

# SEEDS OF PEACE

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*Seeds of Peace*  
Celebrates 40 Years!

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INEB & SEM Join Hands in Solidarity  
with Myanmar

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Organic Asia, the School for Wellbeing  
Studies and Research, and Wongsanit  
Ashram.

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## Editorial Note

### Dear Friends of INEB,

The first issue for 2024 celebrates *Seeds of Peace's* 40 year anniversary! The term 'Seeds of Peace' was given by Thích Nhất Hạnh in the 1970s. The *Seeds of Peace* was initially published by the Buddhist Association of Thailand as a supplement to its annual Visakha Puja. Later, when the Thai Inter Religious Commission for Development was formed in 1979, it began publishing its newsletters in 1983. Currently, the *Seeds of Peace* is published by the Bangkok-based International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). Its name has been preserved over time, and as quoted in the first issue from 1985 – "*It must have peace [as] its aim and its means. And in this violent world, the more we sow the seeds of peace, the better it is to lessen suffering and to build harmony, reconciliation, and happiness.*" We celebrate that the *Seeds of Peace* has consistently honored its aim throughout the years.

From its beginning, the SOP has reached a wide readership around the world and now is available on INEB's website where all the issues can be accessed. This issue's cover image of the clasped hands is a paper mâché sculpture made of past issues into a three dimensional piece of art that symbolizes its vision over time. Please read Dexter Cohen Bohn's article titled *Sculptures of Peace* to learn more.

This issue includes several of INEB's program activities, particularly as described by our close friend

Doreen Wang in her article *How to be a Buddysattva* which is a reflection about the recent international young Bodhisattva program held in Taiwan. INEB staff and good friend Anchalee Kurutach has shared the culmination of the Network for Peace project in its partners' reflection meeting. Also, please read about the release of *The Little Buddha* a report about the research project that explored child protection across Southeast Asia which was coordinated by INEB staff member Opor Srisuwan.

Several articles may peak your interest including a look back at why Chinese arts appear on most royal temples in old Bangkok. On another note, our dear friend Jane Rasbash remembers Pracha Hutanuwatr. Jennifer Yo describes the Kumarajiva Project's progress translating essential Buddhist texts from Tibetan into Chinese during her interview in *Aspiration is King*. Other articles include the 33<sup>rd</sup> Jungto pilgrimage of 500 practitioners across India and Nepal. Please read the timely article on sustainable development by one of the original contributors to *Seeds of Peace*, Uthai Dulyakasem.

We honor the passing of several very close friends whose vision and inspiration have guided us for decades. Johan Galtung (1930-2024) from Norway contributed to peacebuilding around the world and developed significant concepts such as structural violence which deepened the understanding of hierarchy and power relations when analyzing peace processes. Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne (1931-2024) Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement founder and Buddhist leader from Sri Lanka has been the beacon for sustainable rural development since the late 1950s. His community-based grassroots model has been tested during challenging times, yet continues today. Other friends who recently passed away include Ven. Samana Bhodirak, Lama Doboom Tulku and Diasaku Ikeda.

There is much more in this issue including book reviews, letters from friends. We thank you for your ongoing support.

Lastly, we ask you to save the dates for the next international INEB conference scheduled for November 28 until December 3, 2024, in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The conference theme is Buddhist Heritage Towards Inclusive Societies.

## Japan

We call for the reversal of the policy of returning to nuclear power and the abolition of all nuclear power plants in Japan.

January 18, 2024

**Mr. Fumio Kishida,**  
**Prime Minister of Japan**

**Mr. Ken Saito, Minister of Economy,**  
**Trade and Industry**

We, the “Association of Religious Leaders for Reexamining the Nuclear Power Administration,” are a national network of religious leaders (Buddhist, Christian, Shinto, etc.) who are concerned about the government’s policies regarding nuclear power. (Formed in 1993)

We admonish the following in protest of what was revealed by the Noto Peninsula earthquake and the government’s policy of returning to nuclear power generation.

### 1. Alarm bells from the natural world should be taken seriously.

The earthquake caused the ground to rise several meters in Takaya Town, the proposed site of the Suzu nuclear power plant. If the nuclear power plant had been built, the pipes would have been damaged and the cooling system would have been lost, resulting in a nuclear disaster that could have surpassed even Fukushima. It is now clear that the nuclear power plant siting study could not have predicted such an earthquake. Experts have also pointed out the possibility of a linkage of active faults. Operating a nuclear power plant on an earthquake-prone island is the height of recklessness, and the warning bells from the natural world should be taken seriously.

### 2. Evacuation from a nuclear disaster is impossible.

The recent earthquake has revealed that evacuation plans in the event of a catastrophe are a picture-perfect plan. Roads themselves will become unusable due to cliff collapses and upheavals. In addition, if an earthquake and a nuclear accident occur simultaneously (nuclear disaster), the evacuation of people indoors (within a 5-30 km radius) will not be possible due to collapsed houses. People cannot avoid being exposed to radiation. Evacuation plans should be subject to review by the Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA), and the current system of having the top three officials (Director General, Deputy Director General, and Nuclear Regulation Technical Director) from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), which promotes nuclear power, is an abandonment of safety.

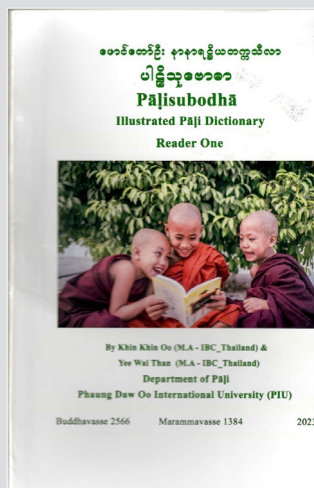
### 3. Nuclear power is a costly energy source.

The government enacted a major change in nuclear power policy the year before last and the related GX law last year, but now nuclear power plants have lost their price competitiveness. Solar and wind renewable energies are growing rapidly and are the cheapest in the world (about 8-9 yen/kWh). Conversely, nuclear power is the most expensive energy source (Dr. Kenichi Oshima calculated the nuclear power related costs for 10 years from 2011 for each electric power company based on their annual securities reports and found that the cost was about 52 yen/1kWh). ). Add to this the cost of

### Recommended Reading

*Pālisubodhā, Illustrated Pāli Dictionary – Reader One*

Authors: Khin Khin Oo and Yee Wai Than  
Publisher: Department of Pāli Phaung  
Daw Oo International University,  
Mandalay, Burma, 2023



ash disposal, and you have the cost of nuclear power generation. Yet, the government has been flamboyantly revising the Basic Act on Nuclear Energy through sheer force of numbers, adding a section on economic measures for decarbonization (i.e., support measures to be borne by the public) only for nuclear power plants, without mentioning other energy options. Most of the public is unaware of this. If

nuclear power has reached the end of its mission as an industry, it is essential to honestly communicate that fact and make a major policy shift toward its abolition. (Extending the operational period of nuclear power plants and building new plants are also out of the question.)

We demand the reversal of the current nuclear power plant policy,

which disrespects human life and economically oppresses the people.

## Interfaith Forum for the Review of National Nuclear Policy

Rev. Hiroaki Osada (Jodo Shin Otani)  
Rev. Takumi Okayama (Jodo Shin Otani)  
Rev. Shingo Naito (Lutheran Church)  
Rev. Hidehito Okochi (Jodo)

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## Sri Lanka

# Global Tamil Forum Meets President Wickremesinghe

8 December 2023

Source: *Daily Mirror* - <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Global-Tamil-Forum-meets-President-Wickremesinghe/108-272856>



The Global Tamil Forum (GTF) and prominent Buddhist monastics met President Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday and presented the Joint Himalayan Declaration, promoting a pluralistic Sri Lanka that prioritizes community well-being, learning from historical mistakes, stressing the importance of accountability measures, the President's Media Division said.

S

Colombo, Dec 8  
(*Daily Mirror*)



## Sri Lanka

# Marching Towards the Restoration of Rightful Place/Identity

By: *Ceylon Today*, Shabeer Mohamed

Pix: Kalpa Rajapaksha

22 August 2023

Source: *Daily Mirror*, Sri Lanka - <https://www.dailymirror.lk/breaking-news/Global-Tamil-Forum-meets-President-Wickremesinghe/108-272856>



The ‘Malaiyaha Ezhuchchi-Payanam’ Walk by the *Malaiyaha* Tamil community in Sri Lanka from Tailamannar to Matala to commemorate the perilous journey undertaken by their ancestors who were brought from South India by British colonists over 200 years ago came to a conclusion in Matala on Saturday, 12 August.

The last leg of the 14-day march commenced from the historic Nalanda Gedige Vihara in Matala.

At least, 3,000 people joined the march on the final day including

*Malaiyaha* community members, clergy from all religious faiths, students, civil society representatives, and well-wishers.

While the march concluded at the Sri Muthumariamman Temple in Matala, 70 persons who had walked the entire journey from Talaimannar to Matala were recognised and honoured for their effort.

Speaking to *Ceylon Today*, human rights activist and an organiser of the walk, Jeevaratnam Suresh said his community should be officially

recognised as ‘*Malaiyaha* Tamils’ instead of the commonly used term ‘Indian Tamil’s.

“For the past 200 years, our community has been the largest contributor to Sri Lanka’s foreign exchange earnings. However, our identity is yet to be officially recognised. We are not seeking sympathy; we are striving for acceptance and the acknowledgement of our rights. This march marks just the initial step. Let’s come together to address these crucial matters and find the rightful place we deserve. After two centuries, we are eagerly awaiting the resolution of these issues at the earliest,” he said.

Meanwhile, addressing the media, Wekandawala Rahula Thera emphasised the need for unity to restore the rightful pride and identity of the *Malaiyaha* Tamil community.

“As religious leaders, it is our duty to honour the dignity and identity of every citizen. We must strive to uphold the vision they rightfully deserve. Our faith teaches us to refrain from discrimination. The community in question has been seeking recognition for their identity for many years, and it’s important that they receive the respectful responses they deserve,” Thera noted.

“It is truly impactful to witness the Sri Lankan *Malaiyaha* Tamil community connecting with their heritage, thereby empowering themselves through this march. This effort has facilitated a broader societal conversation about the dignity of individuals and their rights as equal citizens of our nation.” Suchith Abeywikrama, an activist said.

“Being part of this solidarity was crucial for me, as the Sri Lanka I desire is one where fairness prevails for everyone. It’s about standing alongside others and voicing their concerns. Additionally, as a Buddhist, I firmly believe that my practice involves striving for the overall welfare of all individuals and contributing to the healing of our fractured society. I’m convinced that it’s high time we acknowledge the challenges faced by the *Malaiyaha* Tamil community and focus on the essential social, economic, and political changes required for our coexistence,” he added.

US Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Julie Chung, also conveyed her commendations for the event via her official Twitter account. She remarked, “With the completion of the 2-week walk commemorating the *Malaiyaha* Tamils’ struggle to become full and equal citizens with other communities, our thoughts are with those who marched from Talaimannar to Matale to mark the anniversary of their arrival in Sri Lanka’s hill country plantations 200 years ago”.

Representing 11 Tamil schools within the Matale district, the students of these schools coordinated a procession in Matale city, which featured various Tamil cultural activities. Furthermore, 25 students from the Kandaloya Estate in the Kagalle district, who were selected for university education, also participated in this march. Remarkably, all these students are enrolled in different universities across Sri Lanka, having received their primary education in the schools of the Yatiyanthota area.

The *Malaiyaha* Tamils encounter significant hardships stemming from their lack of land ownership. This predicament greatly complicates their ability to sustain themselves, often leading them to reside in low-income housing or on the outskirts of urban areas, where they grapple with various challenges. These difficulties extend to their children, who attend segregated, lower-tier schools, consequently hindering their access to promising career prospects and a pathway to socio-economic advancement. Regrettably, this pattern of inequitable treatment reverberates into their professional lives as well, as they confront obstacles in securing employment opportunities and face wage disparities. Moreover, their underrepresentation within the government further exacerbates the injustices they experience.

The challenges faced by this community serve as a poignant reminder of the imperative to champion equity and impartiality for all individuals. It is incumbent upon both the Sri Lankan Government and the international community to rally behind them, safeguarding the integrity of their rights. Although the recent protest marked a promising commencement, their quest for parity persists. With an enhanced network of support, they exhibit a resolute spirit, showcasing their unwavering resolve to the world.

On the final day of the march, the *Malaiyaha* Tamils, adorned in the attire of tea plantation workers, covered a distance of 26 km. This symbolic act was carried out to advocate for the fundamental livelihood rights of their

communities.

Commenting on the march, a Professor from the Department of Economics and Statistics of the University of Peradeniya Dr. Kalpa Rajapaksha said the feat was historical.

“This struggle, epitomised by the recent march, has brought to light various dimensions of the labour force within the estate sector. The participants of the march notably rejected the label ‘Estate Tamil’ and instead embraced the identity of *Malaiyaha* Tamil, signifying Tamils from the upcountry,” he said.

According to Rajapaksha, this shift holds profound significance as it involves replacing a label imposed by capitalist norms with a name that resonates with their own history and identity.

“This act holds historical importance as it signifies their refusal to adopt a name bestowed upon them by a system that historically oppressed, marginalised, and ruthlessly exploited them. This transformation holds immense meaning not only for the individuals involved but also for the broader society,” he noted.

Rajapaksha commended the dedication of those who walked the entire trek from Talaimannar to Matale.

“Certain individuals from this community, although born in the upcountry, ventured to various regions across Sri Lanka for work. However, regardless of their location, they remained subject to harsh exploitation by both the capitalist framework and the majority Sinhalese population, along with other communities. The level of commitment demonstrated by

these individuals throughout the march carries profound meaning. It underscores their resilience in the face of adversity and sheds light on the depth of their dedication to their cause,” he said.

He also recognised the communal harmony and cooperation displayed by those of other communities along the way.

“It’s heartening to note that the Sinhalese community also played a supportive role during the march, offering sustenance such as food and drinks, and displaying a remarkable

sense of hospitality. Equally noteworthy is the strategic approach of the march participants in conveying their message to others. Even in the midst of accepting food and engaging in conversations, they exhibited careful consideration and strategy to effectively communicate the essence of their cause. This collaboration between communities holds significant importance, particularly given Sri Lanka’s current socio-political context that necessitates such forms of communication and cooperation. In such circumstances, these efforts are not only valuable but

essential for fostering understanding and unity,” he said.

“Engaging in direct, face-to-face conversations with people is essential. The era of virtual communication and social media has its boundaries, particularly when it comes to driving substantial political change. To witness transformative shifts in Sri Lanka’s political landscape, prioritising human-to-human interaction, building connections, and offering political education becomes imperative,” Rajapaksha concluded.



## Do You Hear the People Sing? The Sound of the Resistance Concert

Lido Connect - Central Bangkok  
10 February 2024

The Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) organized a three hour interactive public event on February 10. The event showcased the people’s resilience who bravely continue to confront injustice and all kinds of oppression to the Myanmar coup of February 1, 2021.

Together Myanmar and Thai artists performed music, a stage play and facilitated a public dialogue in support of the revolution. One of the key messages was “Joy is an act of resistance.”

These events help express solidarity against the repressive Myanmar military government!



# Promoting A Culture of Peace and Sustainability in Myanmar

Annual Report of the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)  
January to December 2023

By **Sabrina Kathleen**



*Participants of Active Citizen Training celebrate on graduation day at the Wongsanit Ashram*

Nearly three years after the military coup, violent armed conflict in Myanmar has intensified. Estimates state that more than 1.95 million people are internally displaced within Myanmar.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Thailand hosts approximately 100,000 Myanmar refugees in the nine temporary shelters on the Thai/Myanmar border, in addition to several thousand urban refugees and asylum-seekers, and some 480,000 persons registered as stateless.

The resistance began making significant gains in October of 2023, leading to renewed hope for restoring Myanmar's civilian government. As fighting intensifies, however, the number of internally displaced persons is increasing inside Myanmar, and more refugees are fleeing across the Thai border. Myanmar citizens seeking shelter in Thailand continue to face harassment, arrest, and forcible return. Although Thailand is strategic as a host, a transit, and origin country for refugees, there are no proper mechanisms to deal with this critical issue as Thailand has not endorsed the UN convention and

protocol relating to the status of refugees. Three years after the coup, there is still a lack of vision and systematic practice to handle the ongoing Myanmar conflict and refugee crisis.

During 2023, the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) continued to respond to the crisis in Myanmar following the February 1, 2021 coup d'état. SEM is working closely with partners in Myanmar and Thailand with the immediate goal of preventing further violence, and of ultimately creating a shared culture of democracy through an inclusive, participatory, nonviolent peacebuilding approach.

Through needs assessment data from alumni networks and their respective communities, SEM identified three key areas of engagement: (1) capacity building and dialogues, (2) support for community resilience initiatives and actions, and (3) media campaigning as our key priorities. The SEM team intensified its efforts in each of these three areas in order to more deeply address the situation. Continuous reflection and updates are crucial to our work in conflict-

<sup>1</sup> <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/myanmar-situation>

sensitive areas, providing ongoing context for our needs-based approach, and allowing us to prioritize the safety needs of participants and SEM team members in Myanmar and Thailand.

Activities under each of the three priority areas are shown below. We are careful to protect the identities of persons participating in these activities when possible.

### Capacity Building and Dialogues

- ▶ Inter-and Intra-Faith Dialogues
- ▶ Dialogue Space for Sangha Working Group
- ▶ Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) workshop with Buddhist and Muslim participants
- ▶ Intra-Muslim Dialogues with men and women
- ▶ Interfaith Dialogue with Buddhists, Christians and Muslims including LGBTIQ+ activists
- ▶ Annual Sangha Dialogue for core Sangha alumni
- ▶ Active Citizen Training
- ▶ Psychosocial Support – online and in person
- ▶ Psychosocial Support for Myanmar Students at Mahidol University
- ▶ Networking and coordination with partners, networks, and service providers in Mae Sot
- ▶ South East Asia Hub Listening Dialogue
- ▶ Well-being Retreat for Local Activists in Myanmar
- ▶ Well-being workshop for Myanmar women activists
- ▶ Trauma-Informed Community Building and Effective Communication Workshop
- ▶ Well-being workshop for Myanmar migrants in Bangkok
- ▶ Resilience Amidst the Storm consisting of weekly online counseling

### Community Resilience Initiatives and Actions

Community Support for Change Agents

### Media and Campaigns for Public Awareness and Advocacy

- activities included:
- ▶ 2023 Media Fellowship
  - ▶ Myanmar Film Nights 2023
  - ▶ Awareness-Raising Activities
  - ▶ Lecture on Myanmar refugees at the Chiang Mai University Faculty of Law

- ▶ Helped organize the East-West Center's (Hawaii) 2023 Senior Journalists Seminar in Thailand
- ▶ Supported a research team from Chiang Mai University to conduct research on transnational crime along the Thai-Myanmar border and make policy recommendations.
- ▶ Organized an online discussion entitled "The 2023 Thai Election and a New Chapter for Myanmar," as follow-up to the Thai election of 21 May 2023
- ▶ World Refugee Day 2023 with an event called "In Between" that included panel discussions, performance art, a film screening, and an art exhibition. The event focused on developing policy recommendations to affect positive change in Thailand's official position and protocol towards Myanmar that would be submitted to the newly elected Thai parliament.
- ▶ 2023 ASEAN Peoples Forum – "Reclaiming Safe Space and Restoring Democracy in Southeast Asia" attended by more than 800 persons that were advocating for stronger human rights protection within the region and for restoring peace and democracy in Myanmar.
- ▶ Myanmar Human Rights Festival - dedicated to fostering understanding, dialogue, and advocacy for human rights within Myanmar and beyond
- ▶ Dawei Journey Page - culture-based information to promote understanding among Thai and Myanmar citizens

In 2024, SEM intends to increase the duration of training sessions, as well as the number of participants. This decision was based on the participants' desire for more time to learn each topic in greater depth. In turn, SEM will offer one longer, more comprehensive training to a larger number of participants rather than conduct two shorter training workshops. We believe that our consistent support for a nonviolent community-based approach will contribute to bringing about sustainable societal transformation and peace in Myanmar.

# INEB-BMF Encourages Religious Moderation and World Peace

By Editor

11/23/2023

Source: **IB Times** - <https://ibtimes.id/ineb-bmf-dorong-moderasi-beragama-dan-perdamaian-dunia/>



*Members of the International Forum on Buddhist-Muslim Relations (BMF) and INEB visit Muhammadiyah*

A total of 47 Buddhist figures from 17 countries who act as Executive and Advisory Board members of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) visited Muhammadiyah on Wednesday (22/11/23).

INEB and Muhammadiyah are 2 of the 5 core members of the Buddhist-Muslim Forum which was formed in 2013 as a strategic effort in the Asian region in particular and the world in general, to encourage inter-religious harmony and peace.

The inter-religious cooperation between these figures acknowledged that dialogue and meetings with Muhammadiyah leaders were very strategic in encouraging religious moderation and world peace.

The INEB-BMF delegation visited the

Muhammadiyah Museum at the Campus IV Complex of Ahmad Dahlan University (UAD) then continued with dialogue with elements of the Muhammadiyah Central Leadership (PP) at Madrasah Muallimin Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta.

According to the initiator and chairman of the activity committee, Yayah Khisbiyah, Secretary of the PP Muhammadiyah International Relations and Cooperation Institute (LHKI-PPM), the Muhammadiyah Museum which is designed with advanced state of the art can quickly provide an understanding of the historical background behind the development of Muhammadiyah to become one of the most prominent Islamic organization in the world today.

Meanwhile, LHKI PPM Deputy Secretary Zain Maulana stated that the visit to Madrasah Muallimin

Yogyakarta was part of the INEB-BMF delegation's efforts to get to know more closely the educational institution known as the base for Muhammadiyah cadre formation.

In Muallimin, apart from watching art performances and talking with teachers and students, LHKI PP Muhammadiyah also held a discussion session entitled "Interfaith Diapraxis: Religious Moderation for a Just and Peaceful Civilization".

Diapraxis itself is dialogue accompanied by real action, bringing together different groups to work together to find solutions to various social and humanitarian problems that affect human welfare.

This dialogue activity featured guest speakers Ambassador Yuli Mumpuni Widarso as the LHKI PP Muhammadiyah expert council, and KV Soon Vidyananda as the INEB executive committee and secretary of the Buddhist-Muslim Forum, with facilitator Yayah Khisbiyah.

Yuli said that this diapraxis was a sign that both parties had very high concern for the realization of human values and global peace.

"Inter-religious meetings need to be encouraged considering that one of our biggest challenges is how to strengthen the government's efforts to fight discrimination and religiously motivated violence," he explained.

Meanwhile, KV Soon proposed an exchange program for foreign youth to visit the Muhammadiyah Museum and live in the Muhammadiyah Islamic boarding school, to learn from Muhammadiyah's experience as a progressive Islamic movement which

has contributed a lot to the nation's progress through education and social services.

"There is a lot of cooperation that INEB has and must continue to carry out with Muhammadiyah, especially in the field of Interfaith for Ecology and Climate Network cooperation to overcome climate change and ecological damage, as well as promoting the human right to freedom of religion," said Yayah Khisbiyah.

The Director General of Buddhist Development at the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, Supriyadi supports Muslim-Buddhist cooperation efforts in maintaining unity in diversity and increasing social capital for domestic development and world peace.

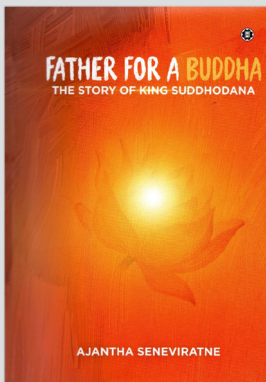
Apart from dialogue, activities at Muallimin were also enlivened with art performances by the madrasa students. The appearance of the students was part of the cultural introduction to delegates from the United States, the Netherlands, Bhutan, China, India, England, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, South Korea, Cyprus, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan and Thailand.

Executive Secretary [Moo] Somboon Chungprampree stated that he was very impressed with Muhammadiyah and was committed to increasing cooperation.

Muallimin Director Aly Aulia also added that the dialogue location at the Buya Syafii Maarif Library was Muallimin's commitment, which is one of Muhammadiyah's leading educational institutions, to produce a young generation of national cadres who have a broad insight into Indonesianism and humanity.



## Recommended Reading

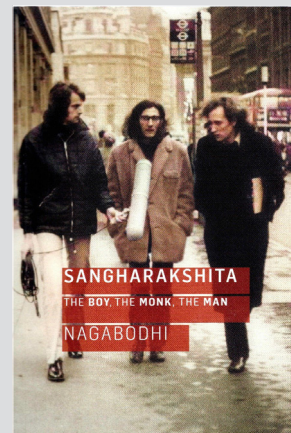


### *Father for a Buddha The Story of King Suddhodana*

Author: Ajantha Seneviratne  
Publisher: Sarasavi Publishers, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka, 2023

### *Sangharakshita The Boy, The Monk, The Man*

Author: Nagabodhi  
Publisher: Windhorse Publications, Cambridge, UK, 2023



# How to be a Buddysattva

## Lessons from the International Young Bodhisattva Program

By Doreen Wang



Is there space for the figure of the Bodhisattva to be embraced (and even spelled) in fresh and fun ways?

“Yes!” was the working hypothesis that propelled my work as a learning designer and facilitator<sup>1</sup> for our recent International Young Bodhisattva Program (YBP) in November 2023. Last year was particularly meaningful, as it was the first time we re-convened in person following a 3-year pandemic pause. This essay serves as my dispatch from the field, gathering reflections and lessons-learned from watching this program grow over the past several years.

### Background

Under the auspices of Buddhist Hongshi College, YBP has strived to organize an annual exposure program for young adults to learn about engaged Buddhism in Taiwan since 2019. I was honored to be part of the implementation team that inaugural year—the first time YBP has ever been held in East Asia and a Mahayana Buddhist context.<sup>2</sup>

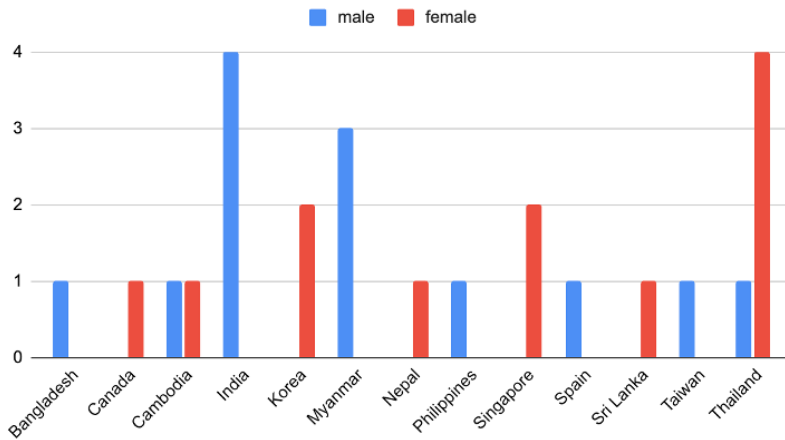
The following year was, of course, an excruciating and crucial wake-up call that plans and schedules are always a practice in impermanence. Out of the COVID era, partly as an attempt to move YBP online, new initiatives like Digital Bodhisattva emerged.

Compared to 2019’s incipient gathering in Taiwan, which had 27 participants from 10 countries, 2023’s YBP gathered 25 participants from 13 different countries.

<sup>1</sup> A facilitator who actively participates in, and is not outside of, the learning process.

<sup>2</sup> Previous iterations of YBP occurred in Thailand, Myanmar, and India since its inception in 2002.

## 2023 YBP Participants



### Lessons in Recruitment

Preparations for YBP began approximately six months in advance, including an in-person meeting between INEB's secretariat and Hongshi College over the summer. We established a recruitment process, including designing a new poster, selection criteria, and an online application form, which was then disseminated amongst the Network and other friends.

We followed by conducting short video interviews which, while time-consuming, served a three-fold purpose: a) to assess participant needs, which then fed into program design; b) to confirm understanding of program requirements; and 3) to manage expectations on what the program is and is not. This was hugely valuable, because, increasingly, I find that people no longer read—even the very application form that they fill in!

One common misconception, for example, is that YBP is a training, whereas it's more akin to a learning journey. A large portion of the program consists of site visits to big and small “b” Buddhism sites—Luminary International Buddhist Institute, Dabei Great Compassion Hospice Care, Dharma Drum Mountain, Buddha Education Foundation, and Tzu Chi Recycling Center—as well as meeting social justice activists and scholars who offered Buddhist analyses on societal suffering and technological interventions. Another is explaining that like a Bodhisattva, one does not necessarily need to be Buddhist to participate. And of course, there are always some awkward but thankfully

rare moments where we clarify basic information: “you’d be coming to Taiwan, not Thailand!”

Rigorous recruitment matters, because in co-created spaces such as YBP, every single participant—who they are and what they bring—contributes to how the program functions. And we found that these efforts paid off. Participants selected through this multi-step process arrived prepared and ready to engage with generous, open hearts.

One final takeaway is that recruitment needs to start earlier in future years, as Taiwan's special political status makes it a challenging destination to secure visas and travel permits, especially for participants from several South and Southeast Asian countries.

### Lessons in Program Design & Implementation

Considering the Mahayana context, I proposed that we explore the idea of Bodhisattva, to investigate how one of the earliest existing concepts of Engaged Buddhism could be infused with new life. In asking myself “who and what is a Bodhisattva?,” I ultimately arrived at three pillars from which to build out the curriculum.

**A Bodhisattva is a:**  
**- Friend to the world**  
**- Creative project**  
**- Bold decision for greater good**

I was inspired by Mingyur Rinpoche's conceptualization of Bodhisattva as a “friend” instead of “savior” to the world. It felt more approachable and aligned with *kalyana-mitta*, the spirit underpinning INEB's decades-long work. With my background in arts and storytelling, creativity seemed to be essential *upaya*, if we hope to have any luck in broaching the daunting task of liberating all sentient beings. Finally, I interpret the vow as a bold decision for the collective good, which can arguably be defined as “leadership” in the modern

world. Bodhisattvas, I therefore argue, are an early model of leaderful movements. There's never a possibility of too many.

Nurturing friendship and community began with Common Ground-like exercises to help us identify commonalities and also normalize disagreements with each other. Upon arriving at Hongshi College, each participant was also asked to randomly select a Secret Buddysattva, which, similar to its Secret Angel alter ego, encouraged individuals to give and receive concrete acts of care to instill a greater culture of care among the group. I witnessed serenades and love notes, as well as crafted my own message out of leaves and twigs and received a bag of strawberries.

Cultivating creativity led to vivid interactions with Hongshi bhikkhuni and volunteers. Sometimes it involved making a meal together, from sunrise shopping at the wet market to displaying deft wok skills that, to our pride, resulted in a truly edible and delicious lunch for close to 50 people! Participant small groups also sat with Hongshi bhikkhuni to hear and, later, enact Bodhisattva stories from the Mahayana tradition, much to our laughter and applause. And on the eve of a scavenger hunt inside the renowned National Palace Museum, Chao Chang Lee, a Hongshi student and oil painting master, showed us how to create and interpret Chinese landscape paintings.

One of the primary ways participants were asked to lead was through making pre-prepared presentations about their background, community, or work. This aimed to give everyone a chance to "teach" something as well as multiply the directions of learning. Participants were also asked to lead via group work. Different groups had responsibilities ranging from regularly sweeping leaves as part of daily temple upkeep (in line with the traditional Buddhist practice of 出坡) to interviewing Hongshi bhikkhunis for a storytelling project.

Throughout my time with INEB, I've come to believe that youth work is in essence, leadership development work. But leadership development cannot solely be aimed at youth. It also needs to prepare elders for impermanence, which means all of us need to practice stepping back and sharing power. To anticipate the day



we are no longer here, we need to make space now, which means offering people who have received capacity-building and training a seat to be a decision maker.

### Lessons in Being a Bodhisattva

The final ceremony culminated with lively singing, acting, and poetic interpretations on our central question, "What is a Bodhisattva?" It ended with something I never thought I'd see in this lifetime: a participant announced her reign as Miss Universe Bodhisattva and led us all in strutting the runway...down the temple's grand Buddha hall.

During our two weeks together, a participant once remarked to me that sex workers are Bodhisattvas. Another brought his guitar and wanted to start a Boy Band Bodhisattva. The monastics who joined us in vegetable-cutting, curiosity-chasing, and runway-cheering were smiley, twinkly, very human reminders that indeed, ideals can live on this Earth.

How can a big concept become fun, feasible, and fearless? Through enough space for play, care, and curiosity is what I've realized. Living in Taiwan, traditional usages of the term "Bodhisattva" once scared me. I rarely heard young people say it; and my work in social justice had warned me against "saving" anyone or becoming a self-sacrificing martyr. But YBP has given me the opportunity to re-imagine. I find that I am less afraid to reach for the impossible, because in all corners of the world, I have friends for the journey.<sup>3</sup>

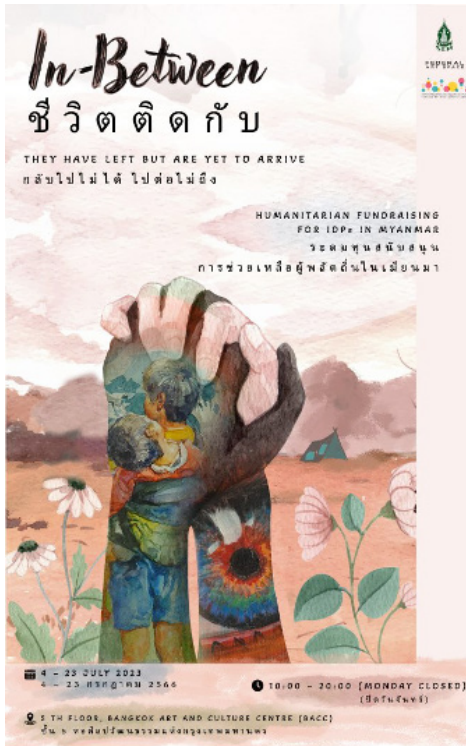
<sup>3</sup> James Norbury wrote: "'Which is more important,' asked Big Panda, 'the journey or the destination?' 'The company,' said Tiny Dragon."

# Sculptures of Peace:

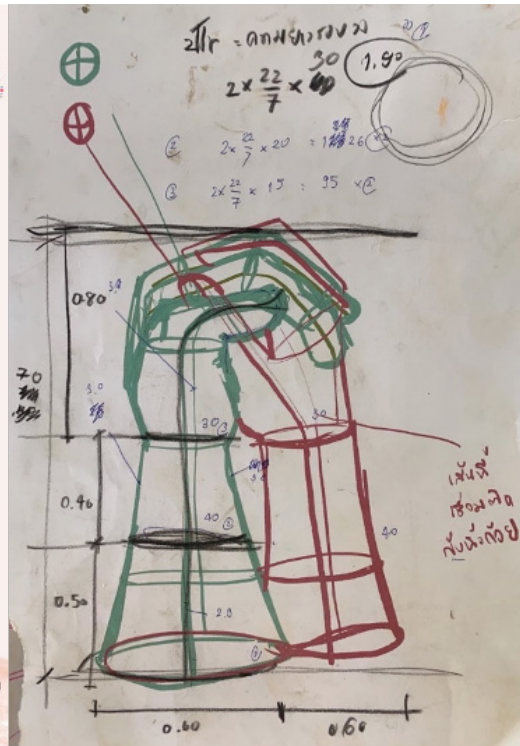
## INEB Joins Hands with SEM

### in Solidarity with Myanmar

By Dexter Cohen Bohn



Original SEM poster.



Sculpture design schematic drawn by Pim.

To mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of INEB's *Seeds of Peace* journal and third-year remembrance of the Myanmar coup d'état in February 2021, INEB and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) collaborated in bringing to life an innovative sculptural art project expressing solidarity between the Thai-Myanmar people's movements for justice and peace.

Inspired by an image created by the SEM team to promote their 2023 events on issues facing Myanmar migrant workers, INEB staff Dexter Cohen Bohn and a skilled team of art students from Rajamangala University

of Technology Lanna in Chiang Mai designed and fabricated a two-meter-tall sculptural reproduction.

For ten days at Tao Luang Pottery Studio in San Kamphaeng, Nuttanan (Pim) Bundit, Teerut (Tee) Suppaso and Saranya (Fern) Namsung developed the project from a sketch and clay model into sturdy tact-welded frame and papier mâché shell made with 200 recycled *Seeds of Peace* journal issues.

Thanks to the support of many helping hands, including master potters, kiln technicians and even Dexter's visiting parents – the final product was shipped to Bangkok for the project's second phase.

On January 29, 2024, members of the migrant

From left to right Pim, Fern, Tee, and Dexter.



Completed papier mache shell drying at Tao Luang Studio, Chiang Mai



A workshop participant illustrates the Myanmar border on a *Seeds of Peace* article



Workshop participants at the Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation



Completed sculpture on display at SEM's 'Do You Hear the People Sing' benefit concert, 10 Feb. 2024.



Detailed image from the sculpture.

workers' community living in Bangkok from Myanmar's southern Dawei region were invited by SEM to participate in a contemplative art workshop hosted at the Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation. Together with the artists from Chiang Mai, INEB and SEM staff joined these Dawei participants in reflective exploration of an assorted thirty-three past *Seeds of Peace* issues from 1999-2023.

Adding illustrations in pastel and paint around particularly evocative content, the participants engaged with the *Seeds of Peace* as a mirror and canvas for the expression of their feelings. A wide assortment of

thought-provoking imagery took shape during the workshop which participants then began to pasting onto the full size sculpture.

As a collage of language, symbol and color formed over the papier mâché shell, it was evident that the sculpture had truly come alive thanks to the heartfelt creativity these participants were able to share. The finished sculpture was displayed at SEM's February 10<sup>th</sup> 'Do You Hear the People Sing?' benefit music concert before going on permanent exhibition at the HOPE Space gallery in Bangkok.

# Network for Peace All-Partner Reflection Meeting

March 2024

By Anchalee Kurutach



*All-Partners attending the Networks for Peace Reflection Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand.*

From March 11th to 15th, 2024, INEB Network for Peace Program Managers Opor Srisuwan and Anchalee Kurutach took part in the *Networks for Peace All-Partner Reflection Meeting* hosted by FHI360 in Bangkok. The event brought together approximately 45 representatives from 16 partner organizations, project alumni, a broader network of peacebuilders, as well as the FHI360 team and USAID representatives. This significant gathering celebrated successes and reflected on innovations and lessons in peacebuilding to promote inclusive peace and social cohesion in South and Southeast Asia.

The conference focused on various themes including networking for peace, innovations in digital peacebuilding, effective communications, inclusive practices in intra- and interfaith peacebuilding, developing positive narratives, and organizational strengthening. It also provided a safe space for partners to deepen and expand networking, and identify avenues for continued collaboration on peacebuilding at national

and regional levels.

INEB had several opportunities to showcase the work done through our Sangha for Peace and Women Peacebuilders projects. On Day 3, Anchalee Kurutach moderated a panel discussion on “Inclusive Peace: Working with Faith Leaders, Women, LGBTIQN+ and People with Disabilities.” Three panelists, members of INEB’s Sangha for Peace and Women Peacebuilders networks, shared their perspectives and practices of inclusive peace within their communities. Subsequently, small discussion groups were set up for deeper exploration of tangible actions. Participants were inspired by these peace champions’ extraordinary resilience, wisdom and compassion.

Another significant event was on Day 4, where Opor Srisuwan screened the *She Inspires* documentary on women peacebuilders to the audience. The audience was visibly moved after watching the documentary that depicted the lives of women working for peace in Burma, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Watch the INEB website for news of when the film will be launched.



*Opor and Anchalee with the Networks for Peace poster*

Following the documentary, Anchalee Kurutach conducted a “Human Library” activity on behalf of Network for Peace GESI Specialist. This unique social learning platform first began in Denmark in the year 2000 and has now spread to more than 80 countries. For our Network for Peace Human Library, eight individuals each shared chapters of their lives as “human books” with a small group of four to five people. The session captivated the audience, becoming one of the most favored activities at the gathering.

On the final day, a “gallery walk” allowed partner organizations to present their work on posters, fostering dialogue and engagement. During this walk, USAID representatives expressed appreciation for INEB’s contributions under the Network for Peace project. The key accomplishments highlighted on INEB’s poster are genuine and impactful transformations that are evident through the participants’ individual and collective actions to build bridges across faiths, gender identities, and spiritual practices. Sangha for Peace’s learning missions successfully served to broaden participants’ perspectives and deepen understanding on issues of marginalization and oppression.

Activities such as Christmas at a (Buddhist) Temple, Interfaith meals, Rainbow Sangha, monks collecting garbage, Power Sharing Culture among Bhikkhunis, and Interfaith Female Leadership are among the examples of success stories by the Sangha for Peace. The video documentary featuring women peacebuilders serves as a source of inspiration and an empowerment tool



*During the Networks for Peace All-Partner Workshop, a panel reflected on the inclusive practices in intra- and interfaith peacebuilding. The panel brought together the members of the INEB-facilitated Sangha for Peace and Women for Peace networks. They represent the LGBTQ+, women peacebuilders with disabilities, and religious communities. The panelists shared about the disability culture, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the religious engagement in peacebuilding work. Ven. Ittiyawatt introduced the Buddhist principle of the five precepts and how it can be integrated into peacebuilding work.*

that recognizes the significant contribution of women peacebuilders everywhere.

A USAID social media post commemorated the event, acknowledging the milestone achieved and the collective commitment to peacebuilding despite challenges. It emphasized the journey of resilience, collaboration, and dedication to building a brighter, peaceful future for all.

### From USAID Asia Facebook Post:

*“[The meeting] marked a truly special milestone, as we gathered with all the partner organizations in the Networks for Peace community and celebrated nearly five years of the project. From conception to implementation, it’s been an incredible journey of resilience, collaboration, and unwavering dedication to building a brighter, peaceful future for all. Despite the many unprecedented challenges faced, our collective commitment to peacebuilding never wavered. Together, we have transcended borders, embraced diversity, and championed inclusivity every step of the way.”*



# *The Little Buddha*

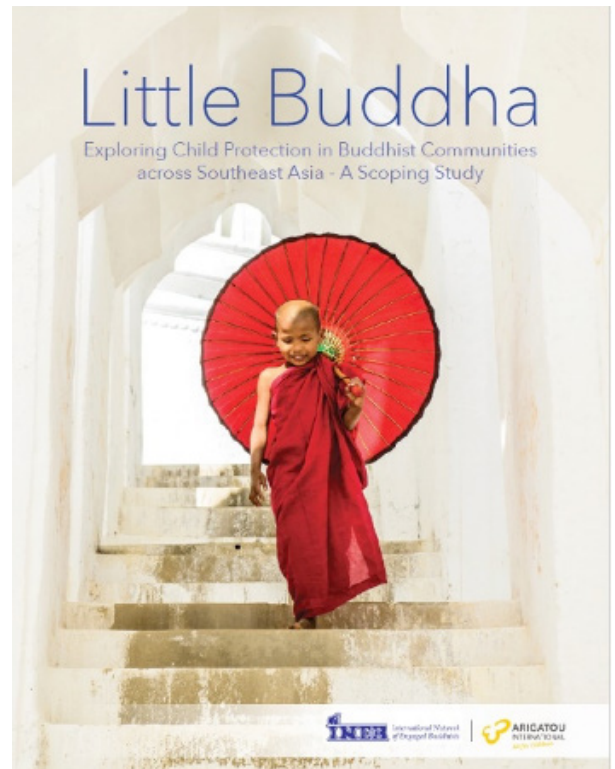
## *Exploring Child Protection in Buddhist Communities Across Southeast Asia - A Scoping Study*

By INEB Staff

Buddhist educational institutions hold a significant role in shaping the lives and minds of young individuals, and it is crucial that these institutions become safe sanctuaries where children can learn and grow in an environment free from all forms of violence. The scoping study is a collaboration between the International Network of Engage Buddhists (INEB) and Arigatou International. It is the first of its kind to delve into this critical and sensitive topic in a Buddhist context where the research was conducted by local partners in Buddhist educational institutions across five Southeast Asian countries - Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. In this context, the study examined:

- The current status of violence against children and child protection in these five countries.
- Effective practices and mechanisms employed by Buddhist organizations to prevent and respond to violence against children.
- Recommendations for religious leaders to prevent and address all forms of violence against children in their communities.

By understanding the current situation, we can better comprehend the challenges that exist and identify opportunities for improvement. Moreover, this study explores effective practices and mechanisms that have already been implemented in various contexts. By examining these successful approaches, we can learn from one another and replicate these strategies in different settings, thereby bolstering our collective



efforts to protect vulnerable children everywhere. We acknowledge that this is only the beginning because there is much more in-depth research that needs to be undertaken to complete the full picture.

Monks and nuns, as influential community figures, can contribute to child protection efforts. Proactive support from Buddhist institutions, educating parents and caregivers, is crucial in breaking these norms and fostering a protective environment. Findings suggest that Buddhist Educational Institutions actively incorporate Buddhist principles aligning with child protection and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These principles emphasize compassion, non-violence, and community spirit, providing a strong

foundation for child protection initiatives. However, more extensive training and awareness programs are needed to ensure that these principles are applied consistently across diverse contexts. Both Cambodia and Vietnam, among the countries in this study, have shown strong commitment to child protection and tackling violence against children, particularly in their post-war contexts. These countries have implemented specific child protection strategies, legal frameworks, and monitoring systems that are presented as good practices in the region.

The data collection indicates that children's participation is acknowledged, but efforts are needed to strengthen its scope, quality, and outcomes. While democratic processes exist, cultural dynamics influence participation levels which calls attention to the importance of nurturing environments that foster collective decision-making, critical thinking, and individual expression. Efforts to include children with disabilities are ongoing. Nonetheless, some Monastic schools struggle with capacity and infrastructure to host children with special needs, indicating a need for increased support and inclusivity.

The scoping study recommends a multifaceted approach to enhance child protection within Buddhist educational institutions. Legal reforms, including eliminating corporal punishment for children under 18, are crucial. Collaborative policies involving public-private partnerships, monitoring mechanisms with gender and social inclusion indicators, and addressing existing gaps in child protection are essential steps to be taken.

The insights and recommendations provided in this study are intended as a reference for religious leaders and educators in Buddhist educational institutions with the goal to provide the knowledge and tools needed to strengthen child protection. In summary, the study advocates for legal reforms, active involvement of Buddhist leaders, educational initiatives, and empowered institutions, all fostering a safe environment for children within Buddhist educational settings.

Preventing violence against children requires a collaborative approach that involves a wide range of

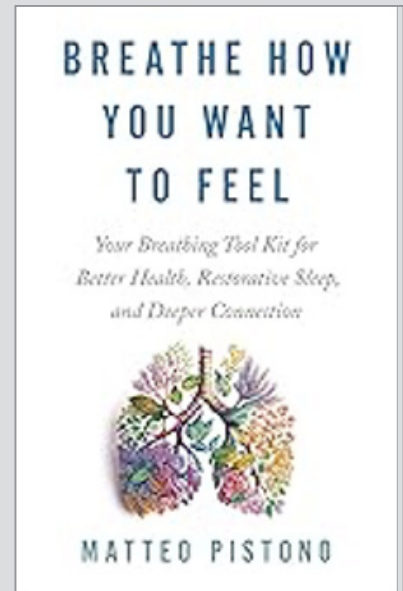
stakeholders across sectors. They include not only religious leaders and educators but also families, communities, governments, and civil society organizations. The recommendations put forth in this study, when implemented collectively, have the potential to create lasting change, safeguarding the rights and well-being of children.

It is our hope that the study will serve as a vital resource for all stakeholders working towards a violence-free world for children. Ultimately, the overarching goal is to foster cultural transformations in an environment where everyone can coexist harmoniously while upholding the rights of each and every child.

Opor Srisuwan is INEB's project coordinator. Follow the INEB website for when the full report is released later in 2024.



#### Recommended Reading



*Breathe How You Want to Feel: Your Breathing Tool Kit for Better Health, Restorative Sleep, and Deeper Connection*

Author: Matteo Pistono

Publisher: Hay House LLCC, Carlsbad, California, May 2024

# Observations on the Achievements of the Sombath Somphone Memorial Fund

By **Ng Shui Meng**

20 April 2024



2023 saw the launching of the Sombath Somphone Memorial Fund which elicited 61 applications from countries in the Greater Mekong Region. After careful screening, 11 applicants successfully received grants to implement projects that closely aligned with the ideals and principles of the Fund, that is to give opportunities to marginalized children and young people through education and social support to improve their well-being in a sustainable and wholistic manner.

I am happy to report that the 11 successful applicants coming from Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos completed their projects in a timely manner. What's most heartening from my perspective is that many of these projects used very creative and innovative

ways to address the different challenges they sought to address, be these about improving learning needs of disadvantaged children, addressing communities' agriculture needs, overcoming environmental degradation, and others. Most of the projects were also implemented in a very participatory manner with full engagement of the community, schools, teachers, and young people.

I am sure that Sombath is proud of what these projects have achieved. Sombath always believed that making real progress in development of any society or community does not need large sums of money. What is most needed is people's own desire and belief in taking charge and making changes to improve the lives of their children, their families, and their communities. Providing small start-up funds is just one way to plant the "seeds of change". These seeds must now continue to be nurtured to grow within each family and community.

In 2024, the Sombath Somphone Memorial Fund Committee has already received more than 100 applications and it is now in the process of selecting the next batch of awardees. I hope that the Sombath Somphone Memorial Fund will continue to sow "seeds of change" within the region's families and communities.

Lastly, I would like to thank family members, friends, and other supporters who made contributions to the Sombath Somphone Memorial Fund. With your kind support, I am confident that the Fund will be able to continue for many years into the future.



# Why Do Chinese Arts Appear at Most Royal Temples in the Old Town of Bangkok?

By Chayanin Pravichpibul

In this article, the Old Town district of Bangkok refers to the area inside Rattanakosin Island, which is the location of the Grand Palace, where King Rama I, King Rama II, King Rama III, and King Rama IV resided, and the area near the Chaopraya River on the Thonburi side of Bangkok (the west side of the Chaopraya River) covering the area between the Pinklao Bridge and the Memorial Bridge, which was the capital of Siam during the Thonburi period. Thon Buri Palace, where King Taksin the Great resided, is located within the area which was the capital of Siam during the Thonburi period.

In the Old Town district of Bangkok, there are numerous royal temples which were either constructed by the kings or royalties during the Thonburi Period and the Early Rattanakosin Period or constructed by non-royalties and dedicated to the kings as royal temples. Examples of the royal temples within the area inside Rattanakosin Island are the Temple of the Emerald Buddha inside the Grand Palace (Wat Phra Kaew), the Temple of the Reclining Buddha (Wat Pho), Wat Ratchanatdaram, Wat Thep Thida Ram, Wat Bowonniwet Vihara, Wat Suthat Thepwararam, Wat Mahathat Yuwaratransarit, Wat Saket (the Golden Mount Temple), Wat Mahannapharam, Wat Chana Songkram etc. Examples of the royal temples within the area near the Chaopraya River on the Thonburi side are Wat Arun Ratchawararam (Wat Chaeng or the Temple of Dawn), Wat Rakhangkositaram, Wat Prayurawongsawat, Wat Hong Rattanaram, Wat Kalayanamit, Wat Molee Lokayaram etc.



Figure 1 the Old Town district of Bangkok

In addition to the aforementioned royal temples in the Old Town district of Bangkok, Wat Ratchaorasaram and Wat Nangnong in Chom Thong District and Wat Yannawa in Yannawa District will also be mentioned in this article since Chinese arts are outstanding at these three temples. Moreover, Nukit Ratchaborihan Chinese Shrine inside the Bangkok National Museum area will be mentioned although it is not a Buddhist temple and was not constructed during the Early Rattanakosin Period as Chinese mural paintings depicting a Chinese mythology novel can be found here.

Nevertheless, what surprises the visitors at most royal temples in the Old Town district is the fact that

*Figure 2 Wat Phra Kaew or the Temple of the Emerald Buddha*



*Figure 3 Wat Pho*



*Figure 4 Wat Ratchanatdaram*



*Figure 5 Wat Thep Thida Ram*

*Figure 6 Wat Bowonniwet Vihara*



*Figure 7 Wat Suthat Thepwararam*



*Figure 8 Wat Chaeng or the Temple of Dawn*



*Figure 9 Wat Kalayanamit*

Figure 10 Wat Ratchaorasaram



Figure 11 Wat Nangnong



Figure 12 Wat Yannawa



Figure 13 Nukit Ratchaborihan Chinese Shrine

Chinese arts can be seen at almost all the royal temples in the Old Town district. There is a Chinese pavilion assembly hall (Phra Viharn Geng) at Wat Bowonniwet Vihara. There are numerous Chinese stone statues<sup>1</sup> at the Temple of Dawn, Wat Pho, Wat Suthat and all the temples constructed and restored by King Rama III. There is a Chinese pagoda called Tha (塔) at Wat Kalayanamit. Wat Ratchaorasaram, which is the temple of King Rama III, has the most beautiful full-scale Chinese arts. There are Chinese mural paintings depicting stories from the Three Kingdoms literature in the ordination hall (Phra Ubosot) of Wat Nangnong. For Wat Ratchanatdaram, despite traditional Thai architectural style, the gable end of the ordination hall features the leafy patterns which are Chinese patterns.

<sup>1</sup> Chinese stone statues are carved stone statues that served as ballast for junk ships.

As a matter of fact, Chinese arts have existed in the region equivalent to present-day Thailand since the Sukhothai Period. Sangkhalok ceramics, which were essential goods during the Sukhothai Period, were produced by Chinese potters who had fled the Mongol rule in China during the Yuan Dynasty to Siam and had installed pottery kilns in Sukhothai. Throughout the Ayutthaya Period, Siam and China traded with each other. During the Thonburi Period, King Taksin the Great was a descendant of a Chinese man with the surname Zheng (鄭). His father was a Teochew man who migrated to Siam from China. However, only the royal temples during the Early Rattanakosin Period will be discussed in details in this article.

As the Early Rattanakosin Period of Siam was during the period between the years 1782, the year in which King Rama I ascended to the throne and established Bangkok, and 1851, the year in which King Rama III

Figure 14 Chinese Pavillion Assembly Hall  
Wat Bowonniwet Vihara



Figure 15 Chinese Stone Statues



Figure 16 Chinese pagoda "Tha", Wat Kalayanamit



Figure 17 Chinese Arts, Wat Ratchaorasaram



Figure 19 Leafy Patterns on the Gable End of the  
Ordination Hall, Wat Ratchanatdaram

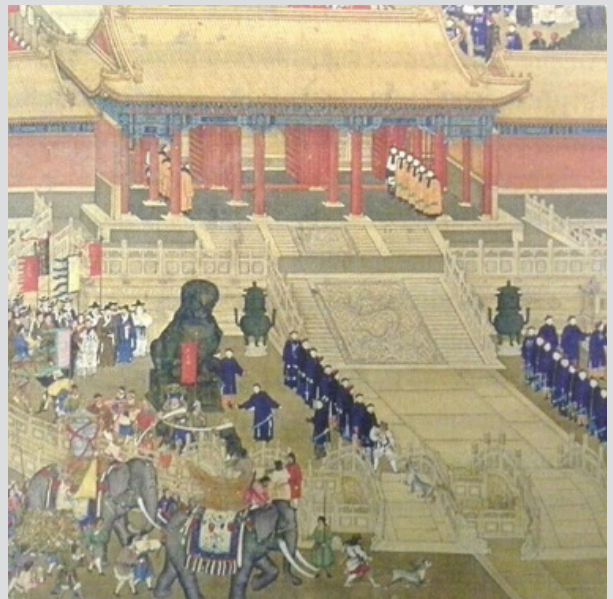
Figure 18 Chinese Mural Paintings Depicting Stories  
from the Three Kingdoms Literature, Wat Nangnong

deceased, was equivalent to the period during the Qing Dynasty of China, which was the last dynasty of China before the imperial system in China was abolished. Hence, we must roughly understand the imperial system during the Qing Dynasty in China. How did the Chinese imperial court inspire the Siamese kings during the Early Rattanakosin Period, especially King Rama III, to be fond of Chinese arts?

In the perspectives of the Chinese emperors since the ancient times, China was the center of the world. When literally translated, the world “Zhong Guo” (中國), which refers to China, means “the country in the center.” Chinese emperors considered China a state located in the center of the world with more advanced civilization than those of other states; therefore, China had to spread the Chinese civilization and supported and protected other states. Any state that sent tributes to China was considered accepting China’s superior power, and in return the Chinese emperors would grant them with valuable gifts and special rights. Similarly, during the Qing Dynasty the emperors granted any state that sent tributes to them with valuable gifts and special rights.

“The tributary system was an essential diplomatic method of strengthening the relationships between China and other states. China considered herself the state that was located in the center of the world, had supreme power and more advanced civilization than any other state; thus, China had to expand her charisma and merits to other states. The outstanding feature of the tributary relations is that any state presenting tributes to China was considered a state accepting China’s power. If that tributary state follows the rules and regulations set by China, the Chinese emperor will repay that state with valuable gifts and special rights. Since different states adopted different ranges of the Chinese civilization and had different levels of close ties with China, China categorized her tributary states into different levels with different regulations.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ZHOUBI FENG, Sarasawadee Oongsakul, “The Tributary Relations Between China and Lan Na in the Late 13 th - 16 th Centuries”, Chinese Studies Journal Kasetsart University., Vol 13 No.2 (2020): 232-250.



*Figure 20 This Painting Depicts the Welcoming Reception of the Group of the Royal Envoys sent by King Taksin the Great to Present Tributes to the Chinese Emperor.*

As Imperial China categorized her tributary states into different levels, the regulations and special rights for each tributary state are different, depending on how much each tributary state adopted the Chinese civilization and how close to China it was. Thus, the Siamese kings during the Early Rattanakosin Period had international policies which placed importance on close ties with China. During the period of Qian Long Emperor of China (reigning between 1735 and 1796), King Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty immediately sent envoys to the Chinese imperial court in Peking to present tributes to Qian Long Emperor after King Rama I had ascended to the throne and established Bangkok. King Rama I desired that Qian Long Emperor accept King Rama I as the King of Siam. As Qian Long Emperor did not mind who would become the King of Siam as long as tributes were sent to the emperor to pledge allegiance to China, he simply accepted King Rama I as the King of Siam. The Chinese imperial court granted King Rama I the Chinese name Zheng Hua (鄭華). Later, King Rama II and King Rama III also sent tributes to the imperial court of the Qing Dynasty, and were granted the Chinese names Zheng Fo (鄭佛) and Zheng Fu (鄭福) respectively.

*Figure 21 Qian Long Emperor of the Qing Dynasty*



*Figure 22 King Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty*



*Figure 23 King Rama III of the Chakri Dynasty*



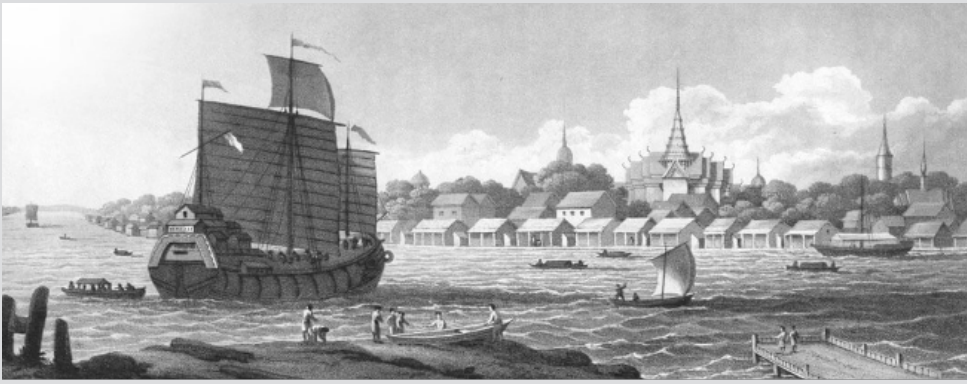
The diplomatic relationship between the Siamese royal court and the Chinese imperial court was of utmost importance during the Early Rattanakosin Period, especially during the period of King Rama III, since China was the trading partner which generated the largest amount of revenue for the Siamese Royal Treasury. There is a Chinese pavilion with mural paintings depicting junk trades between China and Siam at Wat Pho. The junk trades with China during the period of King Rama III brought unprecedentedly astronomical revenues to the Siamese Royal Treasury. King Rama III called these revenues “red purse money” since they were stored in red purses. Then during the period of King Rama V, he paid a part of this red purse money to France in order to redeem Siam from being colonized.

Applying Chinese arts to royal temples was one way to show that Siam accepted the Chinese civilization so highly that the Siamese kings who were staunch devotees of Buddhism commissioned the Chinese arts in the royal temples. Absolutely, the Chinese imperial court was so impressed that the Siamese kings were granted various special rights from China, especially commercial special rights. King Rama III had been fond of Chinese arts since he held the title “Krommameun Jessadabadin” and directed Krom Tha (the department of foreign trade). He



*Figure 24 Red Purse Money*

launched fleets of junk ships loaded with goods to trade with China and various nations. Krommameun Jessadabadin’s fondness for Chinese arts partly enabled him to trade with China conveniently and bring considerable revenues to the Royal Treasury. His abilities in trading with China made King Rama II, his father, call him “Chao Sua”, meaning a Chinese rich person. In 1824, the year in which Krommameun Jessadabadin succeeded the throne and became King Rama III, the trade volume between Siam and China exceeded those between and all



*Figure 25 A Junk Ship during the Period of King Rama III*

other nations combined. As a matter of fact, the trade volume between Siam and China had already exceeded those between Siam and all other nations combined since King Rama III held the title “Krommameun Jessadabadin.”

After Krommameun Jessadabadin had ascended to the throne and become King Rama III, the trade volume between Siam and China became greater than it had previously been; thus, the national revenue greatly soared. By the time King Rama III deceased, the money in the Royal Treasury, including the money earned from junk trades minus the national expenses, were worth as high as 40,000 Changs (an ancient Siamese monetary unit). One reason the trade volume between Siam and China increased after King Rama III had ascended to the throne in 1824 is that the Chinese imperial court had been impressed by his fondness for Chinese arts since he held the title “Krommameun Jessadabadin.”

King Rama III was a staunch devotee of Buddhism. Therefore, he ordered the constructions and restorations of over 70 Buddhist temples in the Old Town district of Bangkok and regional provinces. The Buddhist temples ordered to be constructed are Wat Ratchanatdaram and Wat Thep Thida Ram. There are 35 Buddhist temples ordered to be restored such as Wat Phra Kaew, Wat Ratchaorasaram, Wat Chaeng, Wat Pho, Wat Suthat Thepwararam, Wat Yannawa, Wat Nangnong etc. There was a saying that says “If you want to be favored by King Rama III, then build a Buddhist temple.” Wat Kalayanamit is an example of a Buddhist temple ordered to be constructed and dedicated to King Rama III by a superrich Chao Sua.

As King Rama III had been fond of Chinese arts since he held the title “Krommameun Jessadabadin,” he employed the Chinese construction techniques which were faster than the previous techniques commonly used and mixed these Chinese construction techniques with traditional Thai architecture. This new kind of architecture is called “the royal preference arts.” During the period of King Rama III, most the temples ordered to be constructed and restored contain the royal preference arts. The temples with outstanding royal preference arts are Wat Thep Thida Ram, Wat Ratchaorasaram, Wat Nangnong, Wat Yannawa, Wat Ratchanatdaram etc. Wat Kalayanamit, ordered to be constructed by a superrich Chao Sua, also contains the royal preference arts. That King Rama III ordered temples to be constructed with Chinese arts shows that he accepted the Chinese civilization so highly that he, a staunch devotee of Buddhism, applied Chinese arts to even important Buddhist places for worship like Buddhist temples. Absolutely, the Chinese emperor felt even more impressed. Thus, the Chinese emperor granted King Rama III with greater commercial benefits, and the trade volume between Siam and China became greater than it had previously been. As Chinese stone statues were needed as ballast when junk ships were sailed, numerous Chinese stone statues were used to decorate the temples ordered to be constructed and restored by King Rama III. The temple with the largest number of Chinese stone statues is Wat Pho.

“After the Bangkok period had begun, junk trades highly flourished and brought considerable amounts of revenue when compared to other sources of revenue



Figure 21 Qian Long Emperor of the Qing Dynasty

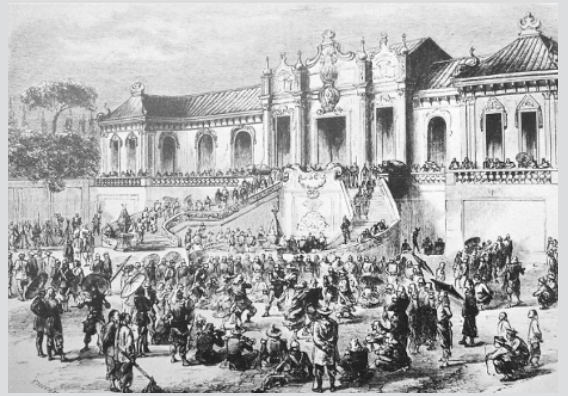


Figure 22 King Rama I of the Chakri Dynasty

(Waraporn Tinanon, 1984 : 137-138). In the 1820s, the Sino-Siamese trade volume exceeded those between Siam and all other nations combined (Ammar Siamwalla, 1984 : 145).<sup>3</sup>

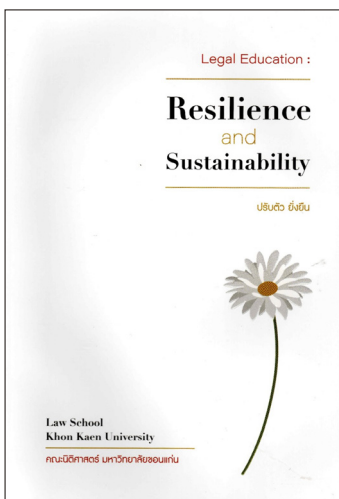
However, during the period of King Mongkut, who was King Rama IV of the Chakri Dynasty, China was defeated in the Second Opium War in 1860; hence, China's power drastically waned in the world.

<sup>3</sup> Santi Leksukhum, Thai mural paintings during the period of King Rama III : Ideas Changed, Expressions Also Changed, 1, (Darnsutha Press Co.,Ltd. : Ancient City Press, 2005), p.13

Colonialism by European superpowers such as Britain and France dominated the world, and China was no longer the state nation that brought the greatest amount of revenue to the Siamese royal court. King Rama V employed European architecture instead of Chinese architecture. Nevertheless, King Pinklao, who was the second King Rama IV, still remained fond of Chinese arts. He ordered the construction of Nukit Ratchaborihan Chinese shrine, which is located inside the Bangkok National Museum today. Inside this Chinese shrine are Chinese mural paintings depicting a Chinese historical novel.



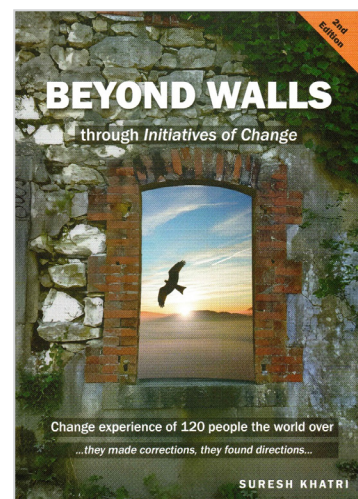
## Recommended Reading



*Beyond Walls  
through Initiatives of Change,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*  
Editor: Suresh Khatri  
Publisher: Rich Prints, Pune, India, 2023

*Legal Education:  
Resilience and Sustainability*

Editor: Kittibodee Yaipool  
Publisher: Law School, Khon Kaen University,  
Khon Kaen, Thailand, 2023



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## Remembering Pracha Hutanuwatr

### Decision-making is Education, Relationship is Education, Self Cultivation is Education

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By **Jane Rasbash**

25 January 2024

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*Pracha Hutanuwatr at home, January 2023*

As I write this on a chilly winter day in Scotland I remember a year ago being with Pracha in Thailand. He was very unwell yet determined to be present for the opening weeks of the 3 month Training for Community Facilitators (TCF) for Myanmar participants.

Pracha's vision and determination established the Grassroots Leadership Training (GLT) programme from the 1990's onwards with a mission to empower and skill up leaders and in the longer term build up inter-religious, inter-ethnic solidarity in Myanmar and beyond. The Training for Community Facilitators was a contemporary version in response to the needs of community leaders in the current volatile situation in Myanmar.

Sadly, Pracha only managed to be with the group at Wongsanit Ashram for a couple of days as his health was deteriorating. He did join the opening ceremony in January 2023, and managed to hold one scintillating Q&A after dinner where he delved into all manner of topics relating to his activist past and the political situation in the region.

In March 2023, during the last weeks of the training Pracha and I were scheduled to co-facilitate a Training of Trainers for the group. Pracha established the Training of Trainers, an intensive training that allowed participants to become adept in participatory facilitation skills so alumni can work in their local communities appropriately listening to and drawing from local people. This training was built on Pracha's long relationship with the Quakers at Training for Change in Philadelphia, and also inspired



*Pracha at  
Wongsanit Ashram,  
January 2023*

*Pracha, Ajarn Sulak and Lahpai Seng Raw  
SNF training room, Bangkok, 10 April 2023*

by Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and Buddhist wisdom and contemplation practices. In the 1990's George and Lillian Willoughby and George Lakey came regularly to Wongsanit Ashram to lead ToT style courses. Since then I worked with Pracha on many International Training of Trainers at Bornok, Thailand, and at Findhorn, Scotland, in partnership with Gaia Education. Pracha also built up teams of facilitators to take this work forward in Myanmar, China and Thailand. The name Training of Trainers became synonymous with Pracha's style of facilitation training in Asia, however it was a bit confusing when we branched out internationally and we renamed the course 'Mindful Participatory Facilitation Skills for Empowerment.' I believe these courses were one of Pracha's passion projects.

Sadly, Pracha was not well enough to join us for the ToT in March 2023. I did consult with him by phone most days of the 3-week training and his wise counsel supported me to do the best with the skilful team who stepped in.

In honour of Pracha's legacy I would like to share three components that were close to Pracha's heart in these courses.

**Decision making is education:** In GLT and ToT there is space for participants to join in decision-making as much as possible, including shaping the contents of the learning sharing expectations, co-designing/adapting

schedules and co-creation of the knowledge. The gist of this is community workers / facilitators share their power/authority with the communities as much as possible. This is based on the premise that local community members know their communities much more than outside community workers. Engaging locals meaningfully in community development creates conditions for empowerment and ownership of ongoing initiatives. GLT alumni worked with their communities, networked with each other and shared learning experiences. Then they were invited back for further reflection and exposure study. This model of action – reflection is the best learning approach that highlights the principles of making decisions is education. When you take action in your work you make decisions in the most authentic way.

**Relationship is Education:** This creates an atmosphere conducive to serious discussion and open to sharing of opinion and facts. To achieve a deep level of sharing a process to create a safe container or a community of learning is vital. This is why in GLT's and ToTs we devote the first part of the training to community building often with group challenges to gel the group. We believe that participants learn from relationship energy between the facilitators and participants as well as among participants themselves. This learning is non-verbal. Participants learn to share power once power is shared with them.

Self-Cultivation is Education: Pracha deeply believed that we make decisions and take action with responsibility and reflect upon it with the support of a community of good friends we learn about our strengths and weaknesses. We discover what we are good at and what we are not good at both in terms of our ability to do things and our basic character. His view was that this self-knowledge according to perennial wisdom, is the key to life, with this most important knowledge we learn to discipline and cultivate ourselves. This facilitates personal growth and maturity. This is another core aspect of empowerment. The path of enlightenment and social activism can be one once we are able to work to transform internal and external structural violence at the same time. An example of external structural violence is economic exploitation, authoritarian rule or overconsumption that devastates the natural environment. Internal structural violence includes excessive greed, self-centeredness, anger, jealousy and aggression that are natural traits that need to be tamed, reduced and eradicated. Without the power to concentrate one cannot do this internal – external reflection thoroughly. Without proper meditation self-reflection is not possible without self-reflection self-discipline and self-cultivation are not possible. Hence authentic growth is not possible either. Without internal growth empowerment is undermined. This idea comes from the principle of critical self-awareness (yoniso manasikaia).

In April 2023 the final session of the Training for Community Facilitators was held at the SNF office with the awesome trio of Ajarn Sulak, Pracha and Daw Seng Raw in attendance. In between lying on the sofa in pain he got up and gave precise, insightful input that was a fitting honour to what I understand was his last public appearance. Among many things he spoke of were his wish to see climate change being taken more seriously everywhere, ‘western’ countries becoming less Eurocentric; China having more space for freedom of expression and democracy and for the peoples movement in Myanmar to get stronger and stronger with unity among the different ethnic groups.

Pracha, was a charismatic, complex man with many



Jane and Pracha, 14 January 2023

contradictions yet he was always a leading light shining on a path towards a more just, sustainable and authentic future. He influenced so many students, colleagues and friends around the world to question the status quo and created conditions to empower them to work for sustainable, just futures.

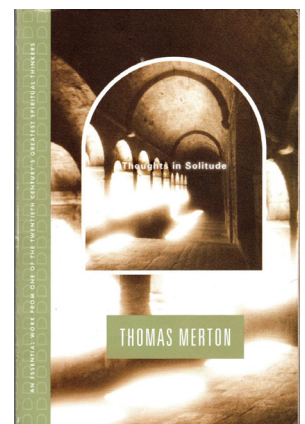
Note: Om Sunisa Jammiest and I are planning with likeminded friends to hold an International Legacy ToT at Wongsanit Ashram probably in September 2024. We hope that this will support the continuation of Pracha’s unique approach and build up the next generation of International ToT trainers. For more information: <https://gaiaschoolasia.com/training-of-trainer/>

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## Recommended Reading

### *Thoughts in Solitude*

Author: Thomas Merton  
Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1958



# Aspiration is the King

An Interview with the Kumarajiva Project's Executive Director,  
Jennifer Yo

February 5, 2024

Source: Kyhentse Foundation -

<https://khyentsefoundation.org/story/aspiration-is-the-king/>

The Chinese Buddhist canon is comparable in size to the Tibetan Buddhist canon, but each canon lacks certain texts that exist in the other. This visionary project seeks to translate essential Buddhist texts from Tibetan into Chinese, bridging a crucial gap between these two profound traditions.

The Kumarajiva Project is spearheaded by Jennifer Yo. Raised in a Buddhist family in Taiwan, Jennifer has served Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche on various projects since 2006. To celebrate Chinese New Year, KF talked to Jennifer about her involvement with the Kumarajiva Project and the latest developments.



Jennifer Yo - The Kumarajiva Project of Khyentse Foundation (KF) is a groundbreaking endeavor to translate canonical Buddhist texts from Tibetan into Chinese.

## How did you become involved in the Kumarajiva Project?

It was through the KF-sponsored “Planning Workshop on the Cross-Translation of the Tibetan and Chinese Canons” held in Hong Kong in 2012, which discussed how to go about translating the texts missing from the Chinese and Tibetan canons. Rinpoche and the foundation asked me to coordinate the work related to the project, which was officially launched as the Kumarajiva Project only in 2019. When I accepted the task I didn’t realize the importance of this undertaking, nor how difficult it would be!

I remember Rinpoche saying at the launch ceremony of our collaboration with Dharma Drum Institute of Liberal Arts (DILA) in Taiwan, “We should have started this 40 or 50 years ago.” Now, we also deeply feel the urgency of translating these precious texts.

Many dharma friends ask us why Rinpoche wants to



*The King of Aspiration Prayers.” Illustration by Yachi Tseng; animation by Yawen Zheng.*



*Participants at the workshop  
“Wisdom-Led Buddhist  
Technology,”  
October 2023.  
Photo courtesy Hero.*

translate Tibetan texts into Chinese when the Chinese canon is already so rich. In fact, it was only after we did a catalog comparison of the two canons that we realized that nearly 90 percent of the Mahayana treatises and tantric texts had not been translated into Chinese, which is a great pity.

### **How many texts have been translated to date? How are they selected?**

Since our official launch in 2019, we have translated 36 sutras and Indian commentaries from the Tibetan canon into Chinese. Each translation is a labor of teamwork, crafted with meticulous care to ensure that the teachings of Buddhism resonate deeply with readers in both classical and modern Chinese.

The texts are mainly selected on the basis of the content's significance in complementing the Chinese Buddhist tradition, such as Indian commentaries on the much-recited “Heart Sutra.” We also try to translate texts that provide direct guidance for lay practitioners on specific practices. For example, last year Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche gave a public teaching on “The Sutra on Wisdom at the Hour of Death” and two Indian commentaries. The newly translated “The Questions of Brahmadaṭṭa” explains the merits and benefits of genuine faith and sincere practice, as well as the pitfalls for hypocritical practitioners. This year, we aspire to translate

three important Indian commentaries on “The King of Aspiration Prayers.”

### **What have been some of the challenges along the way?**

One of our biggest challenges has been the scarcity of skilled Tibetan-Chinese translators. To address this, in 2021 we launched a rigorous training program to nurture a new generation of translators dedicated to preserving and sharing the timeless wisdom of Buddhist texts.

The other challenge is that we realize there is an urgent need to find a suitable “cup” for modern people so that they can taste the “good tea” of the classics. In the past few years, we tried to foster a deeper understanding of the translations and their relevance in today's world among Chinese readers through workshops, recitations, art, audiobooks, and music. This year we are exploring new approaches so we can reach out to a bigger audience.

### **Can you tell us about any related events the Kumarajiva Project has organized over the last year?**

Last October we partnered with the CBETA (Comprehensive Buddhist Electronic Text Archive) Foundation, a respected organization in the Chinese Mahayana tradition, to host a workshop titled “Wisdom-



*Kumarajiva sutra recitation  
at the Dzongsar Monlam,  
Bodhgaya, India,  
October 2023.  
Photo courtesy Tenzin Edi.*

Led Buddhist Technology: Translation and Transmission of Buddhist Texts in the AI Era.” We were honored to have Professor Peter Skilling, an internationally renowned scholar of Sanskrit, Bahasa Indonesia, and Tibetan Buddhist texts, join us for a lecture on “Cross-Cultural Translation.” This collaboration marks a significant step in our mission to integrate artificial intelligence into the translation of Buddhist texts and the study of the dharma.

We were also very moved to host a recitation of “The Sutra on Dependent Arising” under the Bodhi Tree during the 2023 Dzongsar prayer festival in Bodhgaya.

*One thing that gives us confidence and hope is that in this modern world, ... the causes and conditions that support the reading and study of the texts is much better than it used to be a century ago. So therefore, if you are able to translate the words of the Buddha and make them accessible and available, people who are fortunate and have the karmic connection will greatly benefit, even if they are able to read sutras such as “The Sutra on Dependent Arising” just for a fraction of a second. ... I make this aspiration under this Bodhi Tree that in the future “The Sutra on Dependent Arising,” which does not exist in Pali and Khmer, will be translated and will be read under this Bodhi*

*Tree. — Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, Bodhgaya,  
October 2023*

### **You are also in charge of developing the curriculum of the translator-training program. What do you look for in your translators?**

The trainees in the program are actually very rare in this day and age. They must possess a strong desire to translate the Buddhist canon, enjoy studying Buddhist texts, be committed to continuous improvement in Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit, and balance these studies with their worldly responsibilities. Despite the program’s difficulty, we now have more than 20 very dedicated and talented students from all over the world.

### **Is there anything else you would like to share?**

I would like to thank Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche for his constant encouragement—Rinpoche’s emphasis on the importance of the Kumarajiva Project makes us determined to do our best. I am also grateful to all the friends who have supported the project by volunteering their time, supporting us financially, or joining our online teachings. It is really the aspiration to serve more and more Chinese sangha members that has brought us together and keeps us going.



# Special Report: Footsteps of the Buddha - Ven. Pomnyun Sunim Leads 500 Practitioners on the 33<sup>rd</sup> Jungto Pilgrimage across India and Nepal

By **Craig C Lewis**

February 7, 2024

Source: Buddhist Door Global -

<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/special-report-footsteps-of-the-buddha-ven-pomnyun-sunim-leads-500-practitioners-on-the-33rd-jungto-pilgrimage-across-india-and-nepal/>



All images courtesy of Jungto Society

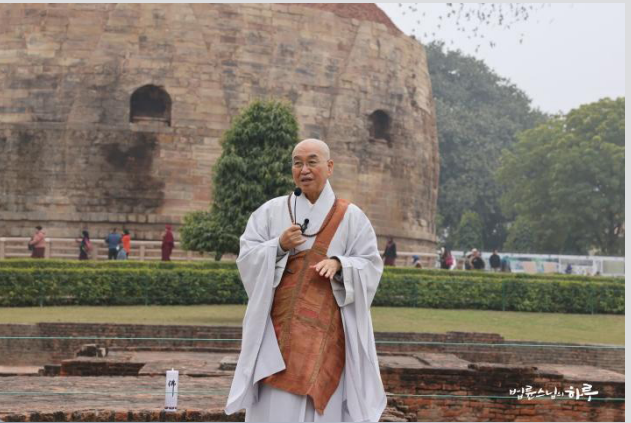
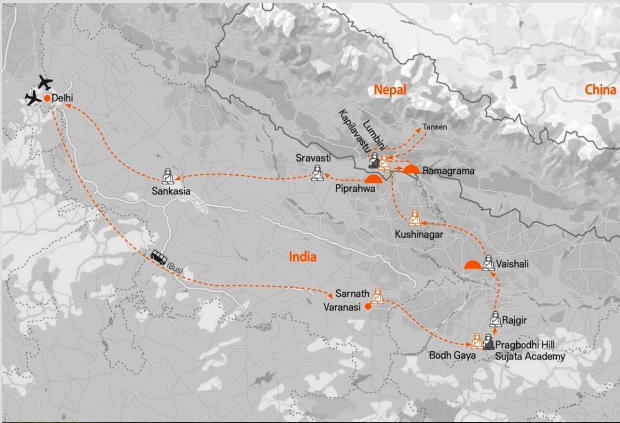
Jungto Society, the international Buddhist community founded by the revered Korean Dharma master and social activist Venerable Pomnyun Sunim (법륜스님), has conducted its 33<sup>rd</sup> annual pilgrimage across India and to Nepal. Held under the theme “Following in the Footsteps of the Buddha,” the pilgrimage, which ran from 19 January to 2 February, was attended by more 500 practitioners.

The pilgrimage was particularly notable for two reasons: this year saw the participation, for the first time in the Jungto pilgrimage’s 33-year history, of non-Korean practitioners. It also celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sujata Academy, a remarkable community school established by Ven. Pomnyun Sunim in Dugheswari,

Bihar, that has transformed the lives of an entire community of people who have faced systemic social and economic exclusion as a result of India’s conservative Hindu caste hierarchy.<sup>1</sup>

Jungto Society is a volunteer-run community of practitioners that aspires to embody the Buddhist teachings through social engagement, and by promoting a simple lifestyle centered on sustainable living. The community seeks to address the crises of modern society, such as greed, poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation, by applying a Buddhist worldview of interconnectedness and living in line with the principle that everyone can find happiness through Buddhist practice and active participation in social movements.

Although fewer in number than the 1,250 practitioners who attended Jungto Society’s 2023 pilgrimage,<sup>2</sup> the 500-plus Korean Buddhist pilgrims who



recently returned from India were accompanied nine practitioners from Italy, Japan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam—some of whom are members of the the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), including two bhikkhunis from Thailand, while others are graduates of Jungto Society's English-language Dharma School.<sup>3</sup>

One such Dharma school graduate is Aeko, a 74-year-old Japanese American.

“When I first heard about the pilgrimage, I thought ‘what a great way to learn about the Buddha,’” Aeko shared of her experience. “And then, at the first pre-pilgrimage briefing, I found out that, oh! we need to bring a sleeping bag! And, oh! we have to bring our own food! There were so many things we needed to do to prepare and be ready for this journey that I almost didn’t come!

“But then it became a challenge that I decided that I was going to meet. And I’m really glad that I did! I used to say that I’d never come to India, because I’d heard

about the extreme poverty and the number of beggars, but I’m really happy to have had this opportunity to see what India is really like, as well as to visit at least a little bit in Nepal.

“It was also a great experience being on the same bus as Ven. Pomnyun Sunim because we didn’t miss any of his thoughts; we were there. I think that a lot of the important information about the pilgrimage, you know, we can get it from the books and the Dharma lessons, but to hear him tell the stories made it all so much more meaningful.”

Ven. Pomnyun Sunim has returned to India many times since his first fateful pilgrimage in the early 1990s. Most frequently, his visits are centered on the work of the international Buddhist relief organization he founded, Join Together Society (JTS), and its Indian office JTS India, which endeavors to lift the lives of vulnerable people out of hunger, illiteracy, and disease by working directly with communities and teaching them to mobilize their own capabilities and resources.



The annual pilgrimages the monk leads enable pilgrims to trace the life and legacy of the historical Buddha, while the seeds of social outreach he has planted have led to the founding of a modern legacy of engaged Buddhism that has benefited thousands of underprivileged [people] in several countries many times over.

This sacred undertaking is not for the faint of heart, nor for those unwilling to give up the comforts of modern life—at least for the duration of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims are expected to adopt the mindset of the itinerant monastic, receiving temporary ordination during the pilgrimage, pledging to strictly observe five precepts.

In keeping with these observances, the circumstances of the pilgrimage are suitably humble yet rigorous: each day begins at around 4 a.m. or earlier, with a full schedule each day, bookended by formal Buddhist ceremonial practices. The pilgrims eat two meals a day, sleep in shared accommodation in Buddhist monasteries, or snatch much-needed naps on the fleet of 14 buses that enabled the 500 pilgrims and 50 support volunteers to cover in excess of 2,000 kilometers to visit 14 sacred Buddhist sites in India and Nepal, as well as spending time at Sujata Academy, which lies some 12 kilometers northeast of Bodh Gaya.

“This pilgrimage has provided a really special environment for me to practice the teachings of the Buddha, because we have traveled so much, encountering different circumstances and environments. Sometimes it

has been challenging, both physically and emotionally, so it’s a great opportunity for practice,” said Vū, a Buddhist social activist from Vietnam.

“In addition, we listen to Dharma talks every day from Ven. Pomnyun Sunim. He’s given me new insights into my understanding of the Buddhist path, and a new perspective on my practice. Now I can look into my mind, and every day, at every moment, I can observe what is taking place within me, within my mind, from the time we get off the bus to visiting a stupa to the time that we eat.

“The other thing I’d like to mention, which I’ve found particularly valuable, is when we get into the original teachings of the Buddha, when we visit the historical sites and archaeological excavations, Sunim, through his explanations and analyses, helps us to thoroughly access the Buddha’s original teachings and overcome some of the more mysterious aspects of the sutras to understand the true Dharma.”

The pilgrims’ progress traced the significant stepping stones in the life the historical Buddha: his birthplace in Lumbini; the site of his enlightenment in Bodh Gaya; his first Dharma teaching at Sarnath; and the site of his mahaparinirvana in Kushinagar.

The practitioners also paid their respects to the great teacher at Kapilavastu, where Siddhartha Gautama spent his childhood, and Pragbodhi Hill, where he practiced asceticism for six years.

And stops were also made at Rajgir, Sravasti,

Vaishali, and Sankasia, the scenes for significant events in the Buddha's life, as well as Vaishalli, Ramagrama, and Piprahwa, home to stupas containing relics of the Buddha. The schedule also allowed for visits to the ancient Buddhist monastic university of Nalanda and Delhi Museum, whose extensive collection includes recovered sacred relics of the Buddha.

Jinsook Kim was one of the tireless and dedicated team leaders who helped to organize and guide the international pilgrims through the tight schedule. "This has been such an amazing experience—so much more than I had expected! It has also been something of an adventure for me as it's the first time I've traveled anywhere without my family," she explained.

"During this pilgrimage, I was so impressed to be able to visit these ancient Buddhist sites in person, and to relive chapters from the Buddha's life. When I studied the life of the Buddha in Korea, it felt a little unreal—almost like a storybook somehow, because it all took place 2,600 years ago. But coming here, I've gained a very real sense of the Buddha as a human being, and all the stories of his life have become much more real for me. I feel as though I've truly been touched by his life."

At the conclusion of the long and taxing journey, Ven. Pomnyun Sunim offered some closing thoughts for the pilgrims to consider:

"The primary reason for our pilgrimage is not to explore external boundaries but to engage in introspection. When we visit India, there are many new sights to behold. If one were to visit the US or Europe, there wouldn't be that much to see as the standard of living there is quite similar to that in Korea. Even hotels, whether in Korea or the United States, are nearly identical. The only differences lie in older buildings or slight variations in architectural styles; otherwise, daily life appears almost identical. Clothing, lifestyles, and everything else are similar. However, when one visits India, there is still a significant presence of ancient traditions, allowing for a wide array of unique experiences. . . ."

"While admiring external landscapes may be one of the charms of travel, a greater journey lies in observing the landscapes of our mind. . . . Conventional travel entails surveying external scenery, while pilgrimage involves examining how one's mind responds to various sights and sounds encountered along the way. Yet it's not merely a matter of debating whether one's mind arises with negativity or positivity.

"For pilgrimage to be effective, one must adhere to the principle that the mind is simply a variety of phenomena arising. The mind can give rise to benevolent intentions as well as malevolent ones. . . . Nevertheless, in practice, both malevolent and benevolent intentions arise along the boundaries of the mind. . . . Just as a marionette moves automatically in accordance with the commands of its strings, the mind arises spontaneously along these boundaries. Thus, one should not attribute too much significance to what arises in the mind . . . if one simply acknowledges, 'This is how the mind is arising now,' it will soon dissipate like boiling water. By refraining from attributing meaning in this manner, one ceases to be ensnared by the boundaries. Conversely, by attributing meaning one becomes ensnared like a puppet. . . . Even if ensnared, upon realizing, one can turn inward and return to one's original position, thus pilgrimage can become a form of practice. . . ."

"When discussing enlightenment, four stages are mentioned: the first stage is called *sotāpanna* in Pali, which is a clear understanding of the essence. However, due to the continual influence of fleeting ignorance, this understanding may not be readily translated into practice in reality. Nevertheless, once one clearly comprehends causal nature, one will not regress to ignorance. . . . When one falls, we acknowledge, 'Ah! I have fallen,' and then learns to rise again. It is through continual practice of this process that one reaches a stage where they no longer stumble. . . ."

"The second stage, *sakadāgāmi*, entails continued stumbling, but after one more fall, they no longer stumble. The third stage, *anāgāmi*, signifies the end of



falling. The fourth stage, arahant, represents the stage where one no longer stumbles on the path. Each of you must reach sudawon in this lifetime. Even if it is not feasible in daily life, you must be aware when understanding the essence clearly. Thus, you must progress to the stage where you do not rationalize the inability to achieve something. Only then can you become the master of your own life.”

“After achieving sotāpanna, Buddhism in Korea refers to obtaining insight as chogyongsung—first perceiving one’s original true nature. Following insight, engaging in cultivation after attaining realization is termed borim in Korean. By analogy, striking a match is akin to chogyongsung. However, a match is quickly extinguished once lit. Therefore, borim involves affixing flames here and there to ensure they do not extinguish even when the wind blows. Progressing to a stage where the flames never extinguish is called borim. What did you realize during your pilgrimage? Did you perhaps sense that there is no need to become overly attached to eating, dressing, and sleeping?”

“Yes!”

“Even if you feel this way now, after returning home and living for a month, you may forget that you had such thoughts. During the pilgrimage, you lived frugally, even saving every 10 rupees. . . . Therefore, spending money becomes challenging upon returning home. . . . Yet before a month passes, you will revert to your old habits.

Therefore, you must maintain what you have realized here. A pilgrimage does not instantly change your life; rather, it serves as a catalyst for initiating change. It is difficult to change in everyday life. Hence the saying, ‘The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ However, after experiencing intense stimulation during the pilgrimage, if you make up your mind to change you can actually do so. . . .”

“Do not search for happiness in distant places. Being able to see, hear, speak, eat with your own spoon, relieve yourself, these simple actions are already immense sources of happiness. The most challenging thing for someone in hospital is being unable to relieve themselves. Many people in hospital cannot even feed themselves, so they have to be fed through their nostrils, or they have tubes inserted into their sides to collect waste. When you witness such circumstances, simply being able to walk with your own legs and move with your own hands becomes a tremendous blessing. When your employer assigns tasks, it’s because you can walk, move your hands, and see. If you couldn’t do these things, how would you be able to work? If you can see through such situations, you can quickly attain freedom.

“The Buddha’s blessings do not come in the form of material wealth but in the form of freedom in life. That’s why we undertake pilgrimages like this, even though they are difficult, because through the process we gain more freedom. However, the benefits aren’t limited to

individual freedom. By undertaking this pilgrimage, you'll experience and accumulate much merit. . . ."

"By choosing to sleep in the poor temple instead of staying in a hotel, you've provided assistance from the temple's perspective. Especially when you sleep in temples in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, or Cambodia, it's an act of virtue in itself. Furthermore, because we've traveled frugally and saved money, there's some left over. So even if you don't donate separately, any remaining funds from the pilgrimage fees are used to support the Sujata Academy. This was my plan from the beginning when I started organizing pilgrimages. With the money saved from pilgrimages, we've built school buildings, provided food, clothing, and school supplies for children in need. So while the pilgrimage may have been a personal practice for you, the frugal approach we took during our journey has also benefited impoverished children in this country. However, it required some effort from you. That's why when you travel with me and undertake the pilgrimage, you might find it challenging . . . yet despite the difficulties, you've successfully completed the pilgrimage safely.

"When feces are in the house, it's filth, but when they're in the field, they become fertilizer. Similarly,

whatever happens, whether it benefits me personally or helps the world, I should consider it as part of my practice and strive to make it beneficial to others. Through this pilgrimage, I hope you've become more aware of such principles. . . .

"The Buddha said: 'I leave you with the wisdom of enlightenment, not the physical body. Although the body may depart, the wisdom of enlightenment shall forever remain with you. The world is transient. Diligently practice and strive, like water dripping on a rock.'

"These are the Buddha's final words. May you engrave them in your heart and always continue to strive forward."

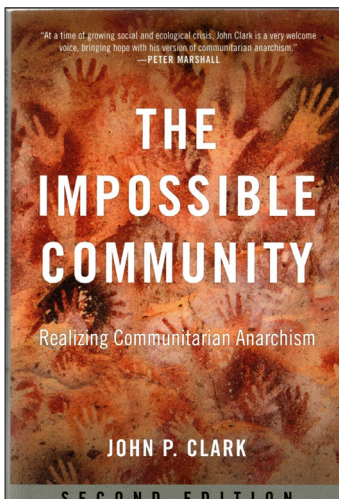
<sup>1</sup> Engaged Buddhism: Ven. Pomnyun Sunim and JTS Volunteers Visit Sujata Academy Project in India (BDG)

<sup>2</sup> In the Footsteps of the Buddha: Ven. Pomnyun Sunim Leads 1,250 Jungto Practitioners on a Pilgrimage to India (BDG)

<sup>3</sup> Online Dharma: Jungto Society Opens Registration for Spring Intake of Jungto Dharma School with Ven. Pomnyun Sunim (BDG)



## Recommended Reading

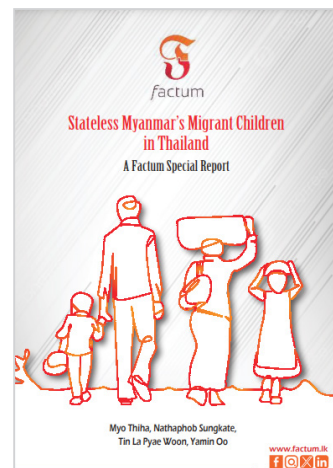


### *Stateless Myanmar's Children in Thailand* A Factum Special Report

Authors: Myo Thiha, Nathaphob Sungkate,  
Tin La Pyae Woon, & Yamin Oo  
Publisher: Factum, Colombo, Sri Lanka

### *The Impossible Community* Realizing Communitarian Anarchism, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Author: John P. Clark  
Publisher: PM Press, Oakland, California,  
USA, 2022



This Report was produced with the support of the Thai-Myanmar Media Fellowship 2023. Organized by Visual Rebellion Myanmar and the Spirit in Education Movement.

# Keynote Speech on Sustainable Development

By Uthai Dulyakasem, Ph.D.

**Good morning, ladies and gentlemen:**

The term “sustainability”, especially, “sustainable development” has been used more and more often over the past three decades after the publication of Brundtland Report (Our Common Future) in 1987. It becomes a catchword. In fact, this term has its roots in ideas about sustainable forest management, which were developed in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries in response to a growing awareness of the depletion of timber resources in England. However, one of the first uses of the term sustainable in the contemporary sense was by the Club of Rome in 1972 in its classic report on the “Limits to growth”, written by a group of scientists led by Dennis and Donella Meadows of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Later in 1980, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, published a world conservation strategy that included one of the first references to “sustainable development as a global priority and introduced the term “sustainable development”.

In addition, at the World Summit for Social Development, held 1995 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the largest gathering ever of world leaders. It was recognized that there were then 4 major crises which the world was encountering, such as, Income inequalities, ecological depletion, family and community dis-cohesiveness, and ethical deterioration.

At the conclusion of the Summit, Heads of the governments adopted a Declaration and Program for Action to tackle these problems.

Even if the term “sustainable” was used for so many

years in different contexts, its definition was unclear as to what it really means. Up until the Brundtland Report came out in 1987, the term ‘sustainable development’ was officially defined and is mostly recognized. It is defined as follows:

*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet to meet their own needs.*

Despite the fact that the term “sustainable development” was modified and reframed several times, it has been, and still is, subject to criticism, including the question of what is to be sustained in sustainable development. It has been argued that there is no such a thing as a sustainable use of a non-renewable resources, since the existing rate of exploitation of earth’s finite stock continues, as clearly seen in the cases of petroleum, natural gas and other minerals.

In 2015, the SDGs were set up by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030. The SDG’s or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a blueprint to achieve better and more sustainable future for all.

However, it is very interesting to note that more than half of the timeframe for SDG’s (6 years) has passed, there is no clear indication that any of the 17 global goals would be likely to achieve. The main reason that the SDG’s are unlikely to be met is that the values held by most countries, developed and developing, are never changed. They continue competing instead of cooperating, they continue taking advantage of each other, they continue taking more than giving, they continue promoting for overconsumption instead of sufficient or sustainable consumption, they continue emphasizing on unlimited-growth more than on fair

distribution etc. Consequently, they continue overexploiting of natural resources and ecosystem services. Put it another way, they hold to the belief that economy is greater than ecology. It is therefore not surprising that social inequalities, both within and among nations, have soared and other crises remain unchanged.

In addition, they firmly believe that modern technology will help find the substitutes for the depleting natural resources and they can continue managing the societies in the same manner. Even if new innovation has been introduced to prevent natural resources from rapid destruction, for example, the green economy, circular economy and eco-friendly economy, but in practice, the implementation of these innovations are still in a very small scale both in terms of products and location. Consequently, the old beliefs are continuously reinforced in the educational system, mass media, and the commercial propaganda.

It is true that the great movements that changed the world for the better, such as the Green Revolution, Industrial Revolution, modern medicine and the like. But it is undeniable that, most damaging movements that created the unsustainable world and the sufferings of millions of people around the world are also caused by modern science and technology, such as wars, destructive exploitation of natural resources, poor health, food insecurity, energy insecurity and climate change, for example.

It is crystal clear that technology, the development of science and new knowledge alone cannot solve the problems we are presently encountering.

In addition, the world around us is changing faster than ever before, politically, economically, socially and environmentally. It is a great challenge for us to deal with.

However, as Albert Einstein once aptly said that “we cannot solve the problems by the same kind of thinking we used, when we created them.”

In my view, sustainable living or sustainable development is very unlikely to achieve, unless all concerned organizations and individuals or groups of individuals must first honestly accept that sustainability is a humanity agenda and secondly, certain social values must be applied into actual practices of all activities, e.g., production, services and daily life styles in every society,

developed and developing. In addition, it must be kept in mind that the concept of sustainable living or sustainable development does not mean only to improve the quality of life of all people, but the harmony between man and nature based on the respect of life, as well as the non-living things in nature is recognized. Social values, which I will discuss here are by no means new. They are in fact clearly reflected in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, including religious principles for centuries. Sadly, however these values are hardly put into practices at both an individual and societal levels.

I believe it is widely recognized that Humanities and Social Sciences teach us and instill important values that are very crucial for humanity. I think that modern technology, be it digital technology or artificial intelligence (AI) cannot replace these values.

Values in Humanities and Social Sciences which are believed to help change the attitude thinking of the people are recognized that they could be roughly categorized into three groups of value orientation related to the attitude of man to nature and ecology, namely,

- (1) the anthropocentric view (man is superior to living things and nature)
- (2) the bio-centric view (it assumes the equality of all living beings), and
- (3) the Theo-centric view (it assumes the existence of God- the Creator, man is the custodian of entrusted gifts). (Novacek, et al, 2005).

These views are reflected in major religions and indigenous beliefs too. For example, the anthropocentric view is mostly reflected in Christianity. The bio-centric view is reflected in most oriental religions such as Buddhism. The Theo-centric view is clearly reflected in Islam.

Consequently, a fundamental change of value orientation from anthropocentric to bio-centric or Theo-centric is very important and necessary for the achievement of sustainable living in the future. However, we must be prepared to accept that this is easily said than done, especially if we still continue to blindly follow the Western model of societal development. As Oscar Wilde, once put it, “a society that focuses only on the economic benefits of knowledge is one that knows the price of

everything and the value of nothing.” The Humanities and Social Sciences can in fact influence nearly every aspect of our lives, but unfortunately, few of us realize the extent of such influences.

The students of Humanities and Social Sciences should know it well that the teaching of Humanities and Social Sciences is intended to instill the following values, namely

- (1) They probe what it is to be human
- (2) They search for meaning
- (3) They challenge [by] asking ethical choices
- (4) They ask intelligent questions and how human action can impact the future
- (5) They teach us to respect and value cultural differences
- (6) They stretch our imagination
- (7) They teach empathy

Unfortunately, lessons most often learn too late in life that “wisdom does not automatically come with age.” because Mahatma Gandhi said long time ago that “Earth provides enough to satisfy everyman’s needs, but not everyman’s greed.”

Or as Dr. Guy McPherson, an environmental health and industrial activist aptly puts it, “If you really think the environment is less important than economy, try holding your breath while you count your money.”

Another important point which I think I should be honest to confess that part of our failure in integrating Humanities and Social Sciences values into the actual practices in our daily life and in societal development processes resulted from our poor and ineffective learning and teaching processes in all educational levels. A great number of teachers of Humanities and Social Sciences do not really have faith in or do not see the meaningful contributions of Humanities and Social Sciences to the sustainability of living and ecological systems.

The teaching and learning processes mostly emphasize on memorizing facts and figures. The analytical thinking and practical activities are hardly promoted. In addition, the teaching and learning process put more emphasis on bookish knowledge and technical skills than on values, ethics and creativity or imagination. It is therefore not surprising that Humanities and Social

Sciences knowledge and values are ignored by the policy-makers and development planners almost everywhere despite the fact that many people working in these offices have educational qualifications in Humanities and Social Sciences.

I think it is very crucial that the teachers as well as administrators in Humanities and Social Sciences departments at all levels in educational institutions must bear in mind that they are the first groups of people to change the way they run the teaching and learning processes. Remember that we must ‘change to remain the same’, as the title of one movie puts it.

Ladies and Gentleman,

I am still hopeful that sustainable living or sustainable future could be attained if all sectors in a society sincerely admit that sustainable living is a human agenda and that the values related to man and nature have to be fundamentally changed. I am confident that it could be done. Take a financial sector as an example, the Central Bank, commercial bank, stock market, securities finance company and the like could take initiatives by setting rules and regulations for the loans and credits to their borrowers or investors to undertake activities that promote sustainable living or not to carry out the activities that create environmental problems and at the same time, the borrowers or the investors may get a lower rate of interest in return.

In addition, campaign must be carried out constantly to incite the public, especially, the customers to be aware of such a movement so that the customers would collectively support the investors or the companies whose products and services promote sustainable future.

At the family or individual level, I am also hopeful that their life-style could be changed to promote sustainable living, if their values and attitude toward man and nature are changed. For example, once they realize that man is part and parcel of nature, they would understand that whatever we do to nature, positively or negatively, its consequences will definitely affect us, as clearly seen in the cases of flooding, drought, heat and freezing, for instance.

The examples from the indigenous practices and cultures of the First Nation groups in Canada, which have adapted their lifestyles to fit into and respect their environments by preserving soil, reducing erosion,

conserving water and reducing disasters etc. Their ways of life and their livelihoods can teach us a lot about preserving natural resources, growing food in sustainable ways, preserving biodiversity and living in harmony with nature.

I think that such practices could be adopted by ordinary people without difficulties at all.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you that my presentation is not the first time and certainly it is not the last time for this kind of discussion. I am certain that we will need to keep reminding ourselves again and again that if we and our younger generation hope to see and to live peacefully and happily in the rapidly changing and unpredictable world, we must strategically find ways to integrate Humanities and Social

Sciences values into the societal development processes so that sustainable future would be practically feasible.

Yet, my fear is that our attempt at this conference will be like many other previous attempts in many meetings, as the old saying goes: ***“Everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die.”*** Hence, if we want to see a sustainable future, we must change our mindset to respect life and nature right now.

**Thank you very much.**

Draft keynote presentation for the international conference on “Integrating Humanities and Social Sciences for Sustainable Future”, organized by Prince of Songkhla University with collaboration with some higher educational institutions in Malaysia in mid-May 2022.

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## Declaration Against Military Draft

By Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal, April 5, 2024

**I** declare my stance, since after the coup d'état in 2014, that when the time comes for military

conscription, I will not participate. This decision is based on the belief that coercing citizens who are not willing to serve in the military violates human rights principles, personal moral beliefs, is outdated, ineffective, and contributes to undermining democracy in Thailand. Ten years have passed, and I reaffirm my original position.

Military conscription does not promote equality among citizens but rather enforces a system of varying degrees of oppression. I understand and empathize with many who wish to avoid conscription by seeking education abroad, becoming monks, or finding other exemptions. However, many cannot avoid it and must serve involuntarily.

All Thai citizens should have the equal freedom to choose whether or not to participate in military conscription. No one should be coerced or forced, as it is not beneficial to individuals or the nation.

I could find ways to avoid it like others have done,

and I respect their decisions, but publicly refusing to participate may confront the issue head-on, which might be necessary for the improvement of citizens freedoms and to ensure a military that respects human rights in this modern era.

Therefore, I declare my act of civil disobedience by not participating in military conscription. I am aware of the legal consequences and apprehensive, but if the results face lead to a better quality of life for other Thai citizens, I am willing to proceed towards a fairer process.

I have come to present myself for this selection process to reaffirm my stance over the past decade and to clearly demonstrate that I have not evaded or fled, nor have I ever considered doing so.

On 5th April, last Friday, Thai conscientious objector and human rights activist Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal declared his conscientious objection in front of a military conscription centre in Samut Prakarn province, openly stating his beliefs instead of complying with a call-up. His deferment as a student ended on Friday. He was not arrested. Thailand does not recognise the right to conscientious objection.

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# Keeping it Real in a Frantic World

## Breathing Noticing Returning

March 2024, Broughton Sanctuary, Yorkshire

By Jane Rasbash

Sometimes an inner prompt causes one to say yes to an experience one would not usually take. Thus, I embarked on a retreat like no other in a stately home in rural Yorkshire. As I walked around the ornate library and drawing rooms I noticed the juxtaposition of the outer opulence contrasting with the inner turmoil of my chaotic mind. I came to the retreat with an intention to revisit mindfulness, address increasing anxiety and leave with tools for a regular practice to support inner calm and outward effectiveness for world work. Having been involved with Engaged Buddhist circles around Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa for decades I do have some knowledge of applied Buddhism. Over the years I have attended several retreats and mindfulness courses yet struggled to sustain a regular practice.

Gelong Thubten a curious balance of charisma and humility unfolded teachings on mindfulness with clarity and ease. A Buddhist monk of thirty plus years, under the guidance of Akong Rinpoche, at Samye Ling, Monastery, Scotland, he had a deep well of presence and wisdom to draw on. His innate skill to catch the essence and convey it in an accessible way made the elusive regular practice seem possible.

Ruby Wax like quicksilver, Chiron, using irreverent humour as a skilful tool to cut through the mires of delusion and illusion. Her lived experience of mental health challenges, meditation practice and her deep curiosity and study of how the mind works gave a rare authenticity to her sharing on mindfulness.



*What a Gang! Our esteemed teachers - Rahla, Ruby & Gelong Thubten*

Rahla Xenopoulos gave us writing exercises, a welcome practice to ground my chaotic thoughts and create reflective poems through her alchemic processes.

A key takeaway was comprehending the fluidity in how our minds work. Neuroplasticity is how our brains can change and adapt due to experience and Epigenetics relates to behaviours and how the environment can cause changes in the way our genes work (e.g., trauma can switch on genes) and this can pass through generations.

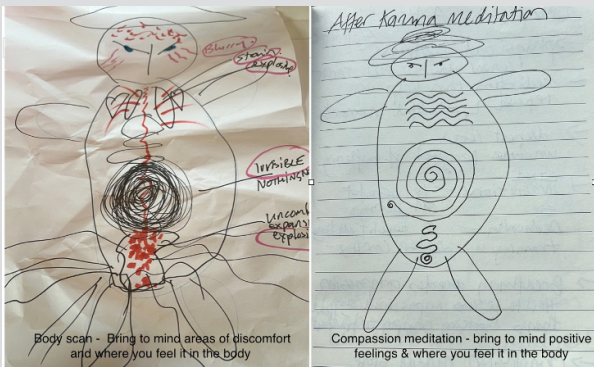
Often the focus of meditation is the breath. Thubten stated that meditation in a nutshell is Breathing, Noticing, Returning. Bookending this, he recommended we create a sound container for the practice starting with an intention and ending with a dedication that the practice benefits all beings.

The teaching on compassion was particularly helpful. Firstly, understanding the distinction between compassion and empathy. Both are being with / aware of

emotional experiences of others - yet compassion is also doing something to alleviate the suffering. Compassion is a trainable skill of the mind that becomes an action of the body. Training in the intention to help others. Working positively with pain and embracing the parts of yourself you want to hide. This gives us the strength to sit with the pain of others. I was reminded how pain has been a focus of meditation and transformation at other times in my life and was grateful to relive and ground this teaching. Breathing into the pain and breathing out compassion for all beings.

Ruby led a practice where we did a body scan and noticed the places in the body where we felt the discomfort. My mind went to the areas that I have health issues with namely eyes, lungs, digestive system and the dark space where a large organ was removed surgically. We were then asked to put them into pictorial form of our body. Later we did a meditation to generate compassion bringing to mind positive relationships and feelings. Then we were asked to revisit the first diagram and add another layer. Not having the first drawing with me I did another one. was and still am amazed by the transformation. Thanks Ruby!

I learned about forgiveness according to the Tibetan tradition rather than blaming someone we reflect on seeing the 'truth' through different lenses:



- \* How I feel about a conflict situation
- \* How the other person may feel about the same situation
- \* How an observer would see this interaction.

Thubten suggested we write a letter from each perspective. I baulked at the thought of anyone writing a letter about my behaviour. For me the process could also

be applied to forgiving myself a step towards deactivating crystallised, internalised shame.

Thubten's practice tips are very helpful. The exploration is about why you suffer rather than how you suffer observing the mental events that come up on the cushion. Early practices in the retreat included a one minute mini meditation and grounding ourselves to feel our feet on the earth to give a glimpse of mindfulness. He suggested we do this kind of micro focus hourly. He recommended starting with a 10 minute daily meditation practice. Thubten also advised to choose a regular daily action like brushing teeth or washing hands and do it mindfully every day. All these actions contribute to creating a neural pathway in the brain shifting from stressful feelings leading to an anxious response to stressful feelings leading to kindly response.

A few weeks on from the retreat I have established a daily mindfulness practice and several micro meditations during the day. During the mindfulness I observe my mind and emotions in great turmoil, yet in general outside the practice I am feeling more positive. This is in line with Thubten saying that we do not measure progress by having less thoughts and emotions during the practice rather less stress and more kindness outside the practice.

The retreat has been a small yet significant step in transforming suffering of myself and all beings. I would like to finish with a couple of lines from the self portrait writing exercise.

Jane is like a diverse and complex river with many tributaries, whirlpools and silent parts.

Jane is loved because she can be a harbinger of transformation.

Forever Grateful to Ruby, Thubten & Rahla

If you would like more insight into these practices there are many books on this practice including 'A Mindfulness Guide for the Frazzled' by Ruby Wax and 'Handbook for Hard Times - A monks guide to fearless living' by Gelong Thubten both of which I plan to review for the next edition of *Seeds of Peace*.

In the UK Ruby is touring with her insightful journey with mental health, life and mindfulness - 'I'm not as well as I thought I was' about her journey with mental health, life and mindfulness <https://rubywax.seetickets.com/tour/ruby-wax>



Sulak Sivaraksa-Niggarapada Foundation



## Letter of Condolences

Date: 17 March 2024

### RE: The Passing of Venerable Lama Lobzang,

Yesterday, we lost one of modern India's greatest Buddhist leaders, Venerable Lama Lobzang.

Born in 1931 in the town of Leh, which was then Jammu and Kashmir but now the Union Territory of Ladakh, Venerable Lama Lobzang belonged to the Boto community classified as Scheduled Tribe (ST) under the Indian constitution.

Venerable Lama Lobzang dedicated nearly 60 years of his life for the welfare of the people of Ladakh. He tirelessly provided healthcare to economically marginalized families and those living in the remotely located communities. He also played an important role in the revival of Buddhism in India and worldwide, particularly the restoration of Buddhist heritage sites. His work took him to nearly 30 countries around the world, where he met with political, religious, and civil society leaders.

Venerable Lama Lobzang served as an Honorary Advisor to INEB since 2013. With his invaluable advice and connections, especially through the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), Venerable Lama Lobzang helped INEB outreach to larger international Buddhist communities all over the world.

We will greatly miss him and wish for him to attain nirvana.

**With deepest condolences,**

Sulak Sivaraksa  
Chairperson INEB  
Advisory Committee

Harsha Navaratne  
Chairperson INEB  
Executive Committee

Somboon  
Chungprampree  
Executive Secretary  
INEB Secretariat



Metta Development Foundation

## Letter of Appreciation from Metta's Silver Anniversary

30 October 2023

**Dear Moo Somboon and colleague from SEM,**

It has been 25 years since Metta Development Foundation (Metta) has been founded in October 1998 to serve the communities through providing development and humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. The primary objective of Metta is the evolution of self-reliant and peaceful societies through social and economic growth. The driving force behind Metta is the concept that the very word embodies - that of "loving kindness".

We want to express our deep appreciation and honour for your generous support and accompaniment in this endeavour of Metta. We can truthfully say that without your vital support, Metta could not be able to reach this far. On our silver anniversary, Metta would therefore like to convey our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude and inscribe in the annals of Metta.

We look forward to receiving your continuous support and companionship to stride for fulfilling Metta's mission.

Move forward with Metta!

**Sincerely,**

Gum Sha



**Pilgrimage Asia**  
Eco-Spiritual Tourism & Learning

## Lama Doboomb Tulku

1942 - 2024



Lama Doboomb Tulku was the first lama that I knew. Eventually we became very close friends. He invited me to give a Padmapani lecture in Delhi which I regarded a great honor. Indeed, he was the first one to give me a *thanka*, that *thanka* was of the Tara. Unlike most people who regard the *thanka* as a piece of something beautiful, but for Do Tulku the *thanka* represented Tara. He presented to me in my own home and recited the mantra in Tibetan for three hours. At that time Lodi Gyri Rinpoche happened to be at my house and he told me that this was something great. I still keep it in my house now. He was the first director of Tibet house in New Delhi. Under his leadership Tibet house contributed so much so that not only for Indians, but a lot of people would understand Tibetan culture if not Tibetan Buddhism.

I am sorry that he has passed. I am sure that he will be reborn soon and be reborn in a better position in this life. I dearly miss him, and I hope people will appreciate him more although he is a Tulku, normally we call a Tulku a Rinpoche. But he was so modest, he never called himself Rinpoche, he called himself Doboomb Tulku. That's all. Simple. He was really a good monk, a good administrator, he represented the best of Tibetan tradition.

When HH wanted to organize a sacred musical festival in 2000, Doboomb Tulku organized this all over world. He

## Diasaku Ikeda

1928 - 2023



Daisaku Ikeda, Honorary President of the Soka Gakkai and President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), passed away from natural causes at his residence in Shinjuku, Tokyo, on the evening of November 15. He was ninety-five. A funeral has been held with members of his immediate family; the time and date of commemorative services will be announced shortly.

Ikeda was born in Tokyo on January 2, 1928. He was inaugurated as third President of the Soka Gakkai in 1960 and for almost two decades led the lay Buddhist movement in dynamic growth that also saw important international development. He became Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President in 1975 and Soka Gakkai Honorary President in 1979. He is survived by his wife Kaneko and his sons Hiromasa and Takahiro.

Source: Soka Gakkai - <https://www.sokaglobal.org/contact-us/media-room/press-releases/memorial-service-tributes-for-daisaku-ikeda.html>

even asked me to be one of the advisors, which I feel was one of the greatest honors I could receive.

I am sure that those who knew appreciate him like the way I appreciate him.

**Sulak Sivaraksa**

## In Memoriam: Farewell to Johan Galtung

24 Oct 1930 - 17 Feb 2024



Johan Galtung recently passed away. He was 93, two years older than myself. Johan was a renowned figure, especially among academics. Originally from Norway, he taught at universities across Scandinavia, including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. Later, his teachings spread almost globally, including at University of Hawaii in the United States.

He was instrumental in nominating me for the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, which I was honored to receive, having received the award himself in the past.

One of Johan Galtung's significant contributions was his exploration of structural violence. He emphasized that violence doesn't just occur between individuals but is ingrained within societal structures. This concept was highly valued in academic circles.

He himself fought for freedom and established educational institutions focused on human rights, dedicating his life to these causes. Finding someone with his depth of knowledge, prolific writing, and teaching for peace in the world is rare.

With the passing of Johan Galtung, we have lost an important advocate for peace. I hope that we, as Thai citizens, recognize the value of individuals like him for the betterment of our future, rather than embracing those who govern with ill intent in our present time.

**Sulak Sivaraksa**

# Santi Asoke Founder Ven. Samana Bhodirak Dies in Thailand Aged 89

By **Craig C Lewis**, April 12, 2024

For the full obituary, please refer to Buddhist Door Global - <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/santi-asoke-founder-ven-samana-bhodirak-dies-in-thailand-aged-89/>



Venerable Samana Bhodirak, the founder and spiritual leader of the Santi Asoke Buddhist community in Thailand, has died. A message on social media posted by an organization representing Santi Asoke stated that Ven. Samana Bhodirak died early on Thursday morning of natural causes. He was 89 years old.

Santi Asoke (meaning “Peacefu Asoka”) is a Theravada Buddhist movement that has established a number of self-sustaining ascetic communities and monasteries across Thailand. The movement has also founded a series of social welfare projects, among them second-hand stores, farmer’s markets, and a restaurant that provides free meals to those in need.

Born Mongkhon Rakphong in Thailand’s agrarian northeast in 1934, Ven. Samana Bhodirak carved out a well-established television career under the sobriquet Rak Rakphong, focused on educational and children’s programs before being ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1970, taking the Dhamma name Bodhirak. As a monk, Bhodirak was highly critical of contemporary monastic life, and publicly denounced other monks for eating meat, smoking cigarettes, and engaging in superstitious activities.

Ven. Samana Bhodirak established his own monastery in Nakhon Pathom Province, aiming to reflect the ideals of simplicity and self-sufficiency of the Thai Forest Tradition, and in 1975 declared independence for Santi Asoke from the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand. Bodhirak subsequently adopted the Pali prefix samana, used to describe itinerant ascetics.

In response to the news, Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa, founder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), wrote an open message in memory of Ven. Samana Bhodirak, which was shared with BDG, and has been reproduced in translated and edited form below:

I would like to express my sincere condolences for the passing of Samana Bodhirak (formerly known as Rak Rakphong). He was once esteemed in the mass-media industry but later found it to be superficial. Instead, he turned to spirituality, initially interested in the rituals of Brahmanism, and ultimately found his calling in Buddhist monasticism. He sought ordination at Wat Asokaram under the Thammayut Nikaya.

He believed that the monastic sangha needed to modernize itself. However, he overlooked the fact that newly ordained monks must adhere to certain rules for at least five years, including following the guidance of senior monastics and teachers without deviation. Samana Bodhirak refused to accept this reality and attempted to reform the tradition he was part of, but his efforts were unsuccessful. He then ordained in the Maha Nikaya sect but was unable to effect any significant changes.

It’s regrettable that Samana Bodhirak didn’t adapt himself to the influence of esteemed monks such as Phra Ajahn Buddhadasa . . . and Phra Ajahn Chah. . . . If he had, he might have aligned himself better with contemporary Buddhist practices.

When he lacked qualified mentors, Samana Bodhirak took on the role himself, which was dangerous as he sometimes acted in areas beyond his knowledge and capabilities, for instance, claiming to know Pali without formal education in the subject.

Nevertheless, the Buddhist movement he established emphasized anti-capitalism and consumerism by promoting sustainable agriculture and non-profit production. . . . They cultivated organic produce and prioritized charity and compassion over profit, offering a genuine challenge and alternative to capitalist consumerism. . . .

I cautioned Samana Bodhirak to focus on the good he was doing and to refrain from attacking the mainstream monastic sangha, but he couldn’t resist. Consequently, the Thai Sangha issued a joint statement disavowing Samana Bodhirak and denying his status as a monk. . . .

Although Santi Asoke is an independent organization that opposes consumerist capitalism, it’s regrettable that this group didn’t work to better align its activities with the mainstream Buddhist community, instead of relying solely on Samana Bodhirak for guidance and authority.

Now that he’s gone, it remains uncertain whether Santi Asoke will persist. If it can continue its activities against capitalism, it will be something worth studying.

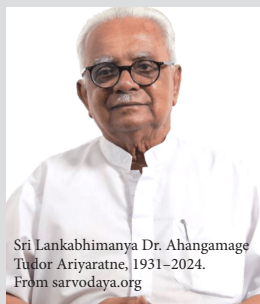
Nevertheless, I commend Samana Bodhirak for his unique and far-reaching outlook and dedication to the improvement of society.

(Sulak Sivaraksa Facebook)

## Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement Founder and Buddhist Leader Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne Has Died in Sri Lanka, Aged 92

By **Craig C Lewis**, April 17, 2024

Source: For the full article please refer to Buddhist Door Global at <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/sarvodaya-shramadana-movement-founder-and-buddhist-leader-dr-a-t-ariyaratne-has-died-in-sri-lanka-aged-92/>



The socially engaged Buddhist leader and founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, sometimes hailed as the “Gandhi of Sri Lanka,” died on Tuesday. He was 92 years old. His passing leaves a profound legacy of spiritual leadership, social empowerment, and compassionate service.

According to media reports, Dr. Ariyaratne, the father of six children and a devout Buddhist who was active in Sri Lankan politics and community development throughout his life, passed away at a private hospital in Colombo while undergoing treatment.

As the most prominent and internationally renowned socially engaged Buddhists in Sri Lanka, Dr. Ariyaratne built the foundation for the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, a grassroots humanitarian organization that has been active throughout Sri Lanka since 1958, and that has grown into the nation’s largest and most broad-based community-development NGO.

Sarvodaya Shramadana, a self-governance movement, takes an integrated approach to development based on community participation, self-reliance, and sustainability, and founded on the concept of “sharing of labour, thought, and energy for the awakening of all.” In promoting spiritual and cultural development, the movement has built a successful rural economic empowerment program based on micro-finance and developing entrepreneurship, benefiting more than 15,000 underprivileged communities in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lankan media reported that final funeral rites for Dr. Ariyaratne would be conducted in Colombo on 20 April, with full state honors, in line with instructions agreed on by Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, and Sarvodaya Shramadana officials.

Dr. Ariyaratne’s remains will lie in state at the headquarters of Sarvodaya Shramadana in the municipality of Moratuwa until noon on 20 April, before being borne by funeral procession to Independence Square the Sri Lankan capital. Final religious rites will then be held, followed by cremation at 4 p.m.

A former high school teacher at Nalanda College Colombo, Dr. Ahangamage Tudor Ariyaratne was born in southern Sri Lanka in 1931. He studied economics at university and was later made an

Honorary Doctor of Letters (D.Litt.).

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement first took root during a charitable camp in Sri Lanka’s Kurunegala District in 1958 that Dr. Ariyaratne organized, along with 40 high school students and 12 teachers from Nalanda College Colombo. The workshop conducted various social services and led to the formal establishment of Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, with the underlying goal of fostering a just, sustainable, and compassionate social system aimed at supporting the fundamental needs of the community through individual and collective enlightenment informed by traditional principles of Theravada Buddhism. Today the organization is one of the world’s largest volunteer development movements, with in excess of 3,000 paid employees.

In response to the news of Dr. Ariyaratne’s passing, the revered Korean Dharma master and socially engaged Buddhist activist Venerable Pomnyun Sunim, founder of the volunteer-based Buddhist community Jungto Society and international humanitarian organization Join Together Society (JTS), and patron of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), shared a public statement:

I am deeply saddened to hear of the death of Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, the founder of the Sarvodaya movement and the world leader of socially engaged Buddhism, and I express my sincere condolences.

May he rest in peace.

The influence of engaged Buddhism achieved by Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne has been a great inspiration to me and the volunteers of the Jungto Society.

The Jungto practitioners and I have long remembered and practiced the teachings he gave us when he visited the Sujata Academy in India and Jungto Society in Korea.

Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne has passed away, but his teaching and practice will remain with us forever, helping many practitioners achieve the Buddhadharmā.

Please rest in Nirvana.

We’ll continue with his legacy of engaged Buddhism around the world.

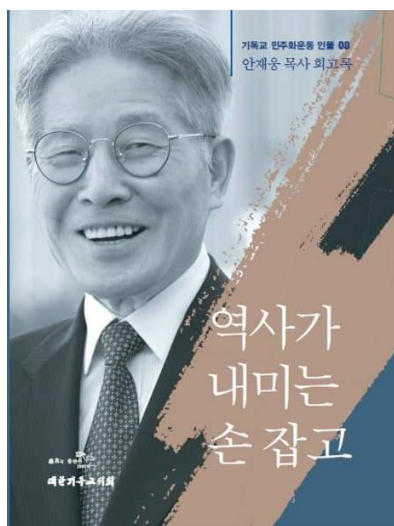
Dr. Ariyaratne received numerous local and international honors in recognition of his lifetime of work benefitting others through peace-making and community development, among them: the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1969; the King Baudouin International Development Prize for 1982–83; the Gandhi Peace Prize from the government of India in 1996; and the Niwano Peace Prize in 1992. Dr. Ariyaratne received the Acharya Sushil Kumar International Peace Award for 2005, and in 2007 the government of Sri Lanka bestowed on him the nation’s highest civil honor, conferring the title Sri Lankabhimanya.

Every human being, particularly the Buddhist, must think of the well-being of all as our objective. If we are to realize Bodhi or the highest levels of intelligence that any human mind has the capacity to attain, we have to serve all living beings and help them overcome physical, mental, and emotional suffering. This truly is the bodhisattva ideal. This is our supreme goal and it may be called total personal awakening. — Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne

## *Holding the Hands of History - A Memoir of Rev. AHN Jae Woong*

The History of An Ecumenical Activist in Asia and Asian Churches  
Book Review (March 2022) by **Professor KIM Heung Soo** (Church Historian, Professor Emeritus at Mokwon University, and former President at the National Council of YMCAs of Korea)

**Source:** *The Christian Thought* - A Monthly Magazine, published by Christian Literature Society of Korea, vol. 759, March 2022, pp.158-163. YunHeePathos - <https://yunheepathos.tistory.com/1885>



What does this 700-page book contain? In general, memoirs are about personal stories. However, it is better not to expect personal stories about the author, Rev. AHN Jae Woong and his family in his memoir. In Chapter 1, the readers can learn a little about the author's childhood and his family. He was born and raised in a Presbyterian home, known as "The Believing Family", located near Songnisan in Boeun. In order to prepare for his entrance to the University, AHN left his hometown to live with his uncle in Seoul. He was substantially influenced by his uncle, Rev. AHN Kwang Kook. When the author failed to enter the

university, his uncle had suggested that he enrolled in Soongsil University instead. The author lived with his uncle's family until his sophomore year. After graduation, the author had intended to study theology at Hanshin University but his uncle recommended him for admission into the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary.

AHN's uncle had a profound influence on him during his college days. It was also the time when he met practitioners who were leading the progressive Student Christian Movement. In his Bible Study class, he met Mr. OH Jae Shik and Dr. James T. LANEY, the latter being a Methodist missionary from the United States of America. Mr. OH Jae Shik was then, the Executive Secretary of the Korea Student Christian Council (KSCC) and Dr. James T. LANEY was his co-worker. KSCC was a council body of the Korea Student Christian Movement (KSCM), University YMCA, and Student YWCA. AHN used to visit the KSCM office often, which was then located in the "Christian Literature Society of Korea" Building in Jongno 2-ga. KSCM was then led by General Secretary Rev. SON Myung Gul. The author also participated in the

ecumenical work camp led by Rev. PARK Sang Jung, the Executive Secretary of the National Christian Council of Korea (NCCK) Youth Department, as well as the National Christian Council of Japan (NCCJ) Youth Department's ecumenical work camp held in Japan. Youth camps were another form of university education for AHN, which broadened his Christian horizons. The author was taught the Bible and received leadership training from OH Jae Shik, James T. LANEY, SON Myung Gul, and Park Sang Jung. Their tutelage would last till December 1963, when he graduated from the University. The future of an ecumenical movement's leader was thus, prepared.

After serving in the South Korean military as part of the country's national draft, AHN volunteered at the KSCM Summer Conference in 1968, led by Mr. OH Jae Shik, the Executive Secretary of the University division of YMCA, and Rev. CHOI Sung Mook, the General Secretary of the KSCC. In those days, Mr. Oh Jae Shik, the former Executive Secretary of the KSCC, also worked as the Executive Secretary of the University division of National Council of YMCAs of Korea, after completing his theological studies at Yale University. Around 800 KSCM members, and members of the University YMCA and Student YWCA, which are all member organizations of KSCC, had participated in that summer conference. The main task of the summer conference was to merge these three organizations. Hence, the author describes in his memoir, how the conference became "a turning point in the Student Christian Movement" (p. 51). Around this time,

the author was also preparing to study abroad, but he gave up the idea, right after the 1968 Summer Conference and accepted the post of Executive Secretary of KSCC instead. Rev. CHOI Sung Mook, General Secretary of KSCC, resigned from his position at the end of the summer conference. In November 1969, the author became a staff of Mr. OH Jae Shik, who took up the position of the first General Secretary of the Korea Student Christian Federation (KSCF). The KSCC was subsequently dissolved. After ten years of leading the Student Christian Movement in Korea, AHN became a front-line practitioner at the age of 30 in 1970.

Chapter 2 covers the period when the author “was deeply immersed in the Student Christian Movement” (p. 56). When the Student Christian Movement was transformed into the KSCF system, the author was at the forefront of the movement. After he became KSCF’s Executive Secretary, the author attended the training of the Asia-Pacific Secretariat of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), where Mr. KANG Moon Kyu was the Regional Secretary since 1970. The training for Asian youth lasted for three months and was held at Tozanso, the Japan YMCA training center. In this way, AHN’s horizon was broadened to Asia, and the relationship between WSCF Asia-Pacific Secretariat and Asian Christian youth was established. Since then, the author led the Student Christian Movement for no less than eleven years, right until 1980.

This was the time when AHN demonstrated his leadership as a practitioner in the student movement

organization, and in this process, he became a leader of the Korean democratization movement. The first ordeal that the author experienced was the “National Federation of Democratic Youth and Students” incident in April 1974. As a result of his involvement, he was imprisoned at the beginning of his honeymoon. His wife, who worked for the “Council for Political Detainees”, was forced to endure various hardships at the hand of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA). After being arrested by the police and transferred to the KCIA on March 31, 1974, AHN was sentenced to fifteen years in prison but was released a year later, on February 15.

Looking back at this period, 50 years later, the author remembers Korean and international comrades who shared the ups and downs of the Student Christian Movement, and the Korean democratization movement in general, especially that of Mr. NAH Byung Shik, who is now deceased. The author finally took office as the General Secretary of the KSCF in 1976. Therefore, this book covers not only the history of the Student Christian Movement but also the Korean Democratization Movement.

This book is one among the history series about the prominent figures of the Korean Christian Democratization Movement. As this book’s title contains the word, “history,” one may conclude that it is about Korean history. However, the Korean story is only a small part of the book. Even though his activist life in Korea ended in 1980, his life has expanded to embrace the whole of the Asian region after that. The ecumenical movement of Asian churches is also an important

part of the book. The author became the Regional Secretary of the WSCF Asia-Pacific Region in Hong Kong in 1980. After his appointment in December 1979, Rev. KIM Kwan Suk and Rev. KANG Won Yong had to meet then Korean Military Strongman, CHUN Doo Hwan to negotiate for AHN’s departure from Korea, so that he could take up his post in Hong Kong. He then spent the subsequent six years in Hong Kong. The book goes on to tell many WSCF-related stories. Since then, AHN’s horizon and sphere of activities have expanded to cover the whole of Asia. And he began to find ways to help realize the aspirations of the Asian peoples.

During this time, the people’s liberation from military dictatorships in several Asian countries including, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Taiwan became paramount. There was also the issue of human rights of marginalized groups, such as the indigenous peoples and high-mountain tribal communities that needed to be addressed. In Hong Kong, AHN began to establish close working relationships between WSCF, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

After his tenure at the WSCF Asia-Pacific Region had ended, AHN embarked upon his theological studies at Harvard University. And after his graduation, he was appointed to lead the Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission (CCA-URM) in Hong Kong, succeeding Rev. KWON Ho Kyung. He continued to work in Hong Kong until 1995. In his memoir, AHN commented, “It was like moving my job from campus ministry to urban-rural ministry” (p. 242). In

taking on this task, the author has prioritized in building people's power in Asia. The top leadership of CCA-URM came from India and Korea then, with namely, two Indians and three Koreans (OH Jae Shik, KWON Ho Kyung, AHN Jae Woong) at its helm. The Korean leadership demonstrates the strength and importance of the Korean Church in Asia. Its leadership was already evidenced in the region's church-state relations since the 1970s. When I visited CCA in the fall of 2009, the Associate General Secretary from Sri Lanka told me that the Churches of Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan have played an important leadership role in church-state relationship of Asian churches through their respective democratization movements.

AHN returned to Korea from Hong Kong in 1995 and led the Korea Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development as the Executive Director in Seoul for three years, before returning to Hong Kong in January 1999, to take up the post as CCA's Associate General Secretary, responsible for finance. He then became CCA's General Secretary a year later. In his memoir, AHN remembers that Rev. IN Myung Jin has recommended him to assume the post of CCA's Associate General Secretary for Finance, and Dr. Bart Shaha, the General Secretary of the World Alliance of YMCAs, has recommended him for the latter position. Although the author mainly stayed in Hong Kong, his leadership and involvement covered the Asian region.

The author's activities during this period are less known to us in Korea. Hence, I was particularly interested in

reading this part of his book. AHN and I have attended the World Alliance of YMCAs General Assembly in Thailand, and the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs General Assembly in Japan together. He then introduced me to colleagues and friends with whom he had previously worked with across Asia. I saw how he was being warmly greeted by Asian colleagues, which made me realize that he is really a leader of Asia, rather than a Korean leader. These were people he met and worked with while leading organizations, such as the WSCF Asia Pacific Regiont, CCA, and YMCA. Chapter 4 to 7 are full of stories about the Asian peoples.

Among many other activities AHN has initiated in Asia, the publication of "A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia (2004)" is particularly noteworthy for Korean Church historians, and missionaries who work in Asia. The Korean version was published in 2006. AHN saw the necessity for such a book and went on to organize a committee to realize it. He also began fundraising for it during his tenure as CCA's General Secretary. AHN regarded this initiative as his, "... important achievement while serving as the General Secretary of CCA" (p. 367). Besides AHN, KANG Moon Kyu, OH Jae Shik, PARK Sang Jung, and KWON Ho Kyung, have all worked as Executives in CCA and WSCF, etc. They all testified to the People's Movements, the Ecumenical Movements, and the Student Christian Movements throughout Asia through their memoirs, which were published after their retirement. In this way, we learn about our Asian neighbors through their involvement, as well as

through various other testimonies of Korean missionaries and ecumenical activists active in churches and Christian organizations throughout Asia.

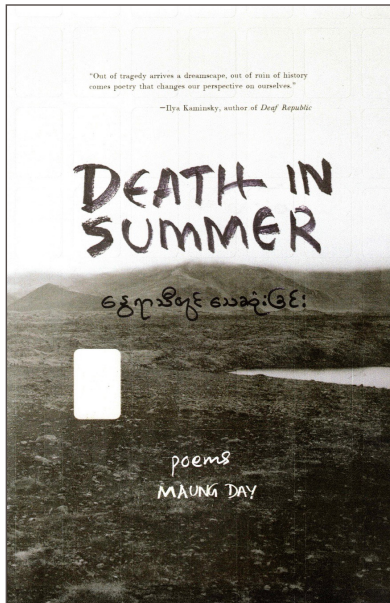
AHN highlighted, from Chapter 8 to the end of his book, various social movement activities that he engaged with after his return to Korea in 2005. The author took office as the President of the National Council of YMCAs of Korea in 2012. In 2014, the National Council of YMCAs of Korea celebrated its 100th anniversary under his leadership. This was such a great blessing for Korea YMCAs.

This book profoundly describes the author's arduous and rewarding life story that spans 80 years. There is a confession of faith that he did not dare to shake off "The hands of history" was guided by his faith. In this respect, this book is about the history of confession of an Asian ecumenical activist from Boeun, North Chungcheong Province. In this memoir, AHN also describes his sadness that he could not warmly hold his family's hand while holding the hands of history. "My imprisonment has turned my wife into an activist and sacrificed my eldest child" (p. 158).

The author's marriage was officiated by Rev. PARK Hyung Kyu. When he proposed to her, LEE Kyung Ae, who was then the Secretary of Rev. KIM Chi Mook, the General Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs of Korea, "She just smiled shyly" (p.101). It is the most emotional scene in the book and the most beautiful scene in his life. The only flaw of this book is how AHN's personal memories are hidden by 'history'.

# "Beyond the Sensible Mind"

## An interview with writer and artist Maung Day



Coming this fall, *Death in Summer* is Burmese poet Maung Day's ninth book of poems and his first full-length collection written in English: a haunting, surreal series of prose poems and original ink drawings that deliver defiant social commentary on the atrocities of Myanmar's past and its turbulent current events.

From the introduction by Greg Bem: "*These poems emphasize public voice and collective spirit, through suffering and triumph, and yet at the core is Maung Day: his voice, his experience, his self.*"

**Chin Music Press: Maung, congratulations on *Death in Summer*! It's a gorgeous and startling collection of poems and artwork. Tell us a**

**little about the inspiration for this project.**

**Maung Day:** In 2019, I wrote a series of prose poems in Burmese and some of them were the earlier incarnations of the poems in *Death in Summer*. (These poems were written during the course of three years, and several of them were first published in *The Margins*, the online publication of Asian American Writers Workshop.) There is a tradition of tale telling running in my family. My grandmother who will be 97 this year told me and her other grandchildren numerous tales when we were young. I was always fascinated by her tales. They were strange and wonderful. In fact, a lot of those stories were about my great grandparents, their life experiences and the times they lived in. Then there was my father who passed away five years ago. He was a schoolteacher as well as a teller of tales. So, you can say I grew up listening to a lot of stories. I believed in most of those stories and still remember many of them.

**This is a collection of prose poems and artwork. What was it about the form of prose poetry that interested you?**

I have always wanted to write a book of prose poems drawing on the history of my family and my own childhood

experiences. There are a few books of poetry that taught me how to work with the autobiographical, the mythological, and the political in a poem: Venus Khoury-Ghata's *Alphabets of Sand*, Charles Simic's *The World Doesn't End*, Valzhyna Mort's *Collected Body*, and Ilya Kaminsky's *Dancing in Odessa*. Then there's the great Russell Edson whose work showed me how to ply fable-making, surrealist imagery, and absurdity in poetry. Prose poetry makes it possible for me to bring into the work all of these elements including the tale-telling tradition of my family.

**What surprised you during the creation of this project?**

The biggest surprise has been the response of my body and conscious/unconscious mind during the process of writing these poems. I felt like I was writing something very, very close to me, something I knew and could still feel very much, but at the same time, I felt very free and was ready to go beyond the sensible mind and explore what my imagination and unconscious mind could mine from themselves or from my memories. It was an enjoyable process.

**Did anything surprise you about the finished version of this project?**

This project has been a combined effort and most effort came from the editorial team and the publicity department of Chin Music. I am very grateful for their support. I am so happy to see my poems and my art published side by side. The images

seem to speak to or weave themselves into the words quite well and quite interestingly, I think. These images were made over the past ten years with a lot of discontent, criticalness, and hope.

#### What's next for you?

I haven't been able to write poetry since the coup d'état. But I have been writing a bit of prose and making a bit of art. I want to write poetry again. This project has given me new energy and excitement. I intend to start writing poetry again soon and see what happens.

**Thanks so much for chatting, Maung, and congratulations on the collection. It really is a special thing. Last question: What's something that you've read/watched/seen/listened to lately that you're loving?**

I have been reading a book of poems called *Waitress in Fall* by Kristin Omarsdottir. It's such a daring work, such beautiful sensuality, such playfulness. It will change the way you think about poetry and life. I am also reading *The White Book* by Han Kang. A slow, meditative, and gorgeous writing about grief.

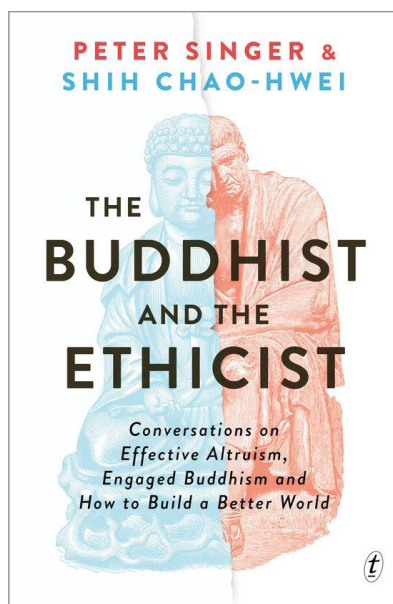


## ***The Buddhist and the Ethicist: Conversations on Effective Altruism, Engaged Buddhism, and How to Build a Better World***

By Nachaya Campbell-Allen

February 1, 2024

**Source:** *Buddhist Door Global* - <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/features/book-review-the-buddhist-and-the-ethicist-conversations-on-effective-altruism-engaged-buddhism-and-how-to-build-a-better-world/>



On 12 December 2023, Shambhala Publications released *The Buddhist and the Ethicist: Conversations on Effective Altruism, Engaged Buddhism, and How to Build a Better World* by Peter Singer and Shih Chao-Hwei.

This book features Shih Chao-Hwei, a Buddhist monastic, scholar, social activist, professor at Hsuan Chuang University and the founder of Hong Shih Buddhist College, and Peter Singer, renowned as the “father of the modern animal welfare movement”

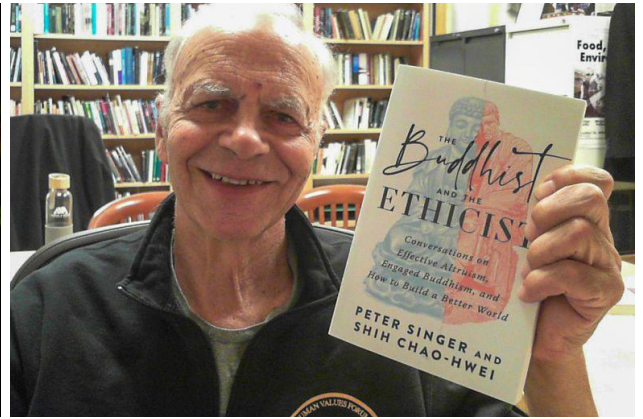
and a leading philosopher. Singer, recognised for his influential, and at times controversial, work in bioethics and animal rights, as a non-religious philosophy professor, explores his affinity for Buddhism despite initial scepticism, finding common ground on ethical considerations. The dialogues in this book cover a range of topics, including animal rights, gender equality, and various moral dilemmas. The collaboration, initiated at the Bodhi Monastery in Taiwan in 2016, reflects a meeting of minds bridging cultural and philosophical gaps over five years.

The collaborative effort involved meticulous transcriptions due to the language barriers, ultimately being translated by Yuan Shiao-Ching, and critical discussions over this time which both stretched and probed each other's thinking.

This book contains topics some may find challenging or triggering including suicide, abortion, animal cruelty and eugenics. These are, nonetheless, provocative subjects that any atheist or Buddhist will inevitably consider eventually, and how the



*Ven. Chao-Hwei. From Initium Media*



*Peter Singer with a copy of "The Buddhist and the Ethicist." From LinkedIn*

Buddhist precepts of some two and a half thousand years ago hold today, without appearing somewhat sanctimonious and inappropriate in contemporary context.

The book reads as a scripted dialogue or a transcript of a private conversation, offering readers insight into the exceptionally polite and respectful exchange between Singer and Ven. Chao-Hwei. The conversational tone seems to take on a Q&A structure, where Singer seeks Ven. Chao-Hwei's reflections which consist of Buddhist tales as well as her own experiences, and questions are reiterated in responses, one assumes emphasizing her understanding, but also useful for a neophyte Buddhist audience. Ven. Chao-Hwei emerges as a well-researched and informed Buddhist, seamlessly blending Western psychology with strict Buddhist perspectives.

The book opens with an examination of the convergence and divergence between Buddhist ethics and utilitarianism, where their discussion covers ethical scenarios,

like sacrificing one innocent life to save many, revealing the complexity of decision-making and the subjective nature of ethical judgments, before progressing logically to concepts like karma, equal rights, and gender judgments, through to the dilemma surrounding meat consumption within Buddhist communities, including monastics, and the perceived inaction of Buddhist leaders in addressing this concern.

The juxtaposition of utilitarianism with the perceived Buddhist emphasis on contemplation over activism highlights a significant disparity in their approaches to instigating positive societal change. If it is deemed acceptable to eat the flesh of another living creature, how and where does one draw the line between staying alive and murder? And where does that argument end? In a respectful "waste not want not" environment, should we still be eating the way of our hunter-gatherer forebears, or do we live in a world where, thanks to advancements in many fields, many of us have a choice? We despise cruelty inflicted on

animals, yet remain blind to the meat sandwich we may be consuming.

The dialogues were insightful enough to prompt reflection in many areas. One example was during the section discussing the Chinese Mahayana practice of Compassionate or Merciful Release. It brought back memories of my time in Brittany, a region known for its seafood-centric culture due to its northwestern peninsula location in France. Unlike the selfish or detrimental situations cited by Ven. Chao-Hwei, where the practice has often become an ego-driven act, or akin to a business not dissimilar to fox-hunting where the fox is caught only to be rereleased in front of a pack of hungry dogs for the chase, local Breton Buddhists engage in the practice of releasing wild-caught crabs and marine life. Caught by local fishermen, delivered to the local supermarkets and kept alive, they are quickly bought by the Buddhists and freed in safer coastal waters. This is surely a small example of earnest compassion in action with no religion needed. No crabs needed either for us

to do similarly small yet meaningful acts of kindness.

I have been a vegetarian my whole life, so naturally, this conversation intrigued me. However, the discourse on gender equality caught my attention even more, and I found myself not just in agreement with Ven. Chao-Hwei, but also heartened by the fearless stance she takes against numerous misogynistic issues. Over the years, I've often discussed these problems, and seeing them boldly addressed by this courageous woman was incredibly validating. The deeply entrenched misogyny, established millennia ago, has lingered in an unevolved and insecure state, casting a shadow over the lives of countless women, and causing immense suffering for too many across various religions and life paths. And religions like Buddhism should know better than to be caught up in the illusion of gender and

separatism.

As for the other topics raised in this discourse, they are not only of valuable interest but ultimately serve as a diving board from which we can nosedive into our own deep thoughts and flex uncomfortable synapses.

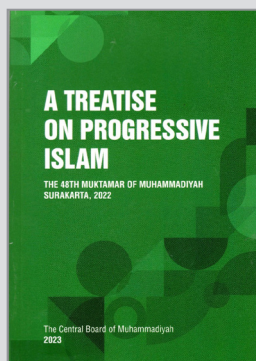
As a lifelong philosopher introduced to Buddhism at a very young age when Geshe Namgyal Wangchen lived with us at our family home, I was eager to read this book. The challenging topics presented serve as an excellent introduction for those intrigued by either perspective, whether seeking a deeper understanding of Buddhist philosophy or, akin to any engaging debate, desiring to explore two thoughtful viewpoints to expand their own thinking. My feeling is that the book and discussion is presented in such a way so as to aid the reader to do just this.

The book provides fascinating discussions between an incredibly progressive female Buddhist and a broader-thinking man than many. While I, as a woman, feel congruent with the feminist opinions offered by Shih Chao-Hwei, I could not help but wonder, actually almost amuse myself with the thought of, were this book a conversation between a traditional male monastic and an atheist, like Germaine Greer. Or even Richard Dawkins, just how differently the book would read.

Ultimately, this is a 5-year-long, deeply considered conversation between two intelligent and lively minds that is wonderful to be witness to, with questions that would have us all reflecting actively.

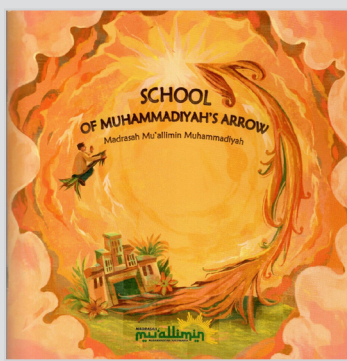
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## Recommended Reading



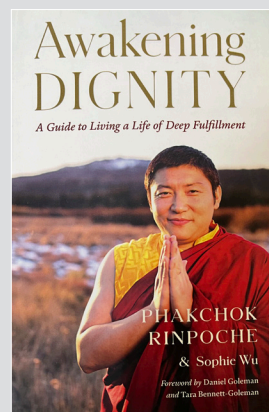
*A Treatise on Progressive Islam, 48<sup>th</sup> Muktamar of Muhammadiyah, Solo, 2022*

**Publisher:** Central Board of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta and Jakarta, Indonesia, 2023



*School of Muhammadiyah's Arrow*  
*Mardrash Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah*

**Authors:** Inayatul Husna, Rasya Swarnasta, and Latifah Ratriana  
**Publisher:** Mardrash Mu'allimin Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2023



*Awakening Dignity*

**Authors:** Pakchok Rinpoche & Sophie Wu  
**Publisher:** Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boulder, Colorado, USA, 2022

ปาฐกถาเสวนา พริ้งพวงแก้ว ครั้งที่ 29  
The 29th Annual Sem Pringpuangkeo Public Lecture

# Eco-dharma: ธรรมนิเวศ

## Future of All beings in Global Boiling อนาคตสรรพสิ่งในโลกที่กำลังเดือด

จันทร์ 26 กุมภาพันธ์ 2567  
เวลา 14.00 - 17.30 น.

เรือนร้อยอนา มูลนิธิเสฐียรโกเศศ-นาคะประทีป  
ถนนเจริญนคร คลองสาน กรุงเทพฯ

**Monday, 26th February 2024,  
14.00-17.30 hrs.**

Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation  
Charoen Nakorn Rd. Klongsan, Bangkok

### ORGANIZERS :

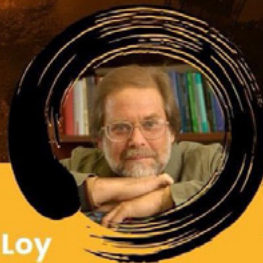


ปาฐกถา โดย

**David R. Loy**

นักเขียน และธรรมอาจารย์เซน

แปลภาษา โดย อัญชลี คุรุฑิ



### MORE DETAILS :

Tel. 08 6305 3011, 09 9453 8836, 08 6327 7792

[https://semsikkha.org/2019/sem\\_publictalk/](https://semsikkha.org/2019/sem_publictalk/)

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## SAVE the Dates

### The 21<sup>st</sup> Biennial INEB Conference Buddhist Heritage Towards Inclusive Societies



Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India  
28 November – 3 December 2024

### Tentative Program Schedule

- Monday-Wednesday, 25-27 November  
Hands-on Workshop  
at Sukhavati Eco-temple
- Thursday-Friday, 28-29 November  
Engaged Buddhist Workshops
  - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
  - Climate Change
  - Child Protection
  - Marginalized & Inclusive Societies
- Saturday, 30 November  
Exposure Visit
  - Buddhist Heritage Sites
  - Sukhavati Eco-temple Project
- Sunday, 1 December  
Public Symposium in Chennai
- Monday & Tuesday, 2 - 3 December  
INEB AC/EC Meeting

Organised by:

