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At a recent conference on Buddhist studies held at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, one of the participants suggested that engaged Buddhism was changing the face of the *Buddha-sāsana* and should, therefore, be considered a seminal new expression of Buddhism in the postmodern world. The recent spate of monographs on engaged Buddhism—including the companion volumes co-edited by Christopher Queen, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (1996) and *Engaged Buddhism in the West* (2000)—can be seen as confirmation of this opinion. In the latter volume Queen advances a phenomenology of engaged Buddhist ethics and argues that this new form of Buddhism represents a fourth *yāna* in the history of Buddhism.

Engaged Buddhism is not a movement in a formal organizational sense. These studies underline not only the commonalities but also the diversity of expressions to which engaged Buddhism, a term first coined by Thich Nhat Hanh in conjunction with the founding of the Order of Interbeing, refers. Engaged Buddhism can be seen as a contemporary expression of the Buddha Gotama's quest to discover the cause of suffering and its cessation; however, it has transformed the soteriological emphasis of more traditional forms of Buddhist thought and practice ranging from the Theravāda *arahant* ideal to the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva*'s infinite compassion to programs of social, political, and economic transformation. The spiritual emphasis of

Buddhist practices such as meditation continues to be at the heart of many forms of engaged Buddhism, but, to apply a term Evelyn Underhill coined many years ago in her study of mysticism, it is a “practical spirituality,” one in which the transformation of society takes equal precedence with the transformation of the individual. For engaged Buddhism, central to the overcoming of greed, hatred, and delusion is the achievement of a just or *dharmic* society. This can be seen in the Dalai Lama’s proposal for making Tibet an *ahimsā* zone, A. T. Ariyaratna’s Sarvodaya Shramadana programs for village renewal in Sri Lanka, Mahaghosananda’s peace walks in Cambodia, Sōka Gakkai International’s conferences and publications on peace and nonviolence, and the many NGO’s founded by Sulak Sivaraksa, including the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB).

Since Sulak’s return to Thailand thirty-five ago after completing his university education and earning a law degree in England, he has worked tirelessly for social, political, and economic justice in Thailand and to combat violence, injustice, and the infringement of human rights wherever these evils occur, whether in Asia or other parts of the world. In Thailand he has organized cadres of monks and lay persons in what I have characterized as alternative *sanghas*, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), that strive to address problems ranging from the exploitation of the poor to the destruction of the natural environment. He is a prolific writer in both Thai and English, having published hundreds of essays and books. His best-known books in the United States include a collection of essays, *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, and his English language autobiography, *Loyalty Demands Dissent: Autobiography of an Engaged Buddhist*, both published by Parallax Press. Internationally, he has become one of the leaders in the engaged Buddhist movement together with Thich Nhat Hanh, H. H. Dalai Lama, Mahaghosananda, and A. T. Ariyaratna. INEB and its triannual publication *Seeds of Peace* have helped to define engaged Buddhism as an international movement.

Global Healing is the most recent of six published collections of Sulak’s essays, talks, and interviews written in English. This volume will introduce those unfamiliar with Sulak to his work as a lay Buddhist social critic and reformer and to the major Buddhist doctrinal themes that inform his tenacious dedication to social, economic, and political reform in Thailand and globally. Those already familiar with Sulak’s work and writings will find new material here. Sulak’s thematic concerns permeate the volume, but most of the material was written post-1997. Included in the collection are several 1998 essays: Sulak’s speech accepting the Unrepresented Nations and People Organization award, his testimony against the construction of the Yadana pipeline project from Myanmar to southern Thailand, and

comments that he presented at the “World Bank World Religions” conference at Lambeth Palace. Although the volume includes one theological paper (“God from a Buddhist Viewpoint: A Theravada Response to Christian Upāya,” his 1992 talk at the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies), the majority of the essays articulate Sulak’s criticisms of globalization, consumerism, and international development driven primarily by profit and greed that promote structural violence, and his vision of a sustainable, human-centered, ethically- and spiritually-calibrated community dedicated to the goal of the well-being of all. He put the challenge this way in his speech at the opening ceremony at the Royal Commonwealth Society in London in March, 1998: “The world community today is facing a great crisis that demands a revolution no smaller than the one that led Europe out of the middle ages to the modern era. [But] ... crisis also means opportunity. So, as leaders in this time of history you are all responsible for making the right decision to turn our crisis into a new opportunity for redirecting human society from common disaster into common good and well-being ... for all other beings on earth” (p. 124).

Sulak’s vision has been criticized as being more mythological than historical, and naively unrealistic in hoping that “Buddhist virtue can overcome modern vice: ‘Sulak is very like Confucius, a philosopher of the highest virtue in an age of iron, dreaming of a long-lost golden age that may never have existed’” (quoted from an editorial by Michael Wright in the *Bangkok Post*). Although such criticisms are not without merit, they do an injustice not only to Sulak’s rhetoric, but, more importantly, they ignore his accomplishments. As his 1995 Right Livelihood Award citation put it, Sulak has legitimized people outside the circle of power who are fighting for liberty against authoritarianism (p. 1). He has done this not only through his writings and his own personal example but by creating communities that have sought to embody—albeit imperfectly—a less acquisitive, more just, and compassionate way of life. In this sense, Sulak might be seen as utopian, but he is neither naive nor unrealistic, and he is certainly not mythological in the sense implied by the above quote. He mythologizes the past not to valorize a golden age that never existed, but to inspire right action in the present, a technique employed by many visionaries.

Global Healing includes a concise summary of Sulak’s critical re-visioning of the criteria for the kind of development that promotes human flourishing in community. They are an appropriate conclusion to this review. After acknowledging the conventional tendency to consider religious and ethical criteria irrelevant to such practical matters as development, he then goes on to make his case for “qualitative development”: development that is inclusive and not based on the expense of others; a system not based on

hatred, violence, and greed; an equitable distribution of wealth that includes an adequate social security net and a fair system of taxation; development that curtails weapons of mass destruction and uncontrolled military spending; a way of life that promotes the health of body, mind, and speech; a system that integrates positive, skillful means with an inclusive, beneficial goal, and guarantees physical well being, basic human rights and promotes moral and spiritual health (151–152). These criteria reflect what this reviewer sees as Sulak’s synthesis of idealism and realism.