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Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's Centenary
27th May 2006



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* symbol marking the diamond jubilee of the King's ascension to the throne (9th June 2006)

PEACE

Seeds of Peace is published thrice annually in January, May and September, in order to promote the aims and objectives of the Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development (TICD) and the Spirit in Education Movement (SEM) as well as the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). In order to subscribe a $50/year donation is suggested. Personal checks from the UK, US, and Euro are accepted.

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The goals of INEB are to:

1. Promote understanding and co-operation among Buddhist countries, different Buddhist sects, and socially conscious Buddhist groups.
2. Facilitate and carry out solutions to the many problems facing our communities, societies, and world.
3. Articulate the perspective of Engaged Buddhism regarding these problems and train Buddhist activists accordingly.
4. Serve as a clearing house of information on existing Engaged Buddhist groups.
5. Cooperate with activists from other spiritual traditions.

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Sulak Sivaraksa offered *Pah Krab,* which commemorates the centenary of *Bhikkhu* Buddhadasa to H.H. the Dalai Lama at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath on 10 January 2006. His Holiness immediately put it on his shoulder, which used to be traditional among Thai monks. (*Pah Krab* is a cloth on which Thai Buddhist monks put in front of them when prostrating before the image of the Buddha or to let female devotees put offerings on it to avoid personal contact as prescribed by the *Theravada Vinaya.*)

100th Anniversary Celebration of the Birth of the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (27/05/2006)

A century ago, a child was born in Chaiya District, Surat Thani Province in southern Thailand. That child, Ngeuam Panich, who was later known as the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, became a revered monk. He is recognized as one of the most influential Buddhist teachers in Thai history.

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), during its meeting last October, included the 100th anniversary of the birth of the Venerable Buddhadasa Bhikkhu in the UNESCO's Calendar of Anniversaries of Great Personalities and Historic Events, 2006-2007. Bhikkhu Buddhadasa was among the 63 personalities whose anniversaries would be celebrated until next year. UNESCO has also encouraged member states to join the celebrations. In Thailand, various activities are being planned by both public and private organizations in honor of the late scholar monk.

Born on 27 May 1906 and died on 8 July 1993, Buddhadasa, literally meaning "the servant of the Buddha," became a Buddhist monk at the age of twenty. After a few years of study in Bangkok, he was inspired to live close with nature in order to investigate the teachings of the Buddha by going back to the original sources. He decided to quit his formal monastic education to pursue a more effective and appropriate approach. He made an effort to integrate Buddhist philosophical theory with practice. The effort involves, for instance, the transformation of greed to generosity, hatred to compassion, and delusion to wisdom.

The document, prepared by Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and submitted to UNESCO, states that Bhikkhu Buddhadasa established Suan Mokkhabalarama, the Grove of the Power of Liberation, as a spiritual center in the forest in 1932. This center was the first of its kind in Thailand and also in the world.

After extensive studies, experiments, and practices with spiritual life, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa devoted his life to disseminating the essence of Buddhist teachings and to bringing spiritual values back into the modern world. He always sought cooperation and understanding with other religions. He was skillful in elaborating the teachings of the Buddha and other spiritual practices to fit the traits and backgrounds of his audience without discriminating against nationalities, religions, and beliefs.

More than 140 books by Bhikkhu Buddhadasa have been translated into English, 15 books into French, and eight into German. Some of his books have also appeared in Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Lao, and Tagalog. Moreover, his work is studied in every university in Europe and North America offering courses in world religions. He was a pioneer in promoting understanding between different religions and was highly respected by many religious leaders. UNESCO has honored him as one of the world's great personalities.

Editorial Notes

This year, the Thai government agrees to celebrate Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's centenary (27th May) nationwide and internationally. The government also intends to organize a big festival to mark the diamond jubilee of H.M. the King's ascension to the throne (9th June). Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra, the Prime Minister, personally wants to carry both events under his leadership. However, he has no vision for cultural or spiritual depth. Besides he has no moral legitimacy to lead the country. Both national activities will carry no meaningful message to the next generation. Even to most people who really care for the revered monk and King, the events will be a waste of public money without any dhammic essence.

As for Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's centenary, we at INEB will organize workshops, meditative gatherings etc. among Buddhists and with those of other living faiths and nonbelievers for social awareness to bring about peace and justice as well as environmental balance in our small ways within the kingdom and abroad by cooperating with many friends and organizations. This will be reported in *Seeds of Peace* as well as on our website (www.sulak-sivaraksa.org).

H.M. the King made a gracious speech on 4th December last year on the eve of his birthday, that he should be criticized as he is only a human being who could also improve himself by listening to constructive criticism. Besides he warned us that anyone accusing others of defaming the king is in fact harming him and weakens the monarchy. Yet, H.M.'s government is now directing the police to use the law of lese majeste to get rid of Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra's rivals nationwide. Our publisher, Sulak Sivaraksa, is no exception. The police charged that the interview he gave to a journal *Fa Diew Kan* (*Same Sky*) contains at least 19 counts against this law. We therefore have his interview translated in full so that our non-Thai readers can find out personally what it is all about. (see pages 49-57)

We also have Sulak's public talk to the multitude of the people's movement at Sanam Luang, next to the Grand Palace on 5th March 2006, translated and published in this issue (see pages 42-44) so that the reader can understand the speaker's point of view that the Prime Minister has no moral-legitimacy to run the government any more.

Since the PM used all kinds of tricks, by hook or by crook, to abuse Parliament and all public institutions for his own benefit politically and economically, not to mention for his family and cronies, without any consideration for the citizens or the nation state, a lot of Thais feel that we must have the peoples' movement to oust Mr. Thaksin and his cronies from office nonviolently. Sulak's speech was one of many stating the facts against the government – those facts had been suppressed or distorted by the government and the mainstream mass media under the influence or control of the government.

The public demonstrations have been going on for weeks, with more and more participation from citizens – not only in the capital but in many provinces too. People who spoke at the rally included senators, former public servants and diplomats as well as members of the media who have been exploited by the regime during the past five years. Besides, academics, monks, medical doctors as well as entrepreneurs have also joined the platform to denounce the government. It is wonderful that public gatherings went on for weeks nonviolently with patience and a good sense of humor – very Siamese and Buddhist, yet Muslims and Christians also joined the movement. Many contributed money, food and leadership.

Unfortunately the ruling party also organized counter public gatherings by paying people to gather together, to denounce the people's movement violently. Some of these people even went to barricade a newspaper's office to force it to suspend its daily publication for five days. This is certainly extra legal. Yet the government never intervened. Besides some leaders of this counter movement brought charges of defaming the king to leaders of the public demonstrations and others, including our publisher, Sulak Sivaraksa. (see pages 21)

We feel we must forgive them and we must also strengthen the public movement to be more nonviolent and to be more mindful so that compassion and wisdom will guide the people to overcome not only the present regime but the whole social structure, which is full of violence and greed – not only politically and economically, but culturally and educationally as well. Indeed even the establishment of the national Sangha must also undergo real spiritual reform so that the wheel of the law (Dhammacakka) would again be able to guide the wheel of power (Anacakka) meaningfully and appropriately for the contemporary world – not only in this kingdom but beyond. If that will be possible, then the centenary celebration of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa will really be meaningful, i.e. we will be leading the way to a culture of awakening and *ahimsa* worldwide.

Emergency Decree Creates Climate of Fear in Southern Thailand

Introduction

During the past 20 months, the southern border provinces of Thailand have been the scene of an unprecedented level of violence. More than 1,000 people—both civilians and government officials—have died in a new spate of violence, which began on 4 January 2004. Insurgent attacks—taking the form of arsons, bombs, beheadings and assassinations—have prompted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to implement a series of counter-insurgency responses. But many of the government initiatives exacerbate the problem and escalate mutual mistrust between the Buddhist Thais—particularly the authorities—and the ethnic Malay Muslim population in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat.

The Executive Decree on Government Administration in Emergency Situations (commonly known as the Emergency Decree), enacted on 16 July 2005, legalizes the removal of legal and administrative safeguards against human rights violations committed by government officials.[1] Given the fact that the Thai law enforcement and security forces are responsible for a high number of deaths and violations of human rights, the Emergency Decree has institutionalized a culture of impunity and injustice, which further alienates the local population from the state and contributes to the expansion of militant groups.

What is Wrong with the Emergency Decree?

The government of Prime Minister Thaksin initially referred to the preference to have alternative security legislations to replace martial law in the southern border provinces, which would give headways to the authorities in fighting insurgency.[2] But to many villagers in the southern border provinces, this policy is a "license to kill".[3]

The Emergency Decree does not proclaim a state of emergency in itself, but authorizes the Prime Minister to declare a state of emergency in parts or in whole of the country. This provides the legal basis for a range of special powers limiting and suspending fundamental human rights guaranteed under the 1997 Constitution of Thailand and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

As a state party to the ICCPR, Thailand must uphold and take measures to ensure the realization of basic rights. Like all state parties, under Article 4 of the ICCPR, Thailand may declare a state of emergency if the emergency "threatens the life of the nation." Once a state of emergency is officially announced, a state may derogate from the covenant "to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation, provided that such measures are not inconsistent with their other obligations under international law and do not involve discrimination solely on the ground of race, color, sex, language, religion or social origin."[4]

That said, many provisions of the ICCPR, such as the right to life, freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion may in no circumstances be circumscribed. Arbitrary deprivations of liberty or deviations from the fundamental principles of a fair trial, including the presumption of innocence, are not permitted. Further, the rules of international humanitarian law must always be strictly upheld. It remains, however, unclear how much effort has been put in place by the Thai government after the enactment of the Emergency Decree to ensure that the army, police, intelligence services, and other state institutions are fully aware of and commit to this effect.

In addition, according to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, the exigencies of the situation relate to the duration, geographical coverage, and scope of the state of emergency. They must be proportional to the threat and based on a careful justification of the state of emergency and any specific measures taken to implement it. But, while the Emergency Decree stipulates that a state of emergency will last a maximum of three months, it provides no limitation on how many times it can be extended. This creates the risk of arbitrary and disproportionate limitations on rights and freedoms on an indefinite basis.

The scope of the Emergency Decree does not appear to be necessary and is subject to misuse, given the Thai government's poor record on human rights and civil liberties. It provides the Prime Minister extraordinary

power to tell any Thai citizen that what they say or do is forbidden, to censor the media, to authorize warrantless searches and seizures, to forcibly move entire populations, and other extraordinarily repressive measures. No one should have all the powers that the Emergency Decree affords to Prime Minister Thaksin.

The Emergency Decree does not contain appropriate judicial and administrative safeguards and erects unnecessarily high barriers against legal action by individuals for human rights abuses by government officials. Both of these provisions are likely to alienate the public while creating a more permissive environment for abuses. This will only deepen the "climate of impunity" described by the United Nations Human Rights Committee in its report of 28 July 2005—a term that would not have been used in recent years to describe Thailand.

Under the administration of Prime Minister Thaksin, the Thai law enforcement and security forces have increasingly used excessive violence and operated with impunity. There has been virtually no accountability for the more than 2,000 extrajudicial killings during the "war on drugs" in 2003. There has been no accountability for the excessive use of lethal force by the security forces against a group of lightly armed militants in Krue Se Mosque in Pattani on 28 April 2004. There has been no accountability for the brutal dispersal of protesters in Tak Bai in Narathiwat on 25 October 2004. There has been no accountability for the many alleged abductions, tortures and murders, which have taken place in counter-insurgency operations in the three southern border provinces. It is this environment that has bred the violence.

Specific Problems with the Emergency Decree

1. Section 11 (1) and Section 12 allow the Prime Minister to issue a notification conferring the powers to a "competent officer" to arrest and detain a person for seven days upon application to a court. There is no limit on who such individuals can be, no requirement of adequate legal or other training, and no indication of how such persons will be supervised, and inadequate judicial oversight. This raises serious concerns about the possibility of arbitrary detentions, torture and mistreatment, which have been a serious problem since violence broke out in the south. As the United Nations Human Rights Committee pointed out in its 28 July 2005 report, "Any detention without external safeguards beyond 48 hours should be prohibited." This is because the longer an individual is held without appropriate safeguards, the more likely the individual is to be mistreated."
2. Section 12 bizarrely allows for suspects not to be detained in police stations, detention centers, penal institutions, or prisons. This raises the prospect of the use of secret, undisclosed, or inaccessible places of detention where detainees may be mistreated and where monitoring is impossible. This is an unprecedented and extremely dangerous provision that is almost certain to lead to abuses. There is a great risk of "disappearances" in such a volatile situation where there is no judicial oversight or access to counsel or family.
3. The Emergency Decree does not provide guarantees of access to counsel or family members, the right to challenge a detention before a court (*habeas corpus*), or safeguards against torture, or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment during the 30-day period of detention allowed by the decree. Only upon the termination of such period will a case proceed under the Criminal Procedure Code. Although the government has stated that a report about an arrest or detention will be submitted to the court, there is no time limit for the submission of this report and in practice we fear that reports will not be submitted in time for the courts to intervene as necessary. There is no reason to depart from provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code, which comports with international standards by limiting detention periods to 48 hours, provides for access to legal assistance, and establishes rights to *habeas corpus*. It also prohibits torture and mistreatment of detainees. Although the government has offered assurances that additional regulations will be issued to provide access to legal counsel and family, it remains unclear when these regulations will actually be issued and what their contents will be.
4. Section 16 removes the ability to challenge the legality of the Emergency Decree itself, or any orders or acts under the decree, in the Administrative Court. The Administrative Court is established in the Thai Constitution and is a key mechanism for the redress of human rights abuses by state agents, as well as a core element of the checks and bal-

ances system established under the Constitution. This is a transparent attempt to shield the government and its officials from anticipated allegations of abuse. It serves no legitimate purpose and should be removed.

5. Similarly, Section 17 provides unnecessarily expanded immunity from criminal, civil, and disciplinary liability for officials acting under the Emergency Decree. A complainant now has the burden to prove that the officials in question did not act in "good faith, non-discriminatory, and an unreasonable" manner. This will make it even more difficult for individuals suffering human rights abuses to find redress at a time when virtually all experts have advised your government that a key component of rebuilding confidence in the south is a demonstrable commitment to holding abusive officials accountable. There is already a strong reluctance and often a refusal of courts, particularly in the south, to accept cases related to human rights abuses by soldiers, police officers, or other government agents. This provision is sadly similar to attempts by previous military governments to shield soldiers and officials from the criminal law, such as amnesty legislation enacted by the military government National Peace Keeping Council after the coup in 1991 and after the crackdown on protesters in 1992. This was the product, directly and indirectly, of military rule, which allowed abusers to walk away from their crimes. This type of legislation is not something an elected government should be replicating or reinforcing. Even in a state of emergency, victims of human rights violations must have an effective way to challenge limitations of their fundamental human rights and freedoms before an independent judicial authority. The government is also obliged to provide compensation for illegal acts and to investigate and prosecute gross human rights violations committed in the course of security operations. This is particularly critical with regard to serious violations of human rights, such as the right to life, as well as freedom from torture, cruel and inhuman treatment and enforced and involuntary "disappearances."
6. Section 11 (2) authorizes a competent officer "to summon any person to report to the competent officials or to give an oral statement or submit any documents or evidence relevant to the emergency situation." The authorities may seek information and cooperation from the public as part of investigations into crimes. However, given the record of law enforcement and security forces in the three southern provinces, this power may be abused as the authorities resort to torture and inhumane treatment to extract information. In summoning persons to give information, the authorities have often ignored the right to remain silent. For this reason it is critical that proper oversight mechanisms are created when implementing Section 11 (2). In addition, as the separatist militants continue to single out and take retaliatory actions against any persons who cooperate with the authorities, the summoning powers must be used carefully to avoid making individuals targets. Adequate security must be offered to individuals cooperating or perceived to be cooperating with the authorities.
7. Freedom of expression is essential for the functioning of democracy and guaranteeing other fundamental human rights, yet Section 9 (3) allows for censorship for vague reasons such as "misleading understanding of the emergency or affecting the public morals of the people." Such terms can easily be used to limit legitimate political expression and dissent. Restrictions on freedom of expression under this section can also be applied both in the area where an emergency situation has been declared and throughout the entire country, allowing for a national regime of censorship. This would be disproportionate under present circumstances and therefore illegal under the ICCPR. It is important to remember that only through the free flow of information can the government, parliament, the judiciary, civil society and the public come to sound conclusions about the underlying facts and best policies to address political and social problems, especially in emergency situations.
8. Section 9 (2) allows for the suspension of the rights to freedom of assembly and association without any safeguards against the excessive use of force to prohibit or disperse the assembly or gathering of persons. This is of particular concern in light of the brutal and deadly dispersal of protestors in Narathiwat on 25 October, 2004, leading to many deaths, for which to date no

one has been fully held accountable and which have continued to fuel unrest in the south.

9. Section 11 (4) allows the authorities to issue a warrant for the search, removal, withdrawal or demolition of buildings, structures or obstructions as necessary in the exercise of functions in order to promptly terminate a serious situation where a delay may render the situation beyond control. Section 11 (5) expands these powers to issue an order to inspect letters, books, print materials, telegraphic transmissions, telephone conversations or any other means of communication. These regulations limit the right to privacy, but the decree provides no effective measures to prevent abuses and arbitrary implementation.
10. Section 9 (6) allows for the "evacuation of people out of a designated area for the safety of such civilians..." The evacuation of the civilian population should be considered a last resort. This power must be used carefully, if at all, to ensure it does not lead to abuses. Military and civilian officials should be aware that the forcible transfer of population without grounds permitted by international law from the area in which the persons concerned are lawfully present can be considered to be a crime against humanity.

Impacts of the Emergency Decree in Southern Thailand

Legal and security experts, as well as human rights advocates in Thailand and abroad, parliamentarians and members of the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) and the media vocally raised alarms and warned the government of all negative consequences of the Emergency Decree in the southern border provinces. That could perhaps be summed up by comments of the highly respected NRC Chairman, Anand Panyarachun, that, "The authorities have worked inefficiently. They have arrested innocent people instead of the real culprits, leading to mistrust among locals. So, giving them broader power may lead to increased violence and eventually a real crisis ... The important question is, when the power is exercised, will it be according to human rights (principles) and other laws? ... The government's ideas are not compatible with reconciliation efforts."[5]

Despite very vocal concern from many corners that the extraordinary powers prescribed by the Emergency Decree would not only downgrade human rights in Thailand, but also make worse the already precarious situation in the southern border provinces, the Thai government rushed to enact the Emergency Decree without parliamentary approval on 15 July, 2005. The Emergency Decree was then enforced in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat on 19 July, 2005 and renewed for another period of three months on 19 October, 2005.

The Muslim population in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat know that the Emergency Decree empowers police and soldiers to arrest and detain people without charge, and that any abuses committed by government officials will go unpunished. Worryingly, they also believe that unrealistic deadlines given to the law enforcement and security forces by Prime Minister Thaksin to quickly restore peace in the region have created pressure on police and soldiers to resort to extrajudicial means and human rights violations. They complain that a number of people have been arbitrarily arrested, "disappeared" or executed by government officials, including prominent Muslim lawyer Somchai Nelapaijit. Before his disappearance in March 2004, Somchai submitted reports to the Parliament and the National Human Rights Commission giving detailed accounts of how police tortured detainees suspected of involvement in insurgent activity, most notably by severe beatings, near-suffocation by drowning or placing plastic bags over their heads, and electric shocks to the thighs and testicles, in order to force them to provide information and confession.

However, to date, the government of Prime Minister Thaksin shows no serious attention to those allegations of serious human rights violations. Promises for investigation and justice appear to be only rhetoric, aiming to defuse criticisms and political pressures. Instead, what has emerged and in stitutionalized is denial and impunity.

The Thai government claims that it is satisfied with the enforcement of the Emergency Decree. But nothing has really changed. The brutality and lethality of militant attacks have in fact increased. Daily shootings and explosions still happened, with occasionally well-coordinated attacks on strategic positions and massacres of those suspected of cooperating with the authorities.

In many areas, Muslim villagers' trus in government officials has eroded to zero. On 29 August 2005, Imam Satopa

Yusoh of Ban Lahan village in Narathiwat's Sungai Padi district was gunned down in front of his home by unidentified gunmen. Almost 100 women and children formed a human barricade to prevent government officials from entering the village. One day later, 131 Muslim villagers fled Thailand to seek asylum in Malaysia, citing fear of persecution by the Thai law enforcement and security forces. On 20 September, 2005, hundreds of angry Muslims in Tanyong Limoh village of Narathiwat's Rangae district held two marines hostage—accusing the soldiers of responsiblity for the shooting which killed and injured many people in a village teashop. After 18 hours of drama, the two marines were found beaten and stabbed to death inside a single-room building.

Believing that villagers' resistance to the authorities had been masterminded and organized by the separatist militants, the government put more effort to break into their secretive networks and win back popular support. The result, however, is bordering on disaster when blacklists are used to pressure suspected separatist militants and their sympathizers to turn themselves in to the Thai government. The blacklists of suspected drug dealers in the 2003 "war on drugs" were full of errors. [6] The use of blacklists as part of a counter-insurgency campaign is even more risky and prone to abuse.

Reports from the 9th Region Police, in charge of the southern border provinces, indicate that as many as 4,000 Muslims in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat have been put on the lists as of October 2005. The lists—prepared by district offices, local police and military taskforces—target known members of militant groups, such as the Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO), the National Revolutionary Front (Barisan Revolusi Nasional or BRN), the Islamic Mujahidin Movement of Pattani (Gerakan Mujahidin Islam Pattani, GMIP) and the Bersatu, and individuals named in arrest warrants. Another group of names on the lists belongs to those considered to be "high-risk" because they are suspected of being supporters of armed groups or have shown an inclination towards separatist ideology. The authorities seek to encourage them to surrender to prove their innocence and pledge not to participate in insurgent activities.

Contradicting the claims of the government that careful intelligence has been carried out in compiling the lists, Muslim villagers complained that police, soldiers and district officials had visited their houses and had threatened them with "serious consequences" if they refused to voluntarily surrender. No warrants are produced and no legal procedure is invoked.

On 10 December, 2005, Interior Minister Kongsak Wantana and other senior officials presided over a ceremony in Yala celebrating a highly publicized "peace-building" course. But the ceremony turned into a major embarrassment after many participants protested that they had been forced to surrender—although they have done nothing wrong—and to take part in 10 days of training at the "peace-building" school otherwise they would be arrested under the Emergency Decree.

Under the Emergency Decree, anyone who defies a summons is liable to imprisonment for two years or a fine of 40,000 baht (US$1,000), or both. The Emergency Decree does not recognize the right to remain silent. Because those summoned to provide information to Thai authorities under the Emergency Decree are not considered as criminal suspects, they are denied the right of access to legal counsel and the right to *habeas corpus*. Safeguards against torture and inhumane treatment provided by the Criminal Procedure Code, which comports with international standards, are also not applicable. Thai lawyers and human rights activists are deeply concerned that the lack of sufficient safeguards and independent supervision of the security services has heightened the risk of misconduct and abuse by government officials, including arbitrary detention of innocent people and the torture of detainees in order to extract information and confessions.

There is very little concern among politicians and government officials regarding discretion and security which should be offered to those summoned to provide information or attend re-education programs. This has put Muslim villagers between a rock and a hard place. There has been an increased degree of violence towards the Muslim population, whom the separatist militants consider as "traitors". Surrender ceremonies arranged to score political points sometimes resulted in tragedy. On 16 November 2005, both parents and seven children of the Ahwaebuesa family in Narathiwat's Rangae district was wiped out in what could be described as a revenge attack after Suteng Ahwaebuesa reportedly switched

his allegiance to the government.

Recommendations

The government of Prime Minister Thaksin needs to urgently take action to undo the negative impacts of the Emergency Decree—beginning with the removal of Sections 16 and 17, and amendment of Sections 11 and 12.

The Thai government also needs to understand that the separatist militants right now do not have the numbers to control the territorial space, but to control the mental space. Residual grievances within the Muslim community will further strengthen the insurgency and make it possible for the separatist militants to a hard-line vision of Islam in the southern border provinces.

The growing alienation among the Muslim population has turned into sympathy, support and recruits for the insurgency. To reverse this trend, government officials involved in the implementation of extraordinary powers must be made to be fully aware of and committed to the protection of the rights and the safety of the people. Improving relations between the authorities and the Muslim population will be the only way to gain trust and cooperation.

Solutions to the lack of checks and balances over the Emergency Decree can be found in the creation of independent mechanisms—jointly operated by the National Human Rights Commission and the Law Society of Thailand—to facilitate communication with the Muslim community, monitor the enforcement of the Emergency Decree, provide legal assistance to the people, and investigate into allegations of human rights violations. Rumors of abuses can only be countered with truth.

Last but not least, as the southern border provinces will continue to be militarized in response to the insurgency, the Southern Border Provinces Peace-Building Command (SBPPBC) needs to create a benign presence in the Muslim community through the improvement of soldiers' cultural awareness, Malay language skills, and relationships with community leaders and villagers.

Sunai Phasuk
Consultant, Human Rights Watch, Asia Division

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[1] Full text of the Emergency Decree in Thai and English can be downloaded from website of the Council of State (*Krisadika*) http://www.krisdika.go.th/home.jsp

[2] *The Nation*, 17 July 2005.

[3] A special debate between Prime Minister Thaksin and Anand Panyarachun, chairman of the National Reconciliation Council (NRC) "Kansonthana phiset ruang kansang santisuk nai 3 jangwat chai daen pak tai," [Special discussion on peace-building in the three southern border provinces] 28 July 2005.

[4] Derogable rights, such as freedom of expression or association, may be restricted in specified ways in times of normality, that is, even without an emergency decree. Further restrictions by derogation can only be justified when the life of the nation is in danger. Such restrictions must be enacted by law, serve a purpose recognized by international law, and be necessary to achieve that purpose.

[5] *The Nation*, 19 July 2005.

[6] Blacklists were used in the 2003 "war on drugs" in which more than 2,500 people were killed in unexplained circumstances. Many were killed after being put on blacklists of suspected drug dealers or users.

Thai Politics: 2 Visions, 3 Ways

We're heading for a one-horse race election, which is really a non-election or an electoral nihilism. So our democracy is like the living dead: we are not sure if it's dead or alive or which part of it is dead and which alive. It seems all pointless or unworthy of commitment, especially when it is single-mindedly tied to the right to vote and therefore majority rule. Of course the right to vote is an expression of the freedom of choice. But it can be meaningful only if the people have knowledge and free access to information on the pressing issues confronting society and only if the candidates are also dignified, honest, and virtuous.

In terms of political stance or 'ideology', there is seemingly a three-horse race, but in actuality it is a two-pronged attack on the vision of a radical pluralist democracy advocated by the People's Alliance for Democracy. (There is also the Janus-faced political deus ex machina, comprising of the military and the king, which may intervene to support either position.)

Risking overgeneralizations, the three 'ideological' streams may be classified thus. One, Thaksin (who is doing a first-rate job at being a second-rate leader) and his fellow Thaksinians. They envision a democracy populated by passive and, by and large, apolitical consumers who periodically act as voters. Democracy is about the right to vote. Period. They found little use of the oppositional parties in the past five years, but now Thaksinians pleaded and pressured the three main oppositional parties to take part in the coming general election: for politics to be "calm" it should be kept as an intra-State affair, one lesson they learned from the series of protests at Sanam Luang whereby the protestors are depicted as irrational or fanatical. Most people are just too stupid, and therefore they should be kept busy entertaining themselves to death or making money as entrepreneurs, leaving politics to a bunch of Wise Men. Thaksin himself argues that the protestors are opposing him either because of vested interests or because they are brainwashed by one-sided information. The crux of his argument is that only he could distinguish between private and public interests—that is, only he could act as the Universal, could serve the general interest. Yeah right. And, Thaksin would not be fuming if the people were one-sided the other way—unequivocally supporting or pretending to be supporting him. So, the reasoning goes, if many people start thinking and begin questioning him, they are all one-sided. Thus, contrary to what Thaksinians think, it's not about lacking reason or not being rational, but about which reasons



and rationalities to challenge, respect, transform, etc.

Aside from this, Thaksinians are boasting that they are playing by the rules and regulations—their selling point. And the name of the game is the general election. If the people don't like Thaksin, they can vote for other parties or candidates. But Thaksin must always be on the display shelf, must always be a—if not the—choice. Thaksinians call this returning the power to the people. But this is really delimiting the power of the people—spatially and temporally; the people can only exercise their power at the ballot box on the election day. The people should not be out in the streets. And it is typical of a roguish power to suspend the law but declare that it always plays by or upholds the rules and regulations. We don't need a Carl Schmitt to tell us that the sovereign does it. Empires do it at the global level. The US did it in Afghanistan and Iraq, to cite just two recent examples. So Thaksin like Bush, Jr. is saying you're either with us (the Law) or with the enemy (the Outlaw; in Bush's case, the Outlaw of humanity). So Thaksin is moralizing politics—making a virtue out of antagonism. And he seems ready to push it to the brink by declaring or rather applying the Emergency Decree to the streets of Bangkok. (As an aside, Bush said that his favorite philosopher is Jesus Christ while Thaksin declared that he's an avid follower of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.) In any case, Thaksin is acting as a righteous contractarian (by self-appointment of course). Thaksin insists that the political impasse is the result of the flawed Constitution—not him and his Cabinet; he's never the problem. Rather he is the solution to almost every problem, including national progress and the eradication of poverty. After the general election, he'll make sure the problem is fixed if his party gains the majority in parliament.

The second cluster is made of 'third way-ists' or advocates of the "middle way." Undoubtedly, they are a varied lot. Generally speaking, they tend to see any form of political antagonism or partisanship as a disturbance of peace. And so to some extent they probably uphold the Thaksinian vision of calm bourgeois politics or a "post-political" society—minimal political declarations, organizations, interventions, etc. In other words, they may or may not like Thaksin, but they do think like him. If you're for peace and social harmony,

turn on your car's headlights during the day, they insist. But who in their right mind could really be against peace and social harmony? Isn't the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) for peace and social harmony? And what about Thaksinians who talk incessantly about upholding rules and regulations? In a way, they are trying to seize the moral high grounds, donning the garb of objective and neutral negotiators: Thaksin is too recalcitrant and the 'mob' at Sanam Luang too confrontational—raising the specter of the rabbles. They want the general election to take place with the participation of the three oppositional parties. Some contend that Thaksin should quit politics for a while. How long is a while? Or skip a term (that is, not take part in the upcoming general election) and run for office in the following election. But how long is a term? All these are too open-ended.

Like Thaksinians, 'third way-ists' are also contractarians. They have great faith in proceduralism: good procedures lead to good outcomes. It is like saying an excellent and hi-tech oven will make a delicious roasted chicken; or a good stone mortar along with a good pestle make a mouth-watering som tum. Everything will be settled when the loopholes of the Constitution are filled, they reasoned. A better Constitution means one that is better at providing "calm politics"? So they are urging Thaksin to take a step back by skipping term and/or bumping off the election for a few more months to allow time for the oppositional parties to prepare themselves and send their candidates to the political horse race. Then the new government will appoint an independent committee to amend the Constitution. Some want a royal-appointed caretaker government to first revise the Constitution and then hold a general election, relying on the king as a deus ex machina. The People's Alliance for Democracy should take a step back by disbanding themselves; that is, take a step toward a post-political society. Third way-ists don't want the PAD to take too many steps forward—but the PAD has only taken a few initial steps, and this is already intolerable for third way-ists as well as for Thaksinians. Wouldn't the third way-ists' call for a step back on the part of the PAD undermine a lot of people's faith in democracy—where democracy is also about voting with one's feet and not merely one's pocket? (It doesn't take any effort or talent in leaving on one's headlights while driving during the day, provided that one has a car to drive in the first place. Again like Thaksinians they envision citizenship as an effortless duty rather than a challenge requiring great commitment. It sure takes much more commitment to go Sanam Luang or the Government House every rally night.)

The final ideological stream is under the rubric of the PAD, which has successfully extended its chain of equivalences to comprise of diverse networks and organizations. The PAD's stance starts from the opposite end of proceduralism or contractarianism. In other words, the PAD points to the flaws of contractarianism. To continue with the food analogy, one goes to a restaurant because it serves delicious food, not because it has fancy cooking utensils. When one orders som tum one must specify how hot it's going to be, for instance—and not leave it to the whims of cook. So one must decide how one likes the taste to be first before thinking about the cooking utensils. The PAD's position is straightforward: Thaksin ruins the flavor of democracy so he (along with his vision and rationalities) should be out of politics for good. Thus something that is legally correct may still be morally indefensible. Put another way, the PAD is concerned about taking care of justice—the securing of a dignified life for all—which proceduralism neglects. It contends that Thaksin and his policies are jeopardizing democracy and the general interest of society. Once contestable notion of justice is settled, we should begin thinking about the utensils and start cooking. As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum puts it, "Justice is in the outcome, and the procedure is a good one to the extent that it promotes this outcome." It should now be clear that the PAD abides by a different set of rationalities on politics and the role of the citizen. Suffice it to say that the PAD urges for a pluralistic and agonistic politics and a vibrant parliamentarianism coupled with citizens as thinking people who thereby make politics possible. The sovereignty of the people does not stop at the ballot box. The PAD correctly sees that politics must operate at a distance from the State, that it cannot be treated entirely as an intra-State affair. If Thaksinians and third way-ists are allowed to realize their vision, democracy will be vanquished or further perverted to exhibit undemocratic tendencies. This is therefore not a struggle over the value of democracy but over the form that democracy should take in Thai society.

Soravis Jayanama

The Teflon Prime Minister and Democracy

It is well known that our Teflon premier once insisted, "A company is a country. A country is a company. They are the same. The management is the same." A lot has also been said about the premier's CEO-mentality and his substitution of management by 'Wise Men' (and the wisest of all is the PM) for politics or what he calls "calm politics," which is marked by the political anesthetization of the civil society, independent organizations, the mass media, and so on—in effect, the construction of a 'post-political' society. Critics asked, how can the management of a company, which is "a private tyranny," be the same as running a country, especially if it aims to be democratic? Thaksin's cronyism or kleptocracy is said to be further proof of his deliberate 'confusion' between the private and the public. If this process is called "Thaksinization," it is only like the tip of an iceberg. We should also see it as reflecting a broader shift in the globalizing paradigm of power: a neoliberal or 'post-modern' power operating, simultaneously or by turns, with a "resurgent sovereignty." What does this imply for democracy?

Suffice it to say that the former trend is characterized by the government and the corporation emulating one another's role, blurring the distinction between the private and the public.[1] The government gives inordinate emphasis on management, profits, the growth and the health of the economy, modernization, foreign direct investment, entrepreneurship (at all levels), efficiency, 'rationality', and so on. In effect, this entails the extension and proliferation of market values, and thereby the devalorization of non-market ones, into non-economic domains —even at the level of personal conduct or the care for the self. All of these are seen as 'normal', and the legitimacy of the premier or the government can therefore only be evaluated by market success—again, at the expense of non-market values. As long as the economy is growing and the stock market is booming, all other considerations should be swept under the rug. "It's the economy, stupid," so to speak. But in Thaksin's rendition it reads, "You are all stupid. A country is a company." Conversely, corporations begin to assume various 'public' roles such as running prisons and funding universities.

The latter trend is about superpower or hyperpower—being unaccountable, spurning checks and balances, suspending the law, and dreaming of invulnerability.[2] As an extreme case, witness the declaration of a state of emergency, which nominally covers the whole kingdom, but is being particularly enforced in the deep South. "Sovereign is he who declares the exception," as Carl Schmitt put it. Sovereign is he who normalizes the exception. The sovereign is neither inside nor outside the law. Nevertheless, the sovereign talks incessantly about law and order. And the PM is wielding this roguish sovereign power.

What kind of public do these two powers cherish and attempt to construct? Neoliberalism envisions a public of 'rational actors'; that is, profit-maximizing, competitive, and calculating consumers and entrepreneurs largely lacking in public-mindedness. The roguish sovereign power wants an "apolitical" but not "alienated" public (Wolin) —a public that accepts fixed hierarchies and inequality and that can be readily mobilized for certain ends when the Wise Men beat the tom-toms of 'war' or before a general election, which has increasingly become a form of electoral nihilism or political palindrome. (Even the acronym TRT is a palindrome.) Wolin calls this form of regime "an inverted totalitarianism," which *inter alia* "promotes a sense of weakness, collective futility that culminates in the erosion of the democratic faith, in political apathy and the privatization of the self."[3] However, can a people remain a people without resistance to the State?[4]

In the past 5 years, the Thai Rak Thai revolution has employed both forms of power. It is a revolution in power as much as in culture. This is to say that without a supporting culture Thaksinism would not have been pervasive and enduring. In other words, we will not see the wood for the trees if we merely focus on Thaksin's nepotism, cronyism, or abuse of power. We must also try to ascertain the Thaksinian rationalities. People are supporting Thaksin not because they are irrational or not simply because they are myopic or more concerned about their vested interests (for the numbers of Thaksin's supporters surely

outweigh the numbers of those who truly benefit from his policies).

We have to try to understand these rationalities, however queer, shocking and annoying they may appear to us. Why do the people accept Thaksin's regime of valorization? How is it important to their identities or the constitution of their identities? Do they experience subordination as subordination? How do they like to be governed—like sheep, children, passive consumers, the abnormal, the sick, the poor (i.e., failed entrepreneurs), etc.? For instance, Thaksin envisaged himself as a doctor curing poverty, which is represented by and large as an individual malady, and not say, a structural problem. How do they measure the legitimacy of the prime minister or the government? Do they really care if he's 'corrupt' or not? (Remember that the past 5 years have endlessly been about showing approval or disapproval of the PM or government policies, and not about legitimacy. In your SMS press 1 if you approve of or 2 if you disapprove of so and so policy. The superpower of the State reserves the right to turn a blind eye on or reject any sign of disapproval.) To what extent have the political and cultural landscapes of Thai society been transformed or deformed by Thaksinism? Any counter-hegemonic bloc cannot fail to take these—and many others—into consideration. We must also note well that many people do accept these rationalities without being Thaksinians, hence the need to carefully scrutinize the form of power and power relations. Thaksinism can survive the Thaksinians or can be operating even when the PM's popularity is at its lowest.

Thaksin has also been revolutionary in terms of the political. Thaksinians polarize society and moralize politics through the construction of various binary oppositions: good vs. evil, rational vs. mindless/emotional/stupid/buffalo/irrational, Wise Men vs. mob/bully/rabbles, friends of national progress vs. the Public Enemy, 19 million pro-Thaskin voters vs. the Rest, us vs. them, etc. Since, the PM serves as the stand-in for the positive, universal pole, politics is also highly personalized. Criticizing the PM is thus akin to betraying the Nation. Combined with a dysfunctional Parliament (House and Senate), a weak Constitutional Court, the disappointing 'free' mass media, the pummeling of independent watchdogs, and so on, the polarization, moralization, and personalization of politics cultivate antagonism as opposed to agonism; the latter implies that consensus and dissensus are not binary opposites. The demonstrations on 4, 11, and 26 February have attempted to restore agonism by asking or compelling Thaksin to step down from power through 'calm rage'. In between Thaksinians and their enemy are 'royalists.' They are urging the people to love the King and to respect the Father by eschewing 'conflict'. Despite their professed political neutrality, they are actually supporting Thaksin's 'calm politics' and drumbeating the fear of the rabbles. Put another way, they can even be anti-Thaksin Thaksinians.

Put more theoretically, everyone is not 'counted' equally as if to say that only the 19 millions who voted for Thaksin are ontologically real. They are counted as One, and the one above the One is the PM. Not counted or not equally counted as One, the rest are internally excluded, serving as the constitutive outside. The rabbles are not members of the One. The homogeneity and unity of the One is unthinkable without the constitutive outside—those whose presence is marked by their absence: an 'absent presence.' Complementing this development is the notion that democracy is about majority rule, a majority of the One: it's not about having 19 million supporters, it's about being counted as part of the One. In any case, this is a focus on the *cracy* side, the force of the greatest number. Jacques Derrida keenly points out this double logic as follows, which deserves to be quoted at length:

> ...democracy has always wanted by turns or at the same time two incompatible things: it has wanted, on the one hand, to welcome only men, on the condition that they be citizens, brothers, and compeers, excluding all the others, in particular bad citizens, rogues, noncitizens, and all sorts of unlike and unrecognizable others, and, on the other hand, at the same time or by turns, it has wanted to open itself up, to offer hospitality, to all those excluded. In both cases... this hospitality remains limited and conditional. But even in this restricted space it is typical for democracy to do one or the other, sometimes one and the other, sometimes both at the same time and/or by turns. Rogues or degenerates are sometimes brothers, citizens, compeers.[5]

If the One is the majority, it

is also the voice of reason, and democracy is here envisioned as or reduced to a talk show or, put more positively, a 'rational' debate. A *Bangkok Post* editorial, while recognizing the PM's undemocratic tendencies, argues thus: "But the shrill cries on Saturday night [11 February 2006] of 'Thaksin out' are hardly an example of reasoned debate, either. It is the antithesis of democracy to overthrow an elected government by force or intimidation" (p. 10, 13 February 2006). This is not to demean the importance of 'reasoned debate', but democracy isn't just that. Democracy is a form of politics in the generic sense, and politics is about, well, changing the world. 'Democracy' as it stands today is thus 'post-political'; that is, largely or wholly about opinions and interpretations—the "freedom of expression—and not about changing the world, or challenging the logic of the superpower of the State, by forcing it to count individuals and to count them equally. The February mass demonstrations defy the neoliberal and roguish rationalities of the State and highlight its "organic crisis." Is it undemocratic to pressure for the removal of a democratically elected PM who has not been acting democratically? Or are we—with deep resignation—stuck with him? This means that 19 million people voted to end democracy as a form of politics democratically, an act which must always be tolerated and never resisted? Can't a democracy be perverted to exhibit totalitarian or undemocratic tendencies such as elitism and the quelling of politics? (Or conversely, totalitarianism perverted to show democratic inklings?)

Pace Thaksinians who assert that the mass demonstrations constitute an undermining or a disrespect of democracy, we can say that they are actually testing—feeling the pulse of—democracy. Furthermore, based on the Thaksinian logic, only the 'rabbles' threaten democracy—never the superpower of the State or neoliberal governance and rationalities. The demonstrators are united under the rubric of "liberating the nation" and saving democracy. They are resisting the hegemonic meaning of democracy as majority rule and reasoned debate. Rather, they are pressing for democracy as politics—not democracy lite or plebiscitary democracy. Equally important, the nation, an empty signifier that has great resonances within Thai society, is employed to transform Thaksin into the source of "a general crime" (i.e., his particular or vested interests harm the nation) so that the vanguard group of demonstrators will be able to construct the subject of "a general victim," so that the numerous particularistic groups in society will be mobilized under one universalizing banner.[6] As Anna Marie Smith, following Laclau and Mouffe, points out, "Politicized resistance, then, is discursively constructed; subversive practices never automatically follow from the simple fact of exploitation and oppression."[7] Will it stick this time?

To sum up, as Alain Badiou writes, "The essence of politics is not the plurality of opinions. It is the prescription of a possibility in rupture with what exists. Of course, the exercise or the test of this prescription and the statements it commands...goes by the way of debates. But not exclusively. More important still are the declarations, interventions and organisations."[8] In other words, and the importance of this point cannot be overemphasized, politics operates "at a distance from the State"; it "is not the bearer of a State programme or a statist norm, but is rather the development of a possible affirmation as a dimension of a collective freedom which subtracts itself from the normative consensus that surrounds the State...."[9] Politics is possible—or there will be politics—because "people think." As Badiou points out, "We can therefore say that politics is of the masses, not because it takes into account the 'interests of the greatest number', but because it is founded on the verifiable supposition that no one is enslaved, whether in thought or in deed, by the bond that results from those interests that are a mere function of one's place."[10] So again, politics means to rupture the bond, from the State. Conversely, embedded to the State politics is not possible because "The State does not think"[11]: What is will never be otherwise.

Soravis Jayanama

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See, for instance, Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, expanded edition (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 588-90; and Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* ((Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), Chapter 3.

[2] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, Chapters 16 and 17; Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); and Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Life* (London and New York: Verso,

2004), Chapters 2 and 3.

[3] Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 592.

[4] Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 136-37.

[5] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 63.

[6] See, for instance, Ernesto Laclau, "Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics" in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London and New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 51-58.

[7] Anna Marie Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary* (Routledge: London and New York, 1998), p. 7.

[8] Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (London and New York: Verso, 2005), p. 24.

[9] Ibid., p. 85.

[10] Ibid., p. 73.

[11] Ibid., p. 87.

The Rise & Fall of Imperial Democracies

From the Beltway to Bangkok, Moscow to Manila, elected leaders are using the threat of terror to grab more power—and making the threat worse.

In most parts of Thailand, it's difficult to avoid the vibrant nightlife. At dusk, food vendors wheel their carts out into public squares and start cooking phat thai, stir-fries, and grilled fish. Thais nibble until late: Night markets stay open until the early morning, and people shop for essentials close to midnight. Even Thailand's smallest towns usually have one or two night-spots, and Bangkok has a reputation as one of the world's after-dark capitals. But in Yala, a small city in the deep south of Thailand, the situation is far different. As the sun sets around 6:30 in the evening, shopkeepers frantically draw metal gates over the front of their stores. Traffic exits the city center, and people hurry home as quickly as they can, rarely walking alone. When I try to stop someone to ask for directions, he shrugs me off and walks quickly in the other direction, a coldness rare in a normally friendly Thailand. Even the brothels that used to cater to visiting Malaysians don't open at night. At army checkpoints set up across the town, Thai soldiers dressed in camouflage and carrying heavy assault rifles stop locals and search them from head-to-toe. Every few hundred meters, groups of soldiers set up heavy machine guns, surrounded by sandbags, at intersections. The entire town seems cloaked in fear. There's reason to worry. Over the past two years, the deep south of Thailand—the three Muslim-majority provinces abutting the Malaysian border—has been hit with a wave of brutal violence. Encouraged by al Qaeda's Southeast Asia affiliates, some Muslim Thais have engaged in terror attacks, and the Thai government has reacted with deadly force. Though the bloodshed has received almost no attention in the Western



Leaders of various religious faiths circle the Democracy Monument under heavy rain to pray that the country's next leader is a person with high morals.

media, nearly 1,000 people have died during the past year. Almost every day, soldiers, schoolteachers, provincial officials, policemen, and monks are shot, knifed, or attacked with bombs. With foreign assistance, southern Thai insurgents are beginning to form into groups and launch more sophisticated attacks.

Just five years ago, southern Thailand was relatively peaceful. The army had only a limited presence in the region, and no one feared walking on the streets at night. Tourism flourished, and Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders maintained close contacts. In fact, many political scientists cited southern Thailand as a model of how a government could successfully promote interfaith harmony and integrate a Muslim minority. It's no surprise that the change is partially due to al Qaeda, whose networks have pressed to politicize and make more violent a growing Thai Islamism. But the ratcheting-up of the conflict also owes much to decisions made by the government itself. The leadership of the aggressive, autocratic, self-aggrandizing Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has exacerbated the insurgency problem. But though Thaksin's heavy-handed tactics—repressing independent voices in the media and bureaucracy in times of crisis, locking up members of Islamic opposition parties, and cracking down on institutions that gave the country's Muslim minorities a role in their own governance—seem like the work of a tyrant, they're not. When the most sweeping of the prime minister's actions came to light, the electorate endorsed them, returning Thaksin to office with huge majorities in Parliament.

In times of conflict, this is how even democracies tend to behave: Leaders consolidate executive power and punish dissension, while the electorate rewards them—at least initially—for such shows of strength. The war on terror has given cover to governments around the globe—from Italy and Russia to the Philippines and Thailand to even the United States—that have followed this pattern, becoming imperial democracies. But as the example of Thailand vividly shows, heavy-handed efforts in the name of taking on terror have succeeded only in making violent Islamism a more profound and urgent threat.

Thais love Thais

Up until the turn of the twentieth century, much of southern Thailand was an independent Muslim sultanate called Pattani. When Bangkok annexed the region in 1902, anger in the Muslim population began to slowly simmer. By the 1960s and 70s, it was boiling over, and southern separatists formed a group called the Pattani United Liberation Organization, or PULO. In response, the military governments that ruled Bangkok dispatched battalions to the South, leading to constant skirmishes over the course of two decades. Still, even in the midst of the worst violence, PULO never had a strong religious component— it was instead a Malay nationalist organization. After the end of the Vietnam War, the Thai government finally focused on its problems in the south. And as the country moved to democracy in the 1980s and 90s, Bangkok utilized wise policies to pacify its southern citizens.

Thai prime ministers during this period promoted decentralization, investing local and provincial officials with more decision-making power. They also created an institution called aw baw taw, a task force comprised of local officials, military and policy commanders, and citizen representatives that provided an outlet for grievances—the aw baw taw allowed local journalists, lawyers, and human rights activists to uncover abuses and make them public. Bangkok also reduced the army presence in the south, withdrawing battalions and confining troops to bases. According to Zachary Abuza, an expert on terrorism in Southeast Asia at Simmons College, even when the military had to search for insurgents, it was careful not to alienate local communities by assigning military leaders to the effort who were southern natives and spoke the local languages. Through such measures, the government in Bangkok was able to convince many Muslims that they had a stake in Thailand's political and economic future. In the late 1990s, the prominent sociologist Saroja Dorairajoo found that most Thai Muslims considered themselves Thai first and Muslims second. Perhaps most importantly, PULO had become wildly unpopular with the southern population and essentially dissolved.

In the run-up to the 2001 national election, the country was still recovering from the Asian financial crisis, which many Thais blamed on the ruling Democrat Party. Sensing an opportunity, Thaksin Shinawatra, a telecommunications mogul, formed a new party called Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais). Thaksin's personal charisma and savvy campaign

strategies, along with lingering resentment at the Democrats, helped Thai Rak Thai sweep 249 of the 500 seats in parliament, the largest number a single Thai party had ever controlled.

Early on, Thaksin displayed some authoritarian tendencies. His flagship company, Shin Corporation, purchased Thailand's most independent television station, iTV, and promptly fired 23 journalists who had been critical of the new prime minister. Shin also pulled advertising from print publications that did not back Thaksin.

Primed for disaster

After September 11, Thaksin initially downplayed the threat his country faced from Islamic terrorists, for fear that heightened concerns would hurt Thailand's booming tourist industry. But in 2002, leaders of Jemaah Islamiah—an al Qaeda-linked group that seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia—met in Thailand to plan attacks. Soon after, Thai police foiled a bomb threat against a luxury hotel in Bangkok. JI members began crossing into southern Thailand, and intelligence forces identified a small number of close associates of Osama bin Laden, including top bin Laden deputy Walid Muhammad Salih, who were living in Thailand. As the threat of terror become more real, Thaksin stopped downplaying it. As had leaders in other democracies facing terrorist attacks, Thaksin worked to convince Thais that some abrogation of their civil liberties would be necessary for the upcoming battle, and that they needed a strong, vigilant leader. "Whenever or wherever a society or community is not safe, freedoms and personal rights ... must face some limitations in order to have all people living together in peace," Thaksin told Thais in a national speech. Initially, most Thais accepted this argument. With their support, Thaksin pushed to pass an emergency powers law—think of it as a Thai Patriot Act—which gave government the power to tap phones, hold suspects without charges, and censor the press regarding issues related to the south. Thaksin also weakened judicial institutions by publicly challenging the authority of prominent judges and attempting to name his associates to the bench. Thaksin also dismantled the aw baw taw, thereby eliminating the main outlet for local grievances. Civil servants who questioned the government, most notably reformist army chief Surayud Chulanont, were dismissed or reassigned to ceremonial posts. The prime minister also took care to strengthen ties between the state and the business community in order to ensure corporate support for his policies. A 2003 study by Vanderbilt University revealed that Thailand had the second-greatest number of companies with connections to the governing party (Russia had the most), and eight of the ten largest conglomerates in the country had representatives in Thaksin's cabinet. Finally, in February and May 2003, alone, Human Rights Watch reported, an astonishing 2,275 people were shot dead in Thailand in apparent extrajudicial executions. Thaksin gave no ground. Questioned about the killings, he bluntly responded, that "being ruthless... is not a bad thing."

The public didn't seem to care. New elections in February 2005 added more than 150 seats to his party's total in parliament. And Thaksin's personal popularity remained high, bolstered by the perception that he was strong leader. Drawing upon this widespread approval, Thaksin was able to portray opponents as isolated voices, unpatriotic losers. Last year, after enduring heavy criticism from liberal Thai media outlets, Thaksin announced that the press should "think of the country. These days, when foreign countries criticize us, they quote media reports."

Media intimidation was one thing; the fate of Thaksin's political opponents was even harsher. Human rights workers reported that during the same period, at least 100 anti-government activists in southern Thailand had disappeared.

Anger in southern Thailand resurfaced. In addition to outrage over Thaksin's increasingly harsh "anti-terror" policies and treatment of political opponents, southerners were outraged that while the post-9/11 economic downturn had hit them hard, prominent politicians and business leaders seemed not to be suffering. The assets of Thaksin's family reportedly grew by 70 percent in 2004 alone.

The prime minister increased the military and police presence again in the south, rotating in fresh troops, building roadblocks and preparing for a more serious crackdown, moves which slid under Washington's radar. The situation in Thailand was primed fordisaster.

"A mini Afghanistan"

Five years earlier, Thais in the south could have aired their problems with the aw baw taw, or through local MPs. Now, with

the aw baw taw disbanded and Thaksin consolidating government power, many southerners had nowhere to turn.

At the same time, the Thai government reported that Jemaah Islamiah and other groups connected to al-Qaeda were moving into southern Thailand in greater force. In 2003, according to Zachary Abuza, Thai immigration noted that 128 "followers of Al Qaeda" passed through Thailand. Some of these bin Laden associates were traveling to the south, where they searched for recruits and used funding from the Persian Gulf states to establish radical Islamist schools and charities. Small-scale bombings erupted in southern Thailand in 2002, and fighters began raiding government arsenals, presumably to stockpile weapons for future terrorist attacks. Four new Islamist/separatist organizations sprung up in the south, according to Abuza, and appeared to have at least informal communication with each other.

Meanwhile, with the expansion of Thai satellite television in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it became easier for southerners to obtain channels from the Middle East. As coverage of the war in Iraq turned into a stream of anti-Western sentiment, some southern viewers turned more openly religious and political. Teachers in the provinces reported larger numbers of students coming to school veiled, and mosque attendance rose; suddenly, there were Hamas-style pro-Palestine rallies in southern towns, complete with violent anti-Semitic imagery and militant rhetoric. Southern Thailand's conflicts started appearing on Islamic satellite television channels, alongside Iraq and the West Bank. Professor Abuza believes that JI sees southern Thailand as a "mini-Afghanistan"—a place to foster sectarian conflict and then send recruits. With economic and social grievances rising in the south of Thailand, little outlet for dissent, and an increasingly internationalized population, only a spark was needed. In January 2004, it finally came when a small group of insurgents raided a government army camp, killing four soldiers and making off with a cache of arms. The frequency of terror attacks—and the severity of the government's response—increased immediately. Later that same month, three Buddhist monks were stabbed to death near Yala. In March, a bomb destroyed a tourist bar on the Malaysian border, and 29 government buildings were torched.

Thaksin dispatched thousands more soldiers to the south and set up military checkpoints around the region—today the forces dominate towns like Yala and Narathiwat, forcing pedestrians and drivers to stop every 100 or 200 meters—officially turning southern Thailand into a war zone. While many Buddhist Thais in the south welcomed this military intervention, most Muslim southerners, who were not targets of insurgent attacks, were further inflamed by the deployment. On April 28, a group of radicals allegedly attacked government targets; security forces who battled with the men killed more than 100 teenagers and men. Human rights activists questioned whether the killings had been executions, since local reports suggested many people had actually been shot in the back. Many of the casualties occurred in the sacred Kru Se mosque, splattering its walls with blood, and further offending Muslims in the region. As the situation in the south worsened, Thaksin chose not to respond by restoring rights and freedoms. Strengthened by his personal convictions and by the idea that as a democratic leader he would enjoy public support for anything he did, he took the opposite approach, muscling the press more and consolidating power. His notion of democracy only strengthened his resolve. "Thaksin's idea of democracy is he does what he wants, every four years you decide whether he's right, and then if you vote for him, shut up again for four more years," one Thai expert told me.

By early 2005, it was becoming apparent that the situation was out of control. Security checkpoints made it almost impossible for many southerners to get to the area's rubber plantations, a vital source of income. The insurgents were gaining popularity, and many southerners regarded the men killed at Kru Se as martyrs. In one famous incident, scared Thai security forces bound up more than 100 demonstrators, threw them in the back of trucks, and drove them four hours away to a military base—three-quarters of the prisoners died of asphyxiation during the journey. Today, rebels launch well-coordinated bomb attacks on a daily basis, and some insurgents have started kidnapping civilians and beheading them, Iraq-style. Assassinations of provincial officials, teachers, and monks have become routine. Over 30,000 people have fled the south in the past year alone.

Don't drink the orange juice

Other democratic leaders have also used the cover of the war on terror to turn their nations into imperial democracies, suspending rights and wielding military power in the name of security. In Russia, Vladimir Putin is less charismatic than Thaksin, but he benefits from a citizenry that has already soured on some aspects of democracy, which they link to the sometimes venal and often chaotic rule of Boris Yeltsin. After 9/11, Putin quickly made common cause with the White House's war on terror, using it as an opportunity to deal with the insurgency in Chechnya, which had spilled over into attacks in Moscow and other major cities. Money from the Persian Gulf was allegedly flowing into Chechnya, and—as in Thailand—al Qaeda-linked groups were targeting the region, looking for radicalized young recruits.

In response, Putin argued that a strong state was the only solution to dealing with terror. He also rallied nationalism, portraying Chechnya as an existential threat to Russia, and making few comments when gangs in the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg began to target Chechens and many other dark-skinned people, including foreigners from Africa.

From there, Putin only tightened his control of the press and independent institutions. Earlier this year, he dismissed his prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, one of the few politicians willing to criticize his policies, and solidified even more ties between big business and the government than the Thai government did. Putin pushed through a rule making provincial governships appointed, rather than elected, positions. Finally, critical programs on NTV, the last truly liberal Russian station, were shut down in 2004, and prominent, and critical, NTV journalist Leonid Parfenov was fired after he interviewed the wife of a Chechen leader and questioned whether the Russian security services had murdered her husband. Putin wasn't shy about using his power, and politically it worked. According to Reporters Without Borders, coverage of the hostage crisis in Beslan in 2004 was blatantly censored, and prominent journalists disappeared or were killed; Forbes writer Paul Klebnikov, who wrote articles critical of Putin and his business allies, was murdered in 2004. Russia's liberal political parties have been eviscerated, with Yabloko—the prominent liberal bloc—taking only four percent of the vote in the most recent parliamentary election.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, President Megawati Sukarnoputri used the fear of terror after 9/11 to rally Indonesia against insurgents in the province of Aceh. The province had been the site of a long-running battle between insurgents and the armed forces, but in the early part of this decade, violence in Aceh had subsided, as both Jakarta and the rebels had moved towards peace negotiations. When the peace talks broke up in 2003, however, Megawati unleashed combat operations in Aceh and declared martial law in the province, hoping to pressure the insurgents into returning to the negotiating table. Journalists and Indonesian NGOs had their access to Aceh restricted, while the armed forces killed hundreds of civilians. Like Thaksin, Megawati defended her policies through appeals to nationalism—the Jakarta government even instituted a patriotism test for civil servants. Again, this nationalism worked politically. Even after sketchy reports of widespread casualties in the province, the crackdown in Aceh was broadly popular in other parts of Indonesia. A few critics did speak up. "We are now afraid that this situation in Aceh is (becoming) like a stepping stone to develop a new authoritarian regime in Indonesia," said Munir, the country's leading human rights activist. But Munir paid for his sentiments. On a flight from Indonesia to Europe in September 2004, Munir was invited into business class by an off-duty airline employee who allegedly had been in close contact with a top Indonesian intelligence officer, and was served some orange juice. By the time the plane arrived in Amsterdam, the activist—who had been healthy when he got on board—was dead. An autopsy uncovered a deadly dose of arsenic in his body.

In Pakistan—where democracy is weak and intermittent—Pervez Musharraf has leveraged the war on terror to win support from the Bush administration, bolstered the powers he won through a military coup with a series of farcical referendums, and manipulated national elections to sideline the major opposition parties. Mikhail Saakhashvili, the Georgian president brought to power by the Rose Revolution, has used nationalistic appeals in the face of a hostile Muslim minority to jail critical journalists, amend the constitution to centralize executive power, and win a mid-term election with the Stalin-like vote total of 95 percent. In the

Philippines, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, whose military is fighting a guerrilla war against armed Muslim groups in the country's south, has suggested outlawing protest rallies and pushed for a Patriot Act-like counterterrorism law.

Four years after the global war on terror began, problems with Muslim insurgencies have not subsided—and in some cases, they have actually worsened. And at the same time, many of the strong-arm tactics adopted by these democracies have begun to backfire politically. By trying to restore to Russia the same sort of overbearing, centralized system that characterized the Soviet Union, and by launching new military campaigns in Chechnya, Putin has made the situation in the North Caucuses worse than it was when he took office. In Indonesia, Megawati's strategy of pouring more and more troops into Aceh without creating any system for dialogue with the people there succeeded only in turning more provincial residents against the government. The United States, of course, is no Indonesia or Russia, but even on a smaller scale, the similarities persist. President George W. Bush tapped a powerful vein of nationalism and fear after 9/11 to expand his authority, intimidate opponents, reward corporations allied with his party, and punish dissent within the government. He then used his enhanced powers to invade and occupy Iraq and to capture and imprison thousands of individuals suspected, rightly or wrongly, of being terrorists. But news of the brutal treatment of Muslim prisoners in U.S. jails has only deepened anti-American anger in the Islamic world, and the ill-advised invasion and inept occupation of Iraq has turned that country into a bloody and chaotic breeding ground for the next generation of terrorists and insurgents.

Democratic strength and weakness

In democracies—even those with weakened civil societies and enfeebled judiciaries—popular opinion still matters. For their part, Thais have begun to wake up from Thaksin's spell. This summer, the prime minister's popularity ratings fell below 50 percent, and confidence in his government has remained low ever since. The Thai media, like its counterparts in the United States and other democracies where initial rally-around-the-flag sentiment has waned, has become more aggressive. Thai journalists have probed procurement scandals in Thaksin's government, and they united to help defeat an effort by one of the prime minister's allies to buy into the most respected Thai-language newspaper, *Matichon*. Even in parliament, where Thaksin controls the majority of the seats, MPs have become so disgusted with Thaksin's style, as well as the continued violence in the south, that some of the prime minister's own party members have begun to speak out against him. Elsewhere, a popular movement in the Philippines has attempted to push Arroyo out of office, Bush's ratings are among the lowest for a second-term president in modern history, and even Putin's popularity fell to record lows earlier this year.

So far, Thaksin, Putin, Bush, and others have been unwilling to heed the shift in public opinion. This refusal is due in part to the fact that these leaders all seem to have a tendency never to admit mistakes. But it is also because once the idea of imperial democracy becomes entrenched in a leader's mind, it is very hard to give up. After all, the institutions and culture of a democracy—a powerful judiciary, an aggressive press, a vibrant civil society—can prove extremely frustrating to leaders who want to push through massive changes. In the past four years, as many of those institutions vanished, democratic leaders around the world got used to operating with few constraints, and found they loved it. Terrorism and insurgencies provide elected officials with an opportunity to exploit an inherent weakness of democracies—the willingness, even eagerness, of their citizens to hand near-authoritarian powers to strong leaders in return for the promise of security. But the lesson of the last five years is that authoritarian tactics tend not to quell insurgencies, but to make them worse. And when that happens, democracies exhibit an inherent strength: their tendency to demand accountability.

Joshua Kurlantzick

Sulak to be hit with more charges

Prominent social critic Sulak Sivaraksa may be facing a third *lese-majeste* charge: this time over an interview on the role of the monarchy for *Fah Diew Kan* ("Same Sky") magazine.

Agroup of people calling themselves the People's Network for Nation, Religion and Monarchy, led by Sathien Vipromha, filed a complaint yesterday against Sulak and Thanaphol Eiwsakul, the magazine's editor.

The controversial issue of the magazine came out in October, and Thanaphol has denied publishing any remarks which could be construed as *lese majeste*.

Sathien, a lecturer in the Faculty of Social Science at Mahamongkut Rajavidhayalai University, said he found the interview disrespectful of the monarchy and would have to have recourse to the law.

The Nation, 9th Apirl 2006

Letter from the Secretariat Office

Dear INEB members and readers,

Since the beginning of this year the Secretariat Office has organized several activities to promote inter-religious cooperation and political ethics in Siam, perhaps due to the recent anti-prime minister campaign amid the heat of Bangkok's summer. INEB has joined the peaceful demonstrations with the motto "Ethics First" and prayers for moral leadership.

In February and March, we held three inter-religious dialogues. The first dialogue was under the theme of religious women and their role in social movement. The second one was about religious response to violence and fear. You can read the summary on our website. The recent one was held at end of March with the title "In search of ethical society". I have the report in this issue.

Another article of inter-religious value is "Freedom from Fear". It is a report from the regional and inter-religious seminar in honor of the 72nd Anniversary of Sulak Sivaraksa since December 2005.

Also as a part of INEB inter-religious program, we here in the Secretariat Office are preparing for a pilot training workshop for young Buddhists to have appropriate attitude and respect for people of different religions. We believe that the teachings of the Buddha are a rich and valuable base from which our young Buddhists could work for inter-religious cooperation. We just finished the first meeting to develop the curriculum. The trial training will be in Siam, perhaps in July.

In the next four months, there will be several exciting events in INEB. May 27th is the birthday of the late Ven. Buddhadasa who is honored by UNESCO this year for his 100th anniversary. Another Buddhist iron lady Aug Saan Suu Kyi was born in June. In June, we will also celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday.

This year again, the *"Young Bodhisattva" Youth Buddhist Leadership Training for Spiritual Resurgence and Social Innovation* is planned for May-June. It will be followed by the *Muslim- Buddhist Dialogue "Buddhist and Muslims in Southeast Asia: Working towards Justice and Peace"* at the end of June. In the next issue you will meet famous Buddhist and Muslim thinkers from this region.

In fact our members are active in many parts of the world. I would like to encourage you to share your stories with us. INEB section is always an open space for all members. Your story can inspire us and reaffirm us on the path of socially engaged Buddhism.

Yours in dhamma,
Anne Lapapan Supamanta
Executive Secretary
www.inebnetwork.org

Please help us to continue ***Seeds of Peace*** by renewing your subscription. The suggested rate is USD.50.00 per year.

If you can support more, we would be very grateful for your generosity. Your money will go to supoort INEB activities for grass-root people in poor countries.

"Freedom from Fear"

Regional Interfaith Dialogue
In Honor of 72nd Anniversary of Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa

On 18 December last year. INEB organized a regional interfaith dialogue to celebrate the 72nd birthday of Sulak. We invited people from different faiths to share their views on "Freedom from Fear." The international speakers were the Rev. Geshe Damdul Namgyal (Buddhism, Tibet/India), Rev. Dr. Saboi Jum (Chirstianity, Myanmar), and Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman (Muslim, Malaysia) together with a former Thai ambassador to UN, Mr. Assada Jayanama, Sr. Nara Niyomthai from Pattani.



A historic background of the debate on "freedom from fear" vs. "freedom from want" at UN was introduced by Mr. Assada. The debate implied duality of collectivism vs. individualism. The liberal western interpretation of freedom from fear as the freedom from physical danger was unacceptable among some third world countries. The latter argued for the people-centered, comprehensive version embracing rights to food, shelter, education, etc. Such broader view became more attrctive but not yet accepted at international level. Then, after the 9/11 it seemed that the emphasis was shifted back to be nation-centered.

Dr. Jum defined the term freedom as a "condition of being free or unrestricted, personal or civic liberty, and liberty of action," which is in contrast to our day-to-day life as we are living in a restricted world, communities and societies. Mr. Rahman believes that all great religions of the world are grounded on peace, justice and freedom. As an advocate of equality, peace, justice and freedom, Islam provides strength for humanity to instill in the individual immunity and freedom from fear. Rev. Geshe Namgyal states that the true meaning of the topic "freedom from fear" is harmonious interfaith dialogue.

The root causes of fear are stated differently from different point of views. Dr. Jum believes that insecurities in personal, social, physical, financial and chance of access to natural resource lead to fear. In general, for Muslims the root cause of the culture of fear is a result of the terrorism industry propagated by the Zionists that control the western world. Their effective control and dominance of the mass media enable them to create scenarios of demonizing effect without moral compunction, against whomsoever they want to destroy. Unfortunately, Islam has been impertinently linked to the terrorism industry despite its advocacy for peaceful co-existence, justice, and freedom. Moreover, Mr. Rahman mentions the very root cause of violent crime as Zionism, which is never properly addressed by the supposedly arbiters to the conflict. Mr. Rahman further states that in the case in Southern Thailand, the root causes of the conflict are poverty, injustice, and double standards of governance. Rev. Geshe Namgyal notices that with the advancement of communications technology, the world is becoming smaller and smaller. The action, speech, and thought in our community may cause conflict with other religions. There is no one religion, one race, or one community idea any more.

The impact of fear, according to Dr. Jum, affects people's thinking, attitudes and behaviours negatively. People cannot do as they think and as much as they envision. In many situations, fear has led to a lack of trust among diverse ethnic nationality groups and religious groups. Lack of trust again creates an even stronger fear. Moreover,

when fear conquers over trust "there is no room for justice and truth." Mr. Rahman points out the impact on Muslims thus: The Zionist-inspired agenda has targeted Muslims, making the latter a victim of legalized state terrorisms worldwide. In addition, western media and political clouts have been mobilized to conform to the Zionist agenda. Worst still Western powers, led by the USA, strive to foster the Zionist hegemony through the process of normalization. Rev. Geshe Namgyal states that the impact of fear causes us to have conflict, and competition everywhere even among religions. Sr. Nara shared her experience of the fear that local villagers in her area are living with.

Dr. Jum suggests that in order to have freedom from fear there are several steps to be taken at the political and social structures. From the political point of view, people believe that a good constitution can create freedom from fear. We also need strategies for a smooth transition into a free society. The society itself also needs to be ready for receiving freedom handed over from the constitution, too. A very basic role of civil societies including religious organizations is to promote the quality of dialogue, mutual understanding and trust among different religions and ethnic nationality groups, and ethical values. Promoting social change is one way of supporting the process of political change. However, Dr. Jum believes that religion has a strategic opportunity for bringing out freedom from fear since religion is the only area where people can have easy access and the origin of social ethics is based in religious belief and practices. However, the most important is to make sure that we bring justice, truth, and freedom into religious teachings and activities. Mr. Rahman quotes Denis Halliday (fomer UN Assistant Secretary-General and Director, UN Humanitarian Aid Program) that there is a critical need for governments to invest in people domestically and internationally instead of investing in weapon, moderm crusades and military aggression Ang to achieve the overarching goal, we will use our energ and creativity to realize together a global and sustainable Culture of Love and Peace as mentioned by HSH Prince Alfred Von Ciechtenstein (Chairman of Advisory Board of International Peace Foundation of Australia. Rev. Geshe Namgyal suggested that we should have right attitude toward other religions. There should be clear endorsement in single faith and should accept for plurality in the society and there should not be any conflict between the two. This is because once we are in society; we should allow plurality to grow up. Mr Assada calles for harmonizing both freedom from fear and want.

Dr. Jum concludes that freedom from fear can only be achieved through a peace ful process (national reconciliation), positive political and social changes in the country, active participation of its people and their genuine trust, and supportive network among social/civil organizations from inside and outside the country. Mr. Rahman says that in order to have freedom from fear civilizational dialogues with sincerity are needed to create understanding amongst adherents of great religions in spirituality. There is also a need for interreligious harmony, tolerance, and understanding, free from political influence and consideration. In addition, Rev. Geshe Namgyal states that we need to promote ethics, which is the core of all religions over the doctrinal and ritual formalities. Moreover, religion should also stress on the core of their faith not only on the institution. Religion should emphasize on personal practice otherwise religion would become something to fight against each other. When we reach the core of our religions, there would be no conflict among religions but love and harmony among them.

Sumalai Ganwiboon

In Search for Ethical Society

INEB and TICD, its local member, hosted a seminar in Bangkok on March 25, 2006 with the theme "In search for Ethical Society". The activity is a part of INEB-TICD Inter-religious program.

The first speaker, Mr. Rungrote Tangsurakit is a veteran Catholic social worker. He presented an outline of Christian Theology of Liberation. According to Rungrote, the Christian Theology of Liberation originated as a people's movement in Latin America. At that time Latin America was loaded with serious social, political and economic problems. The Catholics responded to the situation by going back to the the Bible

while struggling to free others from oppression. Then during 1962-1965 there was the Second Vatican Council in which the teachings of Christianity were reread. Among the documents produced on this occasion, the last constitution is *Gaudium et Spes* (The joys and the hopes), which mentioned about the role of religion in the modern secular world. In 1971, there was a meeting of bishops and a document called "Justice in the World" was released. The document pointed out that action to secure justice is a critical religious mission.

Theology of Liberation called for Christians to get together to struggle against the unjust social system. It also demanded the participation of laypeople in taking care of Christianity. Rungrote recalled a small church that he met while he was working in a slum in Brazil. The church belongs to a community which is one of the so-called BCC (Basic Christian Communities) which are a consequence of the theology of liberation.

Theology of liberation is based on messages in the Bible and the live examples of Jesus. Rungrote mentioned that the spirit inspired Jesus to spread good news to the poor, to release slaves, to help the oppressed, to restore sights for the blind and to redeem all people. He summarized that, according to theology of liberation, Christianity must be involved in all aspects of human beings, must be aware of social issues, must criticize the unjust or wicked social structure, must participate in politics, must redeem people from violent social structure and promote human rights, and must study the Bible from the view-point of the oppressed.

Then the seminar turned to Dr. Charan Maluleem. He teaches



at Thammasat University and sits in several committees related to Islamic affairs and investigation on the violence against Muslim communities in the south of Thailand. Dr. Charan talked about an ideal state according to Islam. He mentioned that in general, Muslim communities are peaceful and cooperative. In Islam, the highest authority is from God. Man is only given authority by God as His representative to govern. Therefore, some Islamic states such as Iran take the Koran as the national constitution. When Muslims have problems, they will consult the Koran, then the Hadis and the council of wise men.

According to Islam, the emphasis is on equality. There is no separation, e.g. between state and religion, between mind and body or by race, or by social status. All men are equal in the eyes of God. Islam also teaches about cooperation and helping each other. Zakat, the social tax to support those who are in need, is one example.

Charan talked further that Islam means peace and surrender to God. Even though all Muslims believe that their fate is in God's hand, they still need to choose the correct path. That is the path toward justice. Then the teachings mentioned about jihad which means struggle. There are two kinds of jihads. Greater jihad is a personal struggle to overcome sin in order to live peacefully with others in a community. Lesser jihad, which can be called a necessary evil, includes war and divorce.

With regard to democracy, Charan mentioned that in Sunni, which covers 90% of Islam, the leader comes from consultation and election, while in Shi'a, the leaders are appointed. To him, consultation is a feature of democracy. He could not say whether the democracy in Iran complies with American or western style democracy or not. But it fits well with Islamic teachings. Forcing a country to become democratic is not acceptable. A democratizing process must start from the people's mind. Charan also reminded us that Islam has been influenced by the nomadic culture of the Bedouin which is characterized by loyalty and respect to a chief.

Many countries do not declare to be Islamic states. Malaysia, for example, announced that it can have Islamic communities, but cannot be an Islamic

state. It is a good example in Dr. Charan's point of view where religion is not manipulated but goes along well with development.

The last presentation was on Dhammic socialism by Aurasri Ngamwittayapong, based on the late Venerable Buddhadasa's idea around three decades ago. She emphasized that Dhammic socialism is not a concept or a philosophy. It is a pattern of living at all levels, from group, community, country, etc. It is a principle for practice rooted in the understanding of the law of nature. The law of nature is a law of inter-cooperation or interdependence, saying that each unit must survive on its own while cooperating and depending on others and finally the other units with which it cooperates must survive, too. The survival of A is in fact part and parcel of the survival of B. Should Politics as the management of interest allow a person to monopolize power and wealth, no one will survive.

Dhammic socialism focuses on the relationship of all beings. Therefore, there is hardly individualism. Survival of an individual is not separate from, but secondary to, the survival of the whole community. For an individual to survive in a community, he/she must behave well and be ethical. For the community to survive, its members must hold at least five precepts. If the members want more happiness, they will observe an extra three precepts that detach them from materials while distributing the surplus to others. The extra precept prevent people from drawing wealth or power toward themselves.

Aurasri saw that for dhammic socialism to be established it requires a great deal of learning. At the moment the society does not provide an atmosphere for learning. It even enforces capitalist individualism which reiterates that a person can be happy all alone with material accumulation. It promotes competition rather than cooperation. And finally it denies seeing people as fellow human beings who share inevitable sufferings.

To the question of how to establish multi-religious cooperation so as to achieve an ethical community, Rungrote and Charan shared a similar view. They saw that many interfaith ceremonies are only ceremonial. Rungrote said that people from different religious communities do not tackle the common sufferings of people. The majority of people are still face hardship, exploitation and injustice while religious followers still hardly do anything. He called for people of all religions to practice religious teachings in daily life and together create a humane and brotherly community. He also referred to his experience that if people live in a community, it is difficult to behave immorally.

According to Charan's remark, countries that are active in organizing interfaith conferences are usually those who support the US invasion of Iraq, such as Australia, while it is not necessary in peaceful countries like Switzerland that do not exploit other countries. He proposed that followers of all religions must get together, develop critical thinking, particularly for the moderate, and hold fast to principles of not taking advantage of others, not abusing or oppressing others and not using power to gain political or economic benefits.

Charan suggested that religions must speak of political ethics. The Muslims pay high respect to the leader. However, if the leader commits wrong action, he/she must be investigated by the people. This is mentioned in the teachings and also happened in the past history. His view is shared by Rungrote. He said that the religious followers must participate in politics, not only by issuing a political statement during a political crisis, but to actively campaign for political ethics.

From a Buddhist perspective, Aurasri mentioned the two-pronged approach. At the individual level, we need to look at an unethical leader as a fellow of suffering. We need to give him/her loving kindness and compassion. This is not for his/her sake, but for ourselves not to suffer. However, at the social level, we must be aware that the last point of the Four Noble Abodes refers to the compliance with the laws of nature. If an unethical leader causes suffering to the people both in the present and future generations, to the environment, to all beings and to communities, we need to take action against him or her.

Finally she expressed her concern on the weakness of Buddhism at present in addressing unethical social problems. Dhamma becomes incapable to understand the complicated nature of modern society, such as how corruption in present politics and economics is unethical.

In summary, all the resource persons saw the importance that the religious followers must be active in addressing the injustice and immorality of the society and unethical leadership. The keywords that were repeatedly mentioned are caring, sharing, equality, justice, respect and spiritual practice. Therefore the followers of all religions must work together to revitalize such values in our society.

Lapapan Supamanta

'Buddha Dhamma Has Potential to Serve Humanity'

Dalai Lama hopeful of a better tomorrow

Varanasi: The three-day international seminar on "Buddhism in Asia: Challenges and Prospects" began at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS), Sarnath on Friday.

Addressing the inaugural function, the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, exhorted the Buddhist community to come together to discuss the present day's reality and try to utilise the potential of Buddhism for the welfare of mankind. "I think that the Buddha Dharma has some potential to serve humanity, but this potential is not being used properly to address the present day's reality," he said adding that the present reality was that there were lots of unhappiness, violence, destruction and mental unrest. Today, the people after achieving all kinds of material comforts have started realising that they were lacking something that could help them in leading a purposeful life; he said and added that all the efforts and expectations only for material developments were not correct.

"It is important for us to think and ponder over how we can use our potential," said the Dalai Lama and, added further that Buddhism was related not only to the Buddhist community alone but also to those people of other faiths who lived in the areas of Buddhist culture. "I have better relations with the Christians than my Buddhist colleagues and Hindu friends," he said adding that for the promotion of Buddhist culture and creation of Buddhist view in daily life , there should be a concept of 'inter-dependency.'

In his welcome speech, CIHTS director, Prof N Samten highlighted the importance of the conference and gave a brief account of the activities of the institute. Delivering the keynote address, senior Buddhist scholar, Sulak Sivaraksa outlined the historical contexts and revival of Buddhism, and spoke about the challenges before Buddhism. Earlier, the function began with traditional *mangalacharan.* The inaugural function was followed by technical sessions on different topics. Buddhist scholars from different countries including Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Taiwan and Sri Lanka arrived here to take part in the conference.

A purposeful solution to address the aspirations of Tibetan people would be beneficial for both Tibet and China, said the Dalai Lama, the spiritual head of the Tibetans. He said that he was optimistic about the future of Tibetans living in exile for the last 47 years, but he did not know how long they would have to wait to see the results.

"I am hopeful about a better tomorrow as the intellectual class and even the common people of China today understand the problems of Tibetans, though the situation is not the same with the Chinese government," he said while talking to reporters here on Thursday. He said the Tibetan issue could be resolved by adopting the 'middle path' for which the process of confidence building was going on with China. "Tibet should become a self-governed and self-ruled state in association with the People's Republic of China, and this can be achieved through a process on the lines of the Strasbourg proposal," he said. The proposal made at Strasbourg (France) in 1988 was based on the 'five point peace plan,' spelled out at Washington DC in 1987.

The process of dialogue with the Chinese authorities had been initiated four years ago to resolve the issue, he said adding that four Tibetan delegations had already held talks with the Chinese authorities during this period, and the process of the fifth round or talks was expected soon. "We want only autonomy not complete freedom, which is also in accordance with the constitution of China," he said and added that the process of negotiation should continue. He, however, admitted that nothing concrete had come so far in this direction. "Presently, we are in the confidence building process only, the political process is yet to take a start," he added.

"I expressed my desire to meet the then prime minister of China during his Washington visit some time in the 1990s, but got no response from their side," said the Dalai Lama adding that though the Chinese stand towards Tibetan problems was liberal to some extent in the early 1980s when the need of a special arrangement in Tibet was felt by some Chinese authorities, but the situation reversed after 1985 by adopting a hard disciplinarian policy.

Elaborating the middle-path, the Dalai Lama said that according to his Strasbourg proposal, China could take charge of Tibet's foreign and defense policies while the government of Tibet would

have the right to decide on all the other affairs relating to Tibet and Tibetans.

Replying to a query regarding the impact of the improving Indo-Chinese relationship on the Tibet issue, he said that any improvement in the relation between India and China would also be beneficial for Tibet. It would also be beneficial for India if Tibet became a 'peace zone,' he said and added that he had already advocated for making Tibet a nuclear-free zone. Though nothing significant happened so far on the issues related to Tibet, we are grateful to the Indian government for its sympathy, he said adding that not only India but several other countries as well had shown their sympathy to Tibetans.

To another query, he said that the transfer of Chinese population to Tibet was still on, which threatened the very existence of Tibetans. Though efforts were made in the past to raise the issue of Tibet in the United Nations, we preferred to hold direct talks with China, he added.

The Times of India
11th February 2006

Activities Update

Mahayana Buddhism: Its Role in Building Social Harmony and Global Peace



During 15-16 January 2006, INEB hosted a seminar on "Mahayana Buddhism: Its Role in Building Social Harmony and Global Peace" at Amari Airport Hotel in Bangkok. The seminar's aim was to promote peace and harmony among people through the values of Buddhism. Academics, social activists, monks and practitioners of Mahayana Buddhism from China, India, Thailand and the USA participated in the meeting.

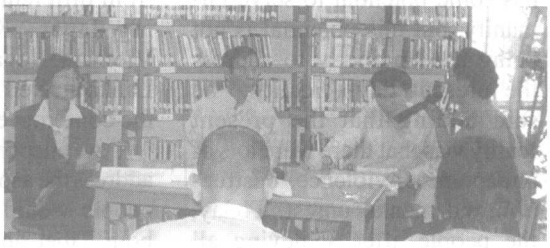
Inter-religious dialogues in Bangkok

Women and Spiritual Movement for Social Justice and Peace

On 23 February 2006, women from Buddhist, Catholic and Muslim communities came to share their experiences in applying religious teaching in struggling for peace and healing their trauma from the violence in the south of Thailand.



Politics of Fear and Religious Approach to Freedom from Fear



On March 11 2006, Dr.Deche Tangsifa, Dr.Niti Hassan and Wanida Tantiwittayapitak explained how fear and violence are used by state to suppress their people, namely the Muslims, the ethnic minority along the Thai-Myanmar border and the poor farmers. By state terror to protect state's interest or so-called national security, the people are undermined in their fight for social and economic justice. Then, they shared their experience on how religion is helpful to overcome terror and regain their strength.

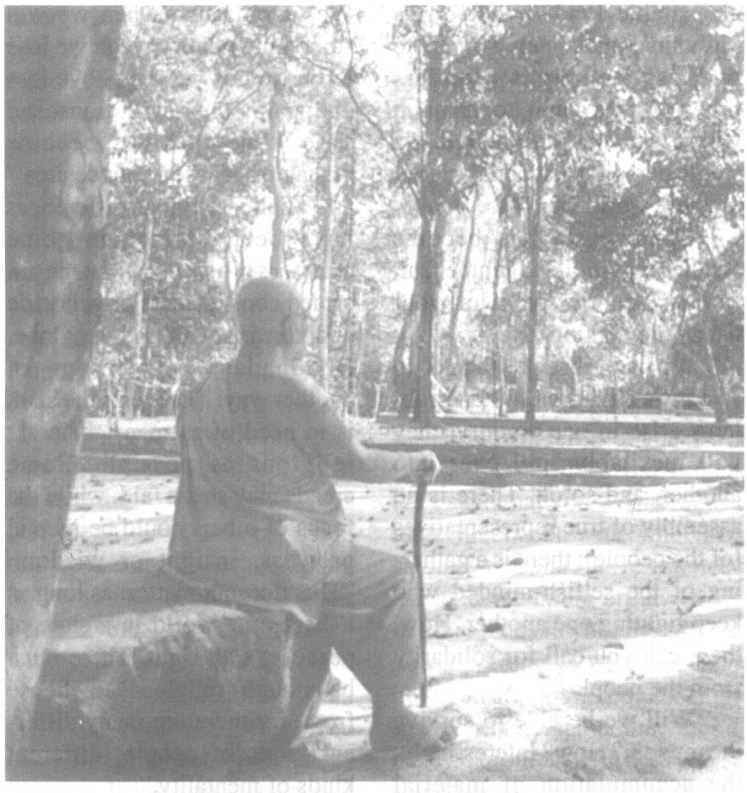
The Outstanding Women in Buddhism 2006 Award went to Jill and Ouyporn

Two longterm friends of INEB, Jill Jameson and Ouyporn Khuankaew were among the 18 women who were recognized as Outstanding Women in Buddhism for 2006. They were given the award at the UN Building in Bangkok on March 7, 2006.

Other outstanding women included 6 Thai bhikkhunis samaneris, nuns, and laywomen, HRH Princess Dechan Wangchuck of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Princess Norodom Morinen of Cambodia, Sandy Boucher, and Bhikkhuni Sister Tathaaloka from the USA.

Leading by example

"We cannot overturn the land. We can only do our work, to the best of our ability, and accept the results in due course. The only hope we have is that our devotion to the religion might inspire more people and that more will follow us. Those in power might do so, or even everybody in the world, that would then be the same as overturning the land. Even though we did not do it ourselves, the results would be the same. And we could stay humble and not have to frustrate ourselves till death."[1]



Given the current level of tension between Thai Buddhists and Muslims, between Christendom and Islam, we would do well to heed the advice of the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, who declared that the ultimate form of merit-making was to promote understanding between people of different faiths.

We could consider ourselves lucky to have been born in this era of global chaos, so said Buddhadasa Bhikkhu 30 years back. The late reformist monk saw a parallel between the world at present and the time of Lord Buddha, more than two-and-a-half millennia ago, when humanity was beset (as now) by all sorts of ills. Suffering is not such a bad thing, Buddhadasa proposed, for it prompts us to seek the Truth, to end the malaise within and without. We can encounter suffering, "play" with it, and challenge it. Only then will we be able to render the cycle of death and rebirth (*Samsara*) totally meaningless.

Indeed, the widely respected monk felt that the very first thing we should mock is ageing, one of the fundamental causes of human suffering. Buddhadasa was born on May 27 and some years before his departure from this world he initiated the practice of organising an "alternative birthday party" on that day at Suan Mokkh, the forest monastery he founded in Chaiya, his home town in Surat Thani province. Monks and lay followers would join a mass, day-long fast, and the abbot himself would give an extended talk on some, aspect of dharma.

In 1976, at the height of the Cold War which saw most of the world, including Thailand, divided into communist and capitalist camps, Buddhadasa chose to celebrate his 70th birthday by talking about "the world that has gone awry". He analyzed the causes, prescribed ways in which individuals could survive the turmoil and, even more significantly, urged proponents of all religions to come together and find ways to counter this global disarray.

Three decades later, his message is no less relevant. Actually, the "mess" he was referring to back in 1976—pollution, rampant homicide (he cited a statistic of 30 murders nationwide each day, including two in Bangkok), the rise of consumerism, failings in our educational and political systems plus ideological bipolarity—now seems minuscule compared to the current state of affairs in the Kingdom.

But the main culprit is still essentially the same: Human

beings. The global crisis, Buddhadasa noted, originates in "the kitchen, the bedroom." Sensations, be they of the pleasurable kind or not, drive individual men and women to recklessly commit blunders time and time again; to the point where, as he prophesied, "a single person's lust could trigger a whole world war."

"The world has become smaller, not unlike a jujube fruit *[put-sa]* on the palm of your hand," he continued.

"It has 'shrunk' thanks to scientific advances. When problems arise in one country, they will inevitably spill over into another, and so on. There is no assembly of true representatives [of the people]; there is a gathering of the selfish-minded who keep fighting one another. How, then, can you call for solidarity from the people?"

Will we be able to survive the muddle? How? Interestingly, the accumulation of material goods by established religions reflects the level of decadence, Buddhadasa lamented. At any rate, he continued, spirituality remains the ultimate solution as long as people know how to apply the "heart of their own religion rightly, adequately, and in a timely fashion."

For Buddhists that means having Lord Buddha dwell within oneself at all times. There is no need, however, to carry Buddhist amulets around; to see the, genuine Buddha, Buddhadasa declared, all one needs to do is to be aware of the laws of *paticcasamuppada,* (dependent origination) and to stay mindful "as if we were in the centre of a snake's mouth but not succumbing to its venom".

"We can cultivate dharma to be like our armour;" he said. "Our minds won't be susceptible to the fangs of a world that has turned upside down. We won't have to cry or go without sleep. We won't laugh when we win something nor cry when we lose it, our minds will be above loss and gain; they will transcend time, time that has become valuable because of our desires."

While, religious differences have been blamed in some quarters for the upsurge in armed conflict, acts of genocide and terrorism around the globe, Buddhadasa saw things in another way: The world, he said, is in need of as many different religions as possible. Some creeds may stress faith while the focus of others could be mental prowess, insight or wisdom. "That doesnût matter; as long as it keeps the world in a state of peace, it's all right. There must be enough [religions] to choose from, for there are many different kinds of people, different kinds of mentality."

The far-sighted monk called for the creation of a "fundamentalist" movement within every religion—but he didn't mean the narrow, parochial type of fundamentalism that has been blamed for contribution to the socalled "clash of civilizations."

If Lord Buddha were, to return to this world, Buddhadasa once 'remarked, he probably wouldn't be able to recognise Buddhism in the form in which it is practised these days; the same could be said, too, of Jesus Christ and the Prophet Muhammed vis a vis the religious to which they gave rise.

There must be a radical cleansing, Buddhadasa said, a stripping away of tumours, parasites and other unnecessary paraphernalia. Only then will we be able to see that all religions invariably teach their followers to abandon selfishness. The, axiom, "To serve others is to serve God; to serve oneself is to serve Lust or Satan," applies equally to atheists as it does to those who believe in a Supreme Being, he declared.

Thus the ultimate form of merit-making, Buddhadasa suggested, is to promote inter-faith understanding. "Building temples or churches has been proclaimed as charitable conduct. But I don't think it will bring as much merit as would making an effort to understand one another, to bridge the gaps [between different religions]; only then will the world survive."

This article is based on a book whose title translated as "The world That Has Gone Awry—And How Can We Live in Such World?" It contains reproductions of the actual note Buddhadasa Bhikkhu made for that "age mocking" birthday address on May 27, 1976, plus the full text of the long speech he gave on *Dhamma* at Wat Suan Mokkha that day. Published to mark the centenary of his birth (1906-2006), the book is one of the fruits of a year-long programme (see related story) to preserve the originals of his hand-written notes and to study his working methods more closely.

Vasana Chinvarakorn
Bangkok Post,
February 26, 2006)

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[1] Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. *Eulogy for Our Mother: Reflections on Mother Who Has Passed Away.* Thailand: Phuttasatsana, 1948.

Importance of Meditation

When you are studying the dharma, you are studying a tradition and a view, a way of looking at things that causes a tremendous amount of upheaval. The upheaval is the breaking down of our habitual patterns and our solid way of doing ourselves. And, in my experience, the only way to work with that, and I really mean this, is to some kind of contemplative practice, meditation practice. What happens if you don't do that? If you study the dharma, even become a Buddhist, and you are not working in an ongoing, continuous way through the practice of meditation, you will either turn Buddhism into some kind of religious trip or you become very cynical and negative toward the whole tradition. And those two responses are both ways of not relating directly to the energy within the tradition.

If you want to really understand and assimilate what this is all about personally, which you may or may not. But if you want to do that, you have to meditate and you have to commit yourself in the ongoing process of meditation and you have to be willing to make a journey. You can't really study Buddhism without the practice because what comes out the other end is actually the opposite of Buddhism and you just end up using the tradition to just reinforce your own way of going about things and your own solid view of yourself whether it is "I'm a Buddhist and I am great, very devotional. I love Buddhism and I am a Buddhist," which is spiritual materialism or the other one, which you see a lot of people doing, is...if you look among people who have been around Naropa for a while, you find this other one actually amazingly present on campus. You become very cynical, very negative, and very critical of the tradition and of the teachers in the tradition because that is another way to hold it altogether and not really relate to what it is all about. What Buddhism is as you know from our work together, it's neither sort of cynical, negative, arrogant thing or the identifying with the tradition which you know as self-identity. You know from our work that it is in the middle, in the no man's land where you don't have any ground. You work with your life, you work with your own groundlessness in an open and direct way, which you can't do it without meditation practice. It just can't. It doesn't work. And that was kind of what the Buddha was teaching during his whole life. As Trungpa Rinpoche said in the Fabrice Midal's biography, "Meditation is the whole reason I am alive. It's the whole thing of what I have to teach. And it embodies everything that is important about the Buddhadharma." It is really that simple.

And I also want to say that although Naropa itself does not have extensive opportunities to study and practice meditation, there are definitely doorways at Naropa to do so. They are definitely here in this environment and it is kind of up to you what you want to do with the whole thing. But there are definitely opportunities here and I hope that as many people as possible will take advantage of those opportunities and not just get your degree, get your knowledge, and then walk away with certain memories of Naropa. I hope that what this place really is as its heart, which is to work with the groundlessness of one's own life, will become part of who you are and part of your whole life. In my opinion, that's the essential dharma.

I know that it takes time to sort of figure it out what's going on here and in terms of your own life, a lot of times the timing isn't such that you would immediately connect with what I'm saying. You may have intellectual understanding or have a lot of other plans in your life of how you are going to be happy and how you are going to make it all work. I understand that and I have no problem with that. But at some points, things are going to fall apart because they always do. And when that happens, I hope you will remember what I am saying right now. The dharma is not a way to keep it together, but it's a way to work with things when they fall apart.

Reggie Ray

(Transcribed from the Three Jewels Class, November, 3 2005)

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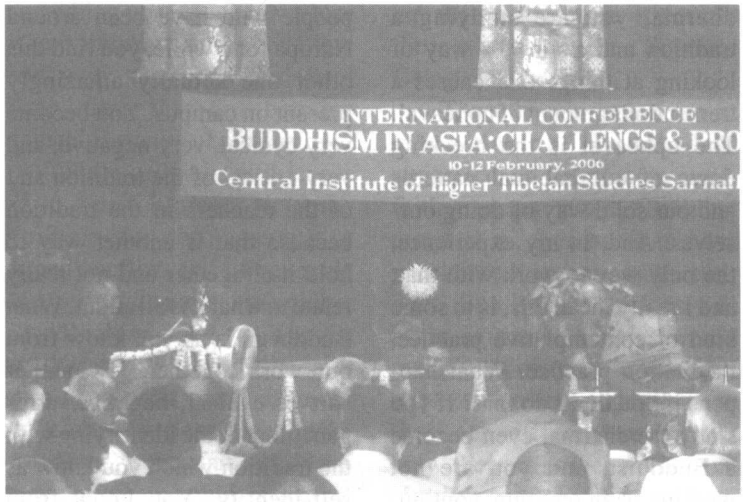
The 2006 Sem Pringpuankaew Public Lecture
by Chandra Muzaffar
From International Movement for a Just world (Just)
Dusit Place Hotel, Bangkok
25th June 2006

Buddhist Studies, Buddhist Practice and the Trope of Authenticity

1. Introduction

In conversation, in the lecture hall, in the Dharma centre and in the public teaching, Buddhists and students of Buddhism worry about authenticity. Is the doctrine defended in a particular text or is a particular textual interpretation *authentic*? Is a particular *teacher* authentic? Is a particular *practice* authentic? Is a phenomenon under examination in a scholarly research project authentically *Buddhist*? If the doctrine, teacher, practice or phenomenon is not authentically Buddhist, we worry that it is a fraud, that our scholarship, teaching or religious life is vacuous, or at least that it is not really *Buddhist* studies or *Buddhist* practice. It is hard for me to remember a conversation of any length with a Western or Tibetan colleague, or with a serious advanced student in which the term "authenticity" or a cognate did not arise, and in which that term did not function as a term of approbation.

I was particularly taken by one episode in which, in a response to a talk on methodology in Buddhist Studies at a major Buddhist Studies research institute, an eminent Tibetan scholar replied that Western Buddhist Studies is not even properly constituted as *Buddhist* Studies, and this for two reasons: first, Westerners are willing to study the traditions called "Buddhist" in such places as Sri Lanka, Thailand, China and Japan. But only the "stainless Nalanda tradition preserved without alteration in Tibet" is *authentic* Buddhism. So, he concluded, Westerners are studying fraudulent traditions under the guise of Buddhist Studies. Secondly, he argued, to study Buddhism is



to study realizations, and realization requires authentic practice. But Westerners freely adopt practices from these fraudulent Asian traditions, and adulterate the stainless Nalanda tradition. So there is no hope of any insight of any value emerging from their study.

To be sure, this response is extreme. But it is not rare; nor is it unrelated in motivation to many more moderate worries about the scope of Buddhist Studies and Buddhist practice. Worries about authenticity have characterized Buddhist dialectics from the earliest period, and motivated the decision to commit the Pali canon to writing at the First Council. Debates about authenticity sharpen with the rise of the Mahayana and the questions that movement raises about the canonicity of new scriptures and about the very nature of *buddhavacana*. With the transmission of Buddhism to China and Tibet, the activity of translation raised further questions regarding the relation of translations of texts to their Sanskrit or Pali originals. More recently, the transmission of Buddhism to the West and the impact of modernity on Asian Buddhist cultures raise entirely new questions concerning authentically Buddhist practice, ideology, lineage and object of study. In what follows I will argue that all of these questions are best discarded along with the very concept of authenticity. To put it bluntly, worrying about authenticity is at best a waste of time and at worst seriously destructive.

2. The Scope of Buddhist Studies

It is a truism that Buddhist Studies is the study of Buddhism. But it does not follow that Buddhism is whatever scholars of Buddhist Studies choose to study. On the other hand, despite the fact that the scope of Buddhism determines the scope of Buddhist Studies and not the other way around, we might well get clues as to what properly counts as a phenomenon of Buddhism by turning to the field of Buddhist Studies, not because scholarship, *per se,* permits the appropriation of authority regarding a domain of human

activity from those who participate in that activity, but because scholars sometimes learn something.

As a matter of fact, if we examine the activities and domain of scholars in our field, we see pretty quickly contemporary scholarship takes under its purview a range of traditions from the earliest followers of Siddhartha Gautama in India to contemporary American or European practitioners who freely integrate practices derived from across the spectrum of Buddhist traditions and who may reject many tenets taken to be central to the traditions from which these practices are borrowed. To be sure, the study of these diverse cultural forms reveals a great diversity among Buddhist practices, doctrines, art forms and ways of life. But one is struck by the underlying family resemblance between these forms and the ease of communication between practitioners and scholars of these forms. There is no *prima facie* reason to suspect any greater discontinuity between these disparate Buddhist traditions than we observe within any other families of religious or philosophical positions. That is, there is good reason to suspect that the apparent unity we observe is a genuine phenomenon, at least until we are given very good reason to believe otherwise. And that suggests that there is very good motivation for the view that Buddhism is capable of diverse manifestations in diverse cultural contexts and at distinct times. This is the default position pending good reason to abandon it.

3. The Academy and the Practitioner

The academy, however, is hardly the final arbiter of reality within the Buddhist world. For while scholars of Buddhism might propose that there is an underlying unity or at least a web of relevant family resemblances between diverse Buddhist schools, doctrines and traditions, if Buddhist practitioners themselves or leading figures within the relevant Buddhist traditions were to reject the characterization proposed by academics, it would be reasonable to suspect that the academy just got it wrong. After all, it is the task of theory to match the object of study, not the task of the object to match the theory; when the object of study is the practice and views of individuals or groups, those individual or groups would seem to be the final arbiters of their own practice or views.

But we should not be too hasty on this terrain. For where there is a multiplicity of communities of view and practice, each claiming authenticity, the classical problem of the criterion arises. We cannot take the criterion of authenticity proposed by any particular tradition as definitive in a contest between traditions for authenticity on pain of circularity. The Zen roshi has her criterion, the application of which delivers the conclusion that the Zen tradition is the only authentically Buddhist tradition. The Gelugs geshe argues, using his criterion, that only his tradition is completely authentic. How are we to arbitrate? There is no neutral ground on which to settle this issue. So, turning to Buddhist practitioners themselves seems unlikely to provide any account of what it is to be authentically Buddhist.

4. Transmission, Transformation and Originalism

Let us return for a moment to academic considerations and reflect on the history of Buddhism. Buddhism has, from its inception, been a missionary religious tradition, a polemical philosophical tradition, comprising a scholastic textual system and a framework for organizing the relations between lay and monastic populations. As a missionary religious tradition that has relied upon philosophical polemic and textual study, Buddhism has penetrated a number of dissimilar cultures. It continues this cultural penetration today. In each case, from the earliest transmissions across India and into China to the most recent transmissions to the West and to Africa, Buddhism has relied upon the translation of texts from one language to another and the adaptation of its social and monastic institutions to local cultural conditions. Each instance of translation and adaptation is an instance of transformation.

Indeed, it is the manifest fact that Buddhism has been transformed in so many ways throughout its history that engenders much of the contemporary and historical controversy about authenticity. In the face of this transformation, there is an inevitable tendency, frequently evidenced in various ways, both within Buddhist traditions and among Buddhist Studies scholars, to search for the "original Buddhism," in order to validate one tradition as the legitimate custodian of that original form. If only we could determine what the precise words of the Buddha were, how the doctrine was understood at the moment when it was spoken, what the practices of the first disciples were, and then we could compare each text, each doctrine, and each practice against that transcendental gold standard.

However attractive this approach sounds, it is not only impossible in practice but

incoherent in principle. It is impossible in practice simply because we are too far from the time of the Buddha to determine, even given the best textual criticism and paleography, precisely what he said to whom, and what went through his mind of those to whom his words were addressed. Even the Pali canon was first committed to writing long after his demise and only a hagiographic understanding of the process of its construction could lead one to belief in its historical purity.

It is incoherent in principle for deeper reasons. Nobody seriously can suggest that Buddhist doctrine or practice, or the object of study in Buddhist study is exhausted by the set of historical episodes involving Siddhartha Gautama between his awakening at Bodh Gaya and his mahaparinirvana at Kushinagar. That eliminates all of the abhidharma literature, all of the philosophical, literary, artistic and ritual traditions that comprise Buddhism. That is to ignore the importance central to Buddhism's own self-conception of lineage, and of the transmission of doctrine, practice and realization through lineage. For lineage persists through time and across space, and necessarily involves augmentation and change. Buddhism without these textual and practice traditions would be unrecognizable as Buddhism and irrelevant to contemporary Buddhist practice. Buddhism so conceived would have ended in Kushinagar.

It is noteworthy that this appeal to origins as a basis for locating authenticity is not limited to the most conservative exponents of traditions they see as constituted by unbroken transmission of texts and insights from Sakyamuni to the present. Even radical modernists appeal to an "original" Buddhism primordially purified of whatever "Indian" doctrines they find distasteful to modernity. As Makransky notes (2000: 124) Batchelor (1997), in arguing for his "Buddhism without Beliefs," argues for the inauthenticity of a host of Buddhist traditions on the grounds that they contain elements that would have been rejected by the historical Buddha. As Makransky emphasizes, this drive to reconstruct a historical Buddha who conveniently shares our own account of Buddhism as a guarantor of the authenticity of our own practice is seriously problematic. There are simply too many such candidate Siddhartha Gautamas to be constructed.

Moreover, particularly from the standpoint of the Mahayana, such a criterion of authenticity would be inconsistent with scripture. We need only attend to the characterization of buddhavacana in the *Asthaharika-prajñaparamita-sutra* to find that it comprises far more than just what Siddhartha uttered. It is anything that is inspired by the Buddha, anything in accord with what the Buddha said, anything conducive to liberation.

> Whatever, Sariputra, the Buddha's disciples teach, make known, explain, proclaim, reveal, all of it is to be known as the Tathagata's work, for they train themselves in the dharma taught by the Tathagata, they realize its true nature directly for themselves and take possession of it. Having realized the true nature directly, and taken possession of it, nothing that they teach, make known, explain, proclaim, or reveal is inconsistent with the true nature of the Dharma. It is just the outpouring of the Tathagatga's demonstration of the Dharma. Whatever those sons of the family demonstrate as the nature of Dharma, they do not bring into contradiction with that nature. (trans Makransky, p 115)

So, even in the heart of Buddhist literature, the speech of the Buddha himself, the criteria of authenticity are, by many traditions' own lights, not originalist in character. In order to determine whether a claim or text counts as buddhavacana we first need to know whether it is conducive to liberation, harmonious with doctrine, etc. Authenticity doesn't help us to filter doctrine; doctrine helps us to determine authenticity! It is not surprising that by its own scriptural lights Buddhism is liberal with respect to what counts as Buddhism.

Makransky urges that we adopt a "minimal understanding, that the Buddha taught the four noble truths, that he sought the liberation of persons from self-clinging and consequent suffering, that he sought their awakening to a penetrating wisdom and unconditional love free from such clinging." [125] He urges that this minimalist basis allows us to take as authentic anything consistent with that minimal basis. There is much to recommend this ecumenical view of authenticity, but it is unclear what is left of the notion of authenticity, or even of Buddhism, once we become so ecumenical, and it is unclear how we take as authentic traditions that deny each other's authenticity.

Roger Jackson (2000) emphasizes this problem when, citing Borges, he says,

> If Buddhism is simply a broadly construed set of ideas and ideals—the truth of emptiness, the value of contemplation, the cultiva-

tion of a compassionate heart and nonviolent action —then to "be Buddhist" in the midst of postmodernity is not difficult at all; what is more, the very generality of these ideas and ideals means that Buddhism itself becomes a virtually unrestricted tradition, such that, as Jorge Luis Borges puts it, "a good Buddhist can be a Lutheran or Methodist or Presbyterian or Calvinist or Shintoist or Taoist or Catholic; he may be a proselyte of Islam or of the Jewish religion, all with complete freedom." [59] Conversely, to the degree that he or she values emptiness, contemplation and compassion, the Lutheran, Taoist or Jew—or for that matter, the secular humanist—may with equal conviction claim to be a Buddhist. If that is all there is to it, if Buddhism is simply an infinitely protean postmodern philosophy, then it is little more than a cipher, bereft of distinctive content, applicable everywhere, hence nowhere. (219)

Jackson proffers an intriguing solution to this conundrum in his account of religion in general, and Buddhism in particular, as consisting primarily in an aesthetic set towards the world—a determination to see the world through the myths, images, metaphors and symbols internal to the tradition. Whether this aesthetic turn solves the problem posed by Makransky's avowedly infinitely protean view of Buddhism we will explore below, but let us first talk directly about other problems internal to the concept of authenticity itself.

5. Seals of Doctrine and Characteristics of Reality

There is one common Mahayana criterion for a doctrine counting as Buddhist. A doctrine is Buddhist just to the extent that it is marked by the four seals of doctrine. One might hope that such a criterion would help us make sense of authenticity, but as we shall see, even seals of doctrine provide no comfort to those who would disparage unfamiliar or new Buddhist traditions as inauthentic. Instead they undermine the very activity of drawing such distinctions and support a broad tent account of Buddhist practice and of Buddhist studies.

The four seals of doctrine are: (1) All conditioned phenomena are impermanent; (2) all contaminated phenomena are of the nature of suffering; (3) all phenomena are empty and selfless; (4) only nirvana is peace. Why not simply say that any doctrine that satisfies the seals is authentic, and any other not? The reason is that the seals are in a deep sense self-undermining, and that sense in which they are makes pretences to orthodoxy seem decidedly un-Buddhist.

Let us be authentically Buddhist about what it is to be authentically Buddhist and see where it leaves us. All conditioned phenomena are impermanent. Conditioned phenomena never retain their identity or character even for a moment. What we take to be coherent, persistent entities are in fact continua. Buddhadharma, Buddhist texts, Buddhist practices and even Buddhist realisations are conditioned phenomenon like any other. They, too, then, are impermanent, constantly changing. What we take to be a persistent, coherent institution, practice or doctrine is nothing but a continuum of constantly changing, distinct institutions, practices or doctrines. If there is any Buddhadharma at all, it cannot be identical to one taught by the Buddha.

Now of course impermanence does not amount to nonexistence. That would be the error of nihilism. And so the claim that Buddhism constantly changes, and even the claim that Buddhism changes differently in different cultural milieus, in virtue of different sets of conditions, is not the claim that there is no Buddhism. It is only the claim that there is nothing permanent in Buddhism. Any Buddhism we find now is different from any Buddhism found at the time of the Buddha. And different conditions will yield different changes. No single development has any claim to be any more identical to any original form than any other. That is a very Buddhist claim.

All contaminated phenomena are of the nature of suffering. Only a view according to which phenomena represented through the force of primal ignorance or confusion regarding the nature of reality can be considered a Buddhist view. Now the principal aspect of the primal ignorance that contaminates phenomena is the superimposition of inherent existence or essence on phenomena that merely exist conventionally and that are essenceless. Suppose one thought that there is an essence to Buddhism, a feature that defines precisely the necessary and sufficient conditions of a practice, tradition or view being Buddhist. One might think that this could get one out of the predicament just scouted. One could, one might suppose, use that essence to differentiate disparate forms of Buddhism from one another despite their common origin. However, if one thought that, the Buddhism one thereby conceived would be a contaminated phenomenon, and

therefore, according to any authentic doctrine, a source of suffering. But Buddhism, if it is anything at all, is a path from suffering. So no view according to which there is an essence to Buddhism must be a non-Buddhist view.

All phenomena are empty and selfless. It should be clear by now where this is going. Buddhism, too, must be empty and selfless. No view according to which it has a core or essence can be a Buddhist view. But emptiness is not nonexistence. To be empty and selfless is precisely to be dependently originated and conventionally real. That mode of existence is the only one possible for anything real, including the Buddhadharma. But to be dependent upon causes and conditions is to vary with those causes and conditions, to be subject to change, and to have an identity fixed by human conventions, and not from one's own side. No room for authenticity here, at least if we are to be authentic!

Only nirvana is peace. Nirvana is the cessation of all fabrication. The central fabrication is the superimposition of essence on that which is essenceless. So, the only peace recognizable from within a Buddhist framework consists in cessation of the imputation of essences, including the imputation of an essence to Buddhism. The search for the authentic core is antithetical to such peace.

So, the very conditions that many Buddhists take to mark a doctrine as Buddhist ensure that no Buddhism that can recognize itself as Buddhist can also recognize any conditions that mark a doctrine as Buddhist! Does this mean that Buddhism is self-undermining? It would mean this if, and only if, one thought that these seals are meant to be the validators of the claim that something has the Buddhist essence. In that case, since they could only validate that which asserts is own essencelessness, they would invalidate any tenet or practice as Buddhist. But if these seals are taken not as validators of the claim that tenets have a Buddhist essence, but as indicators of the dimensions of family resemblance that connect diverse strands of Buddhist thought to one another, and as central characteristics of the roots of these traditions, they come out as pretty good descriptors of Buddhist doctrine. Seen in this way, they satisfy the conditions of conventional authoritative cognition with respect to Buddhist theory. But this is a far cry from a certification of the authenticity of any particular development of Buddhist theory or practice.

Luis Gómez (2000: 367-369) nods in the same direction when he defines Buddhism on five dimensions:

(1) finding diverse aspects of Buddhist traditions inspiring;
(2) having sufficient respect for Buddhist doctrines and statements to take issue with them when they do not withstand scrutiny;
(3) seeing the world through Buddhist ways of imagining and engaging through Buddhist ritual;
(4) suspicion of fixed doctrinal systems;
(5) "an ethics of acceptance that.. [takes as] desirable and good the capacity to restrain our impulse to turn disagreement into sectarian bias or into condemnation or disparagement. The question of which form or forms of Buddhism are preferable must remain open. [369]

Needless to say, none of these dimensions is either necessary or sufficient for a doctrine, practice or person counting as Buddhist. One could satisfy the first while hardly counting as Buddhist at all. In some traditions to satisfy the second would be apostasy. But, like the four seals, these five conditions can be taken as marking out the regions of resemblance in theoretical space that embrace Buddhist traditions. If we are to be faithful to the diversity we find within Buddhist traditions and consistent with the outlook that appears to most to lie at the heart of these traditions, it is hard to see how we could ask for anything more restrictive.

6. Direction of Fit

We are now in a position to see what is really wrong with the discourse of authenticity as it functions in the domains of Buddhist practice and Buddhist studies. The discourse rests upon a falsification of the direction of fit between authenticator and authenticated. If I am authenticating a signature on a check or an antique coin, the direction of fit of authentication is clear. For the signature or the coin to be authentic is not an internal fact about the signature of the coin itself, but rather an *original* fact. If, and only if, the *origin* is proper—the person whose name appears in fact signed, or if the coin was minted in the proper place—the signature or the coin is *authentic*. Having learned about origins, I can then discover the properties of the things that have those origins. Your authentic signature looks just so, unlike forgeries; authentic coins of a certain kind look just so, unlike counterfeits.

In this case, the direction of fit is clear: to validate on the

basis of a sample the claim that your signature looks just so requires that I *first* determine that the signature is authentic, and *then* to determine its characteristics. Claims about the characteristics of the authentic must fit the authenticated. We do not require that the *authenticated* fit claims about that which is *authentic*. If I believe that your signature looks one way, and the signature you actually produce looks very different, I cannot dispute the authenticity of your signature on the grounds that it fails to fit my conception. The conception is responsible to fit that which has the appropriate origin.

It is this direction of fit that gives the rhetoric of authenticity its punch. We value certain items precisely because of their origins, and precisely because we can authenticate them by tracing their origins. Coins, objects of art and relics are like that. Two coins, two objects of art or two relics identical save that one is minted by the government and one is not; that one was created by the famous artist and that one was not; that one was once part of the body of a saint and one was not are, just in virtue of the original differences, and despite being otherwise identical, different in value and in significance. It is this curious concern with origins that accounts for our concern with authenticity.

This cachet is borrowed when we approve of a doctrine or practice that it is authentically Buddhist, or disparage another as inauthentic. But the appropriation of this cachet is deceptive. And it is deceptive precisely because in doing so we subtly reverse the direction of fit that gives authenticity its point. In this case we do not begin by tracing the doctrine or practice to its origins in the lips of the Buddha and then discover what the character is of things with that origin. Instead, we determine first whether we approve of the doctrine of practice, and then decide on that basis whether or not to assert of it that it *must* derive from the Buddha. We demand, in other words, that the original facts fit the internal facts, and not the other way around.

The claim to authenticity in such a circumstance is simply fraudulent. The word "authentic" in the absence of independent authentication is simply an honorific form of "approved by the speaker." But since our own approval counts for so little in serious religious or academic discourse, we borrow that of another, concealing the fact that we borrow that which was never lent by means of a rhetoric that draws on the presumption that the loan documents can in principle be found. The move gains its force from the facts that the presumption is tacit, and the documents are never requested. But since no such documents in fact exist, the rhetoric of authenticity is worse than hollow. Disputes about doctrinal coherence, truth or history; disputes about authorship or provenance of texts; disputes about the efficacy or rituals can be prosecuted on their merits, and that is the basis on which, by the way, the Buddha at the end of his career suggested that they be prosecuted. It might be the authentic Buddhist alternative to authenticity.

7. Buddhavacana in the Twenty-first Century

Why worry about all of this? I think about this problem because when we work to understand the shape of Buddhist practice and theory and the scope of Buddhist studies in the Twenty-first Century, we must come to grips with a new Buddhist transmission that, while it shares many features with past transmissions of Buddhism in Asia, is distinctive in ways that raise interesting questions and that stimulate disputes about authenticity. We are in the midst of the transmission of Buddhism to the West. Like the transmission of Buddhism to China, this transmission involves the introduction of Buddhist ideas and practices into an already highly literate and articulate set of cultures. As a consequence, Buddhism is inevitably read through the linguistic, cultural and ideological lens of the cultures into which it is being transmitted. Translation of Asian texts into English or other Western languages inevitably laces them with nuances and lexical resonances they never had in Asia. Cultural forms that are natural in Asian cultures appear exotic in their new homes, and may wither, be transformed, or acquire a new salience. Ideas taken for granted in Asia may be problematised or rejected in the West. We see each of these phenomena at work and each issue in a further transformation and adaptation of Buddhism, a continuation of the process of change that characterizes all compounded phenomena. To reject the new cultural forms of Buddhist practice and thought because of such transformations would require the rejection of all of Buddhist practice and thought as inauthentic. Nothing we see now is just as it was at the time of Sakyamuni.

There is a further challenge posed by the current transmission. Whereas in previous transmissions one might have thought that authenticity could be recovered at least by the tracing of single unbroken lineages, however much change there might be within those

lineages, this thought is inapposite in the case of the westward movement of Buddhism. For as Buddhism moves west, multiple traditions collide. We see the mixing of practices and ideas and the juxtaposition of texts from multiple traditions that were quite distinct in Asia. Is a Buddhist practice that combines Tibetan tantra and Zen meditation authentically Tibetan? Authentically Zen? Authentically Buddhist?

Things get more complex when we consider the impact of the interaction with the West on traditional Buddhist cultures and practices in Asia. The current transmission, unlike many previous transmissions of Buddhism, proceeds not on a narrow one-way caravan track, but on a multi-lane superhighway, with a great deal of diverse traffic flowing in both directions. Buddhist doctrine and practice in Asia is now saturated by Western modernist and postmodernist ideas. Nobody present at the recent Kalachakra teachings in Amaravati, for instance, could miss the relentless modernism of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as he articulated the need to correct Buddhist cosmology by modern astronomy or to join Buddhist theories of mind with those of cognitive neuroscience. And nobody who has been reading the literature of the "Engaged Buddhist" movement can miss the influence of American transcendentalism and liberalism on such thinkers as Thich Nhat Hahn, Bikkhu Buddhadassa and Ajarn Sulak Sivaraksa. Any account of authenticity according to which these figures, the doctrines they propagate and the movements they inspire are not authentically Buddhist risks ruling out *any* Buddhist teacher, doctrine or movement.

As Hayes (1998) and Queen (2003) have noted, this question is particularly poignant here in India where the majority of people who identify themselves as Buddhist follow the tradition initiated by Dr BR Ambedkar. Ambedkar and his followers offer a radically social interpretation of the four noble truths, reject rebirth, have no monastic institutions, and in general reject many of the more transcendent accounts of buddhahood, opting for a more mundane soteriology. Nonetheless, Ambedkar Buddhists take refuge, identify as Buddhists, take the four noble truths seriously, take lay vows, cultivate the Buddhist virtues, and see the world through a lens that is decidedly Buddhist. To claim that this form of practice is non-Buddhist would be to expel most of India's Buddhist from the fold. One would have to seriously question a criterion of membership that eliminates most prima facie members of a group.

Does this mean that anything goes? Is anything anyone cares to call a Buddhist doctrine or teaching thereby Buddhist? Should we follow Tweed (2002: 24) who concludes from similar considerations that "Buddhists are those who say they are?" Of course not. This no more follows than it follows from the indeterminacy of personal identity that you and I are identical. It means that the adjective "Buddhist," like most adjectives, admits of matters of degree, and denotes a set of overlapping patterns of family resemblances, causal chains, and conventional associations. Some things count as Buddhist because of causal connections to other Buddhist practices, doctrines or institutions; some because of ordination or textual lineages; some because of resemblances to other Buddhist phenomena; some because they conduce to awakening; some because they are connected to refuge; some because they involve certain rituals. This might make it hard to count Buddhists, traditions and lineages, and to draw sharp lines. But reality is hard to enumerate, and contains few sharp lines. The discourse of authenticity is nothing more than an attempt to superimpose clarity where there is none, and hence just one more symptom of primal ignorance.

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The Paths of Siamese Intellectuals: Past and Present

During the past 100 years, what "paths" on which Thai intellectuals could tread have been available? By "path", I mean the thoughts the intellectual "sends" to or communicates with society. My focus will be on the intellectual "path" of Sulak Sivaraksa, and I will attempt to answer two broad questions. To what extent has it continued to follow the dominant path or the mainstream? And why did Sulak diverge himself from the mainstream?

In this essay I divide Thai intellectuals into three broad categories, but I will pay particular emphasis on the mainstream intellectual current because it played a formative role in Sulak's intellectual development. I realize that I am risking oversimplification, and am aware of the complexity and differences within each intellectual current. In any case, the three paths may be summarized as follows: the first promotes and consolidates the power of the ruling elites; the second cultivates the power of the people; and the third attempts to liberate all human beings from sufferings or at least mitigate their sufferings.

The Mainstream Intellectuals

They believe and attempt to make others believe that a hierarchical society with political structures that nurture the centralization or totalization of power is inherently good and thus is appropriate for the Thai people and kingdom. Many leading mainstream intellectuals were members of the royal family such as Kings Rama V and Rama VI, Prince Damrong, and M.R. Kukrit Pramoj. In general, mainstream intellectuals have been prepared to "construct" or "alter" the truth to produce a regime of truth that bolsters the 'naturalization' of social hierarchies and political centralization. For instance, there were attempts to make the Thai ruling elites and kingdom appear more 'civilized', to monumentalize the 'successes' of the kings of the Chakkri dynasty (e.g., in 'protecting' the country's sovereignty and contributing to the 'progress' of the kingdom), and to make the era of absolute monarchy appear like a golden age in Thai history.

The belief that a hierarchical society is inherently good is linked to the assertion that the centralization of power in the hands of a single person is the form of governance most suitable for the kingdom; that is, it is the "Thai form of governance." Mainstream intellectuals explained that blood and Buddhism make the ruling elites virtuous and principled. According to this logic, the king should exercise unaccountable power, and if there should be checks and balances, it is the king who should check and balance the power of his officials. Mainstream intellectuals also tried to convince the people to believe that because of Buddhism the Thai state and society are compassionate. Those in the upper rungs of the social hierarchy are inclined to treat their subordinates ethically. The idea is that the superior-subordinate relationship is like the one between the parent and the child. These are just some of the attempts to make social inequality respectable or legitimate. I realize that mainstream intellectuals come in various shades and hues, some emphasizing on blood, ethnism, etc. more than other considerations. But they share a common basic assumption: human beings were not born equally good and capable, and they lack equal capacity to learn or become 'cultivated.' Therefore, only the members of the upper-class are morally principled. And so they should also serve as the ruling elites. The absolute majority of citizens are trapped in a cycle of ignorance, poverty, and suffering, beseeching the compassion and tutelage of the ruling class.

In the hands of mainstream intellectuals, the Thai country and society are essentially good, or goodness is an essentialized quality of the Thai country and society—i.e., goodness as "Thai-ness." Therefore, and this is a bit redundant, the Thai kingdom is good because of Thai-ness. As long as the purity of Thai-ness is maintained and protected, the kingdom will remain good indefinitely. Following this train of logic, any unwanted change or problem in the kingdom is largely the result of the betrayal of Thai-ness or the absorption of undesirable foreign elements.

Mainstream intellectuals pay a lot of attention to justice but it is a form of justice without equality. Put another way, equality is only an intra-group condition. Members of the ruling class are equal, but they are

superior to the majority of the population. (Equality also refers to the equal right to be unequal.) Given this condition, the kingdom's ruling elites are the source of justice in society. As for liberty, mainstream intellectuals stress that there's already ample liberty in Thai-ness: the liberation of the mind through the practice of the Dhamma.

Sulak was once a member of the mainstream intellectual current. He had confidently treaded on this path. Ultimately, he began to criticize (often violently) the pillars of Thai-ness, seeing them as deviating from the idealism of Thai-ness; that is, they had failed to establish peace and prosperity for the people and to make the kingdom "good." Therefore, aside from critiquing, Sulak wanted the pillars of the kingdom to function according to the ideals of Thai-ness. And this could only be brought about by promoting accountability and transparency—by opening up institutions to criticism so they would be able to have reflexivity. This especially applies to the two pillars that are considered to be the "heart" of Thai-ness: the monarchy and Buddhism. Over the decades, however, Sulak sensed that the main institutions of the Thai kingdom had made disappointing progress, and therefore he decided to part company with the mainstream intellectuals.

Despite the elitism he still shares with other mainstream intellectuals, Sulak's path is marked by three distinct and 'de-stabilizing' features. One, Sulak never wanted to be at the center of political and economic power. Thus, he has no reason to serve or flatter the powers-that-be and their regime of truth. Two, Sulak is highly ambitious in terms of accumulating wisdom and spirituality: he is a lover of knowledge. Given his expanding network of acquaintances and colleagues (his kalyanamitta) as well as the rapidly changing conditions of Thai society, Sulak felt that the explanation and understanding based on Thai-ness were highly inadequate to cope with myriad of problems. A revolution in terms of knowledge was necessary to deal with the looming 'crisis.' This entailed criticizing the mainstream regime of truth and the quest for new knowledge(s). By nature a 'rebel', Sulak has therefore effectively performed his role as an oppositional figure. His objective is to radicalize, rethink, and reform Thai-ness. And three, Sulak's increasing exposure to individuals from all walks of life (especially the poor and the marginalized whose wisdom and way of life struck him deeply) both at the national and international levels, stimulated him to completely reject the structural hierarchy of Thai society and its accompanying form of relations.

It is possible to say that when Sulak realized the flaws of mainstream thinking and perceived the potentialities and power of the people more clearly, he began to decenter the core of Thai-ness. This decentering meant a new recentering—moving away from the Nation (i.e., the stance of Luang Wichit) and militarism and ethnism (i.e., M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's) and moving towards Buddhism. Sulak elevated Buddhism above the Nation and the Monarchy. He argues that the Nation is not homogeneous, but filled with diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Sulak also argues that the People is at the core of the Thai nation and Thai-ness.

Additionally, Sulak tends to give importance to intellectuals or what he calls "the youth", which isn't really about age but about the 'vitality' to help others—some are more 'youthful' when it comes to helping others. Although Sulak situates the ordinary people above the mainstream intellectuals, he still feels that they need assistance or help from "the youth" of the kingdom. Therefore, it is one of Sulak's objectives to help 'produce' intellectuals or 'youthful people' to help others.

Sulak does not shun 'foreign' ideas. He even feels that there can be a fruitful mélange between 'foreign' and 'local' ideas. For instance, he does not reject liberalism—unlike mainstream intellectuals who feel that it will bring into question the hierarchical relations they deem suitable for Thai society. However, Sulak finds that Thai society is largely ignorant in blending foreign and local elements for it lacks the rudimentary skill to distinguish good from bad.

At present, Sulak still sees Buddhism and the Monarchy as core institutions of Thai-ness—and will continue to do so in the future. Needless to say, Sulak supports the Monarchy but not the mainstream 'mentality' or 'rationality' that comes with it, e.g., the idea of a fixed social hierarchy.

Redefining Buddhism

Sulak offers an alternative interpretation of Buddhism that once again differs from the mainstream intellectuals'. He 'globalizes' and 'universalizes' Buddhism, portraying it as the proper path on which the world should travel. Put differently, he

has promoted the awareness and understanding of Buddhism at the national and the international levels, and, rejecting the mundane-supramundane binary opposition. Sulak has consistently argued that Buddhism offers solutions to worldly affairs. And when Sulak refers to Buddhism, he generally means a blending of the teachings of the different schools of Buddhism. It is also well known that Sulak sees the sangha as a model for democracy. Lastly, Sulak evaluates other individuals from the perspective of Buddhism; that is, to what extent they uphold or are a model of morality, mindfulness, and wisdom.

Redefining 'Thai Governance'

Sulak has contended that Thai democracy should have the characteristics of a village republic, should use features of Thai rural villages as points of reference. Mainstream intellectuals, on the contrary, refer to the father-child model of the Sukhothai era. Thus, and this is readily apparent, Sulak is an advocate of political decentralization, of loosening the stranglehold of the capital city over 'the peripheries.' As such his position is antithetical to the mainstream intellectuals'.

Redefining the King

Like mainstream intellectuals, Sulak sees the Monarchy as highly important to the Thai nation in terms of maintaining continuity in the society and of being a locus of the unity of the people. Sulak feels that the king under constitutional monarchy may play a crucial role in privately advising, criticizing, and cautioning the government when necessary. On the whole, however, the king should maintain political neutrality. Also, he believes that the monarchy should be a beacon of light in terms of ethics and morality. Nevertheless, as implied above, Sulak does not feel that the Monarchy is sacred or above criticism like mainstream intellectuals (esp. M.R. Kukrit Pramoj) do. Only a transparent and publicly accountable Monarchy will make it truly respectable, Sulak insists. Furthermore, he asserts that the Monarchy should play a leading role in fostering and cultivating democracy (e.g., the decentralization of power). Mainstream intellectuals (again, Kukrit is a good example), on the other hand, favor the leader/king having absolute power. All things considered, Sulak's path has clearly moved beyond that of mainstream intellectuals when it comes to the Monarchy.

The fact that Sulak opposes the political centralization of power and rejects the fixed hierarchy of society signifies his most important dismissal of the Thai-ness advocated by mainstream intellectuals. Although Sulak still openly praises many mainstream intellectuals, his intellectual path increasingly criss-crosses those of the remaining two intellectual currents.

The **second** intellectual path is comprised of those who believe that human beings are all equal, and therefore they should equally share the benefits and the losses. They also disapprove of political centralization—including the various shades of absolutism. This group may be further subdivided into three strands. One, intellectuals who believe in equality and democracy, but feel that the country still has a long way to go before reaching that destination. As such, they have to take part in the system, to reform it from within. An example of this is including Mahayana and Vajarayana Puey Ungphakorn. Two, intellectuals who struggle for social, economic, and political equality. They are often influenced by socialism or Marxism. A good example is Pridi Banomyong. Sulak holds both Puey and Pridi in high esteem, while not fully agreeing with their ideas. And three, intellectuals who struggle for social equality which is inextricable from the liberation of the mind and wisdom as well as political democratization.

The **third** group of intellectuals is comprised of the ordained who are well versed in the Dhamma, have written a lot of books, and see Buddhism as offering solutions to both private and public problems. Leading examples are Bhikkhu Buddhadasa, the Venerable Payutto, and Phra Phaisan Visalo. The ordained intellectuals are not only devoted to the dissemination of Buddhism but also serve as a living testimony that a life liberated from the globalizing culture of consumerism through morality, mindfulness, and wisdom is a good life. Sulak has played a prominent role in helping to broaden public awareness of the works by these intellectuals, locally and internationally, in making Buddhism a relevant part of life worldwide.

To sum up, there are three broad strands of intellectual path in Thai society. Each path is marked by different assumptions, priorities, and objectives, though they may also overlap. Why then is the mainstream intellectual current still dominant in the present? Why do the

majority of Thais still adopt the orthodox lenses to interpret or engage with the world? A possible answer is that these orthodoxies buttress political centralization (e.g., various shades of absolutism), which has been a dominant feature of the Thai state since the reign of King Rama V. It is therefore a major responsibility of intellectuals in the present and future to continue to redefine Thai-ness (to think along with and against Sulak.)

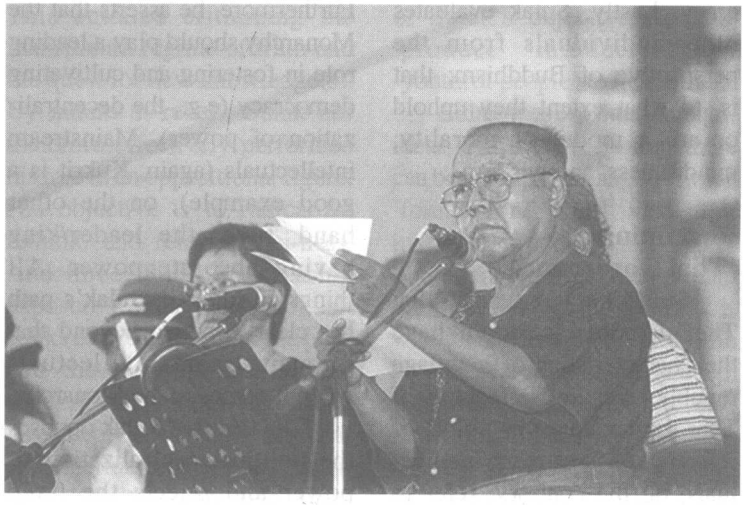
Saichon Sattayanurak

Driving Thaksin Away from Power Mindfully

We all must understand that this struggle against Thaksin Shinawatra is a confrontation with Mara: this is a 'just' war; that is, the Good will prevail over Mara through nonviolent and dhammic means, employing sincerity, compassion, transparency, humility, patience, wisdom, and solidarity.

We must not forget that the Lord Mara is wily, intelligent, and devious. Two days ago, he mobilized hundreds of thousands to come to his rally by fooling them, bribing them. He believed that it was legitimate to do so. Put differently, he has consistently seen injustice as justice, has deliberately confused the distinction between lies and truths, the Wrong View and the Right View, the Devil's Discus and the Lotus. He had bought votes. He had used all sorts of trickery in the general election. He had lied to the people to gain their votes. The sad part is that many Thais still hold him in awe: they are still mesmerized by Thaksinism.

Admittedly, he had once fooled me too. I had firmly believed that he would gradually diverge from his Wrong Livelihood, which has enabled him to accumulate massive wealth. Many of us felt that he had already done his share of getting rich, and therefore he would now work selflessly for the people by narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and by cultivating Right Livelihood; that is, simplicity and humility (along the lines advocated by the King). I was wrong.



We believed that he had made an honest mistake in the concealment of his financial assets in 2001. So we helped mobilize the people to support and sympathize with him. We wanted him to have an opportunity to work for the people. We believed that the Constitutional Court would serve as a major pillar in upholding justice and accountability in society. In the end, Thaksin narrowly escaped a five-year ban on holding political office. We failed to see that the judges of the Court were filled with prejudices, and many were quite devious. Moreover, the Court recently rejected a petition to impeach Thaksin, yet another proof that it lacks neutrality, that it is under the influence of Lord Mara.

For long, people like me have closely followed the administration of Thaksin Shinawatra. It took awhile before we could call a spade a spade and see through Thaksin's web of deceits and the devastation his policies has wreaked on society. We are not surprised that many people are unable to see this fact. The government has intervened in the workings of the mass media. Thaksin bought several media companies and destroyed many others. The mass media have

engaged in self-censorship. Several independent reporters and journalists were fired. TV and radio programs critical of Thaksin were shut down. Lackeys were promoted to eulogize the wonders of Thaksin, demonize his opponents, and spread lies and half-truths. (One or two of them just fell from grace recently, however. And soon Thaksin will follow suit.) All in all, the mass media are not longer free and independent.

For many years, many have already pointed out Thaksin's deviousness, and so I won't repeat their points. I'd like to stress that he's very corrupt and manipulative, and has broken every aspect of the Five Precepts, which serve as the minimal basis of a just and peaceful society.

Violating the First Precept, Thaksin has used legal and extra-legal measures to kill thousands (many were probably innocent) in his 'war on drugs.' Several international human rights organizations have heavily condemned these measures. But many Thais chose to remain oblivious to this fact and to continue supporting Thaksin—seeing violence as a 'necessary evil.' Some monks have even publicly supported the killing of drug suspects. Countless also 'disappeared' in Narathiwat and Pattani provinces as a result of Thaksin's policy on 'quelling' the Southern unrest—that is, state-sponsored violence. Thaksin has helped fanned parochial nationalism. Buddhists were pitted against Muslims, and Thais against Malays. All these are quite unprecedented. And we must not forget the use of violence against those demonstrating against the construction of the Thai-Malay gas pipelines—or of the Pak Moon Dam for that matter, or the fact that he risked the lives of Thai soldiers by sending them to Iraq in order to curry favor from the lords of the American empire. He also allowed the Americans to operate a secret detention center in the kingdom to torture 'terrorist' suspects.

Concerning the violation of the Second Precept, Thaksin has robbed tax payers' money, siphoning it to private coffers—his own and his cronies'. They are all influential at the local and the international levels. The selling of the Shin Corp stocks is the latest evidence, and it serves as the last straw in propelling all those who could no longer tolerate his corruption to come out and oppose him. Thaksin treats the kingdom as his private fiefdom to enrich his and his cronies' pockets. The FTA agreement with China is robbing or bankrupting poor Thai farmers; he had cracked down on Falungong followers in Siam and had refused H.H. the Dalai Lama's entry into the kingdom to appease Chinese leaders. Further showing his callous disregard for human rights, Thaksin has befriended the Burmese military junta—the worst of its kind in the region—and has used Thai tax payers' money to support them in exchange for lucrative business deals. All things considered, Thaksin is more than willing to sell the kingdom and its citizens to TNCs and other countries like Singapore. If he and his pals (a handful of families) can get obscenely richer by eroding national sovereignty, so be it.

As for breaking the Third Precept, I don't have hard evidence. But there are lots of rumors that Thaksin and his cabinet ministers have engaged in many sexual reveries—that Thaksin has been unfaithful to his wife. There is even a toddler who looks astonishingly like Thaksin. All these still cannot be proven. So we may have to give him the benefit of the doubt. But truths about Thaksin's notorious sexual life will surely surface after his fall from power—like those of the dictator Sarit Thanarat.

Now, on the violation of the Fourth Precept. Thaksin uses the mass media to deceive the people. The truth is undermined or asphyxiated. Lies and half-truths circulate endlessly. Thaksin likes to say that he was born poor, but now he's a billionaire. His mission is to make everyone as rich as he is; that is, he's the benchmark. Many are seduced by this promise. But with a modicum of commonsense we would realize how outrageous the promise is. We would know that his wealth was—is being—amassed through deceits and Wrong Livelihood. It's impossible for everyone to be a Thaksin. But it is possible for the rich to level down—to reduce their greed, for instance. It's possible for the people to pursue a simple and humble way of life. Thaksin got rich through devious means, both legal and illegal. He makes a virtue out of thievery. Now he wants all of us to be rich by being thieves. Won't this destroy Buddhism in the kingdom?

As for breaching the Fifth Precept, Thaksin uses the mass media to intoxicate the people. The people are urged to entertain themselves to death and to worship capitalism and consumerism—at the expense of morality, social justice, environmental sustainability, local cultures, and so on.

If we don't understand these facts, we'll give a free hand to a bunch of immoralists to run the country and exploit the people. Governing the country is not simply a matter of political science and the law. But it is also about ethics and legitimacy. Since Thaksin has lost legitimacy, his time is up. The sovereignty of the people enables them to remove Thaksin. Thaksin is no longer able to represent them.

When King Rama IV ascended to the throne of the Chakkri Dynasty he declared, "I will rule the land with justice." All his successors likewise made the same declaration. King Rama IV added that his subjects and officials had the right to remove him from the throne if he had failed to uphold justice in the land. It seems that a Siamese king had the moral courage to enable his subjects to remove him. Thaksin on the other hand sees himself as above the king—who's he to think that we cannot remove him from power? We can vote with our feet to remove him from power.

Thaksin has shamelessly argued that he must stay in power in order to organize the 60th anniversary celebration of the king's accession to the throne. This auspicious occasion should be organized by a virtuous person, not a thug who plunders his own people and country.

All of us who uphold justice must find nonviolent ways to remove Thaksin from power—the sooner, the better. It won't be easy. We have to rely on the dhamma. We must not allow hatred, love, anger, etc. to dominate us. Verbally assaulting Thaksin may bring fulfillment in the short run. But in the long run it lacks real value. Rather, we must nurture compassion (loving oneself and others selflessly); loving-kindness (willing to serve the poor and the exploited and to learn from them); good will towards others (we must not hate Thaksin and the TRT for the karma that they have committed will eventually return to haunt them); and equanimity (we must examine and overcome the prejudices in our hearts in order to prevail over devious people nonviolently).

Like in the Buddha's confrontation with Mara, we must rely on wisdom. Wisdom is not only about correct thinking, but also about harmonizing the mind and the heart. With wisdom, we'll be able to forgive Thaksin. Forgivingness means the absence of fear or freedom from fear. And fear is really about the greed, hatred, and delusion brewing inside of us. If we are able to overcome fear, we'll have sympathy for Thaksin, who's now in a living hell. And, hopefully, one day after his resignation he'll emerge from it to be enlightened by the dhamma. This will be a long and drawn out struggle. We need to maintain patience and mindfulness. And victory will be ours. It will be victory for the Thai people as well as for the dhamma.

S. Sivaraksa's public lecture on March 5, 2006; first published in ***Thai Day*** which is affiliated with the ***New York Herald Tribune***, March 15, 2006.

Regeneration of Nalanda: Looking Ahead to Alternative Education

I

I believe all of you know that Nalanda was a great center of Buddhist and worldly studies in India, founded approximately in the 2nd century of the Common Era. It then developed into a university—the oldest in the world, with its great library and famous scholars.

According to the account of two Chinese pilgrims—Hsuan-tsang and I-Ching who visited Nalanda at the height of its activities—ten thousand monks were resident there and were studying all schools of Buddhism, as well as logic, mathematics, medicine, etc. Important teachers included Dharmapala, Dignaga, Hsuan-tsang and Sthiramat. Students came to Nalanda from China, Tibet and Southeast Asia. The Muslims did not destroy it until the 12th or 13th century.

However well known Nalanda was, with its excellent scholarship and research, it eventually lacked spiritual depth. It is said that Naropa (1016-1100) left the university, despite his fame in the academic world, to seek liberation from greed, hatred and delusion, similar to the way that the founder of Buddhism had left the palace to seek the truth until he had become the Buddha or the awakened one.

It was through Naropa's

Tibetan student, Marpa, that one of the central doctrines of the Kagyupa school was established in Tibet and spread to other countries.

Chogyam Trungpa, one of the contemporary Tibetan masters of the Kagyupa school (1940-1987) became one of the most influential exponents of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, characterized by his ability to expand the Buddha-Dhamma in terms of the everyday life of his listeners in the modern world.

Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet, he escaped to India in 1959. In 1963 he was awarded a fellowship to study at Oxford University. In 1970 he went to North America where he taught until his death. Twenty-five years ago he founded the Naropa Institute, which has now become a university, in the image of the ancient Nalanda, much smaller of course, but with a contemplative dimension, which was missing at the great university at the time when Naropa left it to seek the truth beyond intellectual pursuit. Indeed most institutes of higher learning in the modern world also have no concern for morality or spirituality of man.

You all may agree with me that education is not simply about learning and teaching. It is also about leading an appropriate way of life in society, about supporting oneself and others, about overcoming oppression and exploitation, and about nurturing wisdom. Unfortunately, this meaning of education had more or less disappeared. It started in the West with the waning of Christianity's influence and the advent of the Age of Enlightenment. The brain and individualism have been overemphasized at the expense of sensitivity, sensibility, spirituality, and the mind. The West upheld Rene Descartes as the father of modem philosophy. His famous dictum *"cogito ergo sum"* places emphasis on egoism to say the least. If there is an "I" then there must always be a "you", a "we" and a "them", a "self" and an "other." Western philosophy is rooted in these dualisms or binary oppositions. There is a dichotomy between objectivity and subjectivity: the former is associated with neutrality while the latter is seen as personal views. But if one is unable to see the limits of one's knowledge and the pervasiveness of one's prejudices, especially those rooted in love, hatred, ignorance, and vengeance, how can one assume objectivity.

This brings to my mind the words of Howard Zinn, the author of the widely acclaimed *A People's History of the United States*. Commenting on the notion of objectivity Zinn states:

> *I've said two things about it. One, is that it's not possible. Two, it's not desirable. It's not possible because all history is a selection out of an infinite number of facts. As soon as you begin to select, you select according to what you think is important. Therefore it is already not objective. It's already biased in the direction of whatever you, as the selector of this information, think people should know. So it's really not possible.*

If we analyze Zinn's words, it seems that the objectivity the academic circles in the West uphold as foundational is really based on delusion or the sense of lack, which David Loy has convincingly contended in A *Buddhist History of the West: Studies in Lack* (2002) and *The Great Awakening: A Buddhist Social Theory* (2003). These two great books may serve as our guides in our quest for alternative education in the 21st century.

That which the West calls 'progress' is the hypertrophy of the first use of reason, which, as Descartes wrote, *'makes us masters and possessors of nature'*. The only criterion and only value are those of 'efficacy'. Linear progress, as conceived in the West, is growing efficacy in the destruction of nature and of people. Witness the dominance of neoliberalism in the present world!

Predictably, the Western model of growth is characterized by blind production of more and more, faster and faster, no matter what; things useful, useless or even lethal (for instance, armaments). Such 'growth' in the West is possible only by plundering the rest of the world. The 'growth' began with the genocide of American Indians, continued with the trade of African slaves, and in Asia with the opium war and the bomb on Hiroshima. This 'growth' led, in 1980, to the starvation and death of fifty-five million human beings in the so-called underdeveloped countries, the same year that the West's politics of armaments has ended in placing four tons of explosives on the head of each inhabitant of the planet.

'Underdevelopment' is not a phenomenon of backwardness; it has been created by the growth of the West. The growth of some countries and the underdevelopment of others are only two faces of the same planetary maldevelopment. The first consequence, a theoretical one, of this reckoning is to denounce

the falsehood which is involved in processing to the 'underdeveloped' countries that they should imitate the Western model of development, because, by definition, a system where the growth of some countries demands the pillage and underdevelopment of three-fourths of the world is not applicable to the entire universe.

John D'Arcy May who teaches in Dublin quoted Thomas Berry—a scholar of both the European and Asian classics—thus: universities were "the most dangerous institutions in the world". They produce armies of economic rationalists and set them marching in a direction exactly opposite to where the real problems lie, programming them to do damage to society and ecology by pursuing rationalist economics and the so-called "value-neutral science" while remaining oblivious of the moral issues and religious dimensions involved. The preservation of indigenous species of animals and plants, and respect for ethnic minorities, their languages and cultures, are integral to the functioning of sustainable ecologies without which life on our planet could not survive. Berry advocates that all universities appoint Deans of Morality (by which he probably means non-market morality) to ensure that these crucial questions of value orientation and practical politics be faced in all faculties. In other words, we must also see neoliberal economics as a normative system.

Many would find this programme utopian, but the point is well taken: universities themselves are deeply implicated in global processes, which put techno-logical rationality at the service of the financial interests, which subvert the political process. Universities are corporatized, so to speak. Big money for big science for big business: this, despite smoke screens of token appreciation for the humanities and the liberal arts, is the bottom line as far as university administrators who want to be 'successful' are concerned. In the evolving environment of standardization, quality assurance and public accountability, it is a condition of universities' survival that they become, if not businesses, at least more businesslike and business-orientated. As the provocative educationalist Ivan Illich put it over thirty years ago, Western-style 'schooling' is modernity's *rite de passage*, the "central myth-making ritual of industrial societies". Schools ensure the pupils' "full commitment to the ideology which puts economic growth first", while the university becomes the "final stage of the most all-encompassing initiation rite the world has ever known". Language itself becomes *gleichgeschaltet*, so perfectly attuned to the agendas of the powerful that the concepts and connotations with which resistance could be formulated are eliminated, making protest appear irrational and naïve. Universities are not providing discourses that are invaluable for resistance, for critique, for thinking of alternatives. Rather, they seek to freeze the present—to make it an eternal present; and it does not matter whether the eternal present is bright or dark for it is equally dead. Reason, in the sense of what was classically called *ratio* and in modernity *Verstand*, is understood as 'rationality' and assumed to be a Western prerogative, neutral to human interests and cultural identities and applicable everywhere; reason as *intellectus* or *Vernunft*, the intuition of transcendence and the mystery of existence, becomes invisible in this one-dimensional science-for-business discourse because it is no longer nourished by the stories and metaphors—not to mention rituals and meditative practices—preserved in the collective memories of cultural and religious traditions.

In my view the most important contribution to the alternative education movement in the past 30 years is the publishing of E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful,* which is primarily about Buddhist economics and secondarily about economics as if human beings matter. The importance of this point cannot be overemphasized. The knowledge systems of the West since the Enlightenment have narrowly focused on academic progress and on power, wealth, possession, and success more than on human beings. Or if importance is placed on human beings, it is on his or her role as an oppressor—of nature or of fellow human beings, in terms of race, class, gender, sex, etc. Or human beings are seen as resources for the great capitalist machine that is increasingly transnational and out of control.

In England, Schumacher College has also been established as an alternative education, emphasizing contemplation as well as social justice and ecological balance—beyond the mainstream western science.

We must heed well that the two main objectives of Western science are to discover the laws of nature or pure facts and to use these discoveries to improve the wellbeing of human lives and the material world—e.g., medicine and technology. Religions,

including Buddhism, used to play this latter role. But religious leaders in the West had long fought with scientists ever since Western science had transformed from natural philosophy into science at around the 19th century. And the break between religion and science also erupted in that century with the publishing of Charles Darwin's *The Origins of the Species* and *The Descent of Man.* Science signifies progress, while religion and theology are seen as signs of backwardness or stagnation.

Interestingly, Buddhist leaders in the 19th century did not engage in any debate with Western scientists. In the Thai case, our political leaders willfully subordinated Buddhism to science. In the West, the appeal of science grew rapidly and expanded into other disciplines or knowledge systems such as economics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and history. Venerable Payutto, a leading Thai Bhikkhu, has made an interesting comment on this issue thus:

Many disciplines and knowledge systems want to be scientific or try to show that they are scientific. But a view that is highly specialized, compartmentalized, and one-dimensional is self-defeating, making it impossible to be scientific, including science itself. Science can never be perfectly scientific because it lacks [many] components, making truth incomplete and imperfect. When a truth is imperfect then it is not really true. And when all the components are not considered and conclusions are hastily reached then reality is not clearly perceived. The system of logic and rationality is thus imperfect and thus could not approach the truth.

I admit that even if mainstream science in the West has limitations, it has benefited our world a lot, especially in the past century. For instance, our knowledge about the universe has expanded exponentially, and we have gained some power over nature and many diseases. It is possible to travel around the world (in particular if one belongs to the rich propertied class) and to communicate with others who live 2000 kilometers away from us. But we often marvel at these accomplishments without considering the prices we had to pay: deforestation, the destruction of natural landscapes, the dwindling of nonrenewable resources, the lessening of biodiversity, the concentration camps, weapons of mass destruction, etc. We have to try to seriously understand these bifurcations of reason. Only the few have access to these magical knowledge systems, medical advances, and technological developments. Moreover, the possessors of these highly specialized knowledge systems are akin to theologians in the past: they have the power over life and death by structuring our worldviews, advancing policies that impact millions of lives, legitimizing war and violence, and so on. These highly compartmentalized knowledge systems are often lacking in ethical considerations. The novelty of Schumacher's work is that he tried to infuse the human dimension back into economics from a Buddhist perspective. Schumacher was not a Buddhist. But on the whole Buddhists have been quite influential in developing alternative education in the West. Many Western thinkers such as Ivan Illich, Paolo Freire, and A.S. Neal, along with many Catholic theologians or priests in Latin America have challenged the Western worldview. But they still do so from the Western standpoint that is based on logic and science. In other words, they could not go beyond science, that is, find an alternative to Western science.

It is heartening to learn that many Tibetan Buddhist monks have not succumbed to the Western scientific worldview. Forced into exile due to the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet, these Buddhist monks have not been compelled to modify or revolutionize Buddhist teachings, which could not be proven scientifically, in order to be accepted by their contemporaries in the West and worldwide. Moreover, they also have not tried to launch their tradition to hegemonic position. Over the past 30 years, Tibetan Buddhist monks have done a great deal to tame the arrogance of Western science. One of the most noteworthy among them is Chogyam Trungpa, who has contributed enormously to a spiritual awakening in the West. He has shown that discovering nature's laws is insufficient: wisdom is also needed. He has shown that moral training and meditation can be relied on in our search for the truth, transcending the scientific and rationalistic paradigm. He has written many influential books and articles, and founded the Naropa University in the US, which has offered a Buddhist education for the past 25 years. The heart and the mind can also "perceive" things reliably and perceptibly. Many books by Naropa University's professors have shown that a science deprived of ethics is akin to superstition, and technological development without ethical considerations is like promot-

ing black magic. *Perceiving an Ordinary Magic* and *The Sacred Life* by Jeremy Hayward are two good examples of using Buddhist practices to challenge mainstream science in the West. His latest book, *Letters to Vanessa,* warns against how technology, consumerism, and materialism are destroying the simple magic in the world and colonizing our imagination.

Moreover, the Mind and Life Institute was born in the past decade. Guided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Institute has promoted dialogues between Buddhist practitioners and Western scientists. These dialogues have made many Western scientists more humble and have made them recognize the limitations of objects and forms and the ignorance of their knowledge system. For instance, many scientists have accepted that there is nothing in the mind that can be called "the self."

Most mainstream scientists do not see the importance of religious experiences or of spirituality. Thus they are not interested in the complexities of life and the mind, which cannot be proven scientifically. To approach or fathom these abstract understandings should be the substance of an alternative education system. An alternative educational practice that has been introduced to the West is mental training. It is an essential training for all Dhamma practitioners. Meditation is used to tread or construct the mind's paths, to pursue the 'normal' states of the mind. We are often attached to ourselves (to our convictions, theories, prejudices, etc.). As such the mind is obstructed by the five hindrances: sensual desire, hatred, indolence, anxiety, and uncertainty. These thoughts and feelings inhibit and whither the mind. Meditation is used to enliven and nourish the mind. When we have learned to calm our minds there will be inner peace. We will no longer dwell in our monologues. We will be aware of the superficiality of sensual pleasures and prestige. Instead, we will be able to give birth to true love that is not centered on lust and possessiveness, which are inextricable from greed, hatred and delusion. In other words, only through the reduction of self-attachment will we be able to overcome or critique the dualisms that inhibit our minds and lives.

Once the dualisms are overcome we will appreciate the 'real' states of the mind: compassion, generosity, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. We will be able to perceive non-judgmentally and be awakened from the various forms of mental domination rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion, which are best manifested by capitalism, militarism, and compartmentalized knowledge systems such as mainstream science. Meditation leads to wisdom; that is, the ability to know various states in their reality, without self-attachment. This will instill loving-kindness, sympathetic joy, and forgivingness in us. We will live in freedom. This will help alleviate or resolve the crises in the present world resulting from myopia and selfishness: obtaining short term gains at all costs.

We must overcome our "selves" (e.g., the conception of a translucent, autonomous self) to overcome these crises. This is the substance of a good alternative education. The objective of education must shift from mastery and promoting success, power, and social status to cultivating moral training and inner peace. Education must free us from the chains that are enslaving our minds.

We must treat science abstractly or Dhammically. In other words, we must develop technologies of the self that will help realize inner peace and freedom and use them to engage with society for the benefit of all. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has confronted immense sufferings, especially having seen his people tormented under Chinese occupation. Yet he could continue living happily and simply, and remind fellow human beings of the virtue of simple living and happiness. He is surely one of our role models. For realizing alternative education at the international level, we must chart not only the roots but also the routes of our cultures, and their interconnection. We cannot return to the past: the past is already dead. But we can retrace it with a critical mind. For instance, we must understand that dead people and ideas still influence the present, however unawares we are. For Buddhists this entails shedding certain practices and traditions that are not Dhammic so we can enter into emptiness without defilements and transcend capitalism, consumerism, militarism, and other forms of ignorance.

Buddhism and mainstream science see the world differently. Science tends to deal with the concrete while Buddhism deals with the abstract. We should try to mesh these two views and engender a science that is religiously or morally inclined. The Mind and Life Institute is trying to achieve just this.

What does it mean to be a Buddhist these days? We must find the appropriate light to

interpret the teachings of the Buddha in order to awaken us from various forms of domination. We must understand the complexity of modern society, especially structural injustice and violence. We must ask ourselves what is the meaning of our lives: to have, to buy, to indulge, to possess, or simply to be? If we realized that the meaning of life is to be (which is a process) rather than to have, we will know our role and identity in society. We will know how to appropriately behave to others and to the environment. Buddhist teachings in the past do not have power in themselves and cannot deal with the malaise of industrialized or globalized societies, of transnational corporations and planeterized capitalism. We must not treat mental training as a form of escapism or personal salvation. Rather mental training must awaken our wisdom so we will be able to wisely engage with society and deal with the multiple crises of greed, hatred, and delusion in the present.

Thirty years ago Schumacher made us understand that human beings are incalculably more important than economics, profit, or scholarship. He encouraged us to return to Right Livelihood based on Buddhist teachings and on appropriate technology. In Asia, Pracha Hutanuwatra and Ramu Manivannan have recently edited two volumes entitled *The Asian Future* (2005), which seek to move beyond western hegemony. Now we have David Loy (in his two famous books mentioned earlier) who has clarified on what it means to be awakened based on Buddhist sociology. Loy writes thus: "To wake up is to realize that I am not in the world, I am what the world is doing right here and now. When Shakyamuni became enlightened, the whole world awakened in him and as him. The world begins to heal when we realized that its sufferings are our own."

With this in mind, we can really look ahead for alternative education in regenerating Nalanda.

S. Sivaraksa's
lecture at Nava Nalanda University,
February 13, 2006.
The Goveror of Bihar was
Chair of the session.

Having A Monarchy Is Less Costly Than A Presidency

After the political transformation in 1932, in what ways did the monarchy change? And what were the pivotal moments?

After 1932, King Rama VII initially could not accept the change, which led to his abdication. He felt he had already resolved the 10 December 1932 Constitution to his own liking, which should leave him with considerable power. He felt that he would have the opportunity to appoint at least half of the members of the National Assembly. But when it turned out that he could not do so, he accused all of them of being chosen by the Promoters. This contributed to the Boworadet Rebellion. It is known that the king supported the Boworadet Rebellion even if he denied any involvement. A trial soon followed in which the king lost. The Sukhothai Palace was seized, etc. Thus after the Seventh Reign, the time of King Rama VIII was when the constitutional monarchy fully began. The king was still young and was living abroad. The Regent was thus the one who protected the throne, namely Prince Aditya Dibabha, who was the second Regent. The first Regent Prince Anuvatra Chaturanta committed suicide. Prince Aditya was rather soft, and he surrendered to the dictates of the military dictatorship in every possible way. At the same time Chao Phya Yenyothin, who was close to King Rama VI, urged Luang Adul-dejarat to help protect the monarchy. He did not trust Field Marshal Phibun. This was one of the good things Luang Adul did, and he later served in many important positions till his death—e.g., Privy Councillor. Thus during the Eighth Reign the monarchy was fully under the constitution even if the dictatorship tried to eclipse the role of the king. When Pridi Banomyong became the Regent—the only one—he protected the monarchy with great dignity. He was independent and steered clear from the pressures exerted by the dictatorship. During the Ninth Reign a coup d'etat erupted in 1947. I believe Luang Katsonggram was the mastermind. He wanted to use the monarchy as a tool to attack Pridi. Pridi was

accused of committing regicide, of trying to establish a presidency, and of being communist. I don't think these came directly from Phibun. At that time, nothing could be used to bring Pridi down. Thus the monarchy was used to indoctrinate the people that the political administration had thus far failed because it did not properly respect the monarchy. We can see that after that numerous ceremonies were invented to celebrate the king. At the same time, the king was abused and subjugated. And King Rama IX knew that Phibun was oppressing him. Phibun had full control over the royal budget and the Crown Property Bureau. The king was allowed only one vacation a year—and he often retreated to Hua Hin. The king was not allowed to go anywhere. There was no news on the monarchy, only on the government. So the king pleaded for the establishment of a radio station to serve as his mouthpiece. It was Sarit Thanarat who made full use of the monarchy. Phibun was accused of overshadowing the king. The king regained control of the Crown Property Bureau. And he was allowed to travel freely—he even traveled worldwide. Sarit used the monarchy as a tool to protect his dictatorship since he had no legitimacy whatsoever. At least, Phibun had some legitimacy in terms of protecting the constitution and the parliament. Therefore, the monarchy was under the constitution, and the parliament acted as the main institutional pillar. But Sarit threw the parliament away—threw democracy away in the name of promoting royal prerogatives. He even depicted himself as a sovereign overlord. I believe these ideas came from Luang Wichit Watthakan. This is a brief overview of the development of the monarchy.

If this is the case, can we say that the monarchy as we know it today is a recent historical construction?

Those who are in high positions nowadays only began to know about it in 1958. It has been 48 years. They only know that the monarchy is a sacred or a divine regime—beyond reproach. One must crawl toward it. It cannot be criticized. This is the general picture in the present. The period of absolute monarchy was not like this. At least when King Rama V came to the throne, he demanded that his audiences stand up in his presence. They paid respect by bowing their heads. Even if flowers, incense sticks, and candles were used to pay respect to the king, they did not have to prostrate themselves before him. They paid obeisance to the king once on his ascension to the throne. But they did not prostrate on the floor. And on the second coronation after leaving the monkhood, he abolished the practice altogether. He argued that it is a symbol of barbarism. I referred to this fact in the case I won, a case that was filed against me by Suchinda Kraprayoon. It was during the Sarit Thanarat era that prostration before the king became en vogue again—even on the streets.

Why does a self-proclaimed royalist like you have to come out and criticize the monarchy?

I feel that if this institution cannot be criticized it will ultimately collapse. It must be open to criticism. Likewise, no human being can survive in the absence of criticism. The Buddha said that it is most essential for human beings to have virtuous companions—or those who are willing to criticize us. They are external voices that serve as our moral conscience. No human being will be able to grow or develop without criticism. Likewise, any institution that is comprised of human beings needs criticism. Otherwise it will surely collapse. Some critics may not be sincere. But we must allow them to speak out since there's already the anti-defamation law. They can still be held accountable for their words. They can still be arrested. But I don't think it's correct to arrest someone for lese majeste. I think we should revoke the lese majeste law. The king himself stated that any lese majeste case filed would always negatively impact him. Recently, the Ministry of Public Health accused Suwit Viboonpolprasert of lese majeste. The case soon reached the king. A letter from the king's personal private secretary later stated that the case was nonsensical and that the lese majeste law should be abolished. Major General Sanan Kachornprasart told me that when he was the interior minister, the king asked him not pursue the case on the lese majete law—no one should be charged and arrested for lese majeste. But the king's 'order' was not widely known—hence the case of Khunying Kalaya Sophonpanich. I feel that this issue must be dealt with clearly. The king clearly said that it would hurt him. And those who filed the lese majeste charges have been or are exploiting him —not protecting the monarchy.

Aside from the viewpoint of a royalist, can Thai society criticize the monarchy from other perspectives?

Like I said, Thai society was

uprooted twice. The first time is when Pridi was forced into exile in 1947: the coup d'etat destroyed the substance of democracy and destroyed truthfulness. Pridi was accused of regicide, etc. From your work on the 50th anniversary of the regicide case of the late King Rama VIII, it is clear who killed the previous king. As long as the people don't accept the truth, it's dangerous for Thai society. There was no place for the truth when Sarit came to power. Now wickedness dominates the things we talk about and it has become a foundation of Thai society. In this context, it's hard to find someone with moral courage—one who has the courage to speak the truth. This has become almost impossible. Everybody wants personal success, power, and money. Thaksin Shinawatra is a good example. The truth cannot exist wherever there is a single-minded pursuit of money and power. Even universities have fallen prey to lies. Everywhere. The law is issued to indoctrinate the people. The Emergency Decree is a clear example. If the powers-that-be are not held accountable or arrested—as in the CTX scandal—but those who opposed the construction of the gas pipelines were all arrested (e.g., Vanida Tantiwithayapitak, and even I face one charge) then this is reprehensible. We no longer speak the truth. We are not courageous. I am the only person who stated that the Crown Property Bureau had forcefully relocated people from their lands like animals. Shouldn't the Crown Property Bureau belong to the people? Shouldn't it be a public property? Whomever it belongs to it must be transparent and accountable. We must be able to criticize it. But we cannot even do it!

If the monarchy cannot be criticized, what will be the effects on Thai society?

All institutions, including the monarchy and the sangha, that are not transparent and accountable will not survive. The sangha and the monarchy are in a similar position nowadays. They exist as mere formalities. Everybody is afraid of them. When a monk approaches we prostrate ourselves before him. The same applies to a member of the royal family—even the one who had a foreign husband. When we go see a monk, we have to sit on the floor. Behind our backs many monks may be just like us or even worse. The royalty too. If nothing changes, they cannot survive. They must be made more transparent and open. How much money does the sangha earn? Its bank accounts must be open to scrutiny. It must pay tax. Why must we pay respect to monks by giving them money? This is an ecclesiastical offence. But it has become a common practice. We don't dare to talk about these crucial issues. We always avoid dealing with vital issues. The same goes with the monarchy. Why must we donate money to the monarchy? Where did the money go? How is it being used?

At present the monarchy is inextricably tied to society. Some have compared it to the opium. Every issue must somehow use the monarchy as a point of reference. At the same time, the monarchy plays many important roles. Acharn Kasian Techapeera calls the monarchy 'The Public Intellectual.' On December 4 of every year, many wait to hear the king's speech. In a constitutional monarchy is the king allowed to reveal his thoughts like that?

I think we have not clearly defined the role of the monarch in the context of a constitutional monarchy. In England it is clear. The government must first screen or scrutinize the royal speech. In Japan the emperor only performs ceremonial duties and is not allowed to make public speeches. The monarchs of Sweden and Norway are merely symbols. They perform roles unrelated to politics—e.g. cultural promotion and the conservation of the environment. In the Thai case, however, to what extent do the numerous (development) projects under royal initiative appropriate the funds of the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives? Who's brave enough to raise this issue? And how much money does the Chulabhorn Research Institute appropriate from the Ministry of Science and Technology? And why do all the new buildings and constructions have to bear royal names? This is not franchising. This means that we don't respect other people. Why University are named after the king's father, mother, daughter, etc. All these are detrimental to Thai society in the long run. And when you say that people eagerly wait on December 4th, you forgot to say that many are also bored of it. They want to see soap operas instead. But the speech is broadcast on every television channel, forcing the people to listen to it. And the people who listen to it attentively interpret it according to their own likings because they cannot understand a thing. The royal speech will be meaningful if it is well planned to make it concise and precise. If the government does not censor or screen it—

which it generally does not—then a Privy Councillor should have a look at it first. In England the queen talks 'freely' once a year; that is, on Christmas day. And people around the world wait to hear it. King George V had numerous speechwriters. He didn't possess acute wisdom. He had to rely on 4-5 speechwriters to brainstorm and draft the speech so he could properly serve as the voice of the empire (on which the sun never sets) and to make the people proud of their country and their king. And he did speak for only 5 minutes. Ours speaks here and there, and we can no longer grasp the substance. This is wrong. No one dares to say this. I myself couldn't grasp the gist of the speeches. On Right Communication we must go back to Confucious. The language used must be clear—like ethics it must be clear. If ethics is dubious—like Thaksin's—then it is dangerous.

In Thai society there is a reasoning that goes as follows: The monarchy must be involved in politics because Thai politics is terrible—e.g. 14 October, the Black May, etc. Thai politics would have been worse had the king not intervened in it. Thai society and monarchy are unique. As such, the monarchy must play a political role. What do you think about this?

It is proper for the monarchy to have a political role. But it must be a role in terms of ethics and of fostering democracy. The Spanish king was a naval cadet. He grew up during the Franco dictatorship. When he became king he oversaw the transition of Spain to a democratic constitutional monarchy. The military did not like the government, and it planned for a coup. The military even invited the king to take part in it. But the king openly expressed his intention of protecting democracy. For this the Spanish people lauded him. In the case of 14 October, we did not really discuss about the role of the monarch. We only mentioned his positive contributions. Perhaps his contributions were more positive than negative. But we've never really talked about the negative aspects. Any political role leads to both positive and negative repercussions. There are lots of negative aspects in the 6 October affair. Again, we've not seriously talked about them. And during the Hawaii Rebellion (1-3 April 1981), the king went to Korat. Positive or negative? And a provincial army leader was promoted to be army commander in chief. This is sheer stupidity. Positive or negative? If we don't raise these issues, there won't be any criticism on the monarchy. In this sense, Thai society is still immature. Whenever there's a funeral, we only praise the dead. Monks do the same. This is dangerous. I see that Thai society have already incorporated a lot of wicked things from the West. But we have neglected a positive element from the West: the importance of criticism, of speaking the truth. Again, this is really dangerous. Our tradition may be functional or satisfactory in a simple agrarian society. We could avoid confrontation. But in an urban and industrial setting, we must learn to challenge and confront—through nonviolence. During the Black May, Suchinda Kraprayoon and Chamlong Srimuang had an audience with the king. Things eventually were settled. But what about the dead? How many were killed? We should not avoid confronting this issue.

If that's the case, what should be the political role of the monarchy in Thai society?

It must be a role based on ethics or the promotion of meaningful democracy. It isn't right if we only do things for our friends or ourselves.

After the financial crisis the king proposed the idea of sufficiency economy, and it has received widespread social approval. Development projects under royal initiative serve as a model of sufficiency economy. Please comment on these two points: 1) the concept of sufficiency economy and 2) the way it is being practiced in reality.

The term "sufficiency economy" is a good one. But what does it mean? Though the king is a model of simplicity, but what about the individuals surrounding him? We must also take them into consideration. As for the projects or centers under royal initiative, they are also a good idea. But when they are put into practice, they are not examples of sufficiency economy. They merely serve as a showcase. I had an opportunity to see one of these projects in Hua Hin from the very beginning. The king used it as a model. Government officials at every level went to see it. It was a good model. But everything was invested there. It did not spread out extensively. If it really served as a good opportunity, it should have stretched out extensively to raise the awareness of the people, also relying on the advice and the support of grassroots people to help spread it. I'm sorry to say this but many surrounding the king are not honest. He is aware of this fact.

There has been corruption. Messy affairs. When there's a study trip or field inspection, how many helicopters are used? And what about cars? Inspecting sufficiency economy as if playing with a toy. But I think the king has good intentions. But alone good ideas are not enough. Right Intention must be accompanied by Right Livelihood and Right Conduct. But the king has no one. If we trust William Stevenson's *The Revolutionary King*, the king stated in an interview that he does not trust anyone. How can work be done in this case? One must also entrust work to others. It's impossible to do everything by oneself. For me the projects under royal initiative are a failure. Why? Because they are not accountable. Likewise, the idea of sufficiency economy must be made clear. As long as the poor constitute the majority in society, they must serve as a model. And we must depend on nature, and not technology. The king still has faith in technology, still believes that the construction of dams is the answer. Artificial rain production is the answer. Here I hold different views. But I may be wrong. He may be right. But they must be open to criticism. The latest Pa Sak Cholasit Dam is a good royal initiative. But investors soon came in to buy all the lands. Every stage requires careful implementation. A good royal proposal alone is insufficient.

In your opinion, does the king know that his projects are a failure in practice?

He will know when there are accountability and openness to criticism. How else will one know that one has failed? One does not know or does not want to know? An example is the Chulabhorn Research Institute. How much money has been diverted from the budget of the Ministry of Science and Technology to fund it? Or is this fact being concealed? Or is there no desire to know about it? Hence, the importance of accountability and transparency. In other countries, things are more open and clear. Did anyone tell the king that the Crown Property Bureau had chased people from their lands like animals? The Official Information Act does not apply to the Crown Property Bureau. Since Surasee Kosolnawin stepped down from the position of director of Office of the Official Information Commission, no one has dared to speak out. We lack individuals with moral courage. Bluntly put, the monarchy will be able to carry on if there are morally courageous individuals who see the importance of preserving the monarchy at every level in society. Many no longer see it as important. Many believe that we can be a republic, and they don't want to waste time protecting the monarchy. But they are afraid to think out loud.

You have put it this way: "A ghost that we recognize is better than a ghost that we don't."

Correct.

But if the ghost that we recognize does not act according to expectation, what must we do?

Then there must be correction. Thais have long worked or collaborated with ghosts. The problem is that the younger generation is beginning to have doubts in ghosts. Technology is a ghost. It is a ghost that we don't know, but we allow it to dominate us. Globalization is another ghost we are not familiar with. But we surrender to it. We also capitulate to the ghost of the American empire. Thaksin is an example of a person who respects unfamiliar ghosts. He thinks he knows them—ghosts that come in the forms of the American empire and TNCs. Thaksin seeks to emulate them, desiring to construct a TNC and a personal empire. He has surrendered to the Chinese and the American empires. He may benefit from them in the short run, but he will also turn into a ghost. Thaksin must respect Chiang Mai where he is from, and not make it as ugly as Bangkok—and not make Bangkok as ugly as New York City. The point is that Thais don't know about the traditional ghosts of the country. They only praise ghosts from abroad. Some may say that I'm using an obscene word. I think the king is also a ghost. In the ancient time, the king was called "phi fah" or "devata" (a celestial or heavenly being). But we must always be wary of this ghost. Any misconduct must be corrected. If it's not corrected, then there will be grave consequences—for both the ghost and the human being.

It has become a custom to criticize the government (for corruption and vested interests, for the mishandling of the Southern problems, etc.) by referring to the king's speeches. Prawase Wasi, Sumet Tantiwetchakul, and General Prem Tinsulanond are good examples. What do you have to say about this?

If you study the history of the West, you'll realize that God was used as the point of reference by almost everyone until

the past century. But now no one believes in God anymore. I'm not sure to what extent Prawase Wasi believes in God. But he probably believes that referring to God will give him more credibility. This is my opinion. I don't know to what degree Anand Panyarachun believes in God. But I think he has more faith in God than Prawase does. As for General Prem, he may be deluded by the 'form' of God. And Sumet Tantiwetchakul directly serves God. Small wonder why they all cite God. Whether or not His Name will lend credence depends on whether it is accompanied by magical power. We don't know if they referred to the speeches themselves or if they got the green light to do so. If they received the green light, then there must be a well-planned strategy to challenge Thaksin because the latter is also not a typical person. Thaksin won't listen to the words of God; that is, if words are not accompanied by deeds, by miracles. Thaksin won't surrender to them. An example is Thaksin's actions in defiance of the National Reconciliation Commission.

God also decreed the National Reconciliation Commission?

I don't know. I suspect they are related. If you read Duncan McCargo's article it is clear that Thaksin wants to challenge royal power as well as the Democratic Party's in the South. I don't know if McCargo's argument is right or wrong. But thus far Thaksin has not bowed down to it [royal power]. Thus I feel that royal words must be accompanied by deeds. Some Privy Councillors have spoken out. But Thaksin slapped them all in the face. For instance, Pichit Kullawanit referred to the fact that God was dissatisfied with the lack of transparency in many issues. Thaksin eventually removed Pichit's brother from an active position in the Interior Ministry. So Thaksin is really defiant. This is about royal power. Of course, in many cases God may have more supernatural power than we can fathom. He may not perform it directly and may rely on complex means. He may be able to remove Thaksin—like what he did with Prem, and with Thanom and Prapas. It may need some time—like the time he brought down Suchinda Kraprayoon.

Does using the king to 'punch' others constitute a low blow? The one who receives the knock has no way to hit back. It is like a tradition. Critics of the government must use this means. The Assembly of the Poor used it. Intellectuals who work for the people used it. It is as if we are not using Reason to fight.

You must realize that a political struggle does not rely on reason alone. It uses all means available. If you say that those people punched below the belt, then Thaksin has continuously delivered low blows. And he also has the right to refer to the royal speeches. The king has spoken on numerous occasions. Why doesn't Thaksin employ his subservient intellectuals to use them? He thinks he's too smart. He only trusts his knowledge. Hire them. Numerous speeches can be used politically to hit back at his opponents. A game like this must be fought within the rules of the game.

As someone who wants the monarchy to be a viable institution, you have raised the example of Japan, which has an incapable emperor who manages to carry along the institution. To what extent do you think the Thai monarchy is an institution?

I think it lacks institutional features. It is highly personalized or individual-based. Many fear the things that will happen after the Ninth Reign. Those who think in this way are not thinking in institutional terms. The strengths and weaknesses of a monarchy as an institution lie in the continuation of the royal family by blood. This means no one outside the family could inherit the throne. But it is impossible for everyone in a family line to be smart and good. King Rama VII stated thus prior to the 1932 Revolution. But we have never talked about this. If we are interested in the monarchy as an institution we must talk about this issue. Whoever is going to succeed the throne, we only focus on the individual person. I am not concerned about this fact. I am interested in the institution. We must prepare it beforehand for the successor, whoever it is. The successor may not be that wise, may lack ethics or refinement. All these are possible. And what will we do about it? At present, the Swedish people laugh at their king who suffers from a disability: he cannot distinguish between the numbers 6 and 9. But they feel that it is better to have a [constitutional] monarchy than a presidency. And so the continuation of the royal family by blood continues. This means that role of the monarch is properly defined—to perform only ceremonial roles. This means that if we are concerned about the monarchy as an institution we must emulate Sweden

and Japan. That is, the monarch should perform only ceremonial duties. If the monarch is more capable than that, then the monarch must be allowed to perform tasks that do not impact politics—e.g., concerning culture, religion, the environment, etc. Prince Bernard was married to the Queen of the Netherlands. He wasn't very bright. But he set up the Prince Bernard Fund to support artists. This helped promote his status and reputation, without impacting politics.

We must understand that politicians and military leaders are ready to challenge the institution. You know well that military leaders who had tried but failed were accused of overthrowing the monarchy. But had they succeeded? Thus if we have goodwill toward the institution we must try to prevent these things from happening. We must be ready to have even the weakest monarch, since she is only a formality. Don't forget that H.R.H. Princess Bejraratana Rajasuda, the only daughter of King Rama VI, was a half-wit. But she could still perform numerous ceremonial duties. At the same time, ceremonial duties should not be unlimited. They should not entail worldwide travel all the time or the unrestrained acceptance of donations. They must be transparent. Is royal money used or whose money? And concerning the trips to China and the subsequent publishing of a book, who do they benefit? China? Or who? My main point is thus: the institution must be accountable and open to criticism.

But who will scrutinize?

This is not simply about the monarchy. It concerns all institutions. The younger generation must be trained to have moral courage. The Constitutional Court must have more guts. The MPs must have more guts. We have been lacking guts since 1947—since we started following the Americans. They don't teach people to have guts. Most of those in power are by-products of American universities. America teaches people to desire success (pragmatism). We must challenge this. Put another way, all universities teach people to be followers, to be cowards. They don't teach people to have moral courage. We must attempt to correct this foundation of the education system, not only for the monarchy but also for the survival of the country. Without guts, substance, and essence, we will be dominated by TNCs. 7/eleven stores will be on every street. And ordinary folks will go bankrupt. Small stores will go bankrupt. People only go to big shopping malls. Garlic is all from China, rice from America. This is disastrous. These are all linked.

I don't see the monarchy as an isolated or autonomous issue. It is merely a symbol. The country needs to have this symbol. This symbol needs to be governed by people who are courageous. If you have a spirit house, it is a symbol, which has long been part of the culture. But if you see the spirit house as possessing all solutions and so you worship it, then it is disastrous. Thus preserving it is better than not doing so because it is a symbol inherited from the past. But the spirit house need not be a modern one—e.g., not only made out of concrete. See, the monarchy is in many ways like the spirit house.

Some have raised the comparison of King Rama V, whose reign was long and who was well loved by his people. They point out that the successor may face problems in terms of the acceptance and the high hopes of the people. Do you think the successor of the present king will face problems?

Put bluntly, King Rama V is a symbol used for indoctrination. He's even more esteemed now than ever. Anything that has become 'divine' is a symbol of intoxication. For me, King Rama V was the source of the uprooting of Thai wisdom. (1) He established the army to kill the people. No book mentions about the raison d'etre of the Thai army—that is, to kill the people. Who else could it be used against? On one side bordered France, and England on the other. Hence the army was used to kill, the Ubon Rebellion, the Phrae Rebellion, the Southern Rebellion—up till 6 October and May' 92. The army killed Thai civilians, the Thai people. And the army has become a state within the state. (2) He centralized all powers in the Ministry of Interior. Civil servants from the central region governed over every other region. They were trained to exploit all. This is really malicious. Chiang Mai used to have its own ruler. Likewise the ruler of Phrae was removed. Everyone was removed or uprooted. They were all looked down upon. The people of I-san no longer called themselves 'Lao'. Hence the I-san region and the I-san language came into existence. There is no such thing as an I-san language. (3) He used the education system to brainwash the people to respect the royalties. People in the past did not respect the lords.

They respected their parents and monks.

But the king also protected Thai sovereignty and independence.

That's his good point. But England saw that it's cheaper to maintain Thai independence than to rule over it directly. And we have to hire a whole cadre of Englishmen. England directly ruled over Burma expensively. Here it controlled 70 percent of the trade. On our part, the advisor to the Treasury was a British. If the advisor conflicted with the minister, the minister would be removed. The Ministers of Treasurey to the Treasury in both the Fifth and the Seventh Reigns were Thai graduates from LSE. They were as keen as Westerners. The kings sided with British advisors, and not their ministers, because deep down they feared *farangs*. We were under them judicially and economically. Of course we had independence. But it was a form of independence under the Western banner. We achieved full independence in 1939 when Pridi Banomyong ended all Western extraterritorial rights in the kingdom. We must admit that no other Thai kings were as rich as King Rama V. He had unprecedented wealth. Whose wealth did he take from in order to buy the five gems from Empress Eugenie—they were designated as gifts for his daughters-in-law. None went to his citizens. He gave pearls, sapphires, diamonds, rubies, and emeralds to his five sons. When King Rama III passed away, the Treasury was full of money. He wanted to donate half of it to help support temples and the remaining half to the next king. King Rama IV also wasn't rich. The aristocrats held most of the money. King Rama V defeated the aristocrats and took all their monies. We hardly know about these things. And universities were established to indoctrinate the people, not to train them to have moral courage—especially the university that bears his name. The rector now is a woman. Has she thought about the poor or truthfulness? She only thinks about making money.

The same applies to universities established by commoners like Thammasat University.

Thammasat University is a different case. When it was originally known as the University of Morals and Political Science, it taught students to have guts. It enabled people from the provinces—Lao, the poor, etc.—to become MPs. It established the Free Thai Movement. The last secretary general of the Communist Party of Thailand, who is the nephew of Tiang Sirikun, told me last night that the people were politically awakened at the time. But after the 1947 coup, Thammasat University degenerated. It now suffers from the same situation as Chulalongkorn University. It's the same elsewhere. We must understand that the stance of each university is different. Universities trained civil servants, trained the people to be willful servants. Today they still do so. They train students to serve C.P., to serve Shin Corp. King Rama V is widely respected. But I would like to ask one thing: what real benefits did he do?

Was there any impact on the successor of King Rama V?

Definitely. This was all set up. In the first year King Rama VI came to the throne, there was a rebellion. Frankly speaking, although King Rama V had many negative attributes at least he used intricate and subtle ways—e.g., he reached out to the poor villagers, etc. But in terms of substance, he heavily exploited the people. He destroyed all people—even in ways which we cannot see.

In the 21st century, most of the monarchies in the world have already collapsed. The persistence of the Thai monarchy is thus a unique or a special case. Please explain the importance of the continuation of the monarchy in the country.

It is clear that the new century emphasizes on economics. Thus we must ask whether having a monarchy is more costly than having a presidency. Is it more costly to have an elected official? And will an election bring in good representatives? If you ask me, I think it is cheaper or better, not only economically, but also politically. But in a constitutional monarchy there must be morally courageous people to protect the Constitution, political institutions, and educational institutions. The survival of the monarchy does not simply depend on the king or the royal family. But the people in the country must also want to have this institution and are willing to protect it through moral courage, equality, and criticism in order to make the monarchy open, responsible, and accountable. If these elements are missing, then the monarchy cannot carry on. But I hope it will be able to survive, not only the monarchy but also the country. For the country to carry on the younger generation must have guts—must learn to sacrifice for the country, must think about the future genera-

tions and environmental conservation. This applies not only to the Thai country, but also to its neighbors—Burma, Laos, etc. The poor and the marginalized must be respected. We should live harmoniously together, without abusing or exploiting one another. All these are opposite to Thaksinism. I think Thaksin's way leads to a dead end. As long as Thaksin is in power, the monarchy won't survive. I think we must change our standpoints. And I think they can be changed. I think the Thai people possess ingenuity and are adequately smart. Many cannot see the importance of changing our positions. A good example is Sombat Thamrongthanwong. How could he say that Thais cannot compete with Singaporeans; for example, the average Singaporean earns ten times more than the average Thai does? But this type of people cannot see that Singaporeans are economic animals. We are even more 'human' than Malaysians. Why don't we support the state of being human? The king is merely the head of human beings who are all equal. All we want is just this. We don't want a sacred institution. If you don't understand this part you'll never be able to understand the things I've tried to do all my life.

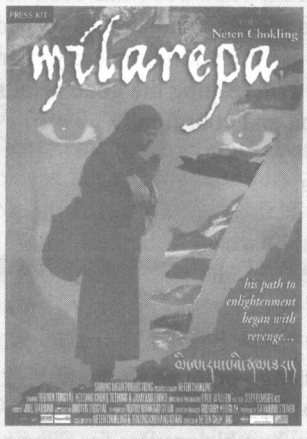
As a critic of the monarchy, to what extent do you think you have been successful? Are there more criticisms now compared to when you first started this role?

I think there are more criticisms now. More people are speaking out. Would you dare to speak about the mysterious death of King Rama VIII had I not done so earlier? This is like what Komol Keemthong said. It is all about laying the first brick. With the first brick in place, the second one will follow. If there are more courageous people, a culture of criticism will develop. Engaging in criticism is important for modern life. In an urban and industrial setting and in an interdependent world, we'll not be able to survive without a culture of criticism.

On the other side, sycophancy has increased. And so has the culture of violence, urging civilians in the South to take up arms, for instance. Although the culture of criticism is strengthening, but so has the culture of bootlicking.

This is not strange because the mainstream does not accept the culture of criticism. This is a very important point. This is a way of bounding the freedom of expression. The culture of bootlicking pervades the mainstream mass media, which are dominated by the powers-that-be. Also, our education system still stresses on violence. Violence is rewarded. Therefore violence must be combated with wisdom, ethics, and spirituality. These are almost completely lacking in Thai society. Luang Poh Khoon likes violence. Luang Ta Maha Bua also likes violence. And who would believe they are Buddhist monks! So we can't blame a particular individual for all these. The queen is only a symbol. She is an ordinary person, who does not possess great intelligence. This looks like a case of lese majeste. But it is known worldwide. They know that the Queen of England is knowledgeable about only one thing: horses. And that she is almost ignorant about everything else. The Queen Mother was very fond of gin tonic.

The political magazine *Fah Diew Kan* (Same Sky) conducted this interview with Sulak Sivaraksa on 8 August 2005.



Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's visit to watch the Asian Premier of Milarepa at The Siam Paragon Cineplex 19 February 2006 at 19.00 hours

Dear Mr Sulak,

I am interested in your book, *Seeds of Peace* (1992). When I read and then edited your book, I find more description and stories same with in Indonesia. And I think your book could be a good reference to understand human being, especially from Buddhist perspectives. Since Indonesia nearly became 'an Islam state', I think this in a chance to bring new perspectives from you. Some phenomena described by you are very relevant to Indonesia. I am glad to realize that you wrote clearly about the forest destruction in Thailand. I remember one case: flooded in Jember, near the Argopuro Mountain, where many of illegal loggers invest the money there. Some villagers began to cut the big trees, and they got some money.

As an editor of your book which was translated into Indonesian, I find an excellent topic: religion and the formation of civil society.

Since the society usually has many distinction between dominant and marginal, and in fact, the marginal society is perceived as being an 'oppresed society'. I am interested with your concept about counter-culture, counter-society. The question about religion that became an important thing whether it will be placed in contemporary society. In the Indonesian context, maybe we can compare the concept of society between Buddhism and Islam.

My name is Stanislaus Yangni, and you can call me Sius. I graduated from Sanata Dharma, faculty of Psychology. I live in Yogyakarta (Central Java). I hope I can contact you.

Sincerely,
Stanislaus Yangni,

Dear Ajarn Sulak,

I received your letter requesting permission to translate the article "Gratitude to Parents" which was published in *Tricycle*. So, I give my permission to do so.

I have listened to your speeches given at the recent events at Sanam Luang with amusement. You certainly are a fearless man. I arrived in Thailand in 1966 when Chompol Thanom and Prapat were in power. Their photographs appeared in every shop in Bangkok. The transition and development/degeneration of Thai society from 1966-2006 has been so much a part of my own life. I do have so much love, gratitude and appreciation for Thailand and its people.

The direction of my life was completely changed through my life in Thailand and my life with Tan Ajarn Cha. And, now I' m reaping the good results of having lived the "Holy Life" for 40 years.

All my best to you and your family.

Yours in the Dhamma.
Ajarn Sumedho

Dear Ajahn Sulak,

I trust I am adressing you the right way.

This is simply to say like many many others I too have watched the election in your land and have thought of and add my humble prayers for Siam and what you must be wrestling with to happen.

It was a privilege and inspiration to meet you at your centre and then at the Initiatives of Change Consultations in the Genting mountains this time.

"Peace is every step" expresses the truth so well.

With warmest and every good wish,

Yours sincerely,
Niketu Iralu.

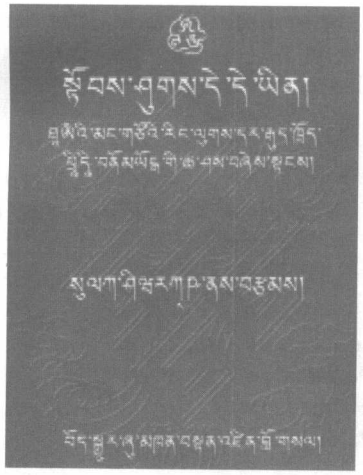
The Powers that Be: Pridi Banomyong Through the Rise and Fall of Thai Democracy.
Tenzin Losel. tr.
Bangkok: Suksit Siam, 2005.

The book **Powers that be: Pridi Banomyoung** has been translated in many languages and it has been recently translated into the Tibetan language by Mr. Tenzin Losel, a Tibetan living in India. Originally, this book was written by Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa in Thai and was dedicated to the late Senior Statesman, Mr. Pridi Banomyong and its English version was dedicated to Lady Poonsukh Banomyoung.

Mr. Pridi Banomyoung was a leader, revolutionist, and former Prime Minister, who cemented the constitutional democracy in Siam. He died peacefully on 2 May 1983 in Paris, France. He was named one of the world great personalities of the century by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on 16 November 1999, at the 30th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris.

In the Tibetan version of the book, Mr. Sulak has expresed his sincere gratitude to the current and first Prime Minister of Tibetan Government in Exile for showing his great interest and recognition of Mr. Pridi Banomyoung's contributions to the Siamese society. At the same time, Mr. Sulak wishes to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a spiritual leader of Tibetan people and his followers in their homeland soon.

The preface in Tibetan on page 8 of the book, Venerable Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, the Prime Minister of Tibetan



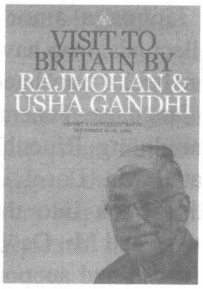
Government in Exile has appreciated Mr. Sulak for his work, not only for his own people but also being a Buddhist leader. Mr. Sulak successfully conveyed the message of peace to the world in the current happenings of the bloodshed in various regions and also integrated and brought different religious leaders and scholars in one platform. Venerable Prof. Samdhong Rinoche has also praised Mr. Sulak in re-building the relationship between Siamese and Tibetans. He has mentioned that even though there are similarities between Tibetans and Thais but they were out of touch since the 9th century.

During 1959, when there were changes in Tibetan history, it was Siam, who was the first country that voiced for the Tibetan issues in the United Nations and supported the Tibetan community living in exile. He appreciated Siam's contribution in helping to preserve Tibetan ethnic people in getting education in recognized institutions and universities in Siam. In recent years, there has been a growing relationship between Siamese and Tibetans which was the effort of Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa. There are also growing interest about Tibetan culture and language among Siamese intellectuals, who have many Tibetan books translated into the Thai language. Venerable Prof. Samdhong Rinoche has appreciated Mr. Losel in translating this book into the Tibetan language and Mr. Dawa Tashi for guidance and support in completing this book. He hopes for more translations in the future by Tibetan and Thai intellectuals to bring these two communities in understanding the similarities of their cultural values and believes.

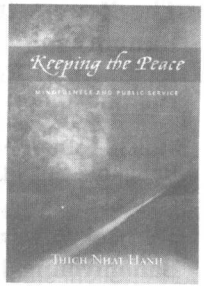
I believe and trust that Mr. Sulak is the "Voice of Poor People" and the "Ambassador of the Minority Ethnic Group" of Mekong region. I met him when I was invited for a talk on "Discussion on Tibet today" by Project 304, who has organized the World Artists for Tibet in August 1998 Bangkok. It is very rare that such a discussion on Tibet can be carried out in South East Asia because of political pressure from the giant country, who claims Tibet is part of its country. With the support from Mr. Sulak's goodwill there are platforms for Tibetan ethnic to share their beautiful centuries old culture and language with South East Asian people and vice versa.

Mr. Sulak, who has wholeheartedly not only supported for Tibetan ethnic people to share their knowledge through dialogue but also supported other ethnic groups from the Mekong region, India, and other Asian countries. These ethnics are the heart of national culture and heritage, which should be guarded, supported and sustained.

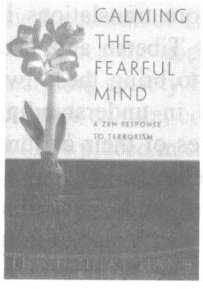
Tenzin RABGYAL
Asian Institute of Technology,
Bangkok, SIAM



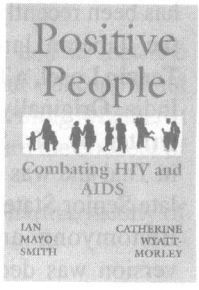
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By Edward Peters. ed.
London: Initiatives of Change, 2005



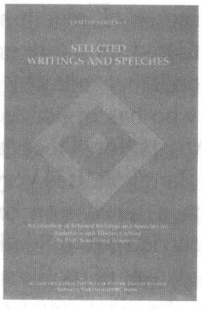
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Mindfulness and Public Service
By Thich Nhat Hanh
California: Parallax, 2005



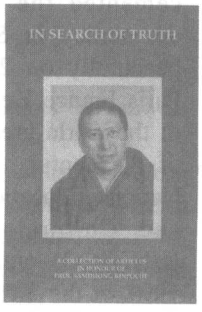
Calming the Fearful Mind:
A Zen Response to Terrorism
Thich Nhat Hanh
California: Parallax, 2005



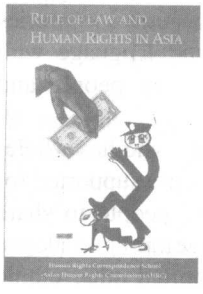
Positive People:
Combating HIV and AIDS
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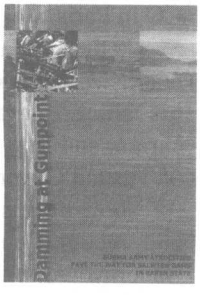
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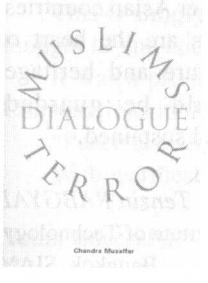
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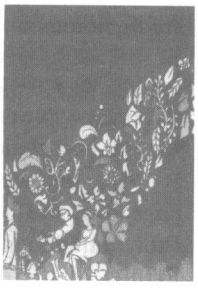
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