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*Eco Temple Community*

*Building a Collective Sustainable Quality of Life*

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## Editorial team

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

## Cover

Bhanuwat Jittivuthikarn,  
photographer. Location Myanmar

Lay-out & Cover Art  
Surapong Petnamlai

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spd@semsikkha.org

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

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## Editorial Note

### Dear Friends of INEB,

Greetings from Bangkok. We appreciate your ongoing support as we continue the work throughout the pandemic and following the military coup in Burma/Myanmar.

Please read the diverse country reports which highlight issues, as well as, inspiring news from our members around the world beginning with Burma-Myanmar through the USA. This issue also includes more articles and reports from INEB, the INEB Institute and the Spirit in Education Movement.

Among the articles is one our close friend Mangesh Dahiwalé wrote incisively about the relevance of Dr Ambedkar's understanding ancient India's history of revolution and counter-revolution today. Another dear friend and INEB member, Alan Senauke writes about the price of freedom in his article and reminds us to be patient and compassionate to ourself and others. He stated, "Buddhas and ancestors will support us, even when the world is on fire."

INEB congratulates our close friend, Venerable Shih Chao-hwei who is the 38th recipient of the 38th Niwano Peace Prize. Please read the reason for her selection as well as her heartfelt and inspiring acceptance speech.

We also congratulate Harsha Kumara Navaratne, Chairperson of INEB's Executive Committee, on his recent appointment as High Commissioner-designate of Sri Lanka to Canada.

We are also looking forward to seeing many of you during INEB's next international conference scheduled for October 23 – 30, 2022 in South Korea.

## Burma/ Myanmar

# He Was a Buddhist Monk. Now He's an Armed Freedom Fighter.

The Myanmar junta's cruelty has upended lives and pushed many into violent resistance.

By Maung Moe, 7 July 2021

Source: *Vice* - <https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7b49z/myanmar-coup-former-monk-fighter>



He protested peacefully as a monk (l) earlier this year but was driven to armed resistance because of the junta's brutality. Photo courtesy of U Kaythara

The former monk takes every meal as if it is his last. If necessary, he and his fighters are willing to sacrifice their lives. Each has a grenade attached to a chest pocket on their uniforms, not for throwing at the enemy, but for blowing themselves up if they are close to being caught by Myanmar soldiers.

"We will never surrender. Even if they can capture us, they will only get our dead bodies, not alive. We will fight until our last breath," the 33-year-old told VICE World News in a recent phone interview from an undisclosed location in the jungles of eastern

Myanmar, where much of the organized resistance to the Feb. 1 coup has gathered force.

The different stages of his life are captured in his changing names, a somewhat common practice in Myanmar. Formerly known as Kyaw Swar Htay, he adopted the name U Kaythara as a monk. When he left the monkhood, he had to choose a new name. Since taking up arms, he calls himself George Michael, a combination of names whose similarity with the late pop star is coincidental.

In the past, the winding mountain

paths and thick forests of Karen State were the domain of ethnic armed groups ensnared in endless conflict with the military. But since the coup ripped Myanmar's young democracy into pieces, the border area near Thailand has drawn poets, musicians, and even a former beauty queen into the struggle against the junta.

In response to the escalating violence, peaceful protests have given way to new methods of resistance, as members of a People's Defense Force battle it out in remote and urban areas. Late last month, street fights erupted across Myanmar's second biggest city of Mandalay. Explosions, shootings, and deadly clashes with soldiers regularly make headlines.

Though Buddhist monks have joined protests against the coup in Myanmar, some senior figures in the Buddhist-majority country's clergy have sided with the junta. But there is a long history of monks emerging from the stillness of the monastery into the chaos of uprisings against oppression.

"Some joined the armed resistance to early British colonial rule; Saya San, who led a peasant rebellion against the British, was a disrobed monk," Richard Horsey, a Myanmar analyst for the International Crisis Group, told VICE World News. More recently, in the 1990s, Buddhist monk U Thuzana led the insurgent Democratic Karen Buddhist Army.

"So, it's not that surprising to see a monk taking up arms against the regime. The vast majority of people in Myanmar from all walks of life are opposed to the coup and angry at the regime's violence against the





The former monk in uniform in eastern Myanmar in this undated image.  
Photo courtesy of U Kaythara



The former monk, now known as George Michael, in his new uniform in eastern Myanmar in this undated image. Photo courtesy of U Kaythara

population,” Horsey added. “There is a great determination to do whatever it takes to prevent the military keeping power, including taking up arms.”

U Gambira, one of the leading figures in the 2007 Saffron Revolution, a series of demonstrations led by monks against a previous military regime that ultimately crushed the uprising, has mixed feelings about Michael’s decision. Gambira spent four years in jail for his role in the 2007 protests. He was tortured inside and still struggles with the trauma. When released in a 2012 amnesty, he said monasteries wouldn’t accept him because he was a political prisoner. He had to leave the monkhood and seek political asylum in Australia.

He said he was “sad” to see Michael leave the monastery. But on the other hand, he was proud of him and said he respected the decision.

“It is not his personal desire. He left the monkhood for the people and the nation,” he told VICE World News.

In a previous interview with Radio Free Asia’s Myanmar service, Michael reflected on the wide gulf between his past and current outlook on life.

“We were required to refrain from killing when we were Buddhist monks, but now we are in training to kill,” he was quoted as saying. “I wonder if I am really capable of killing someone in battle.

“I used to prevent others from killing, let alone killing someone myself,” he added. “But now I am required to eliminate them as a soldier.”

Michael now spends most of his time in the jungle, with what he says is a small team involved in fighting on the front lines against Myanmar soldiers. Now, his policy is “no retreat.”

“Our slogan is ‘Beat them with the stock, once your [gun] magazines are empty.’”

Born and raised in Yangon, he is the youngest son in a family of four. His family moved to outerlying Hlaing Tharyar township when he was a kid.

Even though his father passed away when Michael was 10 years old, he had a happy childhood, and the family business thrived.

“I had the best life. I was even spoiled by my family,” he said.

When he was 20, his mother asked him to enter the monkhood. When she became diagnosed with cancer, seeing her son wearing the saffron robes of the Buddhist monk gave her comfort.

Hlaing Tharyar, now home to many working class families and garment factories, is one of the poorest parts of Yangon. Michael’s monastery soon became known for philanthropic works. He said he provided shelter to homeless people, donated food, and provided emergency aid to the community with his own fire services department and ambulances.

But like many other people in the country with no background in warfare, Michael was traumatized by

what he saw unfolding right in front of him in the early days after the Feb. 1 takeover, when soldiers arrested leader Aung San Suu Kyi, cut the internet, and briefly allowed peaceful protests before cracking down with deadly force.

Michael left his monastery after witnessing the early stages of brutal suppression, moving to safe houses and taking part in protests. In one picture, he can be seen holding up a heart-shaped necklace made of flowers. But after a massacre in Hlaing Tharyar in March, when dozens of people were reported killed, he decided to try a different path.

“I couldn’t do anything for them. That’s why I joined the resistance movement because I was so angry,” he said.

In March, just as he was preparing to flee to the east, he received a call informing him that his long-suffering mother had died. But he had to leave quickly as junta forces were aware of his activities. “I didn’t have enough time to say goodbye to my mother,” he recalled. “I don’t even know the color of her tombstone.”

He slipped out of Yangon by bus dressed as a monk, which helped him evade soldiers at checkpoints, who took no notice of him, he said. Within five hours, he reached a liberated area ruled by Karen National Union, one of the biggest ethnic armed organizations in the country.

He started training with others who had recently arrived. Soon, he said he was overseeing a small group of front-liners, protecting strategic posts.

Now, they get up at 5 a.m. every morning, Michael does a munitions

check, then they perform morning drill, with breakfast at 8 a.m. They train again until lunch, and take classes into the afternoon. Once they finish dinner at 6 p.m., they head into the jungle and find the best place to sleep for the night.

They decided not to sleep in the camps because they need to avoid potential airstrikes, which have been

launched in the area for the first time in decades.

Michael said his philanthropic mindset is unchanged, despite his completely changed life. But now he is helping “whoever wants democracy and truth.”

S

## Burma/ Myanmar

# The 100 Most Influential People of 2021

Esther Ze Naw Bamvo and Ei Thinzar Maung

By Mimi Aye, 15 September 2021

Source: <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2021/6095960/esther-ze-naw-bamvo-ei-thinzar-maung/>



Three fingers aloft, faces aglow, clad in their bright-red shirts—a nod to the Karen ethnic minority—Esther Ze Naw Bamvo (who is Kachin) and Ei Thinzar Maung (who is Shan-ni) were a vision of strength, honor and justified anger as they led people on the very first anti-military protest in Yangon just five days after the Feb. 1 coup that violently

robbed Myanmar of its freedom.

The fierceness of Myanmar’s women has long been suppressed by its military, so this brave new generation sent a surge of pride through us all.

Through their work, both activists have broken new ground. Esther is a leader of the Kachin Peace Network and was one of the few people in the

past who were courageous enough to speak up for the Rohingya; Ei Thinzar, also a longtime activist on ethnic minority rights, has been named as Myanmar's youngest-ever deputy minister in the National Unity Government, an exiled group formed by members of parliament ousted in the coup.

It's thanks to these women and others like them, that we finally have hope for the future of Myanmar.

Aye is the author of *MANDALAY: Recipes and Tales From a Burmese Kitchen*, and host of the food and culture podcast *The MSG Pod*



## China

# China's Buddhism Card

The fear is that it will translate its economic weight into spiritual might

By P Stobdan, *Strategic Affairs Expert*

Updated 26 May 2021

Source: *The Tribune* - <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/chinas-buddhism-card-258452>

As we celebrate the 2565th Buddha Jayanti, it is time to reflect on how the ideas and symbols of Buddha have gradually vanished from the land where he attained enlightenment.

Buddha neither exists in temples nor is Buddhism about kneeling down before a statue to save one's soul. It is not about performing rituals and sacrifices. Yet, this might seem strange,



TAKING REINS: The issue is that of leadership. As India loses most of its legacy, China is taking the leadership over global Buddhism. **AP**

given the growing relevance of Buddhism elsewhere, it is assuming less importance in India.

India needs to seriously reaffirm its central role and embrace its own tradition of Buddha, dharma, sangha.

But sadly, India's deviation from Buddhism and its historical essence could do more harm than good to its global image, for the world outside continues to relate India's greatness, despite its modern achievements, with Buddha's wisdom.

Surely, the builders of the Indian nation were aware of the essence. Nehru particularly elevated his profile through Buddhism — adopted Buddhist features and symbols in the making of the Indian state. According to historian Madhavan Palat, Nehru viewed Gandhi as Buddha's avatar and himself as Ashoka's incarnation. Both rejected dogma but stood for the law of truth. Buddha's ethical approach and principles of change deeply influenced Nehru. If Buddha gave India a temper for peace, Nehru applied it to his foreign policy — to draw back from conflict and from competing with one another.

But today the issue is that of leadership. As India loses most of its legacy, China is taking the leadership over global Buddhism. And, as China plans to become a Buddhist superpower along with its financial, political, and marketing clout, it would come as India's worst fears.

Certainly, China and Buddhism go a long way. In fact, contrary to popular belief, Buddhism remained firmly rooted in China even after the Communist Party took over power.



China has been opposed to superstitious practices but not against religion. But, in recent years China is witnessing a growing passion for Buddhist renewal. The spectre of economic affluence seems to steer people's quest for spirituality, forcing Buddhism to make a strong comeback. Millions of Chinese are seeking their 'yin guo' (karmic) connections with Buddha Amitabha. From students to businessmen, ordinary Chinese are beginning to link their existential happiness to the interdependent nature of karmic cycles.

Chinese Master Jingzong once said China's intent to realise its economic and political destiny would pale compared to the urge amongst millions to accomplish their spiritual fortunes. He cannot visualise China's future without Buddhism.

But, it is none other than President Xi Jinping who has been working on a Buddhist globalisation drive since he was 29 years old, serving as a junior official in Hebei province.

Xi has shown bias against ideologies that deemed foreign i.e. Christianity, Islam, and democracy. He had helped rebuild several famous temples in the past, but ordered thousands of crosses be pulled off the steeples of churches while he was chief of Zhejiang province between 2002 and 2007.

Xi could be following a policy akin to Vladimir Putin's spiritual feat of adopting orthodox Christianity, which is seen as giving him the moral legitimacy to be the leader of the Slavic

world. This is despite Article 14 of Russia's constitution declaring the country 'a secular state'.

Nobody knows whether Xi is a practitioner, his wife is; but he has firmly been putting Chinese Buddhism on the global stage since 2005. At the domestic level, it looks as though he is turning to religion not just to bolster his rule, but to save the party from falling, and to arrest the flagging moral values in China's social fabric through anti-corruption drive.

It looks as though he is reimagining China's future along the lines of the imperial Chinese state. With humanist Buddhist values diffusing into society, China is likely to see in the future what we witness in countries like Thailand today. To be sure, this is having consequences for the rest of Asia, where 97% of the world's Buddhist populations live and where Buddhism is their core values.

The fear is that China will translate its economic weight into spiritual might. It is already on a Buddhist globalisation spree — building spiritual links with the people of other nations and regularly hosting the World Buddhist Forum that draws thousands of monks and scholars from across the world, and is building Lingshan as the Vatican of Buddhism.

China controls the World Buddhist Sangha Councils and bodies, helping to repair, renovate, and resurrect Buddhist institutions across Theravada and Mahayana countries, fervently participating in major international events such as the UN

Vesak Day.

Becoming a guardian of Buddhism helps Xi promote China as an acceptable world power with a soft image. Buddhist globalisation helps Beijing push its economic projects — makes diplomacy easier to win geopolitical influence in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and elsewhere. Taking a cue from the imperial-era practice, China could be even using the powerful Tibetan Buddhist links for expanding its outreach. Whether asserting territorial claims in the South China Sea or pushing connectivity under the BRI initiative along the Silk Route, Xi seems working on the political geography of Buddhism. His approach towards linking trade, connectivity with Buddhism seems to bear that out.

The BRI is pushed into Nepal to link with the Buddha's birthplace, Lumbini. CPEC is being termed the 'Gandhara trail' to link China with Buddhist centres such as Lahore, Taxila, and Peshawar. Taxila relics are being sent to Sri Lanka for a public exposition. Asian monks, including those from Bhutan, are invited to the Saidu Sharif monastery in Swat Valley (the birthplace of Padmasambhava).

India needs to seriously reaffirm its central role and embrace its own tradition of Buddha, dharma, sangha.



## China

# Local Government in Gansu Shuts Down Tibetan Temple, Evicts Monks, Nuns

By Avery, 2 August 2021

Source: *Newsstalk* - <https://www.newsstalk.com/continent-news/asia-news/local-government-in-gansu-shuts-down-tibetan-temple-evicts-monks-nuns/>

Authorities in the northwestern Chinese district of Gansu have actually by force closed down a Tibetan abbey in the Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, kicking out the monks as well as religious women forcibly, RFA has actually discovered.

Monks at Hongcheng abbey, additionally referred to as the Yulingta abbey, are received video clips of the event standing up banners that review “Physical defrocking of monks is unlawful as well as inappropriate!” as well as various other objection mottos.

Video clips additionally revealed monks remaining on the roofing of the abbey yelling down at a team of

unknown individuals on the ground.

Nuns sobbed in grieving at being made to leave, while others screamed “Quit this! Quit this!” as well as “Movie every little thing! Allow’s leap!”

A staff member that addressed the phone at the Yongjing region ethnic minority as well as spiritual events bureau decreased to comment when gotten in touch with by RFA on Monday.

“I do not truly understand about this,” the worker claimed. “You ought to call the workplace. I do not understand about the resettlement plans for Hongcheng abbey.”

The worker claimed Supervisor

Cui of the abbey administration board was in charge of “transplanting” the monks as well as religious women.

Repetitive contact us to Cui’s mobile phone called unanswered on Monday.

A staff member that addressed the phone at the Xihe area federal government workplaces near Hongcheng decreased to reply to inquiries when gotten in touch with by RFA on Monday.

“No, absolutely nothing like that took place,” the worker claimed. “Where are you calling from? Call? Contact number? I require you to sign up.”

## Lots of monks apprehended

U.S.-based analyst Ma Ju, that has actually been adhering to the event, claimed several monks were apprehended throughout the expulsion.

He claimed Hongcheng most likely will not be the last abbey to be targeted.

“They are preparing yourself to get rid of all Tibetan holy places as well as abbeys within the bulk Han Chinese location of China,” Ma claimed. “This is just one of their plans.”

“They think that this location was a method for Tibetan Buddhism to get a footing in landmass China.”

The step is most likely connected to a current go to by the Chinese Communist Event’s Panchen Lama, that claimed Tibetan Buddhism need to not be utilized as a device for “aggressive international pressures” to threaten CCP policy.

Online remarks claimed regional





authorities were most likely thinking about the abbey's wide range, as it had actually obtained a rise in contributions throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

### Long-running project

Kelsang Gyaltsen Bawa, Agent of the Workplace of Tibet in Taipei, claimed the expulsions have actually become part of a long-running project by the judgment Chinese Communist Event (CCP) to kick out monks as well as religious women in Gansu.

"It's also worse in Gansu than it was throughout the Cultural Change," he claimed, in a recommendation to the political chaos as well as mass devastation of social establishments that occurred under late superior leader Mao Zedong from 1966 to 1976.

"The CCP additionally by force defrocked monks as well as religious women from 1956 with 1959 to 1965, for supposed nationwide reforms in Tibet," he claimed.

"This is an extremely major issue. It's not as basic as claiming that they are attempting to sinicize Tibetan Buddhism," he claimed.

He claimed the CCP is most likely attempting to get rid of the method of Tibetan Buddhism anywhere within China's boundaries.

A Gansu-based chronicler surnamed Gao claimed the step remained in line the CCP's project of church demolitions as well as go across elimination.

"Currently they are targeting Tibetan Buddhism, by force defrocking monks as well as religious women," Gao claimed. "There is an essential disrespect."

The Hongcheng abbey was currently damaged as soon as in 1958, prior to restoration started under Head of state Hu Jintao in 2011 utilizing contributions collected by Gentsong Rinpoche, a spiritual leader.

"Regional Chinese authorities shared worry as well as uncertainty regarding exactly how the abbey had actually ended up being so rich, as well as utilized this as a reason to check out as well as revamp," the *Tibet Article* paper reported.

"Eventually, the issue finished

with a need that the abbey share its earnings just as with the city government," the record claimed.

"Random as well as unreasonable assessments ended up being increasingly more constant. Slowly, the trouble rose till the federal government made a decision to straight take the abbey, get rid of the monks, as well as compel them to live a nonreligious life versus their will," it claimed.



## Siam

# Buddhist Monks on the Frontline as COVID-19 Surges in Thailand

By Craig Lewis, 4 August 2021

Source: *Buddhistdoor Global* - <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/buddhist-monks-on-the-frontline-as-covid-19-surges-in-thailand>

**B**uddhist monks are joining essential workers on the frontline of Thailand's COVID-19 response as the Southeast Asian kingdom struggles under the weight of a rapidly escalating third wave of infections. Monastics around the country can be seen clad in personal protective equipment (PPE) to deliver oxygen cylinders, administer COVID tests, and even transport the dead to crematoriums.

Thailand has been engulfed by a third wave of SARS-CoV-2 infections that first emerged on 1 April, traced to a cluster at a high-end Bangkok nightlife district frequented by the politically connected. The outbreak

has since resulted in 643,522 COVID-19 patients, according to the official count, of whom 428,380 have recovered. Earlier today, the authorities reported a record high of 188 COVID-19-related deaths and 20,200 new cases over the previous 24 hours as the highly contagious Delta variant continues to spread nationwide.

"There are a lot of Thais who are still ignored by the public health system," said 33-year-old Phra Mahapromphong, deputy abbot of Wat Suthi Wararam, a riverside Buddhist monastery in southwest Bangkok. Since 21 July, the monk has been visiting the Thai capital's poorer

Buddhist monk Phra Pongpetch Santijitto dons PPE over his robes to cremate the body of a COVID-19 victim at a monastery on the outskirts of Bangkok.

*From channelnewsasia.com*

Disinfecting monastic ritual implements prior to cremating the body of a COVID-19 victim.

*From reuters.com*



neighborhoods, bringing oxygen, food, and medical supplies to the needy, and collecting test samples. “We take care of everyone we come across,” he added. (*Bangkok Post*)

Wat Suthi Wararam is just one of many monasteries that has been turned into an isolation center for COVID patients, with doctors and nurses working alongside the Buddhist monks.

“Monks are able to live because we rely on people’s donations,” Phra Mahapromphong observed. “So it’s time for us to give back to the people. At the very least, we can encourage them to keep fighting.” (*Bangkok Post*)

With infections and deaths escalating and the healthcare system stretched thin, Thailand’s government has extended lockdown measures for a further two weeks from yesterday, with another 16 provinces added to the high-risk zone of maximum restrictions that now encompasses Greater Bangkok and 28 of the

kingdom’s 76 provinces, representing 40 per cent of the population.

Earlier in July, a monastery in Pathum Thani, on the outskirts of Bangkok, reported that it has been cremating 4–5 bodies per day, compared with 2–3 per month before the pandemic. “I haven’t seen other monks in the temple for a while now because I’ve been busy cremating and collecting ashes from dusk until dawn,” one monk, Pongpetch Santijitto, was quoted as saying. (*Reuters*)

After an initially successful response last year in the early months of the pandemic, the Thai government has failed to follow through with a decisive vaccine response. Critics have accused the military government of lacking foresight in managing the pandemic, with the national vaccination program hobbled by delays, confusion, and official obfuscation over the procurement and supply of vaccines. In particular, the government has struggled to secure

sufficient vaccines in a timely manner due to complacency over the country’s initial success.

At the time of writing on 4 August, Thailand had reported a total of 672,385 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 5,503 related deaths, according to data reported by the *Bangkok Post* newspaper. The authorities have reported administering 18.2 million vaccine doses to a population of some 69 million.\* Total global cases have exceeded 199.57 million, with 4.25 million related deaths recorded and 4.15 billion vaccine doses administered.\*

Upriver in northern Bangkok, monks at Wat Chin Wararam Worawiharn are also doing what they can to aid vulnerable Thais neglected by the government. Phra Supornchaithammo has taken on the sobering role of transporting bodies to the crematorium.

“I’m willing to take the risk here. If I contract the virus then I’m ready to



A building in the compound of Wat Suthi Wararam in Bangkok is repurposed as an isolation ward for COVID-19 patients from the local community. *From bangkokpost.com*

accept it without any regret,"the monk remarked. "I didn't have it in my head that I would be doing something like this when I was ordained, but with a situation like this, everybody needs a helping hand and I'm proud to be here," he said. (*Bangkok Post*)

Thailand is a predominantly Theravada Buddhist country, with 94.5 per cent of the nation's population of 69 million identifying as Buddhists, according to government census data for 2015. The Southeast Asian kingdom has some 40,000 Buddhist temples and

almost 300,000 monks. While communities of female renunciants also exist, the monastic authorities in Thailand have never officially recognized the full ordination of women, and bhikkhunis do not generally enjoy the same level of societal acceptance as their male counterparts.



## Siam

# Outcry Over Reported Removal of Suchat Sawatsri as a Thai National Artist

21 August 2021

**Source:** *Thai PBS World* - <https://www.thaipbsworld.com/outcry-over-reported-removal-of-suchat-sawatsri-as-a-thai-national-artist/>

An online signature collection campaign was launched today (Saturday) by Mr. Chamnan Chanruang, former deputy leader of the now defunct Future Forward party, to demand the dissolution of the commission.

In his brief statement, on the [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) website, Chamnan said that a national artist should not be

stripped of his status simply because of his political opinions.

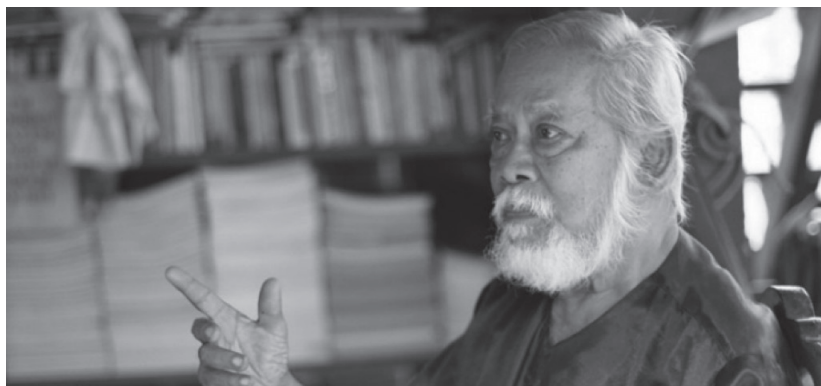
Named as a national artist for literature by the Ministry of Culture in 2011, Suchart has become an outspoken critic of the government of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, especially relating to his alleged mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Air Chief Marshal Veerawit Kongsak, a member of the commission, said yesterday that the committee made the decision during a teleconference on Thursday adding, however, that the decision is not yet final and has to be confirmed by the same commission.

If the decision is confirmed and an official announcement is made, Mr. Suchart will be formally notified and has the right to challenge the decision within 30 days.

Professor Dr. Chaoyant Chaiyaporn, of the Faculty of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University, is demanding an explanation from the National Culture Commission about the controversial decision.

Dr. Chaoyant said, responding to a



The Thai Writers Association, several prominent writers, politicians and academics have voiced opposition to the reported decision by the National Culture Commission of Thailand to strip Mr. Suchart Sawatsri of his status as a national artist.

netizen's claim that Suchart had challenged the commission to revoke his national artist status, that there was no need for the commission to make such decision simply because of Suchart's challenge.

SEAWrite awardees, Mrs. Veeraporn Nitiprapha, Uthis Haemamool, and Sakul Boonpathat, president of the Thai Writers Association, also voiced their strong opposition to the commission's decision.

## Siam

# Why is Thailand's Chulalongkorn University Afraid of Academic Freedom?

At many Thai universities, academic freedom does not extend to searching criticisms of the political and economic status quo.

By Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal, 1 September 2021

Source: *The Diplomat* - <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/why-is-thailands-chulalongkorn-university-afraid-of-academic-freedom/?fbclid=IwAR0AX-PcKUzbtD7P454bS6KN25Rqu0qyuJlOZBAnLfSxsnvf3B6SQtH0FFgU>

In one or two weeks, if nothing changes, I will no more be the president of Chulalongkorn University's Student

Union. Once again, the university considers my actions and opinions to be too controversial, too heterodox,

"The country is declining further and further and has not yet reaching the bottom," said Mrs. Veeraporn in her Facebook post, as she demanded an explanation from the national commission.

"We should ban the commission, as well as the national artist award. It shows a complete lack of maturity," wrote Uthis in his Facebook post.

The taxpayer funded benefits for a national artist include a monthly income of 25,000 baht for life, medical costs of 100,000 baht a year, 50,000 baht compensation for damage caused to property from a public disaster, 20,000 baht for funeral costs and 150,000 baht for the publication of books in memory of the deceased artist.



too provocative. Once again, the university shows that it is afraid of academic freedom.

I have been targeted for organizing an online orientation event for freshmen that included appearances from Parit "Penguin" Chiwarak and Rung Panusaya Sithijirawattanukul, two prominent student activists from Thammasat University, and Professor Pavin Chachavalpongpun from Kyoto University, who is in exile because of his scholarship.

On July 21, the Office for Student Affairs posted a statement condemning the Student Union's actions, saying that inviting these speakers, who are accused of breaking Thailand's severe lese majeste laws, was improper, and that the university would consider



punishing me.

On July 28, an online mini-concert for freshmen should have taken place, but one day before, Professor Chaiyaporn Puprasert, the vice president for student affairs, issued a letter refusing approval for the event. The event was scheduled to take place on the king's birthday, which his office deemed inappropriate.

The university has also sought to censor the student handbook edited by the Union, which includes articles discussing feminism, civil disobedience, LGBTQIA+ issues, freedom of expression, protests and state violence, the historic role of student activists, and self-care. On July 29, the Office for Student Affairs said in a statement that the handbook's content was "incorrect," "inappropriate," and still not recognized by the university.

In the meantime, alumni of Chulalongkorn University have founded an association, the Chulalongkorn University Defense Committee, to press the university's administration to punish me.

On August 4, Puprasert announced that disciplinary action would probably be taken against me for inviting speakers who are said to have talked and behaved in "inappropriate" ways and for having published a "heterodox" student handbook.

Faculty and staff who work under Puprasert will preside over the disciplinary committee, making the process procedurally unfair and the outcome predictable. I will most likely lose 10 "behavior points," which will lead to my impeachment from the

position of president of the Student Union.

Alas, what has been happening in the last three weeks is not something new in my path as an activist and student at Chulalongkorn University.

In 2017, I became the president of the University's Student Council, the first sophomore to hold this position and the president whose term was the shortest lived: my tenure lasted three months, because seven students and I walked out of the university's oath-taking ceremony, in which students must prostrate before a statue of King Chulalongkorn, to express our disagreement with the existence of such a ritual. During the event, my friend Suphalak Bumroongkit, the deputy president of the Student Council, was put in a headlock by one of the university's lecturers, who, despite the incident, was not fired and did not resign from his position at the Office for Student Affairs.

As a result, my behavior points were reduced, and I was impeached from holding any other position at the university again. Despite an international outcry, the university did not step back, and my friends and I had to resort to legal action. In 2019, Thailand's Central Administrative Court reduced the penalty against us, and I was allowed to become a candidate again.

In 2020, I won the elections for the Presidency of the Student Union of the Department of Political Science, and in March 2021, I was elected with 70 percent of the vote to serve as the President of the University's Student Union. Now, once again, the university is threatening to impeach me.

In the face of this pressure, our demands are clear. We want the charges against us to be dropped. The accusations basically rely on the fact that we have created a space for students to express their opinions about the current regime and the social status quo in Thailand.

The criticism directed against the student handbook is, as the Editorial Department of the Student Union has argued, an effort to interfere with the freedom of the press. We ask the university to apologize for threatening to censor our ideas and for attacking our freedom of expression.

We demand the creation of institutional channels through which the Union could regularly exchange views with the administration, such as monthly meetings. We also want a means for the administration to regularly interact with the student body (such as town hall meetings, now possible online as well), and for students to freely exchange among ourselves on social and political matters.

More generally, we expect our university to be a space in which rational thinking, and not monocratic orders, reigns; a space in which critical dialogue replaces conventional wisdom and undemocratic norms.

The relationship between academic and political freedom is intimate. For decades, students have been at the forefront of the struggle for democracy and democratization in Thailand. Chulalongkorn University knows this. The monarchy knows this. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha knows this. That is why they are so afraid of letting academic freedom



have free rein.

Universities must be a fort of freedom. They must contribute to the formation of citizens who are engaged in the building of a democratic society. They must be, in this respect, more critical of the current political situation in Thailand. They must condemn the widespread crackdown and police violence against student activists like Penguin, who is in jail once again not because he has been considered guilty after due process but because he is an outspoken critic of the Thai government and has actively organized and participated in pro-democracy demonstrations. Chulalongkorn cannot choose silence over dialogue, punishment over freedom.

One may think that Thailand is an exception and that one should not care about what is happening at an unknown university in a small Asian country. But as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once argued, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

Academic freedom is increasingly at risk, everywhere. And here, in Thailand, and now, we need all the help foreign scholars can provide to support our struggle for freedom.

*Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal* is an author, an activist, an undergraduate student in Political Science, and the current President of the Student Union of Chulalongkorn University, Thailand.

## Follow Supreme Court Precedent, Dismiss Cases of Judicial Harassment Against Human Rights Defenders

22 September 2021

Source: **Fortify Rights** - <https://www.fortifyrights.org/tha-inv-2021-09-22/?fbclid=IwAR1L5dxsxOZ-IXYUDSzOjus31t30yCXjPpv6vIRFerbLaY9KL4laTbPsXso>



Supreme Court upholds lower court dismissal of criminal defamation complaint against university lecturer Ngamsuk Ruttanasatain

Thai authorities should drop all remaining cases brought by Thai chicken company Thammakaset Company Limited against human rights defenders and protect the right to freedom of expression, said Fortify Rights today. Today, the Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling to dismiss a criminal defamation complaint brought by Thammakaset against Ngamsuk Ruttanasatain, a lecturer at Mahidol University’s Institute for Human Rights and Peace Studies (IHRP).

“Today’s decision by the Supreme Court sets an important precedent for Thailand and Thai authorities

considering similar complaints against human rights defenders who have done nothing but exercise their right to free expression,” said Amy Smith, Executive Director of Fortify Rights. “The needless harm created by this case and ones like it should not be repeated.”

Today’s ruling comes more than two years after Thammakaset lodged a complaint on May 1, 2019 against Ngamsuk Ruttanasatain for allegedly sharing a Fortify Rights news release on the IHRP’s Facebook page on March 12, 2019. The news release related to another criminal defamation lawsuit filed by Thammakaset against human rights defenders Nan Win and Sutharee Wannasiri. On June 8, 2021, the Bangkok Criminal Court acquitted Nan Win and Sutharee Wannasiri of the charges brought by Thammakaset.

The complaint against Ngamsuk

Ruttanasatain alleged violations of criminal defamation under articles 326 and 328 of the Thailand Criminal Code, which carries a sentence of up to two years in prison and maximum fine of 200,000 Thai Baht (US\$6,000). The Bangkok Criminal Court dismissed the complaint against Ngamsuk Ruttanasatain on September 18, 2019, after two days of preliminary hearings. On July 16, 2020, the Court of Appeal upheld the criminal court's decision, and the Supreme Court today confirmed the decision of both lower courts. The Supreme Court's judgment is final.

"SLAPP [Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation] needs to end in Thailand. It doesn't only arbitrarily limit freedom of expression but also takes a massive financial, time, and mental health toll on its victims," said Ngamsuk Ruttanasatain. "Thai authorities should uphold human rights by decriminalizing offenses related to freedom of expression and

preventing SLAPP cases from proceeding."

Since 2016, Thammakaset has filed at least 37 complaints against 22 human rights defenders. The courts have dismissed or ruled against the company in almost all cases. Despite this, Thai authorities continue to consider criminal defamation complaints brought by Thammakaset against human rights defenders. Most recently, the Bangkok South Criminal Court ruled to proceed with the criminal defamation case against Angkhana Neelapaijit, a former National Human Rights Commissioner of Thailand and a 2019 Ramon Magsaysay award winner. The trial in the case against Angkhana Neelapaijit is scheduled to begin on October 26, 2021, and will consider the charge of criminal defamation against Angkhana Neelapaijit for posting two tweets on social media on December 3, 2018, and June 28, 2019, that expressed support for human rights defenders

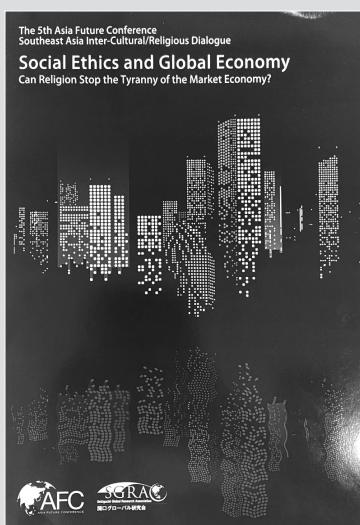
facing lawsuits by the company.

Angkhana Neelapaijit along with two other human rights defenders—Fortify Rights Senior Thailand Human Rights Specialist Puttanee Kangkun and Thanaporn Saleephol, a former Communications Associate at Fortify Rights—also face another case brought by Thammakaset on March 30, 2020, for further social media postings expressing support for human rights defenders facing judicial harassment by Thammakaset. The Bangkok South Criminal Court will continue preliminary hearings on this combined case on December 27, 2021.

The U.S. State Department's 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report referenced the cases brought by Thammakaset, saying that "While Thai courts overturned or dismissed charges against some of these advocates during the reporting period, the company continued to appeal the government's decisions, which leaves these advocates facing ongoing judicial actions." The State Department also expressed concern about Thailand's criminal defamation laws that "continued to allow companies to pursue criminal charges against potential victims and advocates."

Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Thailand is a state party, and the 2017 Constitution of Thailand Section 34 protects the right to freedom of expression. The Thai National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights also includes commitments to protect human rights defenders and prevent judicial harassment.

## Recommended Reading



### Social Ethics and Global Economy Can Religion Stop the Tyranny of the Market Economy

Editors: Brenda Resurecion Tenegra,  
Sonja Dale

Publisher: Atsumi International Foundation  
Sekiguchi Global Research  
Association (SGRA) 2020

## South Korea

# Buddhist Temple to Open *Tripitaka Koreana* to the Public for the First Time

By Craig Lewis, 7 June 2021

Source: *Buddhistdoor Global* - <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/buddhist-temple-to-open-tripitaka-koreana-to-the-public-for-the-first-time>

The *Tripitaka Koreana*, a collection of Buddhist scriptures carved into more than 80,000 wooden printing blocks and reputed to be the oldest and most extensive extant collection of its kind, will be opened for public viewing beginning later this month, the Korean temple housing the sacred artifacts has announced. According to local media reports, this will be the first time that the *Tripitaka Koreana*, which is listed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register, has been made accessible to the general public since its creation in

the 13th century.

The *Tripitaka Koreana* (Kor: 팔만 대장경 [*Palman Daejanggyeong*]) was carved onto 81,258 wooden printing blocks in the 13th century. The woodblocks are now stored at Haein-sa (해인사), one of the principal temples of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, a school of Seon (Zen) Buddhism and South Korea's largest Buddhist order.

"As it was created with a yearning to overcome national crises of the past, we decided that the same message of

hope could be applied to our current national plight posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," stated Jingak Sunim, a senior monk from Haein-sa, during a press conference in Seoul on 3 June. (*The Korea Herald*)

The temple has said that public tours will be offered at 10am and 2pm every Saturday and Sunday from 19 June. The tours, lasting 50 minutes, will be restricted to a maximum of 20 visitors for each time slot. Online booking is available through Haein-sa's official website.

The *Tripitaka Koreana* is much broader in scope than the traditional Pali *Tipitaka* or Pali Canon, and includes a wealth of additional texts and other content, such as Buddhist travelogues, Sanskrit and Chinese dictionaries, and biographies of notable female and male monastics. Painstakingly engraved into 81,352 wooden printing blocks, with no known errors in the 52,330,152 Hanja or Chinese logograms, work on the *Tripitaka Koreana* began in 1237,



*Tripitaka Koreana* woodblocks at Haein-sa.  
From [whc.unesco.org](http://whc.unesco.org)

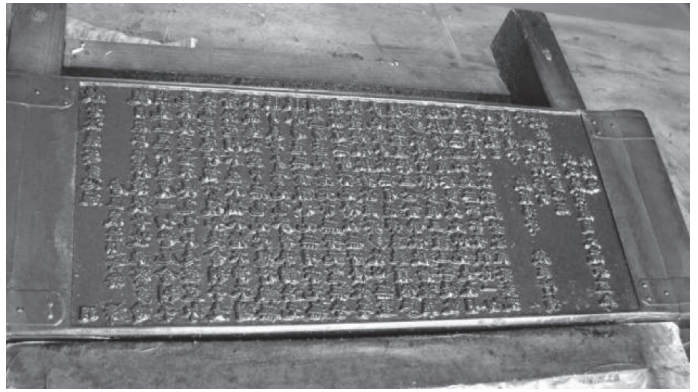


Haein-sa. From [san-shin.net](http://san-shin.net)





*Tripitaka Koreana* woodblocks at aein-sa.  
From wikipedia.org



A copy of one of the woodblocks, used to allow visitors to make an inked print of the Heart Sutra. From wikipedia.org

during the time of the Goryeo kingdom (918–1392), and was completed in 1248. Korea designated the *Tripitaka Koreana* a National Treasure in 1962, and the collection was inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2007.

King Gojong (고종; r. 1213–59), who commissioned the work, believed that the *Tripitaka Koreana* would offer protection for Goryeo and drive out Mongol invaders. Following the loss of the original Tripitaka to fire during the Mongolian invasion of the kingdom in

1232, Gojong ordered the woodblocks to be remade in an appeal to the compassion and authority of the Buddha. The woodblocks are now widely recognized by Buddhist scholars for their outstanding accuracy, superior quality, and artistic merit.

In 2000, after nine years of work, the entire *Tripitaka Koreana* was digitized to ensure their preservation. Efforts are also underway to transfer the texts onto copper plates to serve as a physical backup.

Heian-sa, first built in 802 CE, is

one of the three principal Buddhist temples in South Korea, each of which represents one of the three jewels of the Triple Gem: Tongdo-sa in South Gyeongsang Province represents the Buddha, Haein-sa represents the Dharma or Buddhist teachings, while Songgwang-sa in South Jeolla Province represents the sangha.

The *Tripitaka Koreana* has been housed at Heian-sa, which stands on the slopes of Mount Gaya in Gayasan National Park, South Gyeongsang Province, since 1398. The Buddhist mountain temple and the two 15th century Janggyeong Panjeon, purpose-built depository buildings which house the Tripitaka, were declared a UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site in 1995.

According to census data for 2015, the majority of South Korea's population—56.1 per cent—holds no religious affiliation. Christians make up the largest religious segment of the population at 27.6 per cent, while Buddhists account for 15.5 per cent.

## Recommended Reading

A Tale of Aquitaine:  
A Story in Five Acts

Author: Danny Campbell  
Publisher: Independently published,  
November 2020



## Sri Lanka

## Lankan HC to Canada Assumes Duties

19 October 2021

Source: *The Island* - <https://island.lk/lankan-hc-to-canada-assumes-duties/>

Commissioner-designate of Sri Lanka to Canada, Harsha Kumara Navaratne assuming duties at the Lankan High Commission in Ottawa last week (15).

The newly appointed High Commissioner-designate of Sri Lanka to Canada, Harsha Kumara Navaratne assumed duties at the Sri Lanka High Commission in Ottawa last week (15). He was received upon arrival at the High Commission by its staff.

The High Commission in Ottawa in a release said: "Addressing the staff of the High Commission upon assumption of duties, High Commissioner-designate Navaratne outlined his priorities in Canada and the need to enhance political, economic and people to people ties. He also highlighted the importance in building on the reconciliation efforts

underway in Sri Lanka and the need to work with all communities of Sri Lankan heritage."

Continuing his remarks, High Commissioner-designate Navaratne mentioned that the doors of the High Commission remain open to anyone looking for assistance and that all were committed to working actively in order to carry out their duties in their efforts to serve the people. He outlined the need to highlight the potential available in Sri Lanka in order to encourage more trade and investment from Canada.

The High Commissioner-designate stated that the President of

Sri Lanka had a new approach to promote Sri Lanka as a brand in North America in order to have mutual benefit. He also stated that as the West was focusing on Asia, Sri Lanka could be the peaceful entry into South, South East and East Asia. High Commissioner-designate Navaratne also stated that once he presents credentials, he would be travelling across Canada to meet like-minded groups in order to enhance cooperation and coordination.

His assumption of duties was marked by a simple ceremony organized by the staff of the High Commission, with milk rice and refreshments in keeping with Sri Lankan tradition. The spouse of the High Commissioner-designate D. A. K. Navaratne and the youngest daughter of the High Commissioner-designate T. L. Navaratne were also present on the occasion.

High Commissioner-designate Navaratne has an illustrious and multifaceted career during which he has served as the Founder and Chairperson, Sevalanka Foundation, Commissioner, Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka, Chairperson, International Network of Engaged Buddhist (INEB), Headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand, Executive Member of Peace Prize Committee Niwano Peace Foundation, Tokyo, Japan and Film Producer.

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## Tibet

## Antony Blinken's Meeting with Dalai Lama Representatives In India Angers China

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday met Ngodup Dongchung, a representative of the Dalai Lama, in a clear signal to China about the Biden administration's continued support to the Tibetan cause.

**WorldPress Trust of India**, 29 July 2021

**Source:** NDTV - <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/antony-blinkens-meeting-with-dalai-lama-representatives-angers-china-2497930>



China said it firmly opposes all forms of contacts between foreign officials and Dalai Lama (File)

**New Delhi:** China on Thursday reacted angrily to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's meeting with a senior representative of the Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama in New Delhi, saying it is a violation of Washington's commitment acknowledging Tibet as part of China and not to support Tibetan independence.

Blinken on Wednesday met Ngodup Dongchung, an official in the Tibetan government-in-exile and

representative of the Dalai Lama, in a clear signal to China about the Biden administration's continued support to the Tibetan cause.

In the meeting, Dongchung thanked Blinken for the continued support by the US to the Tibetan movement.

When asked, a spokesperson of the US State Department told PTI, "Secretary Blinken had an opportunity to meet briefly this morning in New

Delhi with a representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Central Tibetan Administration Representative Ngodup Dongchung."

Separately, another Tibetan representative, Geshe Dorjee Damdul, attended a roundtable Blinken held with around seven civil society members.

Asked for his reaction by the official media at a press briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said, "Tibetan affairs are purely China's internal affairs that allow no foreign interference."

"The 14th Dalai Lama is by no means just a religious person but rather a political exile who has long been engaged in anti-China separatist activities attempting to split Tibet from China," he said.

China firmly opposes all forms of contacts between foreign officials and the Dalai Lama, he said. "Any formal contact between the US and the Dalai clique is a violation of the US commitment to acknowledge Tibet as part of China," not to support Tibetan independence and attempts to separate it from China, he said.

"We urge the US to honour its commitment to stop meddling in China's internal affairs under the pretext of Tibetan affairs, and offer no support to Tibet independence forces to engage in anti-China separatist activities. China will take all necessary measures to defend its own interests," he said.

China comes up with such routine reactions whenever foreign dignitaries and officials meet the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

The 14th Dalai Lama has made India his home since fleeing his Tibetan homeland in 1959.

The Chinese government officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have not met in formal negotiations since 2010.

Beijing has in the past accused the 86-year-old Dalai Lama of indulging in “separatist” activities and trying to split Tibet and considers him as a divisive figure.

However, the Tibetan spiritual leader has insisted that he is not

seeking independence but “genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet” under the “Middle-Way approach.”

Blinken arrived in India on Tuesday on a maiden two-day visit with an extensive agenda featuring the rapidly evolving security situation in Afghanistan, boosting Indo-Pacific engagement and ways to enhance COVID-19 response efforts among others.



teachings of compassion, humility, and selflessness that endure today. On this day, we also commemorate the many contributions of Buddhists in America who enrich our communities and our country as we all work together toward brighter days ahead.

Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary Antony Blinken shared messages on Twitter honoring the holiday and Buddhists around the world.

Dixey told *Tricycle* that the International Buddhist Association of America had been trying to establish a Vesak celebration in the White House since 2016. President Obama released a statement that year, but this was the first time a ceremony occurred.

“We hope this is a beginning,” Dixey said, expressing her desire that this happen every year now, and that people around the country pay attention.

“I just think about these early Founding Fathers, who spoke about freedom and freedom of religion. That has such deep meaning. I just feel like this needs to be heard.”

Vesak is celebrated on different dates according to the country or Buddhist tradition, but it is often celebrated on the day of the full moon in May, as it was at the White House. Festivities, such as South Korea’s Yeon Deung Hoe, or lotus lantern festival, which was recently named a UNESCO event of Intangible Cultural Heritage, often take place out of the house. This year, however, many Buddhists

## USA

# For the First Time Ever, the White House Celebrates Vesak, the Buddha’s Birthday

Representatives from the three major Buddhist traditions gathered for prayers and candle lighting.

By Alison Spiegel, 27 May 2021

Source: *Tricycle* - <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/vesak-white-house/>

Wednesday, May 26, 2021, marked a historic moment for Buddhists in the US. For the first time ever, the White House celebrated Vesak, the holiday that commemorates the Buddha’s birthday, death, and enlightenment.

Wangmo Dixey, Executive Director of Dharma College and President of the International Buddhist Association of America, coordinated the event with the offices of Mr. Shekar Narasimhan, President of the Dharma Into Action Foundation. The celebration included candle lighting with the Second Gentleman, Mr. Douglas Emhoff, and prayers by

leaders from the three major Buddhist traditions. The White House also released an official statement by President Biden:

Jill and I extend our warmest wishes to Buddhists in the United States and around the world as they celebrate Vesak, a day honoring the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha. The ceremonial lighting of a lamp, the symbol of this holiday that has been celebrated for over 2,500 years, reminds us of Buddhism’s



Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, joined by Wangmo Dixey, Bhante Uparatana, Marvin Harada, Tarthang Rinpoche, Shekhar Narasimahn and Erika Moritsugu, holds a Vesak Celebration for the Buddha's birthday, in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

*Official White House Photo by Cameron Smith*



*Official White House Photo by Cameron Smith*



*Official White House Photo by Cameron Smith*

celebrated at home, for the second year in a row, because of the pandemic.

The White House's ceremony was meaningful both because it was the first Vesak celebration held there, but also because it brought together three schools of Buddhism.

According to a press release from Dharma College, Dixey said, "It is wonderful that prayers were offered from all three great traditions of Buddhist practice here, at the heart of American democracy."

The Most Venerable Uparatana represented the Theravada tradition; Rev. Marvin Harada represented the Mahayana tradition; and Venerable Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, who is Dixey's father and the founder of Dharma College, represented the Vajrayana tradition.

Dixey also shared with *Tricycle*

the blessing she read during the ceremony, which specifically recognized the citizens of India, who are currently enduring the world's worst surge in COVID-19 cases.

On behalf of the International Buddhist Association of America, the Dharma into Action Foundation, all American Buddhists, and the hundreds of millions of Buddhist people worldwide, we stand here together in lighting these lamps in honor of the Blessed One, the Buddha, whose life and teachings are an inspiration to us all. May the prayers we offer today on this auspicious occasion of his birth, enlightenment and passing away bring peace and healing to all peoples, particularly to our brothers and sisters in India, the heartland of the dharma, and may the light that radiates from here, the White House of America,

bring wisdom and harmony to the whole world. May all beings be happy; may all beings avoid suffering; may all beings have the happiness that is free from suffering; may all beings enjoy immeasurable equanimity, free from attachment, aversion or indifference.

Dixey told *Tricycle* she is used to bringing together sanghas and she emphasized the importance of spreading the dharma, specifically the teachings on wisdom and compassion, with the four million Buddhists who live in the US.

"But more than that, I think the after impact of this is the beginning," she said. "I was watching Kamala Harris say, 'I see you,' and there's this feeling that by lighting this lamp, 'I see you.'"

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## Reason for Selecting Venerable Shih Chao-hwei Recipient of the 38<sup>th</sup> Niwano Peace Prize

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The 38th Niwano Peace prize will be awarded to the Venerable Shih Chao-hwei of Taiwan in recognition of her work in peace building through her safeguarding of all forms of life, her promotion of gender ethics, gender equality and her approach to open-minded dialogue with different religious leaders and social groups. It is the view of the Niwano Peace Prize Committee that, grounded in her Buddhist faith, she provides fearless leadership in the promotion of a sustainable and viable peace, and as such we are honoured to recognise her work.

Born in 1957 in Yangon, Myanmar, Venerable Shih Chao-hwei moved to Taiwan in 1965. She was ordained in 1978. Leading a full academic life, she teaches Religious Studies at Hsuan Chuang University, where she is currently a professor, and serves as the Dean of Graduate Studies at Hong Shih Buddhist College. In 2004 she founded Hsuan Chuang's Research Centre for Applied Ethics. She is also the founder of the Life Conservationist Association, which lobbies for animal rights legislation. She received the 48th Chinese Literature and Arts Medal for her outstanding contributions to cultural debates. She was also awarded the International Outstanding Women in Buddhism Medal in 2009, and The Person of the Year Prize for social movements in 2012. Together with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, she has been appointed as the spiritual mentor and patron of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), founded by the renowned Thai Buddhist reformer, Sulak Sivaraksa. The Venerable Shih Chao-hwei is the author of over 25 books and over 70 research papers, including numerous manuscripts on nature conservation.

In line with the objectives of the Niwano Peace Prize to be rooted in faith, the Committee notes the Venerable Shih Chao-hwei's commitment to her Buddhist faith as a means to strengthen herself, her community, and her work. Viewing Buddhism as more of a profound philosophy than simply a religion, it is the foundation of her activism. Her viewpoint and participation in social movements is supported by moral studies and ethical discourse rooted in her studies of Buddhist ethics. In addition, she works with others from diverse social and even ideological backgrounds, working with pastors, priests, and monastics on the long, and challenging road of social change. Whilst the activism is inspired by her Buddhist faith, she sees that activism enables a practice that transcends beyond winning and losing, and indeed transcends the Self. She regards the fluid and changing circumstances of activism as a means of Buddhist practice to liberate the self from pain. The Committee notes her deep and profound commitment where her faith inspires activism, and activism becomes a practice by which her faith is developed.

An effective activist, Venerable Shih Chao-hwei has successfully campaigned on a wide range of issues including gender equality, animal rights, and nuclear power, amongst other issues.

Her work on animal rights includes facilitating the legislation of the 'Wildlife Conservation Act' and the 'Animal Protection Act' promoting the Buddhist practice to care for all sentient beings. She also ran a campaign to ban gambling on horses in Taiwan, which was successfully pushed through Parliament. This campaign is in line with her work on gambling, heading a coalition against gambling in Taiwan. She



has campaigned against the building of casinos in economically disadvantaged Taiwanese regions, and her anti-gambling movement successfully led a referendum to stop casino construction in Penghu Island in 2009.

Her work on gender equality includes speaking out against cultural and structural violence. In 2001 she called for the abolishment of the controversial, “Eight Garudhammas” (where additional precepts are required of fully ordained Buddhist nuns above and beyond the monastic rules that applied to monks) declaring that these precepts were not codified by the Buddha himself, and that they strongly discriminate against women. This position raised international attention towards the Buddhist gender equality movement. In 2007, she convened an international conference entitled ‘Religious Culture & Gender Ethics’ to widespread recognition from international academics, religious circles and feminist activists.

Venerable Shih Chao-hwei has written many articles on environmental conservation and ecological protection, human rights and issues concerning religion and politics. She is bold in expressing her opinions from the Buddhist point of view, and publishes articles in several major newspapers in

Taiwan.

The Committee note the Venerable Shih Chao-hwei’s courage in the face of difficulties and her preparedness to give voice to controversial topics. We note that whilst she may feel fear, she also faces up to fear, calling it “the foremost enemy in one’s life.” She recognises that true peace of mind does not come from remaining silent or ignoring an issue, but rather by confronting it. We acknowledge her perspective that often there must be a breakdown of superficial harmony and serenity in order to reach deeper levels of truth and peace of mind.

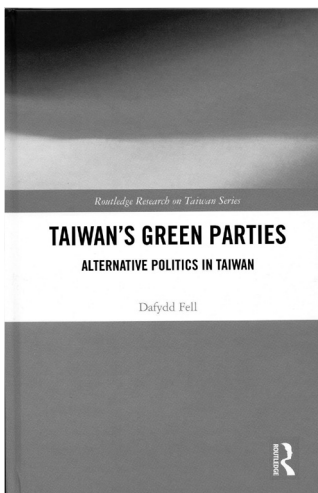
It is for these reasons, and more, that the Niwano Peace Prize Committee, a group comprising distinguished scholars and religious leaders from around the world, in partnership with the Niwano Peace Foundation, are honoured to have selected the Venerable Shih Chao-hwei to receive the 38th Niwano Peace Prize.

**Sarah Joseph, OBE**

Chairperson, the Niwano Peace Prize Committee



## Recommended Reading

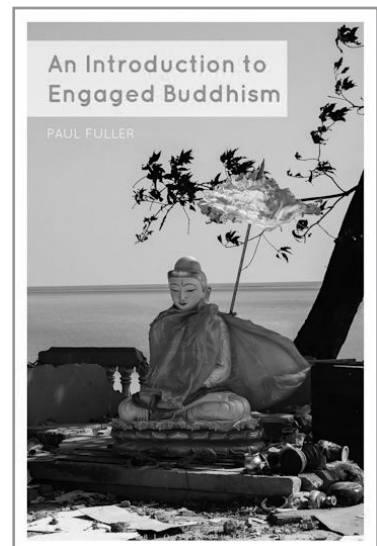


### Taiwan’s Green Parties Alternative Politics In Taiwan

Author: Dafydd Fell  
Publisher: Routledge

### An Introduction to Engaged Buddhism

Author: Paul Fuller  
Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic





## Venerable Shi Chao-hwei's Acceptance Speech for the 38<sup>th</sup> Niwano Peace Prize

# "It is in the Distant Land that All Devotion Forgathers"



**I**mmense gratitude springs from my heart at the honor of receiving the 38th Niwano Peace Prize.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and respect to the Niwano Peace Foundation and especially to its founder Mr. Nikkyo Niwano. With his extraordinary vision and powerful support, Mr. Niwano has been advocating for peaceful activities that are based on the spirit of religion yet beyond the boundaries of religious sectarianism. The Niwano Foundation precisely provides a solid platform for this purpose. The chairman of the foundation, Dr. Hiroshi Munehiro Niwano, his team and the judges who carefully evaluate and select the winner use this annual announcement and award ceremony to encourage individuals who dedicate themselves to the peace activities that this foundation has long sought to endorse.

Believers from all faith traditions naturally consider their religion to be the best, as a result interfaith dialogue has never been easy. Therefore, for people to act beyond their religion or sect, faith leaders and scholars must return to the rational foundation of their religion's theoretical underpinnings and reflect

upon them. This way we are able to build a pluralistic (or, at least, an inclusive) system for all theological beliefs including Buddhist philosophy.

Furthermore, the emotional foundation for going beyond the boundaries of religion and faith depends on genuine interfaith friendship which emerges naturally through interaction and cooperation and moves us toward achieving a great shared vision.

The mission that religion accomplishes is greater than personal enlightenment or salvation; it can create a movement to reach world peace.

However, without vision and broad-mindedness to accept that we are one family—irrespective of faith traditions, religious sects, gender, hierarchy, ethnicity, country and even species—human rationality and conscience could surrender to and be hypnotized by powerful, passionate language and leaders could lead followers astray. If this were the case, religion could also be “the troublemaker that hinders world peace”.

Some religious terrorists who quote holy scriptures out of context and misuse these quotes to justify their behaviour instigate massacres and oppress those of different ethnicities, castes, religious beliefs,

even followers of other sects of the same religion. These atrocities that drip blood and tears become history.

Some religious insiders mistakenly quote sacred books to support their point of view that women are the inferior sex. They discriminate and suppress women and unfortunately become obstacles to the evolution of human ethics. Why? Because this gender order that originated from religious doctrines, when strictly observed prevents women from taking clergy jobs. This in turn influences female practitioners within such a system as well all its religious followers. These distorted views are often caused by feelings of inferiority that sometimes are masked by arrogance and hinder the holistic development of all involved. This phenomenon also challenges the social values of equity and justice.

Likewise, there are huge groups of religious people who manipulate words from holy texts to prove the iniquity of homosexuality. Some of them bully gays and lesbians with cruel means; some have forced gay people to go through conversion therapy, which causes torment. Some of them abuse democracy and practice violence by verbally abusing the gay community citing “freedom of speech”. Some even use social media as their platform for false accusation and vilification of gay people in order to deprive them of their legal rights. In addition to gays and lesbians, other gender minorities are often targets of their hostility.

Moreover, some people exploit, slaughter and use animals as offerings, trophies and guinea pigs indicating their belief in human superiority. The notion of speciesism causes the suffering of countless animals.

The vision and mindset that rise beyond religion, sect, gender, hierarchy, ethnicity, country and species lay an important foundation for peace in the world. The Niwano Foundation dedicates its efforts towards this goal and the Japanese society supports this foundation with open-mindedness. Personally, I bear deep gratitude to the leader, the jury and the team at The Niwano Foundation, as well as Japanese citizens

who support their vision.

I would also like to use this opportunity to pay homage and extend my sincere gratitude to the founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and a pioneer in Thailand’s movement for democracy — Mr. Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. In my mind, Ajarn has always been an exemplar and hero in both practicing the Bodhisattva Path and advocating for democracy. The strength and integrity he demonstrates as an intellect reminds me of a famous quote from ancient Chinese culture — “One cannot be corrupted no matter rich or noble; one cannot be swerved from his principle regardless of poverty and humbleness; neither threats nor forces make him succumb.” As someone junior to him, I deeply thank him for his firm support in each and every way.

The International Network of Engaged Buddhists Ajarn founded has gathered like-minded practitioners of engaged Buddhism in every part of the world. Through the Network’s activities of interfaith cooperation and mutual support (both online and offline), I have witnessed a light of hope toward eliminating the suffering of all beings.

I offer special appreciation and tremendous gratitude, as well, toward Master Yin Shun—my honorable teacher who passed away sixteen years ago. His philosophy of Buddhism for the World crosses the barriers of different religions and sects and echoes the original intention of the Buddha. The master also expected and hoped Buddhist practitioners would use their wisdom cultivated from deep meditation to march forward in the spirit of Bodhisattva—compassionately, proactively and courageously. In this spirit, we then will be able to extend our care to society and offer help to those who are suffering. My teacher’s philosophy helped me to think outside of traditional Buddhist framework and motivated me to unrelentingly protect and respect the equality of all lives. On both an emotional and rational level, this is the source from which I implement altruism.

Furthermore, I would like to extend my wholehearted gratitude to good friends practicing Buddhism

for the World from INEB and across the Strait. Just like within Christianity, there are different focuses: one is prone to the calling of spiritual practice or rituals; the other is inclined to actively serve the world. The same difference occurs within Buddhism. To be concerned with social issues or to take actions to help alleviate suffering is often considered a deviation from what some see as the right track. The thought of rising beyond these different approaches between different religions and sects faces strong objection and ongoing attack. Nevertheless, these spiritual warriors of engaged Buddhism and Buddhism for the World never falter in confronting of these challenges. Together we create a vision of the Pure Land in the world, and agree to witness it together. In return, the world accepts and praises Buddhism.

Among previous Niwano Prize Winners, both Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa and Ven. Pomnyun Sunim are champions who advocate for Buddhism for the world. The three Chinese speaking award winners which include Mr. Zhao Pu-Chu, The Venerable Cheng-Yen and myself are not only advocates for this vision, but also practice it. This is not a coincidence, but an inevitable course of history. The jury's utmost acknowledgement attests to the effective actions inspired by Buddhist altruism. As a result, I consider the honor of this award to be shared by my good friends from Buddhism for the World and Engaged Buddhism.

Venerable Cheng-Yen, leading thousands and millions of people globally for international disaster relief, does great cross-religious and cross-cultural work. She won the Niwano Peace Prize in 2007. Both Venerable Cheng-Yen and my humble self are ordained bhiksunis from Taiwan. I believe this proves that the jury members of the Niwano Foundation are fair and have vision. They value women in religion who motivate world peace with strength. On behalf of all religious women, I would like to thank all of you for empowering and inspiring those of us who have suffered from long term inferiority.

We realize that all struggles which embrace the goal of eliminating suffering for all beings, all efforts

which hope to make the human heart kind, society good and peace in the world are all spiritual practices in terms of Buddhist definition. It does not matter whether they are represented in the form of charity, disaster relief or social movements. In the Diamond Cutter Sutra the Buddha told us: When one cultivates all good without the notions of a self, a person, a sentient being, or a lifespan, one attains unsurpassed complete enlightenment. This means that as long as we do good with a pure heart that rises beyond ego, without seeking the payback of those whom we help, not asking for other people's acknowledgement or hoping for good karma in future lives, then all the good we do is a practice to reach perfect enlightenment. The good I refer to roots in purification and transcendence of mind and soul.

With this boundless state of mind, one can look beyond differences among religions and appreciate the source of all good yet respect the diversity of ideas, representation and symbols of each religion. Mutual respect for other religions is not merely a polite gesture, but constitutes genuine appreciation and good will.

As Neo-Confucianism scholar Mr. Tang Chun-Yi poetically puts it, "It is in the distant land that all devotion forgathers." This encounter would certainly be full of wonder and beauty. With this in mind, I would like to express my immense heartfelt wishes to all spiritual minds.

Lastly, to my predecessors and compatriots in Taiwan's social movements; fellow practitioners, teachers, colleagues and students from Buddhist Hong Shi College and Life Conservationist Association; and administrators and colleagues from Hsuan Chuang University; all members at The Niwano Foundation and the Da Ai TV station crew who invested many hours preparing for the award ceremony, I would like to give my heartfelt gratitude. It is said that a single pole will not make a building. Without your support, all my ideals only stay in my mind. I merely receive this award on behalf of all of our efforts. The honor of the 38th Niwano Peace Award belongs to us all!

# Dr. Sasa Addresses the International Network of Engaged Buddhists

22 July 2021

Last week, Dr. Sasa [Salai Maung Taing San], the spokesperson of Myanmar's government-in-exile, was invited by the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) to speak about the coup and his hopes for the future. The INEB is an international organization that sponsors Buddhist-themed responses to social, political and economic challenges around the world, as well as proactive projects in such areas as the arts and gender empowerment. Dr. Sasa spoke to participants from 10 different countries, who listened with concern as he described the dark world that the Tatmadaw has unleashed on his homeland. After the presentation, Dr. Sasa graciously stayed on to answer questions.

Dr. Sasa began his talk describing the challenging situation in Myanmar since the February 1 coup. He explained that his country has essentially been taken hostage. In pleading for his homeland to be kept in mind, and for empathy for the plight of his people, he said, "We need love and peace more than ever before!" He wryly noted the irony of himself being accused of high treason by the coup leaders, when they themselves are committing high treason against the nation and people of Myanmar on a daily basis.

He then proceeded to tick off a litany of chilling facts:

- more than 6,000 civilians illegally detained;
- over 1,000 innocent civilians murdered in a nation where many, including Buddhists, don't kill mosquitoes;
- young children being used as lures to try and capture their parents;
- it is estimated that more than 6 million Myanmar people will be without food by the end of October;
- within a year, over half of Myanmar's population of



55 million is expected to be living in extreme poverty;

- 2,000 people—including medical workers, monks and nuns—on the run, in fear for their lives, having been charged with treason;
- 1.2 million innocent people displaced: fleeing their homes and villages, with some in refugee camps in neighboring countries.

In discussing recent reports about the horrific treatment by the Tatmadaw of innocent citizens being held against their will in the building that used to be Insein Prison, he described how upset—if unsurprised—he was. The military has often used torture against its citizens, and that building has now become emblematic of the mistreatment of the Myanmar people. He pledged that when the NUG regains the power granted to them in the 2020 election, he will close that symbol of hate and torture.

He said: "I can assure you that as soon as we can restore democracy and freedom, as soon as our government is established properly inside the country, we will end Insein Prison! We will close down Insein Prison. This is the prison where they have kept the children of political prisoners. It is a hell there. This isn't a prison, it is a hell. We will close Insein prison, and other prisons across the country, where they have



treated human beings inhumanely.”

Another serious topic addressed by Dr. Sasa was Myanmar’s burgeoning COVID-19 crisis. The junta has not attended to public health, allowing the virus to start spreading unchecked throughout the country. However, Dr. Sasa did share some good news, that millions of doses of vaccine would be arriving soon in Myanmar. He assured the audience that in cooperation with international agencies, donors, and partners, they have developed a strategy to distribute the vaccine doses without fear of interference—or theft of the vaccine—by the junta; if they do, there is a monitoring mechanism and there will be serious consequences.

Dr. Sasa urged those in attendance to hold onto their ideals of non-violence. He compared the largely non-violent resistance in Myanmar with what happened in India to combat British colonial rule and stressed that the just spirit of a non-violent path was

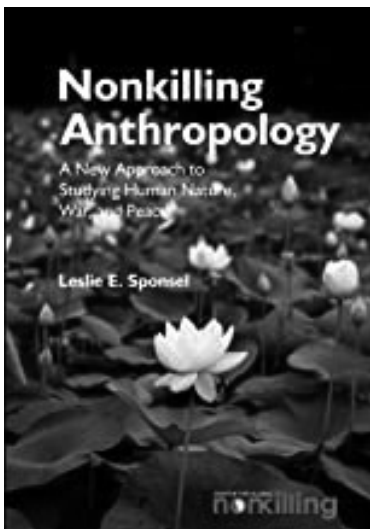
the best way that would ultimately triumph, and ensure future peace and security.

Participants resonated strongly with Dr. Sasa’s passion for freedom and non-violence, which parallels their own. To assist him in his struggle to protect the people of Myanmar, Clear View Project pledged \$40,000 USD to be used for Covid relief and CDM. Dr. Sasa’s team is currently in communication with them to identify how to utilize it for a healthier, brighter Myanmar.

Source: Insight Myanmar - <https://insightmyanmar.org/burma-dhammadblog/2021/7/27/dr-sasa-addresses-the-international-network-of-engaged-buddhists#comments-61006c72a7e0a967c34f907b>



## Recommended Reading



The Center for Global Nonkilling has launched today its latest academic publication, *“Nonkilling Anthropology: A New Approach to Studying Human Nature, War, and Peace,”* by Professor Leslie E. Sponsel. Inspired by the work of CGNK’s founder Glenn D. Paige, this book explores the mutual relevance of anthropology, nonkilling, and peace studies, and their synergy. All three are maturing in their development with increasing potential for benefiting society and humanity. Nonkilling as one focus in anthropological research and teaching can help generate inspiring new knowledge, understanding, and insights with significant practical as well as theoretical relevance.

As the book’s preface states, “Nonkilling, as one focus in anthropological research and teaching, can generate inspiring new knowledge, understanding, and insights with very practical as well as significant theoretical relevance.” (...) “Hopefully this book will encourage others to also engage in helping to continue advancing the exciting and promising arena of science and scholarship in nonkilling anthropology. Any constructive criticisms and other comments are most welcome.”

A PDF version can be downloaded for free from CGNK’s website and paperback copies can be ordered at \$15 from Amazon.com. Royalties from printed book sales have been kindly waived by the author for CGNK.

Center for Global Non-Killing - [https://nonkilling.org/center/2021/08/31/nonkilling-anthropology-book-launched/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=nonkilling-anthropology-book-launched](https://nonkilling.org/center/2021/08/31/nonkilling-anthropology-book-launched/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=nonkilling-anthropology-book-launched)

## “Nonkilling Anthropology”

Author: Joám Evans Pim

# Seminar for Spiritual Leaders To Reduce Demand for Wildlife Products

By INEB Staff

Via Zoom and Facebook Live

16 July 2021, (08:45 – 11:15 AM) in Thailand

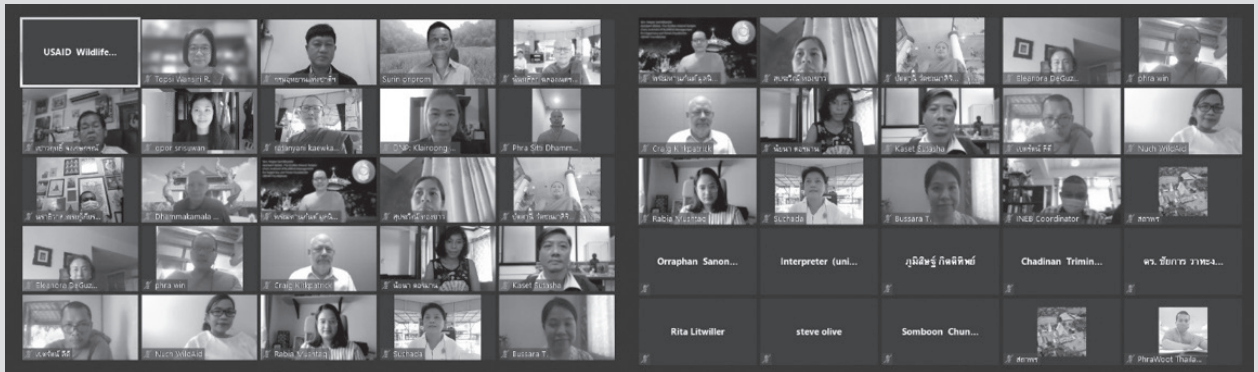


Photo of Zoom participants

USAID collaborated with the International Network of Engaged Buddhist (INEB) to increase spiritual leaders' in this case Buddhist monks, nuns, and interested laypersons, awareness and activities supporting reducing the demand for wildlife products. They initially proposed to offer three workshops conducted in person. However, due to the COVID-19 situation the first 2 workshops were conducted in person, and the final seminar took place online via Zoom and Facebook Live. The first workshop took place at Wat Chakdaeng in Bangkok on October 21, 2020, followed by the second workshop at the Psychiatric Hospital in Phitsanulok province on March 13, 2021, with the final seminar taking place on July 16, 2021. This report is of the final seminar on July 16, 2021, which was a collaboration between USAID Wild Asia, INEB, Sekhiya Dhamma Group, IBHAP, Wat Saket Ratcha Wora Maha Wihan in Bangkok, WildAid Thailand, and the Thai Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP).

Following the October 21, 2020, workshop USAID

and INEB agreed that conducting two more workshops for spiritual leaders was needed to increase awareness and build momentum regarding reducing the demand for wildlife products. The workshops' objectives aimed to strengthen the capacity and commitment of Buddhist monks and nuns in key selected temples in Thailand.

Due to the Thai government's restrictions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the third workshop was presented as an online seminar for two and a half hours on the morning of July 16, 2021. Live translation was available to the participants in both English and Thai languages.

## Zoom and Facebook Participants

The total number of participants was 39 with: 9 male monks (8 temples, 6 provinces), 3 female monks (1 temple, 1 province), and 27 laypeople that were either from temples or the organizers. Additionally, 245 persons watched the Facebook event live, as well as the video recording (as of July 30, 2021).

## Opening Remarks

Ven. Win Siri wattano Mektripop, an INEB executive committee member from Wat Rakang in Bangkok, mentioned that nowadays conservation efforts amongst monastics could be widely promoted internationally via digital platforms to support future collaborations through networks across the region. Craig Kirkpatrick, Ph.D., Regional Wildlife Conservation Advisor from USAID Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA), emphasized the importance of including monks and nuns when reducing the demand for wildlife products. Mr. Surapong Chaweeapak, Director of International Trade Permission Sub-Division from DNP, added that there is no scientific evidence supporting the false or superstitious beliefs that human beings benefit from consuming wildlife parts. The DNP fully supported this workshop, especially since monks and nuns can play major roles in stopping forest destruction and illegal wildlife trade. Ven. Sitti Dhammawitet, Deputy Abbot of Wat Saket Ratcha Wora Maha Wihan, gave blessings and officially opened the workshop. The online seminar was moderated by Dr. Surin On-prom from INEB.

## Presentations

Representatives from each coordinating organization gave the following presentations:

### Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation – DNP

Dr. Klairoong Poonpon, Director of CITES Implementation and Monitoring Sub-Division of Wild Fauna and Flora Protection

- Described the current situation of illegal ivory trade from Africa
- Gave examples of how wildlife products from animals such as pangolins, tigers, and elephants are used
- Significant seizures made in 2019 and from the exporting countries
- Information about national laws and penalties

Dr. Poonpon concluded by reminding the participants that Thailand is still a transit country for wildlife trade. The major challenges that need to be

addressed are the shift from the physical market to the online commercial platform and changes in the trafficking route of illegal wildlife products to more neighboring countries that are involved. Public participation is critical to address these challenges together with the coordination of law enforcement agencies throughout the region.

### WildAid

Ms. Rabia Mushtaq, Communications Specialist (Thailand)

### USAID Wildlife Asia

Ms. Eleanora De Guzman, Lead, Demand Reduction, USAID Wildlife Asia

- Introduced USAID Wildlife Asia through its purpose to improve regional actions to end transnational wildlife crime in Southeast Asia and China with a particular focus on 4 species: tigers, elephants, pangolins, and rhinoceros.

- Objectives include:

- ✓ Reduce consumer demand for wildlife products in Thailand, Vietnam and China
- ✓ Strengthen regional law enforcement capacity and coordination
- ✓ Increase national and regional commitment to counter wildlife trafficking (CWT)
- ✓ Support RDMA's regional coordination efforts to strengthen USG's CWT

Ms. Deguzman suggested how campaign messages can be adapted in dhamma talks to communities through questioning false beliefs about wildlife products, such as providing spiritual protection or enhancing value or the quality of life through killing another living being. Ultimately the message is "One Action" to stop buying, stop using products from tigers and elephant ivory.

Each presenter shared information about their organization's specific campaigns to end using wildlife products from tigers, elephants and sharks.

## Discussion

Ven. Nunthasila from Thippaya Dhamma Sathan in Songkhla talked about the difficulties faced when attempting to change societal and individual attitudes

and beliefs. Dr. Klairoong Poonpon (DNP) added that communicating messages to the public is challenging as their interest on using wildlife product is not explicit. Ms. Suchada Thongpoon from the Dwarf Elephant Lover Alliance in Songkhla suggested using the past documented experiences when species have become extinct to promote future conservation efforts. She also emphasized the significance of developing local curriculum and media regarding wildlife conservation that is designed to increase the awareness of youth.

## Discussion on the Role of Buddhist Monks

Ven. Sompong Ratanawangso, Ph.D. highlighted the gap between dhamma teaching and the people's practice in daily life. He specifically noted that Thais have deep-rooted beliefs regarding using ivory and tiger fangs as auspicious or holy objects, which directly contradicts the Buddha's teachings. Some Buddhists use the rationale that animals are categorized lower than or beneath human beings, implying that humans can use animals as they chose. Venerable suggested supporting educating the public about how to protect animal life and end killing of animals by people. In his view, any objects that don't involve killing are considered to be auspicious.

Ven. Napan Santibhaddo, Institute of Buddhist Management for Happiness and Peace Foundation (IBHAP), explained that the Buddha taught not to encroach other lives, while he allowed using parts of dead animals. Monks need to clearly state that laypeople cannot take any animal's life for offering. The younger generation can play a key role in communication and raising awareness that supports protecting wildlife and preventing unnecessary killing. Mass media, especially television, is also helpful to reach wider audiences.

Ven. Dhammakamala from Thippaya Dhamma Sathan in Songkhla has worked with young people and supports developing local curriculum and media to educate them. Venerable believes that this group is slowly changing their understanding regarding the use of amulets and auspicious objects.

Ven. Woot from Nakhon Sawan Royal Temple has experience distributing various kinds of amulets other than those from wildlife products. He has observed that

youth can produce digital media and distribute them to their groups once the issue is better understood. Senior monks can be approached as they influence temple policies and practices in their local communities.

## Participants' Commitment Moving Forward

Ven. Win Siriawattano asked the participants to agree to support the demand reduction activities through their temples and communities. The participants verbally expressed their agreement to support activities and believe that the role of Buddhist spiritual leaders as critical to moving forward with reducing the demand for wildlife products.

## Closing Comments

Closing comments were made by Ven. Win Siriawattano, Ms. Eleanora De Guzman, and Ven. Napan Santibhaddo. They responded to the questions: What is your take away message today? As a spiritual leader, what do you think of doing to stop using wildlife products? All emphasized the need for increasing awareness and taking collective action that reaches different audiences through online and offline media. Ven. Napan said that Wat Saket is committed to continue activities raising awareness about not killing wildlife and will continue integrating the Buddha's teaching into the strategy.

Dr. Poonpon, Director, CITES with DNP, said that working with spiritual leaders such as Buddhist monks and nuns was a new approach to the work and believes there is a definite advantage to collaborating with these spiritual leaders. Her comments further highlighted the need for a strategy coordinating a response through spiritual leaders and their networks, in addition to other partner organizations such as INEB. One suggestion for reaching wider groups and communities in the future is through conducting interfaith dialogue sessions which will include the messages to stop killing, buying and using wildlife products.

"Peace in One's Heart  
Starts with One's Hands"

*– quote from a participant*





# Buddhist Monks Can Foster True Sustainable Development: “New Theory Agriculture” (Kok Nong Na) for Sufficiency Economy in Thailand

By Cédric Boudry



Phra Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsiri, designer of the Kok Nong Na model



Two holes dug deep enough to reach the aquifers. This will allow water to stay cool all year.

## Kok Nong Na or “New Theory Agriculture”

Over the past year Thai monk Phra Sangkom Thanapanyo Khunsiri has made unprecedented progress in his holistic sustainable development initiative. For over 20 years now, he has been dedicating his time to social development and innovative management. It has been his life goal to give in return to the community, the environment, and to have a positive impact on the world. Having found inspiration in the Buddha’s teachings, and the Sufficiency Economy philosophy and agricultural theories of the late King Rama IX, he has pioneered a new strategy for water management and land use to improve farmers’ lifestyles. Kok Nong Na or “New Theory Agriculture” was promoted by King Rama IX after the 1997 Asian economic crisis. It consists of dividing one’s land into proportionate parts of water founts, re-elevated forested areas for horticulture, rice

paddies, and living habitats.

The goal of this design is to shift agriculture away from the intensive corporate, mono-cropping system that attempts to maximize revenue, but often leads to debt for local farmers and making lands infertile. The goal is towards a self-sustainable economy, where farmers can live easily off their own mixed harvests, their own water sources, their own medicinal and convenience plants, while selling only surpluses or natural products for monetary gains.

This framework, however, has not been developed rapidly over the years. One of the main reasons for not fully implementing the king’s model is the transition cost. Since many farmers are indebted due to poor harvests from following the mono-crop system, not many have ventured to try it without some form of aid or guarantee of success. Secondly, strong lobbying from

agrochemical and export companies, as well as pro-corporate propaganda promulgated by government ministries have convinced farmers to stick to chemical monocrop cultivation. Thirdly, the idealism and lack of implementation strategies of the king's model hampered its implementation, especially since all lands are different and need diverse styles of stewardship. Finally, the precariousness of droughts and the unreliability of governmental water sources have made the goal of self-sufficiency seem too abstract and risky.

### Foundations in Buddhist Ethics: Sufficiency, Simplicity & Material-Spiritual Balance

Ultimately, a greater issue is that the moral values of Sufficiency Economy go against the entrenched values of corporate capitalism, known to Buddhists as the three poisons of greed, anger, and delusion. The Buddhist values of sufficiency, simplicity, and material-spiritual balance found in this new system make it unattractive to people who do not have a deep awareness of the source of their problems, and a strong resolve to escape from suffering.

To disentangle these knots, Phra Sangkom, who himself studied agricultural science in college before ordaining as a monk, spent years trying to find a way to apply the king's philosophy to practical agriculture and to convince people to change. His main contribution to local agriculture was to find a way to maintain water all year long, especially in the arid climate of Northeast Thailand. This would allow farmers to not only plant rice after the rainy season but to grow a variety of crops for themselves all year long. To achieve this, he adopted the practice of digging ground water banks deep enough to pierce the impermeable bedrock and reach aquifers. This allows for heavy rainfalls to fill not only the artificial pools, but also the underground water reservoirs.

With water secured, Phra Sangkom has suggested that people to cultivate a variety of plants on their land, ranging from lumber trees, fruit trees, vegetables, rice and medicinal plants. One of his ideas is "a tree plantation for four benefits": if you plant many different trees and plants on your land, you will have enough to eat and maintain your shelter; produce everyday commodities

like beauty or cleaning products; develop an economic revenue from selling surplus; and participate in climate change mitigation through reforestation. The goal is to create ecological and integrative gardens, cultivated horticulturally in a completely organic way to eschew chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In just a few months, it is possible to grow vegetables and plants.

In a few years, the gardens flourish into green luscious forested areas, where food grows constantly, efficiently eradicating hunger and poverty. But attaining self-sufficiency is only the first step to wellbeing. Phra Sangkom perceived that to change destructive human practices, a change in mindset is first required. His community development model, based on the concept of *boworn* (Community, Temple, Education) puts alternative education and spiritual cultivation at its center to build a resilient and compassionate community. To this effect, an important part of Kok Nong Na development rests in teaching Buddhist values of moderation and compassion conjointly to alternative organic no-waste agriculture.

Creating schools for children, seminars for adults, and preaching at the temple are important to build a new and lasting paradigm of co-existence. In fact, implementing Kok Nong Na and living by the Sufficiency Economy is difficult for people, as it goes against their social conditioning to desire more. According to Phra Sangkom, to understand that all beings are interconnected and that by choosing a healthy organic and moderate lifestyle, we are positively impacting the earth and its inhabitants is the key to harmony.

### Cooperation with the Thai Government & Royal Family

Phra Sangkom has focused his efforts on developing this community model first in Doi Pasong in the northern Chiang Mai region of Thailand, where he effectively built an eco-spiritual community. After this first success, he collaborated with Dr. Wiwat Salayakamthon, a former development project planner in the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board. They set up the Mab-Ueang AgriNature Centre in Chon



A five month old example of Phra Sangkom's design where rice, vegetables, and fruits are already growing.



Government panel stating purpose of this land and subsidy amount.

Buri province east of Bangkok, following Sufficiency Economy and Phra Sangkom's design for sustainable agriculture. There, they opened an alternative boarding school, where children and their families can come live and learn about organic lifestyle they can then apply in their villages. Like dandelions seeds in the wind, they carry this knowledge to spread across the countryside.

Seminars are organized at the center to welcome people of all demographics to experience Kok Nong Na and Sufficiency Economy. This curriculum for self-sufficiency, moral care for the environment, organic farming, and community building has now been replicated around Thailand in many AgriNature Centers to promote self-sufficiency and non-chemical farming. Recently, this curriculum has even been recognized by the royal institution and is being promoted widely throughout the country.

King Rama X's Royal Noble Consort Sineenat went to meet with Phra Sangkom at his temple next to the Mab-Ueang Center to learn about his work and how he implements Kok Nong Na. Her involvement has led to King Rama X to declare that Kok Nong Na should become a national development goal.

Wishing to pursue his father's work, King Rama X has made Kok Nong Na a national policy in Thailand to boost the people's transition into a new style of agriculture. This signifies that the government and the

Social Development Department have officially been supporting and promoting the New Agriculture Theory. Government workers all over Thailand are now being trained in Kok Nong Na at the various AgriNature learning centers in order to supervise and coordinate the undertaking of projects. They are attached to subdistricts to act as intermediaries and quality controllers. Thanks to this, farmers who wish to switch from monocropping or rice cultivation can now register at their local government to receive financial support. This aid only covers the cost of digging the water pools with heavy machinery, but it is a good impetus for farmers to make the first step towards self-sufficiency.

In fact, since last year, the number of applicants has exploded, and Kok Nong Na projects are sprouting up in all provinces. This popularity is motivating more and more neophytes from all demographics; from farmers to business millionaires, many people wish to change their lifestyle and contribute to helping the planet. Most recently, King Rama X announced even schools of all levels, from primary to university, need to include Sufficiency Economy philosophy and Kok Nong Na in their curriculum. Even prisoners are receiving a mandatory Kok Nong Na seminar before their release, as a rehabilitation program to reintegrate them into society with new skills and a spiritual mindset.

Kok Nong Na seems to have become an important





Phra Sangkom meeting Royal Noble Consort Sineenat at his temple in Chonburi



Rice paddies at the Surin AgriNature Center surrounded by a variety of trees.

integrated into Thailand's development strategy. This structural shift in the fabric of Thailand's political and social fabric holds the potential to alleviate the state of poverty and suffering in rural areas. By making Kok Nong Na a national policy, the King and the government have officialized an intention to transform Thailand's international economic stance, as a country that takes to heart the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. According to Phra Sangkom, this new agriculture style solves many problems in a holistic approach.

### Shifting the SDG Movement away from Corporates to the Grassroots

Phra Sangkom himself says: "I believe it is going to be the most impactful to mother Earth. It is the answer for SDGs. Even if it's a big dream, I started it from small activity. And hopefully, everyone who does Kok Nong Na will understand that it is going to be very good for them, very good for their family, and especially it is going to be harmonious to the world." For now, many people are reticent to shift their agriculture to self-sufficiency, out of fear, ignorance, or pride. Additionally, the vested interests of certain corrupt government bureaus, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, and agro-chemical corporations will continue to hamper progress, to work against the promotion of a chemical free

sustainable lifestyle.

In fact, in 2020, *The Bangkok Post* was addressing the continued presence of banned dangerous chemicals in analyzed produce, claiming the lack of governmental enforcement of chemical bans is aggravating the already slow shift towards organic farming. It is clear change will continue to be challenged by institutionalized and entrenched forms of power who profit from corruption and misery. But perhaps through greater governmental promotion and support, the number of adherents to Phra Sangkom's sustainable development vision will grow, just as the bountiful gardens of Kok Nong Na. Hopefully, the transition from a consumption economy and mindset towards a more moderate and sustainable lifestyle will shine a light on a path to a greener tomorrow.

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**Cédric Boudry** is an Asian Studies major who recently graduated from Geneva University, Switzerland. During his time in academia, he has studied social sciences, sustainable development and religious sciences. He developed a keen interest for Asia through traveling and studying Asian religions such as Buddhism and Shinto. Today, he is a freelance writer for INEB and collaborator/secretariat for the INEB Eco-Temple development project. He is involved in researching and documenting the progress of Eco-Temple fieldwork.







## SEA-AIR Promoted Peace During Time of Change and Challenge

By Philip Gassert

The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, in collaboration with the International Network for Engaged Buddhists (INEB) and consortium partners, successfully completed the European Union-funded SEA-AIR project, despite a time of unprecedented challenges. From January 2019 to June 2021, SEA-AIR staff and fellows participated in a flurry of activities: conferences, research, workshops, social media campaigns, and dozens of community events to promote the right to freedom of religion or belief in communities across South and Southeast Asia.

SEA-AIR staff developed the two-year strategic plan for the International Forum on Buddhist Muslim Relations as a regional structure to advance interfaith cooperation, in Myanmar established cohorts of religious and traditional leaders, engaged hardline actors, conducted trainings for female religious leaders, and acted as key coordinating agents throughout the pandemic and in the immediate aftermath of the military coup. INEB's on-going presence and attempts to engage sensitively and constructively with 'hard-line' Buddhist nationalists resulted in a high level of trust with a wide range of actors. This enabled them to conduct groundbreaking efforts to enhance intrafaith dialogue and inclusive trainings with marginalized groups. These activities raised participants' gender awareness and confidence to address issues of discrimination and misconduct within the Sangha education system and to promote collaborative actions developed by nuns to

foster equality.

Throughout the pandemic and the civil disobedience movement that began after the military coup of February 1, 2021, INEB adapted to community needs throughout Myanmar. With SEA-AIR support, staff coordinated with peacebuilders and religious actors to provide information and support who continue to face tremendous challenges.

Toward establishing networks of actors and organizations promoting FoRB and engaging in pro-FoRB messaging, the SEA-AIR project completed the Interfaith Fellowship Program (IFP), which created a network of 60 religious and traditional peacemakers and changemakers across 10 South and Southeast Asian countries, equipping them with training, increased access to resources, and technical mentoring. As part of the SEA-AIR's effort to enhance local capacities to prevent and combat discrimination on grounds of religion or belief and to contribute to SDG 16, project staff conducted two IFP workshops in 2019 and 2020 with facilitators and trainers who possessed a wide range of geographic and thematic expertise. SEA-AIR provided financial and technical support to 40 fellows and 12 Interfaith Councils and civil society organizations to enhance sustainable activities and infrastructure for the promotion of FoRB in 2020, 2021, and beyond. To contribute to SDG 16, 24 of the small grant projects were designed to bring disparate communities together for dialogue, while all 37 grants included research and/or

training to increase tolerance and understanding of other communities.

Project partners, and their networks and field offices, comprised a “web” for technical support as well as monitoring of grant activities. In total, 25 of the 37 awarded grants were able to complete 100% of their originally planned activities while adapting to the pandemic, and in some instances the military coup in Myanmar, and an additional 7 grants were able to complete the majority of their originally planned activities. 100% of the fellows who received grants reported an increase in skills and knowledge related to FoRB and peacebuilding.

SEA-AIR staff conducted its Final Conference on FoRB Policy and Practice in collaboration with the UN Office of Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect on 08 and 09 June 2021. Informed by project activities, conference speakers presented on best practices for local and national level FoRB initiatives, contributions to Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 16. Project partner World Faiths Development Dialogue, in collaboration with fellows and grant recipients, presented their key recommendations to regional policy makers on issues related to gender, minority rights,

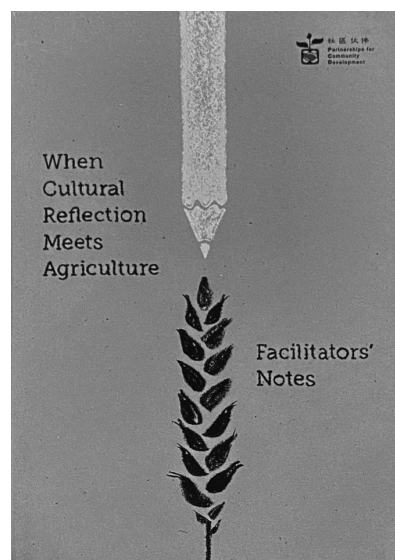
education, and media. The FoRB policy briefs can be found on the Network research page. Throughout all these activities, the SEA-AIR project shared local challenges and success stories as part of its counter-narrative strategy featured on its Twitter and Facebook pages.

The SEA-AIR project established a new network of peacebuilders in South and Southeast Asia. While the project has ended, these peacebuilders are equipped with the resources and expertise to continue their work, sharing their stories, and bravely promoting inclusiveness, human rights, and freedom of religion or belief in their communities and countries for years to come.

The European Union-funded project “Southeast Asia: Advancing Inter-Religious Dialogue and Freedom of Religion or Belief,” was implemented in consortium with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, Finn Church Aid, World Conference of Religions for Peace, World Faiths Development Dialogue, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation/International Network for Engaged Buddhists.

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## Recommended Reading

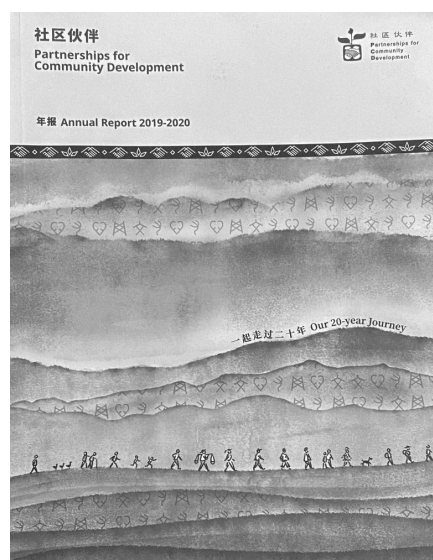


When Cultural Reflection  
Meets Agriculture  
Facilitator's Notes

**Publisher:** Partnerships for Community  
Development 2020

Partnerships for  
Community Development  
Annual Report 2019-2020

**Publisher:** Partnerships for Community  
Development 2021



# Profound Experiences Learning Together in the SENS 2021 Program



Interactive Storytelling

An In-Class Game

## Introduction

A small cohort of nine students and five staff completed the sixth annual SENS program (School of English for Engaged Social Service) between May 2 and July 22 of 2021. I want to thank all of you who participated from my heart. I thank you for having the courage to attend this program in the midst of an unexpected and deadly surge in COVID in Thailand that began just before we opened.

The work team was faithful, responsible, and generous in addressing the many additional challenges, such as quarantines for foreign students, COVID tests, the impossibility of the usual field trips, and much more. The students were remarkably open and ready to engage with whatever we offered in the program, and they gave themselves fully to listening, learning, supporting each other, and enjoying each other's companionship. I want to thank all the donors, including especially the crowdfunding platform Global Giving, as well as the individuals who donated via that platform, the Regional English Language Office (RELO) of the US Embassy in Bangkok for providing two scholarships, and the Jungto Society of South Korea for its generous help.

It was not only the COVID pandemic that framed this program. It was also the coup in Myanmar, and the

heightened security concerns for participants from at least two other countries. How strange it was for me to think that participation in an English and leadership program that emphasizes personal growth and creative, nonviolent social transformation, should require care in what we share with the outside world due to potential political repression! It reminds me that each of us must continue to work for greater openness and safety in our home contexts, so that everyone's contributions can be heard.

For this issue of Seeds of Peace, I feel it would be most useful to share a few of the graduation talks of the students. Like all the student graduation talks, these two talks were drafted by the students themselves, and they are heartfelt and honest. We worked with them on editing to make sure they were saying what they wanted to say, and that the English was publication quality. Please take a moment to read their reflections and aspirations below. And please follow or support our work at [www.inebinstitute.org](http://www.inebinstitute.org)

Thank you,

**Ted Mayer**

Designer and Director of the SENS Programs



SENS 2021 Students from Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam (L-R)



Students Use Cards to Help Identify Next Steps in Working for Sustainability

## First Student Graduation Talk

### Good Afternoon Everyone!

This is the period that I know I will remember for a long time, and I hope that you will too. Honestly, it wasn't an easy task for me to get through this program while carrying the nightmare of the Myanmar Coup and Covid 19 outbreak on one shoulder and workloads from my job on the other shoulder. But I'm very glad I decided to join and managed to work through it.

There are so many things I am grateful for about this program. I will share a few here today.

First and foremost, the classmates. We have shared many wonderful memories and adventures. I've learned a lot from every one of you, your journeys, struggles, fights, courage, and wisdom. Those are tremendously beautiful to me, and I respect and admire you for this.

Second, I'm really grateful to everyone who contributed to making this program happen from the beginning to the end. It's the results of your hard work that we are all here today. I know some of the lessons I have learned from you, both in and outside of the classroom, are going to stay with me for a long time. Thank you for your efforts, energy, passion, and insights. You have given us all your best and made sure we always had great experiences.

Most importantly, the program has been a safe space for every one of us. The feeling of being in a safe place helped me to heal. In the early days of the class, I was deeply distressed by the traumatic events that I

experienced since the coup. I was in shock, overwhelmed with fear and despair. Looking back on myself from now to the beginning days, the change in me is very obvious and clear.

My inner strength has returned, my thoughts have become clear, and I can smile again. I will nurture these profound personal transformations to continue fighting for the freedom of my country, and people. I will be aware of my privilege and use it to benefit everyone. And I also make a promise to myself to cultivate deeper compassion not only toward to the earth and all its living beings, but also (and especially) toward myself.

Throughout this course, I have been handed awakening moments that opened up my relationship with life and the world. Perhaps my previous near-death experiences evoked new perspectives about life and also made me realize how limited my time is. Embracing the uncertainty of life, I'm not going to let fear rule my life any more.

I will live fully and dare greatly.

Last but not least, I would like to offer my apology to you all for any hurts, inconveniences, or wrongdoings I may have caused you during this period, whether consciously or unconsciously. Sometimes, I struggled to be concerned about my class or my English skills while my brothers, sisters, friends, and coworkers are in jail. Sometimes, I found it difficult to concentrate in class while loved ones back home are either getting infected,



fighting to breathe, grieving for their loved ones, or have died in the last few days of COVID 19.

I'm sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true.

Again, thank you for your patience and understanding. I wish you all the very, very best for the future, whatever it may hold. I wish you enough time to grow and realize all of your skills and talents.

I hope you find..... you.

Thank you.

**Razi (Myanmar)**

## Second Student Graduation Talk

**Dear Friends, Teachers, and All,**

I told my niece four years ago, when she was born, "I will try to make a better world for you." Since then, I joined the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) and tried my best in many areas of social issues. Even though sometimes I have forgotten to focus on my goals, I know all of the efforts we put in are for a better world. Many times, I kept busy with my work and forgot what I said to my niece—until I came to join the SENS program in 2021.

The SENS program has guided me in many ways to develop myself, and this has been in various areas—not only language but to be a better human being. I learned co-counseling to heal myself and others. I learned deep listening to listen to and understand others with compassion. I acquired many learning tools to keep developing myself. I now have friends from this program who I believe will always support each other. Finally, the three-months process of SENS helped me to draw conclusions from what I have done before and about what I really want to do next. And those have become my goals.

My long-term goal for my niece (which also includes every child) is to make sure that she gets what she deserves. I think new generations deserve a better world than the world we grew up in. They deserve a world full of natural resources. They deserve to grow up full of wisdom and wide-ranging knowledge, so they do not have to repeat our mistakes. And they deserve a world without war or dictatorship.

To do that I need to be ready, by learning many more things that I still do not understand. So, in the next five years I will attend more alternative learning programs—

at least six short programs per year and hopefully some longer programs, especially in alternative education, nature, and spiritual growth. When the pandemic is resolved, I would like to travel abroad again as I used to, to learn, to share, and to get connected with others who are working in the same areas.

During the coming five years, I will be creating a concrete plan of action for my nature learning center in my hometown. This center will also provide home schooling for my niece. I need to organize my land in an organic and environmentally friendly way. I want to make this center part of an international network for nature education, and to make it sustainable.

I want to be closer with nature and I will try to publish more stories on nature to protect both natural rights and human rights. This will be a way to share the beauty of relations between all living beings, who are all connected.

I will improve my work through all the skills and practices that I have learned. I will seek to be more creative and to reach the core value of being a social worker and storyteller. I will develop an independent platform to communicate social issues in a proper way. My aim is to bring the voice of all the voiceless in this region, especially Thailand and Myanmar, to the public. To do this I need to be connected with friends in this region who have the same goals of achieving justice.

I will return to my reading habit to cultivate my reading and writing skills—at least 12 books a year—but this time I will include no fewer than four books in English.

All of the goals I have shared here have been clarified by this program, and this makes me very grateful to all of my teachers, tutors, and friends, who have been kind, patient, honest, committed, and reliable. I am grateful to my work colleagues for their support and hard work while I have been in this program. I am grateful to my organization for doing great work in creating a wonderful space of alternative learning, both physically and spiritually. Finally, I am grateful to my four-year old niece, who brings me a more lively and meaningful life, and who inspires me as I step into the future.

Thank you,

**Wichai Juntavaro (Thailand)**



# Women Talking Peace We are Struggling Together

by Nonglak Kaeophokha (Jeab) and Wah Wah

**Jeab:** As a woman from Myanmar, could you please tell me a bit about your background, and how it is related to what you are doing right now, as well as your beliefs and your commitment?

**Wah Wah:** I come from the background of a political exile's broken family after the 1988 uprising and grew up as a non-active citizen under political oppression until prior to the 2007 Saffron Revolution and 2008 Cyclone Nargis. I became a social worker after Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and have been involved in Myanmar's environmental and social justice movements, and am also interested in people's perceptions of identity. I have my doubts about living in an incompletely formed State where a divided society continues to have protracted violence at all levels - cultural, structural, and direct violence. I continue my areas of learning and practice of conflict transformation with the belief that change takes place across a spectrum from personal to societal transformation.

**Jeab:** How did you feel when the coup happened in February 2021? What was inside your head during that time, and your perspective on the situation as a peacebuilder?

**Wah Wah:** I remember that feeling of surprise even though we had heard a lot of rumors and saw the signs. I was very angry. On the other hand, as a peace practitioner of conflict transformation, I heard the voice in my head saying, "This is Now or Never," as this is the opportunity to begin the change out of Myanmar's long-term conflict and violence.

**Jeab:** It appears that a paradigm shift had been taking place across Myanmar society that was tested because

of the coup which caused a widespread support for the CDM. Can you talk about this?

**Wah Wah:** The Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) focused the Myanmar people's anger and opposition to the military coup in non-violent ways. It was started by medical doctors and health care workers who were working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020. The general public had high hopes that the country was gradually entering democratic transition since the 2010 elections, although it was fragile and slow-going with structural disconnections. When this military coup destroyed the country's very fragile progress of democratic transition, the public responded through using acts of non-violent civil disobedience as the revolutionary tool for confronting the military and the SAC.

The people of Myanmar came together quickly in the spirit of solidarity in the first few months immediately following the coup. They are all facing similar dilemmas caused by the armed conflict, and real threats to personal security, and are not blaming people who have been leading the CDM. This includes doctors and health care workers who cannot report for work at hospitals and medical clinics. Similarly, schoolteachers fearing arrest and are in hiding yet remain committed to finding practical, innovative approaches for alternative education and non-formal education in communities. It's the same for many other sectors. Many people continue supporting the CDM and confront the State Administration Council Myanmar - SAC.

I've also been personally observing and questioning the process of State formation, religious

beliefs, the pedagogy of education, as well as cultural and traditional beliefs. Historically, forms of earlier protests in previous years also challenged cultural norms and taboos, yet they protests seem more significant in this time. I see those actions as positively contributing to long-term social change in Myanmar.

**Jeab:** What will happen next? Do you still have hope for peace and democracy in Myanmar?

**Wah Wah:** Throughout the devastating days and nights, “What will be next?” is the question all Myanmar people are asking including the military and SAC. I still see this 2021 political crisis along with the failed coup by the Myanmar military as the space and time for a major turning point to reframe and reset Myanmar. This is an opportunity that transcends abstract values, opinions and practicalities undermined or structurally and systematically blocking and disconnecting the competitive interests of each actor from domestic to global intersectionality.

**Jeab:** Last but not least, say something about what you want to do to restore democracy and bring peace to Myanmar.

**Wah Wah:** This is the time to end the protracted war born within this country’s formation, with the needs of new coordinated leadership, i.e., non-violent direct

actions vs defense; Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration - Security Sector Reform (DDR-SSR). We need to be focused on the paradigm shifts of civility instead of democracy; confederation in place of federation, etc. I do welcome the formation of new nations that gradually supporting each other instead of coercive fake unity that perpetuates harm under military supremacy and ethno-religious centric identity groups in one country.

The conversation between Jeab and Wah Wah continues through their work as peacebuilders that focuses on finding nonviolent approaches to ending the ongoing violence and destruction of all forms of life in Myanmar - the natural environment and the people of Myanmar.

**About Jeab & Wah Wah** - Nonglak Kaeophokha (Jeab) is a Program Manager for the Spirit in Education Movement – SEM. Wah Wah is the Programme Coordinator for SEM’s Myanmar Peace Team Programme. We both have so much in common with our peacebuilding backgrounds, and share the same values. First, we believe in peace, but we love to talk about the conflict, struggling, and how conflicts can transform into peace. To solve conflicts inside and around us, a first place to start is finding peace within ourselves - “peace begins from within.”

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## Recommended Reading



### POISON IS MEDICINE

Clarifying the Vajrayana

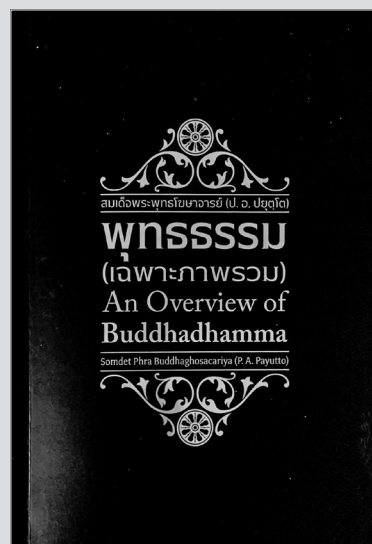
Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse

Poison is Medicine  
Clarifying the Vajrayana

Author: Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse  
Publisher: Siddhartha's Intent 2021

### An Overview of Buddhadhamma

Author: Somdet Phara Buddhaghosacariya  
(P. A. Payutto)



# Happiness is for the Giver and Receiver

## The Story of Tavoy Migrant Workers' Solidarity

By Praphaporn Piyaphatworasakun



The photo shows Tavoy community volunteer's hands offering supplies to member of the migrant community.



Photos of the Tavoy community Volunteers are shown checking on persons' health in their homes. Photos also show the volunteers preparing food in the community kitchen, and delivering the food to the local community.

The Aor Tor Gor and Jatujak markets at Chit Lom are popular and well-known places for tourists to shop in central Bangkok, Thailand. However, opposite the markets nearby across the Bang Sue canal, is a community of approximately 250 migrant workers from the deep seaport of Dawei, Myanmar. The Tavoy migrant workers of the "Wat Pai Tan community" have lived and worked here for two generations. Most of them are sellers in souvenir shops and food stalls, and some are skilled workers, for instance, making picture frames, handicrafts, wood furniture, etc.

Besides working with the Dawei community inside Myanmar, the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) has also supported the Tavoy migrant workers in Bangkok since 2017. SEM and the Tavoy workers have collaborated on events such as "Long Rak Dawei" (Fall in Love with Dawei), and "Kid Tueng Dawei" (Missing Dawei). Most of the Tavoy workers left their hometown to work in Thailand many years ago, and seldom return to visit their hometown in Myanmar. Many planned to come for work

and make money for a short time, like only two years, then return home after saving some money. However, life does not go as intended as they cannot return home yet for several reasons including the political situation, limited finances for travel, and few work opportunities in Dawei.

SEM's objective is to build capacity and skills for the struggling workers which began during the COVID-pandemic in 2020. The training includes providing basic framework for financial management, savings, accounting, and labor law, etc. The workers are learning new things they can share when meeting friends and other workers in their free time. This sharing also helps them form new friendships, as well as solidarity within



their community and the surrounding local Thai communities.

These activities bring the migrants and the Thai people closer together. They also have more chances to exchange ideas for developing their community because whenever something happens in the community they search for solutions and help each other. Coping with the COVID-19 situation has strengthened their solidarity and sense of community.

Unfortunately, the third wave of Covid-19 has had a more critical impact on the community than the previous two. More than 120 people living in the community, both Tavoy workers and Thai people, became infected with 50% being Tavoy workers. They are quarantined inside their small houses which are already crowded. In July 2021, random COVID-19 tests were administered in the markets and the community during which many persons tested positive. After that, the markets were closed to prevent further spreading it. Most of the workers could not work, and some lost their jobs and now have no income at all due to the government restrictions and lockdown policies.

However, during the difficult time, Tavoy workers started thinking about how to support each other while struggling amidst the pandemic's third wave, as well as the political tensions in the two countries. Then the Tavoy workers set up a team of community volunteers who had not been infected and have no jobs. These volunteers established "a community kitchen" where the volunteers can cook and deliver the food directly to the people that were infected. People outside the community donated different types of supplies, for example, medical supplies including thermometers, fingertip pulse oximeters, PPE kits, ventilators, the 'Fah Ta Lai Jon' herb (*andrographis paniculate*), medications, and food supplies such as rice, dry food, and fresh food for cooking at the community kitchen center. The volunteers also monitored the COVID-19 cases (Covid 19 matching) with the follow-up team and transported critically ill patients to hospitals, including pregnant women and infant cases. The community volunteers must wear PPE suits to be safe and prevent further spread of the infection.

They support each other within their community to cope with the Covid-19 and successfully control this crisis by empathy, sharing, caring, good cooperation, and good management. Although over 100 people have already been treated and recovered, only ten infected people remain treated at home. Most people recovered during quarantine in their rooms called Home Isolation treatment (HI).

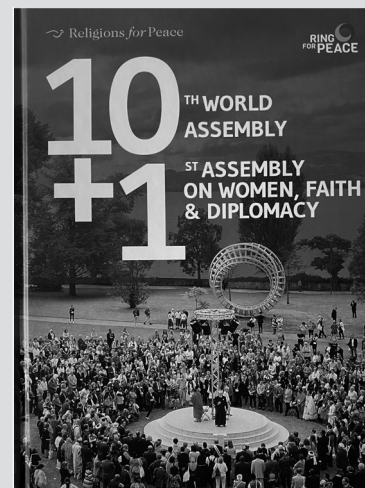
What SEM has learned from the crisis is expressed in the words of one infected person who said that, *"It is important to take care of yourself, eat well, get enough sleep, and follow doctors' instructions and suggestions given by volunteers. More importantly, with the encouragement from friends helping both migrant workers and the local Thai community without distinction of race, nationality, or religion, therefore, we can overcome this crisis together."*

Written by Praphaporn Piyaphatworasakun (Cherry),  
Project Officer, SEM

Edited by Nonglak Kaeophokha



## Recommended Reading



10th World Assembly and  
1st Assembly on Women,  
Faith & Diplomacy

**Publisher:** Foundation of Peace Dialogue of the World  
Religions and Civil Society (Ring for Peace) and  
Religions for Peace International 2021

# Keys to understand Babasaheb's Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Ancient India

By Mangesh Dahiwale



I must admit at the outset that the keys here are developed for personal use to understand this topic which to me is an important contribution made by Babasaheb to understand ancient India. This material makes part III of the Writings and Speeches Vol 3 compiled from the notes left behind by Babasaheb as the full book was not published.

This publication itself is remarkably useful for any reader of Indian history. However, the difficulty arises as the final product is not available as a book but collation of different files instead are available.

It is remarkable the way Babasaheb exhumed the past and brought clear light of his erudite scholarship and intellect to make us see the historical ancient India.

1. The political history of India as recorded began with the Nagas. The founder of Magadha dynasty was Sisunaga. Bimbisara was also a Naga. The political system in India were first launched by the Nagas. This dynasty was overthrown by the Nandas.

But later on Chandragupta Maurya won over the Nandas and founded Maurya dynasty. Asoka was an important ruler of the Maurya dynasty. Mauryas were related to Nagas. This means that Mauryas were also Nagas.

2. The revolution of the Buddha attracted popular support as it was based on welfare of the majority as the Buddha supported equality and stopped sacrifices of all types and kinds that involved violence.

3. The Brahmins advocated Animal and Soma sacrifices and the culture they practiced was opposed by the

Buddha. The ethical practices that the Buddha taught were opposed to Karmakand.

4. When Ashoka became Buddhist, he modeled his political system on the Dhamma and carried on several social reforms started by the Buddha with the state support. This was a period when Yajna were stopped and the Brahmins lost all the privileges.
5. There was a period in the history of ancient India where the Brahmins lived like underprivileged class.
6. Pushyamitra Sung whose gotra was Sung was Samvedi Brahmin and they practiced Soma and Yajna sacrifices, revolved against the Buddhist empire violently. He usurped the throne and declared Brahminism as the State Religion. He also started prosecuting the Buddhist monks.
7. The design of the scriptures supporting Brahminism and opposing Buddhism was initiated by Pushyamitra.
8. Manu Smriti, Ramayan, Mahabharat, Puranas, and dialogue between Krishna and Arjuna are post Ashoka literature. This is very conclusively proved by Babasaheb Ambedkar. The purpose of this body of literature was to establish supremacy of the Brahmins.
9. The codes of Manu were produced to counter the

Buddhist ethical society and establish the supremacy of the Brahmins. These were the penal codes and they did not apply to Brahmins.

10. Then Buddhism started declining in India, but still continued to exist due to its vast network of universities and educational institutions spread all over the India and surrounding areas.
11. The invading Muslims destroyed the Buddhist universities and as such the Muslim invaders were responsible for the fall of Buddhism. The decline of Buddhist revolution started with the counterrevolution launched by Pushyamitra Sung. Even today, in the Chinese Buddhist circles the name of Pushyamitra is taken with contempt.
12. When the Muslims started invading India, most of the kingdoms were ruled by the Brahmins and Rajputs (who were strong advocates of Brahminical religion) except in the eastern India where the Palas ruled. The rulers had apathy towards Buddhism.
13. The invading Muslims affected both the Brahmins and the Buddhists. But the Brahmins survived as their system was based on hereditary priesthood. While Buddhist priesthood was to be ordained by a process.
14. The Muslims were But Shikans. But is an arabic word for idols which means Buddha. But (बुत) is the word for the Buddha in Arabic language. The Muslims were against any worship of idols, so they broke them when they invaded India. and hence, they were called but-shikan.
15. Thus it can be said that the history of ancient India is the history of mortal battle between Buddhism and Brahminism. The Brahminical counter revolution led to the decline of Buddhism in India and subsequent Muslim invasion led to fall of Buddhism.
16. Indian history has been only focused on Islamic invasion of India, but the Brahminic invasion of the Buddhist India is not studied or focused by the historians.
17. The Buddhist texts and literature are an important resource to study ancient India and offers deep

insights into politics and society of that time.

18. The fall of Naga Political System and attack on Buddhism are responsible for the present day caste system and supremacy of the Brahminism.
19. When the Buddhist monasticism was destroyed, there was an attempt to ordain people but had no proper training and were occupied in the worldly affairs.
20. The reduction of the Buddhist population affected the Buddhist monks and led to their decline, and hence further decline of Buddhism.
21. Disillusioned by the Brahmin rulers, the Buddhists in the Sindh and the eastern India supported the Muslims and eventually adopted Islam as Brahminical rulers were tyrannical.
22. Thus, majority of the areas having a significant Muslim population were the past strong centres of Buddhism and Buddhist population. The example is present-day Pakistan and Bangladesh.

These are just some Keys, but this compilation in the form of Revolution and Counterrevolution in ancient India is full of insights and one can derive a lot of knowledge about Buddhism and Brahminical texts and literature.

I wonder why Babasaheb Ambedkar took such an effort to write this is because the understanding of it is critical today as he maintained that those who forget history cannot create history. Just reading it one cannot fail to admire the vast study of Babasaheb Ambedkar in Buddhism, Brahminism, history, and politics. That's the reason this book was to become an extremely important book to revive Buddhism in India in the scheme of Babasaheb Ambedkar.

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**Mangesh Dahiwal** is on the Executive Committee of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

Mangesh can be reached at [mangesh.dahiwal@gmail.com](mailto:mangesh.dahiwal@gmail.com) for references and Pali definitions. The article can also be read on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/536779201/posts/10161356609664202/?d=n>

# When I Say I'm a Buddhist

By Professor Richard Gombrich

“When I say I’m a Buddhist, it doesn’t mean I’m purer and nicer than others. But it means I have too much ignorance and mental defilement to remove. I need Buddhas’ wisdom.



But for letting go of my personal clinging to all worldly desires.

When I say I am a Buddhist, it is not because I pursue a smooth life. But for the calm acceptance of impermanence, and be calm and confident like a king in any adverse circumstances.

When I say I am a Buddhist, I do not mean to manipulate others with the motivation of self-interest. But with good use of wisdom, to benefit self and others while being empathetic to all sentient beings.

When I say I am a Buddhist, it is not because I want to escape from the world and pursue nothingness. But to know everyday life is within Dharma, and to live in the present is to practice.

When I say I am a Buddhist, it does not mean that my life will no longer experience setbacks.

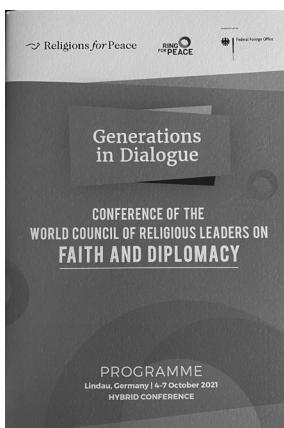
But with the Dharma, setbacks are transformed into a cause for my growth.

When I say I am a Buddhist, my heart is filled with endless gratitude. Just thinking I was born as a human and have the ability to practice in this life, with the opportunity to meet wise teachers and hear the Buddha’s teachings, I am deeply moved by this unbelievable karmic affinity.

When I say I am a Buddhist, it is not because there is a God outside me. But that I find the true Buddha-nature of my own heart.”

**Professor Richard Gombrich** dedicated 40 years of his life to the study and practice of Buddhism and Pali language at the University of Oxford.

## Recommended Reading



Generations in Dialogue  
Conference of the World Council of Religious Leaders  
on Faith and Diplomacy

**Publisher:** Foundation of Peace Dialogue of the World Religions and Civil Society (Ring for Peace) and Religions for Peace International 2021





# The Closing of the Young Minds of Southeast Asia:

## Post-colonial Universities in the Service of Autocratic States

**FORSEA**

Source: <https://forsea.co/the-closing-of-the-young-minds-of-southeast-asia-post-colonial-universities-in-the-service-of-autocratic-states/>

Two leading scholars of Southeast Asia - Thongchai Winichakul, Emeritus Professor of History at University of Wisconsin-Madison and Michael W. Charney, Professor of Military History and Southeast Asian Histories at SOAS University of London - will share their professional perspectives on the ways in which higher education in the region has been misused and manipulated to promote what Michael W. Charney calls “State-Think”.

On Sunday September 5, 2021, FORSEA is hosting a critical discussion on this vital subject of how post-colonial political regimes across Southeast Asia attempt to limit the intellectual space, kill the natural curiosity of the region’s young minds, and neuter the universities’ potential to contribute to the progressive, democratic transformation of society – and the ASEAN region with 500 million inhabitants variously oppressed under autocratic and quasi-democratic regimes.

The two leading scholars of Southeast Asia – Thongchai Winichakul, Emeritus Professor of History at University of Wisconsin-Madison and Michael W. Charney, Professor of Military History and Southeast Asian Histories at SOAS University of London – will share their professional perspectives on the ways in which higher education in the region has been misused and manipulated to promote what Michael W. Charney

calls “State-Think”.

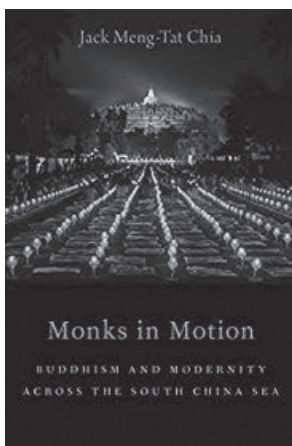
The recent news about the scheduled closure of Yale-NUS College in Singapore in 2025 came as no surprise to any scholar who pays close attention to the inseparable link between the types of political regimes and the institutions of higher learning. It was just a matter of time before the unholy alliance between Yale University, one of the world’s most intellectually vibrant universities governed autonomously, and the National University of Singapore (NUS), under the tight reign of Southeast Asia’s authoritarian city-state, collapsed. In the 2021 World Press Freedom Index, Singapore ranked 160 in freedom of expression out of a total of 180 countries assessed. It criminalizes homosexuality, punishable with up to 2-years imprisonment – which NUS governors defend, who in turn cancel exhibits, talks, and courses, and ban books deemed “insufficiently academic”.



International visitors at Nalanda University,  
January 2016.

In his FORSEA opinion editorial, *State-Think and the Problem with University Education in Post-Colonial Societies*, SOAS Professor and FORSEA Board director Michael W. Charney writes, “this closing up of genuine intellectual counter-spaces marks the critical moment when universities go from saying this is what the state wishes to teach you, to this is what the state limits your understanding to be. And they cancel the contracts for

### Recommended Reading



### Monks in Motion:

*Buddhism and Modernity Across the South China Sea*

Editor: Jack Meng-Tat Chia

Publisher: Oxford Scholarship 2020

books, reject inviting talks by scholars, and ignore work that shows a different way to view one or another of the societies in the region.”

Even in the world’s largest democracy – namely India – since the politics under the ruling Hindu Fundamentalist BJP and populist PM Modi shifted far-right and reshaped state institutions, the country’s leading universities such as Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and national educational project to revive Nalanda University in Bihar (originally built in AD 400 and continuously run until AD 1300) have suffered undue and unwelcome direct meddling by the political regime.

At JNU, Modi-appointed executives attempted to politically neuter the country’s most socially and intellectually vibrant student body on campus by forcibly ending the annual tradition of adorning buildings in social sciences and humanities with wall posters and graffiti art with progressive ideas and thoughts.

In the fall of 2016, at Nalanda, Amartya Sen, the renowned philosopher and economist at Harvard University, resigned publicly from his leadership on Nalanda University Governing Board in protest of the Hindu right wing ascendancy.

Two years ago, Thongchai Winichakul, renowned critic of political and social issues in his native Thailand and the eminent historian at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, lambasted at what he calls Anti-University. In the originally Thai language essay – republished in English translation in *Mekong Review* – Professor Winichakul writes, “(t)he anti-university produces docile people who stay inside the box. The anti-university destroys the individuality of its students. There is no university anywhere in the world that calls the police to arrest its own students simply because they think differently. The anti-university does not protect students or professors who are persecuted by state power.

In a society rich in intellect, the university is a source of evolved knowledge, higher education and the ethical ideal. In a society bereft of intellect, the anti-university is a desert void of knowledge, education and ethics, an instrument of power that produces the kind of citizens desired by Big Brother.”

# The Price of Freedom

By Hozan Alan Senauke,

15 September 2021

Source: *Buddhistdoor Global* -

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/the-price-of-freedom>

My column this month doesn't focus on a particular issue, although so many worldly circumstances cry out for attention. It is about the practices and capacities one needs simply to remain upright in the fires of uncertainty.

At the pivot point of *A Song Everlasting*, a new book by the novelist Ha Jin, the exiled protagonist, Yao Tian, a professional singer, remembers that a fellow Chinese exile had said to him: "The price for freedom was uncertainty." This sentence, tucked away toward the end of the book, leaped out at me as true.

Of course, we don't have to read novels or travel far on the Buddha's way to reach this understanding. Early Buddhism articulates the Three Dharma Seals or Three Marks of Existence: impermanence (Pali: *anicca*), non-self (*anatta*), and suffering (*dukkha*). From that perspective, we might conclude that uncertainty amounts to suffering.

But according to Thich Nhat Hanh and a number of Mahayana sutras, the Three Dharma Seals consist of impermanence (Skt: *anitya*), non-self (*anatman*), and nirvana—the cessation of suffering. This stands the equation of uncertainty and suffering on its head; uncertainty is freedom.

Looking at these two views of the Dharma Seals, what seems clear is that impermanence and non-self are fundamental principles. The Third Seal—*dukkha* or nirvana—depends on our attitude toward the first two. Do we see impermanence and non-self as prison or liberation? Can we find freedom by actually embracing uncertainty? I should say that attitude is no insignificant thing. Our attitudes have deep roots in the conscious mind, the unconscious mind, and

karma.

Usually we want to "know" things, to arrive at certainties, things we can count on. This extends from basic concerns, such as knowing that my home will be there tomorrow; or wanting to ensure safety from infection by COVID-19; or imagining that our nation's political system is imperishable. But recently we have seen wildfires in California and floods in Louisiana from Hurricane Ida, destroying all the homes in their way. On our sangha Listserv, emotions have lately flared concerning safety from COVID-19, vaccinations, and how/when to open the *zendo* to in-person practice. On 6 January, we saw violent mobs literally breaking down the doors of the US Congress, threatening our longstanding institutions of governance.

Nothing is permanent; nothing is certain. If we are not prepared for the universality of uncertainty, we are bound to suffer. Conversely, uncertainty is a gift. We may not always see it, but uncertainty allows for the possibility of creativity and change.

There is a famous Zen *koan*, "Dizang's Not knowing" (Case 20 in the *Book of Serenity*), that can be our guide to the freedom of uncertainty. This dialogue takes place in Tang dynasty China, but remains relevant:

*Dizang asked Fayen, "Where are you going?"*

*Fayen said, "Around on pilgrimage."*

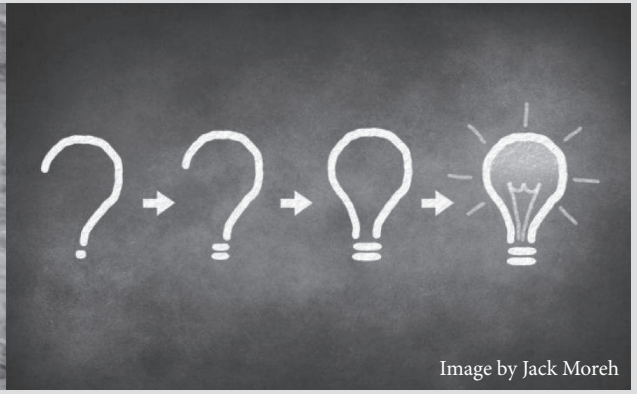


Image by Jack Moreh

*Dizang said, “What is the purpose of pilgrimage?”*

*Fayan said, “I don’t know.”*

*Dizang said, “Not knowing is most intimate.”*

Not Knowing echoes though the ages of Zen. It is Bodhidharma’s response, “no knowing” when Emperor Wu asks who is standing before him. It is Shunryu Suzuki Roshī’s *Beginner’s Mind*: “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are few.” It is the First of Bernie Glassman’s Three Tenets: Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Appropriate Response. It is Korean Master Seung Sahn’s “Only Don’t Know.”

If uncertainty is the price of freedom, intimacy (or nearness, as it is sometimes translated) is the fruit of freedom. When we are uncertain about things, we are intimate with our self. This may not always be a comfortable intimacy, but it is what another Zen teacher of mine calls “life on the line.” As Yao Tian of *A Song Everlasting* comes to learn, this is direct experience of the “self,” of its impermanence and its surprising capacities.

The freedom of uncertainty is one side. The other side of uncertainty is fear and anxiety, which is not entirely irrational. It’s wild out there. Our world is uncertain and always has been. Regimes and empires fall and rise. Invisible organisms bring illness and death. Bitter words of fear and hatred incite division and violence. In these circumstances, not knowing is insufficient. To stick to not-knowing as an unbending principle is investing in ignorance. Along with uncertainty and not-knowing, we must bear witness—

the second of Bernie Glassman’s Three Tenets. It is also the second of the Buddha’s Seven Factors of Enlightenment—Investigation of Reality (Pali: *dhamma vicaya*). We open all our senses, we study with body and mind, and we make the best guess about how to proceed. That’s Glassman’s third tenet—an Appropriate Response. Then we see which way things are headed and make a course correction. Both in our meditation practice and in life we do this over and over again. Even as we sit in the Buddha’s upright position, we are constantly making small adjustments to meet the forces of gravity, fatigue, and distraction.

Going forward calls for Great Patience, the perfection of *kshanti* (Skt.). Such patience is the motor of *zazen*. Practice means sitting with every arising thought or circumstance, even when we might want to jump out of our skin.

After all these months of pandemic, with no end in sight, patience is wearing thin for many of us. I’d like to join Fayan on pilgrimage, wandering aimlessly. These days, even driving across the Bay Bridge to run an errand feels like a great adventure.

So, please be patient and compassionate to yourself and others. Let your mind travel freely on pilgrimage, and honor uncertainty while keeping your eyes open. Buddhas and ancestors will support us, even when the world is on fire.

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Hozan Alan Senauke is the Abbot at the Berkeley Zen Center and a member of INEB’s Advisory Committee.



## Dedication to Rev. Yoshiaki Fujitani Offered by Rev. Blayne Higa Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

Hawaii Association of International Buddhists  
Vesak Day Celebration  
26 May 2021



As we begin our Vesak Celebration tonight, we take a moment to remember our beloved Dharma friend, the Reverend Yoshiaki Fujitani who realized birth in the Pure Land on May 17, 2021, at the age of 97.

Born on Maui, Rev. Fujitani was a son of Hawaii who lived with a heart of profound

gratitude and aloha. In an interview on his experience as a Nisei or second-generation Japanese American, he shared, "Buddhism teaches that we all, we have four gratitudes. One is oya no on, our gratitude to our parents; shujo no on, gratitude to all beings; kimi no on, or kuni no on, our gratitude to our country; and the fourth would be our gratitude to the Buddha. In Buddhism, these four ons are taught."

Among his many accomplishments, we uplift his work in establishing the Hawaii Association of International Buddhists in the early 1980s and his lifelong commitment to interreligious dialogue and harmony.

His intimate understanding of the Buddha's teaching on Interdependence informed his interfaith work. He said, "I think the only way is to get out into the community and to work with other faiths. I think that we have to bear that in mind. We're not alone, we're part of a larger community."

In addition to bringing together Buddhists of all traditions, he also tirelessly cultivated relationships with peoples of all faiths. Through his lifelong friendship with the late Maryknoll Sister Joan Chatfield, they created a Buddhist Studies focused curriculum at Chaminade University, the only Catholic University in Hawaii.

Rev. Fujitani was an inspirational and consequential spiritual leader who himself was honored as a "Living Treasure" several years ago. I have always admired his commitment to interfaith dialogue and social justice and how he embodied the Buddha's teachings through compassionate action. His Dharma-centered leadership touched countless lives and has left a lasting legacy for us all.

For these reasons and many more, we remember him as a

humble disciple of the Buddha who lived with a soft and gentle heart and a firm and resolute mind.

May his memory be a blessing indeed.

Namo Amida Butsu.

Mahalo.

(This excerpt is taken from the full Dedication by Rev. Blayne Higa.)

Namo Amida Butsu.

Mahalo.

(This excerpt is taken from the full Dedication by Rev. Blayne Higa.)

S

## Bruce Gaston

11 March 1947 - 17 October 2021

by **Sulak Sivaraksa**  
17 October 2021

**B**ruce Gaston is an American, but his heart is Thai. He dedicated his life to arts and culture, particularly to music, composing, dancing, etc. He lived in Siam most of his life where his skill of Thai music is best known. He



also performed Western arts such as in Shakespeare's plays. Several years ago he also performed at the Tawandang German Brewery Pub. All the customers enjoyed his performance, which was different from other performances in the country.

Bruce helped the Foundation for Children in Siam in various ways through music, dance, composing songs, and writing for the foundation, including designing their annual calendar diary to raise funds for children.

When the Sathirakoses centennial took place, the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation (SNF) organized a big celebration and invited Bruce to lead a play. At that occasion, HRH. Chakri Sirinthorn attended the play and Bruce welcomed her with a bow in the Thai style.

I do respect him and his generous support to SNF and the Foundation for Children. I believe that he supported other non-profit organizations in various ways as well. His generosity and kindness were well known and respected by the people in Siam.

**I will miss him.**

S

## Kamla Bhasin, Pioneering Feminist Icon, Poet and Author, Dies at 75

by **Aranya Shankar**, 25 September 2021



Feminist activist Kamla Bhasin passed away on Saturday morning. (Photo by Bhupendra Rana)

**F**eminist icon, poet, author and a pioneer of the women's rights movement in South Asia, Kamla Bhasin, died in Delhi late Friday night after a short but spirited battle against liver cancer. She was 75.

Born in 1946 in Pakistan's Shahidanwali village, Bhasin completed her graduation from Maharani College, Jaipur, and post-graduation from Rajasthan University, before moving to Germany to study sociology. After returning to India, she worked with the

UN's Food and Agriculture Organization for 25 years. During this time, she reached out to women across the country.

Bhasin was the founder of Sangat, a South Asian feminist network, and co-founder of Jagori, a women's resource centre.

She is known for improvising and popularising in India the 'Azadi' slogan, which she picked up from Pakistani feminists, as well as for her poems written for children, the most notable being 'Because I'm a girl, I must study'. She wrote more than 30 books on women's rights and eight children's books, along with several songs and poems.

Jagori said in a statement: "Through her songs and posters, she has reached out to millions of activists and energised protests ... Using simple language to demystify concepts, she was able to reach out the ideas of feminism and patriarchy to the lay person without jargon."

"Kamla was one of the pioneers of the Indian feminist movement since the 70s. She was active during the Mathura rape case, the Shah Bano, as well as with anti-dowry, anti-rape movements. She was a South Asian feminist icon, not just an Indian icon. She helped build bridges between India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka," she said.

Writer and publisher Ritu Menon, Bhasin's co-author of 'Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition', said Bhasin's legacy was "enormous."

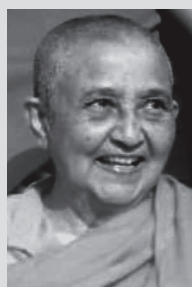
"There was a quality to Kamla that was exceptional. . . . That warmth she radiated, it encompassed almost everything she came in contact with. Her legacy is in the songs she wrote, the slogans she raised, the connections she made, the hearts she touched, the issues and campaigns she fought. It's the generosity,

spontaneity, warmth and intelligence of her struggle. That is her legacy for the entire subcontinent," she said.

Modified from the *Indian Express* - <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/feminist-icon-kamla-bhasin-passes-away-7533380/>

## Ven. Bhikkhuni Kusuma, Pioneering Female Buddhist Monastic, Dies at 92

By **Martine Panzica**, 1 September 2021



**I**n 1996, Ven. Bhikkhuni Kusuma became the first female Buddhist monastic to ordain in Sri Lanka in 10 centuries.

The pioneering female Buddhist Monastic Ven. Dr. Bhikkhuni Kusuma died in Sri Lanka on Saturday, August 28, 2021 BuddhistDoor reports. She was 92.

Bhikkhuni Kusuma was an internationally acclaimed author, scholar, and the founder and abbot of the Ayya Khema Meditation Center. In her lifetime, she wrote several books and obtained two PhDs. In her early life, she studied molecular biology in the United States, and taught university English and Science. She was drawn to Buddhism by larger questions that she found science could not answer. In an interview with BuddhistDoor in 2018, she said, "Buddhism gives priority to the mind. There is no scientific evidence there. There is no physical evidence there. You cannot experiment on mental phenomenon, like feelings, recognitions, perceptions, volitions, memory."

In 1996, Bhikkhuni Kusuma became the first bhikkhuni to be ordained in Sri Lanka in in 1,000 years. The ordination was controversial and opposed by many at the time, so Bhikkhuni Kusuma and the nine others ordained alongside her lived in India for two years for their safety. Despite the initial opposition, Bhikkhuni Kusuma's ordination and subsequent work has inspired the revival of the Theravada bhikkhuni order in Sri Lanka, with over 3000 bhikkhunis ordained.

Ven. Dr. Bhikkhuni Kusuma highly valued education and is held as a role model for Theravada bhikkhunis across the world. She authored many books, established a meditation center, and travelled across the world to speak. In 2018, she told BuddhistDoor "I wish that bhikkhunis — not only in Sri Lanka, but all over the world — will be educated, will be practicing, will be talking about the Dharma and giving that knowledge to the world. Then, it will be a different world altogether."

Modified from *Lion's Roar* - <https://www.lionsroar.com/ven-bhikkhuni-kusuma-pioneering-female-buddhist-monastic-dies-at-92/>

July 2, 2021

Dear Sulak,

We hope that this email finds you well.

We are writing to you today because Monika Griefahn, previous Chair and a member of the Foundation's Board for the past 20 years, will end her term at the next Board meeting. We would like to leave her a very special and personal memory of her time with Right Livelihood and were therefore hoping for your contribution. It would really mean a lot to her if you could send us a personal message or story that we can include in a printed book for her. We will add pictures from our archive, but if you have a nice picture you would like to share, please include that with your short text.

In order to be able to finalise the book before Monika's last Board meeting at the beginning of September, we would need your reply latest 1 August. And please don't approach Monika yet, as we would like to keep this as a surprise.

Thank you so much for your help with this!

**Warmest summer greetings,**

Kajsa & Ole

Ole von Uexküll

Executive Director

STANDING  
UP FOR  
HUMAN  
COURAGE  
SINCE 1980 **Right  
Livelihood**

August 15, 2021

My dear Monika,

I was shocked to hear that you will leave the Board of the Right Livelihood Foundation. For so long you have been at the centre of the foundation, bright and joyful as ever. Feminine leadership has been essential for the growth and integrity of the Right Livelihood community. You have pioneered the most important quality of our community that is courage for so many years.

Thank you and may blessings be on your path.

**Sulak Sivaraksa**

May 18, 2021

Dear Craig,

Thank you so much for your New Year card as well as birthday card. It is good of you to remember my birthday. Please tell David Charles that I remember him fondly.

I remember sending you a message to ask you to review my biography (*ROAR: Sulak Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism*) perhaps for JSS or any preferred of your choosing. If you do not have the book, I am willing to post to you a copy.

So far I have not heard from you perhaps my message did not get to you. I remember I told my secretary to email you. This time I will use the normal post as well as emailed.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

**Sulak**

May 19, 2021

Dear Sulak,

I did receive your earlier note. I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I cannot oblige your request, as I am presently incapable of thinking about some things at the moment. In the middle of April we lost our younger son, Oliver, after his long and valiant struggle with mental illness. I've attached his death notice and the order of service for his funeral. I hope you will understand.

Mr Preedee Hongsaton is editing a second volume of my essays translated into Thai that will be published by Khlet Thai with the help of Khun Pu. At the end of the author's preface I have written a paragraph that mentions you and one of the many times you have taught me something about Thailand and Thai people.

I have a hole in my heart, not only because we have lost our younger son, but also because I don't know when I will be able to travel to Thailand again, perhaps never.

Sincerely, and with  
kind regards as always,

**Craig Reynolds**



Obituaries

**OLIVER TIMOTHY REYNOLDS**  
14 June 1988 – 13 April 2021

Much loved son of Sue and Craig  
Much loved brother of Simon and Bec  
Dear friends in Canberra,  
other states, other countries  
Extended families in Queensland and America

**Generous with his affections,  
skilled athlete, kind soul**

The funeral service for Oliver will be held in the  
Chapel of the Norwood Park Crematorium,  
Sandford Street, Mitchell on Friday,  
23 April 2021, commencing at 12 noon.

No flowers by request



**WILLIAM COLE FUNERALS**  
Canberra - 6253 3655

# Thailand's Octogenarian Intellectual Rages On

Buddhist nonviolent activist Sulak Sivaraksa finds hope in student protests

Jeffrey Sng, July 12, 2021

Source: *Nikkei Asia* - <https://asia.nikkei.com/Life-Arts/Arts/Thailand-s-octogenarian-intellectual-rages-on>



Thai activist and intellectual Sulak Sivaraksa speaks at a demonstration in Bangkok in November 2020 calling on King Maha Vajiralongkorn to cede control of a royal fortune valued in the tens of billions. Although he has been charged four times under Thailand's lese majeste law, which criminalizes criticism of the monarchy, Sulak remains defiant. © AP

**B**ANGKOK -- Sulak Sivaraksa, who was born in 1932, the same year as the fall of Thailand's absolute monarchy, is Thailand's most controversial public intellectual. A household name in Thailand, he is relatively unknown in the West despite being one of the most prominent Buddhist advocates of social justice through nonviolence.

A prolific writer, he has published more than 100 books in both Thai and English. He is also viewed as the father of Thai nongovernmental organizations, and has been a mentor for many young Thai thinkers, artists and political activists.

At the ripe old age of 88, Sulak has actively thrown his support

behind the youth protest movement that started in September 2020 to challenge the military-backed government and the monarchy. He has frequently appeared at protests and has helped generate campaigns on social media to criticize Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha.

Although he has been charged four times under Thailand's infamous lese majeste law, which criminalizes criticism of the monarchy, Sulak remains defiant. Appearing at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand in June 2020, he criticized the monarchy, tapping the floor with a walking stick that once belonged to Pridi Phanomyong, co-author of the 1932 constitution that established a constitutional monarchy. "With

this stick," Sulak said, "I cannot go wrong."

The government has tried to suppress the Ratsadon (The People) movement by arresting many of its student leaders, and indicting nearly 100 people on charges of insulting the monarchy and other crimes. Political analysts think the protest movement is a spent force, but Sulak disagrees.

"I am encouraged that so many young people are becoming politically active," he says. "The previous yuppie generation was politically apathetic. Their education was very materialistically oriented. As a result, young people failed to develop a sense of idealism.

"I am happy to see that the young generation today are more idealistic and concerned about fighting for social justice. I do not think the protest movement is already a spent force. The more people the government arrests, the more people come out to join the protest."

He added that the outcome of the protests remains uncertain. "I don't think the powers that be have weathered the firestorm or groundswell of criticism. But if they are willing to listen and change the system will survive."

Sulak's public endorsement of the Ratsadon movement is the latest chapter in an eventful life. Although he attended a Roman Catholic boys' school he grew up a Buddhist. From early childhood he was tutored by his nanny to live by the Buddhist ethical code. At 12, he was ordained as a junior monk at the Wat Thong Noppakun temple.

By the time he departed





Sulak addresses a crowd of over 50,000 people at a demonstration against then-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, in Bangkok in February 2006. © Getty Images

Sulak heads to a court in Bangkok in 2017 following another run-in with the law after offending the monarchy. © Reuters

Thailand to study literature and history in the U.K. at the University of Wales, later gaining a law degree, he was already a sophisticated and discriminating Buddhist intellectual. Friends note that he “selected what he wanted from the West and rejected that which did not suit him.”

When he returned to Bangkok in 1962, Sulak's first job was at the U.S.-funded Social Science Association Press, where he helped to improve the standards of Thai textbooks. Although he found his work inspiring, it did not fully satisfy his intellectual needs. In 1963, he became the founding editor of *The Social Science Review*, widely seen as Thailand's first intellectual journal.

Modeled after *Encounter*, a literary magazine founded in 1953 in the U.K., it was funded by the U.S.-based Asia Foundation. “At first he never guessed that his six-year term as the editor would become one of the greatest achievements of his life,” noted author Matteo Pistono in his recent biography “*Roar: Sulak*

*Sivaraksa and the Path of Socially Engaged Buddhism.*”

The *Review* became the intellectual voice of the country, and was instrumental in awakening political awareness among Thai students, which eventually led to the overthrow of a military dictatorship in 1973.

“*Roar*” can be read as a stirring biography of Sulak. But its secondary theme is the rise of Engaged Buddhism, which Sulak founded as a new politico-religious movement in Thailand in the early 1970s. Pistono skillfully weaves into Sulak's life story the doctrinal issues of Buddhism, the heroes and martyrs of the Engaged Buddhism movement, its methodology and organizational forms, and the formative events and critical battles in its development and consolidation.

Sulak was an intellectual and writer before he became a social and political activist. Among his early comrades-in-arms was a brilliant student leader from Bangkok's

Chulalongkorn University named Komol Keemthong. Komol and his girlfriend were killed by communist guerillas while they were helping Thai peasants in a remote village in southern Thailand in 1971. Komol's tragic death had a profound impact on Sulak and encouraged him to become an active campaigner for social justice. The student revolution in October 1973 was a catalyst in Sulak's transformation from writer to activist.

Sulak began his Buddhist activism against the backdrop of social and political unrest in the 1970s, when Thailand was greatly affected by the Vietnam War and the fall of Indochina to communist armies. During the Cold War, U.S. and international organizations provided generous funding for academic research, charities, development projects, religious institutions and social work training. Among the funders were the U.S. government, private foundations and NGOs, and U.N.-affiliated organizations.

The U.S. government funds were largely dispensed through the U.S. Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy, whose affiliate, the Center for International Private Enterprise, provided \$6.7 million in the mid-1980s to promote the development of provincial chambers of commerce as agents of a free market and democratic political system in Thailand. Many NGOs and opposition groups in Thailand were also funded by NED and private foundations.

The availability of foreign funding enabled Sulak to launch

several foundations, charities and NGOs throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This laid the foundation for the expansion of political activism in the 21st century and created a robust and highly connected civil society establishment that has served as a countervailing power to the central government.

Sulak believed that Thailand needed heroes to inspire supporters to fight for the movement's ideals. After the murder of Komol, he helped to create a foundation to honor the late student activist as a hero of the people. He received the support of Sanya Dhammasakti, a judge and politician who was then president of the Buddhist Association of Thailand, and Puey Ungpakorn, the former governor of the Bank of Thailand, to establish the Komol Keemthong Foundation.

Building on the foundation, a decade later Sulak established the Wongsanit Ashram, set in a farming community on the outskirts of Bangkok. Organized in the spirit of a rural commune, the ashram (religious community) provided a venue for educators and social activists to conduct programs in grassroots leadership, intermediate technology construction methods, civil disobedience and the empowerment of marginalized communities. In 1986, Sulak founded the Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute in honor of Puey, who was living in exile in the U.K. after fleeing Thailand following a military coup and a massacre of students at Bangkok's Thammasat University in October 1976.

SPDI held seminars on civil rights and democracy, conducted



Sulak speaks at a rally in Bangkok in November 2020. "I am happy to see that the young generation today are more idealistic and concerned about fighting for social justice," says the veteran activist. "I do not think the protest movement is already a spent force."

training in nonviolent social action, and produced training materials in Thai, Burmese and English for programs on rural development and appropriate technology and ways to counter American-inspired consumerism.

SPDI training sessions for monks and lay activists from neighboring Myanmar took place at the Wongsanit Ashram and emphasized the techniques of civil disobedience that had been developed by two leading American proponents of nonviolent action, Gene Sharp and George Lakey. The training was reflected in the disciplined civil obedience actions in Myanmar during the country's "Saffron Revolution" protests against military rule in October 2007.

In 1989 Sulak founded the most important organization in his network, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists. INEB was to achieve the widest global reach of any of Sulak's endeavors. It embodied a transnational Buddhist movement

based on friendship among its patrons, including the Dalai Lama and the Vietnamese monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh.

INEB has served as a platform to support human rights and social justice during the Tibetan struggle for autonomous rule in China, the quest for self-determination by the Chittagong hill tribes in Bangladesh, and the Dalits' protest against caste discrimination in India. As the spiritual leader of a transnational sociopolitical Buddhist movement, Sulak had become a recognizable global figure in humanitarian causes.

At home, the Engaged Buddhists movement was influential in promoting democracy. Following a military coup by Gen. Suchinda Kraprayoon in 1992, the group joined in street protests that ended a short-lived military government. With the restoration of civilian rule, the movement resumed its social activist role, while the SPDI served as the liaison for The Assembly of the Poor, a grassroots organization in the

1990s that became a leading voice for marginalized communities.

When the Thai Rak Thai party, led by telecommunications tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, came to power in the 2001 election, Sulak initially supported the new government. But dissatisfaction with Thaksin led many Engaged Buddhists to form a united front with The People's Alliance for Democracy to oppose the government.

Under the tripartite leadership of Sondhi Limthongkul, a media mogul; Chamlong Srimuang, a former governor of Bangkok and leader of the Santi Asoke Buddhist sect; and Phipob Dongchai, a prominent leader of the Engaged Buddhist Movement, the PAD alliance was a major player in the political crisis that precipitated the 2006 military coup that toppled the Thaksin government. When Thaksin-affiliated political parties won the 2007 general elections, led by Yingluck Shinawatra, Thaksin's sister, the PAD again took to the streets.

Deploying the civil disobedience techniques that were taught at Wongsanit Ashram, the PAD joined the Yellow Shirt royalist militants to become the disciplined phalanx in clashes with the security forces and the pro-Thaksin Red Shirt supporters, culminating in the seizure of Thailand's Don Mueng and Suvarnaphumi airports in 2008. The continuing breakdown of social order during the Yingluck government precipitated another military coup in 2014, which installed Prayuth, the current prime minister.

Street protests against the army-

backed government appeared to die down under a combination of a display of military might, COVID-19 lockdown measures and the declaration of martial law. But public resistance to the government reemerged in September 2020, when protests led by university student leaders were staged. The students captured the imagination of the nation as they confronted the heavily armed security forces in what amounted to a David-and-Goliath standoff.

Asked whether he was optimistic or pessimistic about the future of Thailand, Sulak replied with typical subtlety: "I am neither optimistic nor pessimistic about the future. I am hopeful!"

He added: "In a struggle or battle one cannot be pessimistic because it will dampen morale. On the other hand false optimism is unconvincing because it is deceitful. In the midst of struggle the general must not be unduly optimistic or pessimistic. He must emanate hope."

Jeffery Sng is a Thailand-based writer and co-author of *"A History of the Thai-Chinese"* and *"The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace."*

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## Letters

Dear Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

It's a long time since I saw you last time at an international symposium held in Yokohama.

After that, I have tried in vain to make a trip to Siam due to unexpected incidents, most recently a pandemic of COVID-19. However, I know that you are in high spirits by reading your interview about a new wave of democracy movement in your county given to Japanese newspapers such as the Mainichi and the Nikkei.

You may rest assured that I am very well at this old age, writing some articles for a small non-profit independent online news site set up by Japanese citizens.

Enclosed please find my new book entitled "Toward 'Another Japan' with Asia" (アジアと共に「もうひとつの日本」へ)。

Although written in Japanese, I hope you can imagine from the title what is written. You are mentioned at p.52.

I am looking forward to seeing you before long, exchanging opinions about our common future.

Best regards,

September 28, 2021

Hiroshi Nagai

PS. Enclosed also is a copy of a book review of my book which appeared in The Tokyo Shinbun.

Save the Date!

\*New Dates !!

for the The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)  
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