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# Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

Vol. 12, No. 1

December 2010

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## Greetings from John Eriksson, President, GPS USA

*Welcome to this issue of the Newsletter of Global Peace Services USA. The theme of this issue is "The Different Faces of Peacebuilding." Two thoughtful and insightful articles on Buddhism and Peace have been written by Dr. Sovan Tun, who became a GSP USA Board Member in 2008. Dr. Tun is an economist with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, President of the Cambodian Buddhist Society and Manager of the Cambodian Buddhist Temple in Silver Spring, MD, and is active in a number of Asian and interfaith groups in the Washington, DC area and the State of Maryland. The third article is by Dr. Robert Muscat, who became a GPS Board Member in 2005. Dr. Muscat writes about the extremely disturbing role that leaders of Christian churches played in the horrific genocide that took place in the Central African country of Rwanda in 1994 and the largely unknown positive and heroic roles that the minority Muslim community played in protecting people from slaughter. Dr. Muscat is retired from a career in the U.S. Agency for International Development and the United Nations, and has published extensively about conflict and peace in economic development.*

*I would like to report about another exciting GPS activity that is currently underway. Former GPS Board Member, Clara Doyle, and current Board Member, Dr. Harry Yeide, are taking a "census" of the 25 persons from around the country who participated in the GPS "Peace Power 2000" program in June 2000. The purpose of the census is to find out what participants are currently doing and to ascertain what impact Peace Power 2000 might have had in their lives. We will report the results of Clara's and Harry's efforts in a forthcoming Newsletter.*

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## Peace for All by All: From the Teachings of Buddha

Violence, the antithesis of peace, is explained in the following verses from the *Dhammapada*, a versified Buddhist scripture best-known in the Theravada Canon of *Tipitaka*, and originally spoken by the Buddha.

"All men tremble at punishment;  
All men fear death;  
Remembering that thou art like unto them,  
Do not strike or slay.  
He who, seeking his own happiness,  
does not injure or kill beings  
who also long for happiness,  
will find happiness after death.  
All phenomena are preceded by the mind,  
have as their chief agent the mind,  
and are made up of the mind.

If one were to speak or act with a pure mind,  
Happiness follows one as a consequence,  
Even as the shadow that never leaves one."

(Verses 129-132)

The above statement indicates that all living beings are afraid of death, that the actors of killing or happiness are human beings, that the causes of killing and happiness are controlled by the mind, and that peace can be achieved by a pure mind. In other words, everyone loves peace; war happens because of a decision by an individual or group of individuals; and war can be put out by purification of mind of each individual. In order to achieve peace in the world, each individual must commit to a code of morality which can produce peace within oneself and to propagate this peace to the surrounding world. Buddha's Teaching has the goal of achieving a perfect peace. In the purification of mind, there are three

The Board of Global Peace Services USA sees the GPS newsletter as a forum for a wide range of views on the many questions and concerns entailed in peace-building, peacemaking and peace service. We welcome ideas and opinions from a variety of perspectives, even if we do not necessarily concur with all the thoughts expressed. The GPS Board encourages you, our readers, to share with us your responses to the ideas and experiences presented in these pages. Please write, phone or e-mail us and let us know if you'd like us to publish your reflections in forthcoming newsletters.

levels of His teaching to fit different temperaments, inclinations, and circumstances.

The beginning is moral conduct or *Sila*; the middle level is concentration or *Samadhi*; and the high level is wisdom or *Panna*. Moral conduct consists of disciplinary rules to control physical and verbal behavior. For lay people, there are five Precepts: to abstain from killing, to abstain from stealing, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from false speech, and to abstain from use of intoxicants.

Concentration means keeping one's attention on a particular object, so that the mind can withdraw from five elements known as the hindrances obstructing the mind from spiritual progress. The five elements are excitement of sexual pleasure, ill-will, laziness and lethargy, restlessness and worry, and skeptical doubt.

Wisdom is a penetrative knowledge. It is to understand suffering and the need to comprehend its full breadth and depth. It is to understand the cause of suffering and the need to terminate that cause. It is to understand the cessation of suffering and the need to achieve the cessation. It is to understand the path leading to the cessation of suffering and to see the need to develop that path. When the path is fully developed, true wisdom is realized.

When any defilement arises in the mind, sensations manifest in the breath and in the body. The breath loses its normal rhythm and some kind of biochemical reaction starts within the body. The individual feels miserable. Before one harms others, one becomes the first victim of one's own negativity. In the quest for peace and harmony in society, the individual plays the main role. A negative mind of an individual does not only cause miserable life for that individual, but also it causes agitated mind for others. On the other hand, a pure balance mind of an individual does not only cause a peaceful mind for that individual, but also causes a peaceful mind for others. In other words, one must have peace within oneself before one can have peace with others. Only a peaceful mind can originate a peaceful act.

The Buddha has explained the mutual relationship and duties between several groups of individuals in their

dealings with each other to produce a peaceful co-existence. He named the duties between parents and children, between teacher and pupil, between husband and wife, between friend and friend, between employer and employee, between ruler (king) and subjects, and between monks and laity.

The Buddha also taught loving-kindness to one and all as the most satisfactory way of living in harmony with one another and as a path to true happiness and everlasting peace. The human personality should be based on four moral foundations in their relations with other beings. They are called *Brahma-Viharas* or "divine abiding" --

*Metta*: loving-kindness,

*Karuna*: compassion,

*Mudita*: sympathetic joy, and

*Upekka*: equanimity.

The *Brahma-Viharas* would create a society where loving-kindness and compassion triumph over greed, where the success of one person does not mean the demeaning or exploitation of others, where rulers are guided by clear principles of right or wrong rather than hunger for praise or power.

According to Verse 5 of the *Dhammapada*:

"Hatred is never appeased by hatred;

Hatred is only appeased by love (or non-enmity).

This is an eternal law."

The term "eternal law" means the Dhamma or the Buddha's Teaching in Pali. Thus, non-enmity is a tenet of the Buddhist faith considered as fundamental, namely peace and non-harm.

The following Buddhist prayer sums up the role of peace in Buddhism:

May all living beings be free from sorrow;

May all living beings be free from hatred;

May all living beings be happy and peaceful.

Sovan Tun, Ph.D.

## Buddhist Monks and their Practice of Peace at the Cambodian Buddhist Temple, Silver Spring, Maryland

I am fortunate to have worked with several monks since 1981 at the Cambodian Buddhist Temple, called Vatt Buddhikarama in the Khmer language, located in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Temple is well-known for its well-structured organization, its conservative view, and its strict application of the Buddha's Discipline. It is the first Cambodian Buddhist temple in the United States, established in 1976 after an influx of Cambodian refugees to the U.S. following the communist Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia. All seven Buddhist monks currently resident at the Temple come from Cambodia because only a few Cambodian Americans are willing to be ordained and, if ordained, they would likely remain in the monkhood for only a short time. Some monks have returned to Cambodia, while some others moved to other U.S. states. At this writing, there are seven Buddhist monks at Vatt Buddhikarama.

I prepared a questionnaire for three of the monks to answer regarding their arrival in the U.S., their activities at the Cambodian Temple, and their challenges as Buddhist monks in this country. The three monks are the Abbot of the Temple, Venerable Chanhon Ouk; his deputy, Ven. Chreung Tim; and the latest arrival, Ven. Poeun Puth. Even though the activities and the challenges of each monk are similar, the purpose of this survey is to record each of their feelings and expressions. The three monks each received an R-1 Visa as a religious worker to enter the United States for a three-year stay. They were sponsored by me on behalf of the Cambodian Buddhist Temple. With my petition on behalf of the Temple, they subsequently received Permanent Resident Status (Green Card). Ven. Ouk arrived in the U.S. in 1997 and received his Green Card in 2000. He is the only U.S. citizen monk at the Temple at this moment.

On a typical day, the activities of the monks at the Temple start at 6:00 a.m. with morning chanting. Then, the first meal is served at 7 o'clock. If there is a ceremony at the Temple, the monks preside over the Buddhist service. Some monks may be invited to perform the Buddhist services at peoples' homes. Cambodian-Americans usually celebrate their major life events with Buddhist monks, such as a birthday, new baby, new house, funeral, etc. The monks eat lunch at around 11 o'clock and fast after 12 noon until the next morning. They do chanting again at 5:00 p.m. At Vatt Buddhikarama, the evening chanting takes place early in order to permit certain monks to go to evening school for English lessons. The free time that the monks sometimes have in the morning

and afternoon is dedicated for study of the Buddha's Teaching, reading Buddhist texts, writing articles on Buddhism, learning the English language, or learning computer technology. It is noteworthy that Buddhist monks stand ready at all times to receive people in need of counseling or blessing.

One duty of the monks at the Temple is keep their shelter clean according to the Buddha's Discipline ("Vinaya"). Thus, they are expected to clean the Temple every day. With modern technology, the monks reproduce lectures on Buddha's Teaching ("Dhamma") on tapes, CD, MP3, or DVD for free distribution.

All Buddhist monks at the Temple are under the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, so they are unpaid volunteers. They are restricted to a Temple for their lodging, and they cannot have an outside occupation. According to the Buddha's Discipline, the monks are allowed to receive the 4 requisites, namely food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. They are supported by the Temple and by the generosity of donors who bring gifts ("Dana") to the Temple.

The Abbot (Ven. Ouk) has responsibility over all the monks and all operations of Buddhist affairs. He leads the monks and the followers to practice the Buddha's Teaching at various Buddhist services. He watches over the application of the Buddha's Discipline in the daily life of the monks. He assigns tasks to be performed at the Temple to different monks. He receives all the invitations from people and selects which monks will go to fulfill the needs of the Cambodian community and other ethnic communities in Maryland and in other states according to the ability of each monk and to the nature of the services. Furthermore, Ven. Ouk tries to understand other religions and meets with other religious leaders. His limited English has become better with practice, and he is now able with some difficulty to communicate with non-Khmer speaking Buddhist monks and other religious leaders and with visitors seeking to understand Buddhism.

Ven. Tim has a position as Co-Treasurer. In this role, he watches over the finances and the property of the Temple. He records the revenue and notes the expenses, so that all the funds collected are accounted for. He manages Temple property, in particular the furniture, the kitchen supplies, and the religious supplies, because people are allowed to borrow items from the Temple. As Deputy

Abbot, Ven. Tim helps manage the Buddhist affairs of the Temple. He must understand very well the Buddha's Teaching in order to effectively deliver a lecture on Dhamma to followers and to lead them to the right practice. He leads discussions on Dhamma among the monks and the followers.

Ven. Puth performs monks' duties as applied to all monks. They include teaching Buddhist followers to chant, explaining the five precepts (commandments), giving lectures on the Buddha's Teaching, and providing counseling to people in need. He says: "suffering of the people is suffering of the monks." Ven. Puth also teaches Khmer language, morality, and Khmer civilization to young people in Sunday School classes. Furthermore, he collects funds to help build schools, bridges, hospitals, and water pumps in Cambodia.

What future plans does each monk have? None of the three monks plans to leave the monkhood at the moment. Remaining as Buddhist monks depends on the aspiration of each monk, which cannot be foretold in advance. As Buddha said, life is impermanent and all things change in the future. There is no guarantee that any monk would not leave the monkhood.

Ven. Ouk as Abbot wants to see the growth of Vatt Buddhikarama. He wants to have more Buddhist monks with high intelligence and wisdom to lead the Buddhist followers and to serve as examples to all people. Ven. Tim wants to study hard his English, so that he would be able to communicate with others and talk about Buddhism. Ven. Puth wants to increase his knowledge in order to strengthen his capacity to lead, to develop the association in order to preserve Cambodian tradition, to increase the relationship among the monks and between the monks and the followers, and to help spread the Dhamma to American people who need it.

The Buddhist monks of Vatt Buddhikarama meet many challenges in America. First, they do not know English; thus, communications are very limited between them and the general population, between them and other ethnic groups, and even between them and young Cambodian Americans. They encounter some cultural shocks, such as laughing, walking, shopping, etc. Especially, people stare at them because they look strange with their orange robes, heads shaved, and sandals. The weather in this area can be too cold and sometimes too hot for the monks. America is quite a developed and powerful country with a lot of big and tall buildings; however, there are not many pedestrians on the street; everybody drives a car to go places; there are no pedi-cabs or small cabs for a short distance lift. The monks realize that health care is expensive; no free clinic is available for them as in Cambodia; health insurance premiums are very high.

In spite of his improved ability, the Abbot does not yet feel very comfortable explaining in English the Buddha's Teaching to young Cambodian Americans and to foreign visitors to the Temple. But with his continuing efforts, he will achieve his goal to let people in America know about the Dhamma.

Buddhist monks in several ways have undergone a sacrifice as symbolized by their orange robe which looks like a fire. They will strive to better themselves in order to study more about the Buddha's Teaching and to give lectures to whomever wants to listen. They serve as examples of good character, of tolerance, and of calmness. They teach moral conduct, discipline, and cultivation of mind by which people can have inner peace and to live in harmony with others in order to produce peace and joy to the world.

Sovan Tun, Ph.D.

## Rwanda: Muslim Compassion in the Midst of Genocide

The compassion shown by the Muslim community in Rwanda in 1994, when the country was being wracked by genocide, is a story not well known.

Rwanda is predominantly Christian. Roman Catholics comprise around 55 percent; and Protestants, 37 percent of the country's population... Muslims are a small minority. Hutu-Tutsi ethnic differentiation began only in the nineteenth century, started by a Tutsi king and

deepened under later German and Belgian colonial rule that reinforced dominance of the Tutsi minority.

In the Belgian period, the Catholic Church in Rwanda (the most important non-state institution) supported the discrimination against the Hutu. In 1958, as independence loomed, Belgium shifted to a pro-Hutu policy. The Church shifted with the administration, replacing senior Tutsi clerics with Hutus, although Tutsis remained numerous among the priests. The power transition from

Tutsi to Hutu ushered in a period of violence in 1959-61. Tens of thousands of Tutsis fled into neighboring countries. The refugees then launched a campaign of cross-border fighting.

The trigger for the massacre was the death of Hutu president Habyarimana in a plane crash in April 1994. The Hutu hard-liners launched a well-prepared campaign against all Tutsis indiscriminately, and against Hutus favoring negotiation and reconciliation. In a few weeks, some 800,000, mostly Tutsis, were slaughtered. This was not “conventional” warfare. Large numbers of ordinary Hutus participated, with knives their main weapons.

According to a World Bank report

The brutal nature and extent of the slaughter, along with the ensuing mass migration, swiftly and profoundly destroyed Rwanda’s social foundation. Vast segments of the population were uprooted, thousands of families lost at least one adult and tens of thousands of children were separated from their parents.

Because neighbors, teachers, doctors and religious leaders took part in the carnage, essential trust in social institutions has been destroyed, replaced by pervasive fear, hostility and insecurity. The social upheaval has affected interpersonal and community interaction across ethnic, economic, generational and political lines.

An astonishing aspect was the participation of numbers of Hutu clerics - Catholic, Anglican, Seventh Day Adventist, and others – in the killings. According to one indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, one bishop, “addressing the soldiers and militias, publicly stated that he did not oppose the killing of Tutsis, but that he did not want killings at [his] Diocese and that the Tutsis should be taken to Kabgayi to be killed.” In another incident, a Hutu Catholic priest facilitated the killing of 2,000 Tutsi taking refuge in his church. He directed the attackers to where they should drive in their bulldozers. He then encouraged the killers to dispatch any still alive. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison. An Adventist cleric was charged with luring his Tutsi parishioners to his church where the Hutu militia could slaughter them. When a Tutsi cleric asked the Adventist for help (“tomorrow we will be killed”), the Adventist

reportedly refused, saying “God doesn’t want you anymore.”

Elsewhere, two Catholic nuns led militia to a building in their convent where Tutsis had hidden. The militia burned the building with gasoline the nuns provided. Other cases make equally painful reading.

There were clergy, of course, who opposed and spoke out against the anti-Tutsi policies prior to the massacre. There were clerics who risked their lives to save Tutsi parishioners, but these were apparently too few or unable to sway their parishioners. For the clergy complicit in the genocide, their religious convictions were outweighed by hatred of an ethnic Other, even though the Others were also Christian.

There are many complexities in this story that cannot be covered in a brief account, including the post-conflict effort of the churches to promote truth-telling and reconciliation. However, one piece of this dreadful story deserves greater attention than it has received: the Muslim exception.

The small, mostly Sunni, Muslim communities in Rwanda, comprising both Hutus and Tutsis, did not participate in the killings. As the pogrom surged around them, the imams gave sermons urging that Hutu Muslims should not respond to the calls to destroy the Tutsis. On the contrary, Muslims should protect non-Muslim Rwandans who sought refuge with Muslim families and in mosques. As it turned out, many Christian Tutsis did seek such refuge. Most of these refugees survived, as the Hutu militia attacked very few of the sanctuary mosques. One result of this exception has been a substantial conversion of Christians to Islam, thought to have at least doubled the Muslim proportion of the population to perhaps 15 percent. The converts are said to include people who had been protected, and others impressed by the moral credibility of the Muslim community. Others were said to have converted because they thought it would be safer to be Muslim if Hutu-Tutsi violence breaks out again. Some Hutus were said to have converted in order to escape suspicion that they had blood on their hands. It was also reported that the Rwandan Muslims ejected a group of foreign Islamist extremists who sought to establish a fundamentalist foothold in the community.

Among Rwandan Christians, ethnicity superseded religion. Among Muslims, religion overrode ethnicity. The whole episode deserves more understanding and recognition than it has received. The Rwandan experience should give pause to non-Muslims who – responding to the drumbeat of news about violence by Islamist

extremists — readily denounce Islam in totality as a religion of violence while holding up Christianity as a contrasting religion of peace. The facts are too complex for such sweeping judgments.

Robert Muscat, Ph.D.

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### ***Global Peace Services USA***

GPS USA, founded in 1997, is incorporated in the District of Columbia and is tax-exempt. Current board members are: Daniel Ayana, John Eriksson, Inshirah Farhoud, Cecil Monroe, Robert Muscat, Mindy Reiser, Sovan Tun, and Harry Yeide. We welcome contributions and comments. To contact us:

Global Peace Services USA  
P.O. Box 27922  
Washington, DC 20038-7922

Telephone: 202-216-9886  
E-mail: [johneriks@gmail.com](mailto:johneriks@gmail.com)

Web site: [www.GlobalPeaceServices.org](http://www.GlobalPeaceServices.org)

Global Peace Services USA  
P.O. Box 27922  
Washington, DC 20038-7922  
[www.GlobalPeaceServices.org](http://www.GlobalPeaceServices.org)