอนา สวนเงินมีมา
มูลนิธิเสฐียรโกเศศ-นาคะประทีป ซ. เจริญนคร 20-22

PUBLIC LECTURE

The 27th Sem Pringpuangkeo Public Lecture
Saturday 13th February 2021, 15.00-18.00 hrs.
At Hall Ruen Roichanan Sathirakoses Nagapradipa
Foundation, 20-22 Charoen Nakorn Rd. BKK

ปาฐกถา

กระบวนการสร้าง "สมบัติร่วม"

มุมมองตะวันออก-ตะวันตก
ว่าด้วยการดูแลสมบัติโลก

ฮันส์ และ วาลลา แวนวิลเลี่ยนส์วาร์ด

ผู้ร่วมก่อตั้งบริษัทอินิเครือข่าย
นวัตกรรมสากล (INI)

EAST-WEST
PERSPECTIVES
ON EARTH
TRUSTEESHIP

*Hans and Wallapa
van Willenswaard*

*(Co-founders of INI-Innovation
Network International)*



พร้อมเปิดตัวหนังสือ
ความเป็นหนึ่งเดียว
ปะทะ พวก 1%
Oneness vs. the 1%

เขียนโดย วันทนา ศิวะ
by VANDANA SHIVA

ล่ามแปลภาษาอังกฤษและไทย โดย คุณวาลลา แวนวิลเลี่ยนส์วาร์ด

With translation English to Thai by Wallapa van Willenswaard.

For the full programme, visit <http://www.semsikkha.org> or www.snf.or.th
or contact Ms. Poolchawee at 08 9499 0490, 09 9453 8836

Organizers:

