

Introduction

There are nearly forty articles in this current publication, based on contributions from various participants in the International Buddhist Conference, held in association with the United Nations Day of Vesak B.E. 2550 celebrations in Bangkok and Buddhamonthon, Thailand – coincidentally, held together with celebrations for the Auspicious Occasion of the 80th Anniversary of the Birth of His Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand. Following the Keynote Speech by the Venerable Ajahn Brahmavamso, concerning lessons from his leadership experience - the text divided into four parts:

1. *Buddhism and Good Governance*
2. *Buddhist Meditation and Human Development*
3. *Dissemination of Buddhism through Modern Technology*
4. *Miscellaneous*

Concerning Buddhism and Good Governance: Mr. Ian Harris contributes commentary on Buddhism and good governance. His work is useful to initiate further discussions. As a result, Dr. Thích Nhật Từ contributes excellent articles under the theme of good governance, and each one is concise and remarkably considered an intelligent reflection of the condition or state of humanity – while still suggesting global existence of political systems that continually emphasize the *majoritarian* system of forms of government ‘while discrimination toward minorities continues.’ Further, he seeks social development and solutions derived from peaceful/mutual co-existence and Buddhist principles. One of Thailand’s leading Buddhist philosophers, Professor Somparn Promta, represents himself, through an unedited chapter derived from his upcoming personal publication: “*An Essay Concerning Buddhist Ethics*”. His contribution to the UN/IBC celebration, as published here: “*A Buddhist Concept of Good Community*”, is the final chapter of his thought-provoking future work on ‘ethics’. Dr. Oliver Abeynayake offers his attempt to codify Buddhist theories on political governance as derived from the Pali Canon. Dr. Tavivat Puntarigvivat contributes an analysis of Buddhadasa Bhikkhi’s Dhammic Socialism. Venerable Thich Tri Tam, contributes three articles to this text, his first extends

warm wishes to His Majesty, the King of Thailand, and moves into basic Buddhist concepts and the Vietnamese outlook utilized towards good governance. Le Manh That contributed the historical Vietnamese outlook on good governance – through the concepts of non-action, and what Theravada Buddhists might know as a form of merit or punna – as described in his article, though: a ‘*mandate from heaven*’. In today’s modern, technologically advanced world – someone claiming to possess a *mandate from heaven* would be institutionalized as medically mentally-unstable. This *mandate*, however honorable in the past, cannot be the solution for today’s form of governance. Additionally, for Theravada Buddhists, heavens and hells are mental-states, rather than a physical location where deities preside and contemplate and intercede on earthly matters. The final submission into this section is from the Malaysian, Venerable B Sri Saranankara Sangha Nayaka Maha Thero – concerning basic governance practices derived from the Tipitaka, without adding any independent philosophical contributions. Most Ven. Prof. Tue Sy contributes an expansive picture of the non-Theravadan ‘standard’ universe – and how various Buddhas preside over their Buddha-lands.

Concerning Buddhist Meditation and Human Development: Dr. Rupert Gethin traces how different meditation styles have gained prevalence over time, largely keeping his discussion to samatha, vipassana, and jhana meditation techniques. Therefore, Dion Oliver Peoples follows with his chart pertaining to Venerable Sariputta’s Sangiti Sutta – a portion of text derived from his on-going Ph.D. dissertation. Thanh Giac contributes words pertaining to society’s development and the scientific and technological advances that have occurred and how humans have reacted or adapted – and suggests that meditation is the means to manage stressful external-oppressions; and that meditation will assist towards the peaceful development of individual and the larger society. The Venerable Dr. Thich Buu Chanh contributes an article on the importance of practical morality necessary for practicing meditation, or to have higher mental attainments. The Venerable Thich Tri Tam contributes his second article on significant developments and benefits of daily meditation. Bhikkhuni Tinh Van associates human development with noble discipleship under the Buddha’s discipline. Bhikkhuni Dr. Hue Lien relies on numerous sources and Pali words to present her concept for developing right-concentration – taken entirely from the Tipitaka. Dr. Spomenka Mujovic and Ms. Ivana Zivkovic contribute what can only be considered as personal and basic-elementary Vipassana meditation experience.

Concerning Dissemination of Buddhism through Modern Technology: The Ven. Dr. Naimbala Dhammadassi, Ven. Dr. Thích Quang Thái and The Venerable Thích Giác Hiep contribute necessary advice concerning modern dissemination techniques and the qualifications of such Dhamma propagators and the need to have financial support from benefactors in order to successfully disseminate Buddhadhamma. The final contribution by Venerable Thích Tri Tam may be unrecognizable to him, because of the heavy revisions necessary to make the text presentable for this publication; however he gives a brief history of the dissemination of Buddhist doctrine and suggests some methods for propagating Buddhist doctrine. Visakha (Mary Goh) explores counseling and meditation possibilities inside Singaporean prisons to male and female inmates – and addresses her own insecurities. The Brazilian Buddhist Society contributes their efforts to create a respectable haven for the Buddhist religion in South America. Dr. Tamas Agocs contributes words pertaining to the initiation of the Budapest Buddhist University, credentials of the staff, and justifications for its programs – in the Czech Republic. The Brazilian Buddhist Society confronts some difficulties with setting up their facility, but their outlook remains positive because of their good location. Bhikkhu Nandisena created an e-learning, computerized Theravada Buddhism training-course and discusses how to set up a program and the results of his personal effort from Central and South America. Finally, the Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation utilizes six principles to filter programming – ensuring their material is authentic and suitable for a wider audience.

Concerning other Miscellaneous, or beneficial contributions: Thích Nguyen Dat is interested in *Buddhist Higher Education*- the article is admirable and interesting; however some people may ask if there really should be a global umbrella organization responsible for Buddhist education, aiming to create a general program with a common syllabus and a common background? ‘Wonderful’ attributes from derived from a political system way not be the proper way to manage the vitality that exists with the various Buddhist traditions. Further, the global, politicized Buddhist hybrid entity-organization wishes to provide a new way of thinking to adapt to global circumstances and to cope with competitiveness – or adopting entrepreneurial strategies and structures. He claims that dependent-origination provides ideological support for his endeavor. It seems as if the Venerable Doctor

misunderstands the principles behind the *Bhikkhu-aparihaniyadhamma* – specifically stating monks should not be fond of business or evil desires – which are included into the core characteristics of globalization – his article, respectfully, can speak for itself. Buddhism in Poland is a brief historical paper that traces some ideological backgrounds and schools, organizations and plans for a Buddhist university for the nation. Ven. Thich Duc Thien contributes a plea for Buddhist ‘unity’ towards future propagation efforts. Indonesia has firm plans to expand their Buddhist base by advertising several Buddhist universities and broadcast-media in the predominantly Muslim nation. Another article is concerned with the Sangha’s role in the preservation of art and culture – particularly with the preservation of ancient palm-leaf manuscripts – much of which needs to be copied before decay sets in. The final article details a Buddhist scout-program in Vietnam.

These articles contribute to Buddhist thought to some extent, some better than others. Some articles arrived mere moments before the publication deadline – ensuring that proper editing or a thorough review would be impossible. I sincerely apologize to readers for author’s sending in late articles. However, there are a few articles that shine and deserve special attention - because of the respect they earned and received by the editor. I have reviewed them below, respectfully:

The first text that needs to be explored in depth is Dr. Thích Nhật Từ’s article: *Peace and Sustainable Development in Multi-Religious and Multi-Cultural Contexts of Asia*. It is not as if his article is controversial; rather, his article seems to be the perfect solution to global problems. Because of the broad nature of his topic - his article is featured first, mainly because Vietnam is indeed a multi-cultural society – therefore, he can speak with greater authority or perhaps has greater insight into global developments when comparing him to someone from another nation with a relatively uniform/singular culture. His articles would serve a greater purpose outside the Buddhist-realm, where people hold faith or confidence in different religious or social-guidance systems and are not really familiar with these principles. His international or multicultural outlook makes his presentation successful – and he could represent himself well through a book of his own.

Respectfully, the next article that deserves special attention is Professor Somparn Promta's *A Buddhist Concept of Good Community*. There are several necessary 'occurrences' or questions which need explained, and hopefully these questions will be addressed before he further pursues publication of his own text. To have a good community, he might ask, instead:

- *What is the concept or definition of justice used for this community?*
- *How are individual rights respected in the community?*
- *How is freedom defined by the community?*
- *How is State-political leadership obtained and how deep or far can the leader extend his political power into society?*

Professor Somparn Promta is not addressing an international community, with an international voice – but instead exploring ethical situations which can occur anyplace.

If one wishes to begin an inquiry into Buddhist concepts of justice, it is recommended to start with a deep exploration of the *Agganna Sutta*, found in the *Digha-Nikaya*. This sutta is not only on the 'beginning' of the world, but also suggests how unethical behaviors lead to the decay of society. Whether or not someone takes the *Agganna Sutta* as a joke or literal interpretation of the beginnings of the world is irrelevant here; what is important are the details concerning how a 'just' [as in 'justice] world could evolve – and this is worth considering. Further, Professor Somparn states: "...it is understood that justice is a property of the action provided by the State to its subjects." This should be clarified, because he uses this phrase throughout his text. Does he take a materialistic-physical point of view on 'property' or is this a mental characteristic? What kind of modern state fails to provide justice to its citizens; or what society would accept injustices from the State? The implication is that the State is generous and compassionate and "provides" justice, as a social-benefit.

Professor Somparn Promta utilizes the *Agganna Sutta*, only to define Kingship – perhaps because he is, respectfully, 'Thai'. He neglects to see how hoarding of rice, led to the decay of society – capitalism and consumerism are behind modern social imperfections. He

neglects to mention: Thai Buddhists derived their legal system from the former Mon Kingdom – a Buddhist kingdom that used a variant of the Hindu Dharmasutras as a legal-text. As a simply stated result, and as one derived from studying, observing and participating in Thai culture: Thailand has a social-philosophy – and one that is not entirely Buddhist. Buddhism is not just a personal way of life, but a way of life for society, and a way for the government to suggest methods to the subjected citizens. Some religions have a social-philosophy over communities – while Professor Somparn uses Islam to justify his position – one can look within the Buddhist tradition, itself: observing how the Buddhist code of monastic conduct administers justice to wayward monks. Furthermore, Professor Somparn Promta seems to be involved in a study of John Rawls rather than exploring what Buddhism would really state pertaining to justice – but it is recognized that Professor Somparn had other intentions relating to a good society.

Because individual Buddhists walk around and participate in society, they do observe, however minutely, that the Tipitaka has a section of duties that lay people are responsible toward, such as: children to their parents and the parents to the children, worker to the boss and the boss to the worker, friend to friends, student to the teacher and the teacher to the student, etc. How are the before mentioned... not social-relationships? These are, indeed, social responsibilities, not individualistic, or not individualistic with the freedom to perform or not perform proper action. These might be methods for social-programming to suggest social-conformity.

Concerning abortions, “the male” or “father” is absent from his discussion, regardless if the pregnancy resulted from a rape or foolishness on the part of young teenagers. Should not the male be additionally responsible for rearing the child? Furthermore, take for instance the new Japanese government policy to have a ‘drop-box’ for unwanted babies – rather than aborting a future contributor to society. From Buddhist studies, we learn that a prostitute dropped her baby on a rubbish-heap; consequently, a prince rode-by some time later, and adopted and raised up the future doctor for the Buddha’s Sangha: Jivaka Komarabhacca. For an online biography, see: http://www.palikanon.com/english/pali_names/j/jivaka.htm. Abortions have consequential costs, both known and unknown. If the government [of any nation] is interested in taking on Somparn Promta’s implications, then a

department responsible for social-services [greater than a mere 'orphanage'], could develop unwanted babies to be the nation's future social-leaders, much like a Jivaka Komarabhacca [from being 'unwanted' to being 'in high-demand!'].

Additionally, Professor Somparn does not explore the long-term psychological factors or problems faced later by the male and female 'parents'. There is a deeper implication that states Thai society [or many others] frowns upon female rape victims and praises the sexual-conquests of males. However, knowingly, rape starts with unwholesome mental states of a male, but to say women are entirely absent from fault might be an error. Most young women today dress in clothing that reveals a lot of skin – how could an untrained male not notice a woman's 'enchantments'. Should opposite sexes walk around in extreme paranoia, or on opposite sides of the street? The daily newspapers [in Thailand] publish revealing photos of woman on the front page, as well as dead crime-victims – we learn of impermanence, suffering and non-self just from the daily front-pages. The representation of modern-sexuality needs to be explored further.

Professor Somparn employs the usage of a master and slave in a Buddhist community. He has mentioned the freedom fully-granted to Thai slaves early in the 20th century. His example serves as nothing more than an illustration that some people in Thai society still think vertically, in a hierarchical-dominated society. True individual freedoms as defined by leading democratic nations, are unwelcome in staunchly conservative societies.

For instance: the internationally recognized 'prophet' for freedom, the Rastafarian reggae-musician, Bob Marley, has stated "I don't have an education, but I have inspiration. If I was educated, I would be a damn fool." What he was referring to was the propaganda instilled into students at early ages to accept submission as part of nationalistic political systems that they are raised in and taught to uphold. What Bob Marley wanted was emancipation from mental-slavery without the reliance upon a full-stomach oppressor offering meager food handouts to the hungry-poor. However, Bob Marley was not Buddhist, but he is seen on the t-shirts of younger people in almost every nation, including Buddhist Thailand. International slavery was an anomaly that should have never occurred if Christian

and Muslim societies were educated or possessed a form of *Buddhist Ethics* that the author is familiar with.

The Buddhist ‘Kalama’ or Kesaputta Sutta from the Anguttara-Nikaya and the Yodhajiva Sutta [*superiors purposely mislead soldiers*], found in the Samyutta-Nikaya can teach observant student to question the politically-motivated suggestions disseminated downward from superiors. By what justification does a slave owe his labor-power to the master? It is not from a sense of duty. African slaves had no sense of duty to the white-man; Black-Africans were beaten and stolen from their land by greedy evil-flesh traders, capitalizing on inter-tribal warfare. When brought to a distant and foreign land, what could the chained-human do under a constant horrible physical conditions – laboring against his will. The possibility for slavery to become abolished, was actualized, only after the existence of a class of dependent-poor existed – these people were paid just enough wages to prevent their physical-death... enticed with just enough wages to return to work – allowing for a continual day-to-day existence. This is not Dhamma – but a failure in society to create an educated and capable individual paid well enough to save for leisurely activities. If the duty of the slave-master is to care for the life of a slave [out of getting the most value from his purchase-price?] – does he give enough scraps of unwanted food or animal-intestines – only to allow [of course, *compassionately*] the continuation of his physical working-life? A slave does not owe the performance of duties to a master, but awaits the day of liberation or freedom from the condition unwillingly placed upon these oppressed people. Slaves, indeed, sought liberation from suffering – this concept should sound familiar to Buddhists, as part of the Four Noble Truths and Dependent Origination – and long-fought for rightful freedoms.

The Yodhajiva Sutta, from the Samyutta-Nikaya has the mercenary-village headman asking if he will become reborn into a heaven realm for fighting based on the persuasion of superiors. The Buddha tells Yodhajiva that since his mind was already in a low-state when he was killing, he will be reborn into a hell or animal realm. This has further implications, such as those who are taught or are forced to die for nationalistic causes because they are too young to think freely for themselves. Other Buddhist scholars should take notice of this sutta, one that is possible for creating good and peaceful communities.

In summary, Professor Somparn Promta offers a ‘concept of good community’ – and he acknowledges himself for his inquiry into Western philosophy, but there are other opinions that can be qualified as Buddhist concepts for developing or creating good communities. He offers a vertical example of community, rather than a horizontal method for good communities. He spends a lot of time listening, respectfully, to the ideas of John Rawls and Immanuel Kant – men who are not employed to comprehend the complexities of the Buddha’s Dhamma – and are involved in traditions that claim their own ‘enlightenment’ equates to what Siddhattha Gotama contemplated on, as he became the Buddha. The ‘Great Renunciation’ should teach us more about life, apart from the ‘divine messengers’. What he renounced was also an oppressive home-state created or manipulated by his father.

If humanity, societies, or even communities practiced the principles contained in Dr. Thích Nhật Từ’s article – the negative ethical issues brought up by Dr. Somparn Promta would most-likely: never occur. Males would respect females. Husbands would take care of their singular wife and children. The neighborhood would support the young rape-victim and ostracize or punish the socially-deviant character – instead of upholding his sexual conquest as a worthy endeavor while looking down upon the young lady as promiscuous. It would seem that global-society needs a cultural and moral adjustment, and this is why the United Nations recognizes Buddhism and Buddhist ethics, for the benefit of humanity.

Where do the other articles fit in with this publication? Some contributions to the 4th International Buddhist Conference held jointly with the UN Day of Vesak celebrations, coinciding with the 80th Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, were excluded from publication, because they seemed to advocate personal endeavors or advertisements and ventured away from the purer intentions of Buddhism. Those presented here are properly motivated.

Finally, I have tried to correct most of the errors, either grammatically or doctrinally, to reflect a clearer perception of what the authors intended – as I labored for many hours and days to interpret non-native English writing. My eyes hurt from staring at the computer screen twelve hours a day for the last three weeks – trying to edit eight books for publication – in celebration of the UN Day of Vesak B.E. 2550. As such, I should apologize to the Most

Venerables, the Venerables, and other academic-scholars over any future-arising disagreements over my interpretations of their work. However, I feel amends were made during the processes involved to represent their hard work. I respect all of the authors attempts contained in this text, and thank them for the opportunity to read, edit and learn from their work - which ultimately should improve my future contributions to Buddhist studies.

I am honored to have undertaken the necessary duties for edited articles for this publication – my first major publication effort; and, I hope this work contributes to the greater expansion of Buddhism and Buddhist knowledge.

Peacefully and Respectfully,

-Mr. Dion Oliver Peoples, M.A.

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