

THE NIWANO PEACE FOUNDATION
THE FINAL REPORT OF RESEARCH/ACTIVITY GRANTS
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2004

Title of the project:

A Methodology for Engaged Buddhism: developing skills, approaches, and methods for grassroots Buddhist social change workers

Organization/official title:

Think Sangha

Name:

Jonathan Watts

Summary: *Think Sangha is a socially engaged Buddhist think tank affiliated with the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). Think Sangha uses a Buddhist sangha model to explore pressing social issues and concerns. The group's methodology is one based in friendship and Buddhist practice as much as in theory and thought. The Think Sangha's core activities are networking with other thinker-activists, producing Buddhist critiques of social structures and alternative social models, and providing materials and resource persons for trainings, conferences, and research on social issues and grassroots activism.*

The focus of our work in 2005 was to further develop our three part process of story telling-structural analysis-ethical praxis, and use it to enrich the work of the sangha participants. We assembled a group of 15-20 sangha members (roughly half from the previous year's work and roughly half are new) to begin to share, explore and develop our methods of applying Buddhist teachings to non-violent social change. As with most projects and meetings, we have in the past chosen a single issue for our work (e.g. globalization, violence). While this may provide a focus, it can also create limits on a comprehensive and holistic approach to social change. It can also blind participants to the importance of methods – that is how we go about the work of social change. In turn, arguments and divisions occur between groups because they cling to their one preferred method and cannot comprehend the power of embracing and developing multiple methodologies. In this way, our work together over the year, and the international conference in February 2005, focused on exploring and experiencing the different approaches and methods of the participants to their work. The conference itself took on a workshop style. Different individuals and groups had the opportunity to introduce the ways or methods in which they have developed their approaches to social action using Buddhism. The focus was more on how to go about this process than the issue being worked on. The ultimate purpose was to learn from each other in an experiential way in order to develop a wider and richer repertoire of skills and abilities for applying to their own non-violent Buddhist social change activities.

Since the meeting, many participants have used the tools developed at this meeting (i.e. the Four Noble Truths as social praxis) in their social engaged Buddhist training courses. Future activities in this area may include assembling all this material into a single training manual for socially engaged Buddhist,s which may be of use to the various training programs for youth coordinated by INEB.

1. Purpose of the Activity

A central theme of all Think Sangha work since its inception has been to develop creative ways to apply Buddhist ideas to modern problems. Our project work over the last two years [2001-2003] made an important step forward in this work – for the first time we were able to discover a *method* in which the contemplative social theorists and the grassroots social activists in our sangha could understand each other more clearly and collaborate more directly. In short, this method is a three part process of

story telling- structural analysis – ethical praxis [see *Dharma World* June 2003 issue for a short report OR for a full report see

<http://www.bpf.org/tsangha/tsm03report/longreport.html>].

The purpose of the past year's work was to further develop this process and use it to enrich the work of the sangha participants. We assembled a group of 15-20 sangha members (roughly half from the previous year's work and roughly half are new) to begin to share, explore and develop our methods of applying Buddhist teachings to non-violent social change. The participants in the project were social leaders in their local communities, who often cannot readily find colleagues with similar advanced abilities to share with and learn from. Over the past year, the project has created a small social change community within itself, providing invaluable intellectual, emotional, and practical resources to these participants and in turn their communities. The need and benefit of this type of networking and community building is evidenced by the continuing participation of a number of participants over the years.

The work of this project has been part of a much larger ecumenical movement of progressive religious organizations to help develop an economically sustainable and peaceful world. This movement is about creating a significant global cultural shift -- away from the violent forms of nationalism/tribalism and deluded forms of consumerism towards a pluralistic, non-violent and "sufficient" global culture. This project has supported and nurtured social leaders, who are in turn able to expose numerous people in their communities to this new vision of a global culture and to steer them clear of the delusive identities of nationalism/tribalism and consumerism.

2. Content and Method

Most of conferences, projects and movements focus on a single *issue* - in social work this might be globalization, violence, environment, etc.. While it is important to provide a focus, we have a tendency to become more rooted in the issue and ideological positions surrounding it, rather than rooting ourselves in the human relationships from which the issue evolves. In the over emphasis on ideology, we tend to become blind to the central importance of methods – that is *how* we go about actually confronting the issue. A typical situation may occur where an organization espouses a progressive agenda (i.e. environmentalism, gender equality, etc.), yet is unaware or unable to face the unprogressive means or methods it uses to confront the issue (i.e. their own authoritarian and/or patriarchal organizational structure).

Because the focus is on ideology, most of us cannot comprehend the essential importance of method much less the power of embracing and developing *multiple methodologies*. In the end, arguments and divisions tend to occur between groups, because individuals not only cling to their ideological positions but also to one preferred method. From a Buddhist standpoint, we might understand this point from the Buddha's core teaching of the four types of clinging (*upadana*), which not only include views or ideologies (*ditthi*) but also rules or methods (*sila*). Further, various Buddhist metaphors indicate the essential importance of remaining open to new ways of seeing and acting in the world, such as “dharma” as any manifestation of truth, the 84,000 dharma doors, and the thousand armed Avalokiteshvara.

In this way, the 4th International Think Sangha Meeting held from February 20-25 focused on further developing this work by exploring and experiencing the different approaches and methods of the participants to their work. We came together as seventeen from Tibet, India, Sri Lanka, the United States, Burma, Thailand,

Cambodia, Australia, and Korea; a mix of teachers, academics, community organizers, NGO workers, monks, nuns, and generally, socially engaged Buddhist activists [*see Appendix for full list of participants*]. The focus of the program was on *how* we do our work rather than the issue we are working on. The ultimate goal was to learn from each other in an experiential way in order to *develop a wider and richer repertoire of skills and abilities for applying to our own non-violent Buddhist social change activities*.

In keeping with this focus on process and method, we also did our best to keep the meeting agenda and plan flexible and open to change. Though this may sound beautiful in words, practically it was a very difficult task – specifically within the pre-imposed confines around the meeting which were:

1) *organization by a veteran core*

The reporter here, Jonathan Watts, acting as the general coordinator for Think Sangha, worked with a core group of veteran participants, approximately 4-5, to envision, plan and execute this project. In the initial stages, this consisted of two parts: 1) envisioning the particular purpose and plan of action for the project, and 2) determining an appropriate site for the conference [which was hosted by long time member Ouyporn Khuankaew, as it was in 2003]. The next step was selecting the participants for the meeting – again largely done by the aforementioned core group. Attention was paid to creating a balance between contemplatives and activists, men and women, and different schools or traditions. Attention was also paid to keeping the number around 20 or less so as to enable a workshop-style conference and an intimate community to develop. The above process occurred from February to September 2004 before the grant was secured.

Once the participants were selected, the core organizing group attempted to facilitate the creation of a community among them. At first this was done by assembling everyone on an internet user list. This was launched in September 2004, after the grant was officially secured. Most other conferences use pre-conference time for individuals to develop personal papers. However, *we regarded the conference as just one part of the whole activity*, and so immediately attempted to create meaningful action. This first step was to develop personal relationships and collective thinking *before* the meeting, so that the meeting itself could be as efficient and fruitful as possible. After initial introductions through the internet, the group began to share their work experiences and interests in relation to the theme of the project (developing Buddhist methods for social action).

As these discussions progressed, participants began to plan the particular activities of the conference. In general, the core organizing group attempted to slowly merge into the larger group so that by the conference decisions were being made by the entire group body. However, this process was still incomplete by the time of the meeting in February 2005. Three key factors limited our ability as a group to do significant work over the internet: 1) the busy activism of many participants, 2) different levels of English fluency, and 3) problems with internet access for some of our remote, grassroots participants.

2) imbalances in familiarity

Half of the participants who joined the meeting were brand new to Think Sangha. They had either no direct experience in our group or in this type of workshop. Although, the other half could help lead them in the process, it still took a period of time for them to become familiar with our working style.

3) *imbalances in intimacy*

These new participants were invited by different core members and tended to gravitate more closely to that core member. Our goal was to create a democratic group oriented process. However, there were already dynamics of power and intimacy from the beginning. Because the new participants sometimes felt unfamiliar, they tended to stay closer to core member who invited them to the meeting. At times, this created difficulties in participants getting to know each other fully on their own terms.

3. Course of Actual Events

With these structural imbalances present, we began our meeting in late February 2005. However, from our previous meeting in 2003, we knew that in order to confront these imbalances we needed an initial process building our trust, friendship and community through story telling. Story telling we have found to be a powerful tool for making sure that everyone is heard. This helps to empower the speaker and to encourage compassion through deep listening. It is also an essential group dynamic tool by helping to highlight the varieties of relationship and expose the nature of power in these relationships.

As we not only wanted to focus on our process but to experiment in developing a uniquely Buddhist process, *we organized this story telling session into three parts based on the Triple Gem of Buddha-Dhamma-Sangha*. So breaking into small groups of 3-4, we shared our personal experiences based on the following questions:

1. Buddha - Recall how you were “awakened” both to your spirituality and to your concern for society?;
2. Dhamma - How do you sustain yourself spiritually and what Dhamma is important to you in this regard?;
3. How are you sustained by others (people, organizations, etc.) and what Sangha is important to you in this regard?

Through multiple rotations of these small groups, the result was a rapid and relatively deep group intimacy established by the end of the day. These small groups allowed for a much more intimate setting in which everyone could be heard more easily, especially for those without a high level of English, and everyone could listen more deeply.

However, the success of these small groups highlighted the first problematic encounter in the shift back to the large group at the end of the day for a short report back. The very qualities which made the small groups successful (i.e. the intimacy which empowered a dynamic of expression and listening) became diluted in the large group - those with better English tended to speak more, those with more assertive personalities spoke more, and deep listening became more of a challenge. When empowered speaking and deep listening become lost, the fault lines of our social conditioning and of power (patriarchy, class, ethnicity, nationality, education, etc.) begin to manifest. After a day mostly dominated by an intimate process, however, these fault lines could not be seen yet, and the day ended on a very energetic and deeply connected feeling.

Again following the process we developed in the 2003 Think Sangha meeting, we introduced on the second day more analytical work (structural analysis), after the

grounding of relationships had been established on the first day. In keeping with the focus on process and method, this day's agenda was about *critically examining our approaches and methods to activism*. So we broke into three groups of concern based on our present work or immediate interest:

- 1) Conscientization – education and awareness raising;
- 2) Training – giving conscientized persons tools and skills to more actively practice and engage and become leaders;
- 3) Organizational Building and Transformation – bringing together people into organizations or transforming organizations along Buddhist guidelines.

Once in these groups, we spent the morning discussing the following questions in our work allowing each individual to talk about their particular situation:

- 1) How have you tried to implement Buddhist ideas into your work?;
- 2) What is the impact your work has had on your students/community and yourself? How do you think you have succeeded and failed?

In this session, we felt it important to examine as deeply as possible the reasons for failure or success in our work. How much are our present actions in harmony with Buddhist principles and practices? These groups on the whole went very well, especially the second group on training which was not only the largest of the three but asked for additional time in the afternoon for continuing their discussions.

Practicing the 1st Noble Truth of Dukkha

In the second half of the afternoon, the group came together as a whole again -- and the aforementioned fault lines began to appear. We had spent parts of the last three days together as a complete group, either at meals or in morning meditation or evening chanting. However, sitting together as a group to discuss issues, especially issues around our work and ones connected to social problems, presented a much more challenging process. By the end of the session, the group found itself out of balance. The intimacy we had developed was of course still very new and fragile.

As is often the case with deepening levels of intimacy, fault lines appear as we struggle with our own conditioned selves. In short, issues cropped up in this last session about 1) right speech (truthful speech vs. kind speech), 2) the full participation of all, and 3) decision making authority within the group. Especially concerning the last point, we were at a critical stage in the group process where the authority of the core organizing group had to be merged with the developing membership of the other participants to create a fully consensual process.

In this way, we attempted to: 1) practice the methodological ideals outlined at the beginning of this article → being open to change in harmony with the group's developing needs; and 2) actively practice Buddhist teachings → holding our conflict or dukkha mindfully and trying not to run from it or react to it. So on the morning of the the third day, we engaged in an exercise in Deep Listening & Right Speech. *Deep Listening meant holding onto our feelings and being mindful, while Right Speech meant being true to ourselves by saying how we really felt and speaking in a way to benefit others and ourselves.*

As a whole group, we did a positioning exercise in which we physically aligned ourselves across a small yard based on our response of 0-100%; 0% feeling

people on one end of the yard and 100% on the other end and everyone in between as they felt. The three questions were:

1. What is your level of participation so far at the meeting?,
2. What is your level of being present and attentive in body, speech and mind?,
3. What is your sense of challenging yourself?

After aligning ourselves after each question, some of us were asked to express how we felt to the group. Although there was variety within the group, there were no strong extremes expressed by anyone. However, there were somewhat predictable patterns expressive of how the large group session of the previous day had gone. After this process, we came back together in a seated session where issues around the authority of the group arose. While it is not in the scope of this short report to go deeply into this session, we again struggled to find a whole group discussion process which honored deep listening and right speech in the way that the small groups had.

Although the reflective process from the morning was an important task for the group to experience, we had reached a critical point in the meeting. With the limited time left in our meeting, should we 1) continue to more deeply examine our whole group struggle? Or 2) attempt to move forward emphasizing the strengths we had developed on the two days?

Methodologically, we ran up against another constraint of our general meeting process: *time was a significant limitation to bringing together a group of seventeen people from widely different backgrounds and creating a deep and consensual group process.* Just the day before, this realization had been articulated from the group which worked on training. In their report back, they had commented that in their experience,

meaningful training workshops need a lot of time, up to three months, and that many of them no longer had interest in doing shorter five day workshops.

As one of the main organizers of the meeting, this reporter felt that we had generally built a very good group dynamic that had significant potential for further work in the next day and a half. While I realized that important work still needed to be done to function in a full group dynamic, I felt the time constraints did not warrant further inner group process. Discussing this with the core group of organizers, we decided to move forward with the meeting agenda that afternoon - mindful of what was being left unfaced but optimistic that what we had built could produce something significant in the end.

Expanding Our Resources and Methods

In reflecting on the initial goal of coming together to learn new methods and skills for doing socially engaged Buddhist work, we set up a process over the next day and a half to share and expand our resources. In the afternoon of the third day, everyone took about an hour by themselves to draft a large chart on newsprint relating these things about themselves:

- 1) the Dharma tools you use in your work and life;
- 2) your resources (material, friends/network/community, and inner);
- 3) your areas for growth and learning;
- 4) your needs, and
- 5) your plans and projects for 2005.

We spent the rest of the afternoon sharing our charts with each other in an open session called a “gallery walk” in which each participant briefly explained their poster.

Sharing these five areas with each other we felt would help everyone develop an awareness of some important aspects of their work. 1) The first aspect is not only identifying needs but also resources that can be shared with others. By sharing in a gallery walk style instead of just prompting people to get together with each other, we all first spent time deeply listening about each person’s work and hopefully gained some new awareness and ideas for their work. 2) Secondly, the dharma tools section developed a rich pool of Buddhist resources in teachings and methods which everyone could draw on. 3) Finally, the section on plans and projects for 2005 helped everyone to think in an integrative way. So instead of creating new projects from this meeting and piling on new agendas and work to our already busy schedules, we were encouraged to see how we could fit into each other’s already planned agendas. In this way, there was the possibility of relieving work stress through direct mutual support and aid.

On the final day, participants were invited to briefly review each others’ posters and then make a list of what they could offer others and also receive from them. Then in the morning, participants were encouraged to network on an individual basis and then slowly develop connections which included three or more people working as a group.

Exposure Tour of Shan Refugee Areas

As part of our meeting process, we felt it was important for the participants who had travelled from other countries to learn some about local conditions in northern Thailand. As two of our participants were from the Shan ethnic community, officially

residing in Burma, we decided it was important to create an exposure of the refugee communities that have been pushed into Thailand by the military government of Burma. While space here does not permit a full report of this exposure trip, it was not only an illuminating trip for everyone, but it also created deeper emotional bonds among the group of participants. Traveling together, sharing informal time in company, sharing the experience of suffering of the refugees, and sharing fellowship as Buddhist activists from many different countries made this an ideal activity to culminate our week together. *[see attached article in Appendix on the Shan temple visited on this trip]*

4. Achievements

At the end of the project cycle in November of 2005, we conducted a group evaluation. Each member was asked to reflect and write on the following questions:

- 1) How has your work and practice been going since our meeting?
- 2) In what ways did our meeting influence your work (through new personal connections, new dhamma tools, new awareness, etc.)
- 3) What are your hopes and plans for the coming months and how might we support you?

The reflections that were collected can be broken down into three main areas: 1) networking, 2) training workshops, and 3) personal connection and growth.

1) Networking

One of the simplest and best results of international meetings like Think Sangha are

the new relationships and connections. Specifically, the sharing of resources is significant, for example, 1) connections to funding, 2) sharing training tools and materials, 3) linking those in need with those who have resources, and 4) participating in each other's future activities. All of the above have taken place in the months since the February 2005 meeting. 1) The reporter here is introducing the work of the Ladakh Women's Association and the Shan based Alternative Education for Social Engagement (AESE) group to Japanese funders. 2) Our Cambodian participant, Sotha Ros, has years of experience doing advocacy work for the large Cambodian NGO called PACT. He shared with a number of interested participants four advocacy manuals for their own activist work. 3) The reporter here successfully connected a student from Bunkyo University in Chigasaki to take a training course on gender and Buddhism in August 2005 with the meeting's host Ouyporn Khuankaew and the International Women's Partnership (IWP). This student plans to move to Thailand to begin volunteer work in some Buddhist NGOs upon her graduation in February 2006. 4) The members of the group continue their close affiliation, acting as resources persons for each others' training programs, such as Jill Jameson's course in conflict resolution with the sangha of Ven. Dhammananda on the outskirts of Bangkok in March, 2005.

Through the support, encouragement and inspiration of Think Sangha, Sotha Ros of Cambodia has begun to build an engaged Buddhist network in Cambodia over the past year. In September 2005, they held their inaugural Buddhism and Social Activism Meeting in Phnom Penh with over 60 monks and laypeople. Sotha wrote in his report, "I would like to strongly state that I am very encouraged and strong in advancing our Buddhist development in Cambodia since I have been connected with the Think Sangha. This is because I have been able to exchange knowledge and

experience between different Buddhists around the world and receive spiritual and financial support for the activities. My philosophy is self-dependence, but external support is also needed to increase effectiveness of our work here.”

Through his Think Sangha connections, Sotha could secure funding from Japanese friends to then attend the main INEB meeting in India in October and deepen his exposure and networking with Buddhists from other countries. The INEB meeting also served as a reunion for some of the members of the meeting in February. Jill Jameson, Sotha, Junghee Min, the reporter here, and Mangesh Dahiwalé, who was part of the host organization, were all able to reconnect at the meeting. At the meeting Jill Jameson was elected to the INEB Executive Committee to represent Australia and the women and gender work of IWP. The reporter here was also elected to occupy a representative spot for Think Sangha on the Executive Committee. Finally, the Executive Secretary of the Niwano Foundation, Shinichi Noguchi, participated as well and could himself meet these Think Sangha members and expand the circle of association.

2. Training Workshops

This second area shows the clearest and strongest impact of not only the recent february meeting but the previous meeting in 2003, which was of similar nature. A large number of the participants have been active in leading socially engaged Buddhist training workshops since the meeting in February, and many of them learned valuable methods and tools at the February meeting.

- 1) At her temple on the outskirts of Bangkok, Ven. Dhammananda conducted and completed the three month vassa training for the new Theravada bhikkhuni and

other women. She mentioned that, "I did use some of the Engaged Buddhist elements we discussed in our meeting to bring about the awareness of the women."

2) Nuttharote Wangwinyoo, Director of the Kwan Muang Deep Ecology Institute in Chiang Rai, Thailand has been supporting collective transformative leadership and learning for an organization who wants to improve their team work and collective leadership as well as their ability to learn, individually and organizationally. One of the critical aspects of this style of learning is mindfulness, self-reflectivity and creativity. He reported that, "Our meeting last February has inspired me to learn from other people how important it is to practice our capacity to be present in witnessing social suffering as well as the great potential for humans to learn in order to be free. The kind of group learning process that I have been doing, through different ways of dialogue and transpersonal healing, has helped people to discover their fear and destructive emotions in their daily lives and to understand the negative impacts they create. Futhermore, it also helps people to realize the choice they can make for their lives and to not be victimized by any percieved external conditions."

These were general comments, and at the same time a number of participants noted *the usefulness of the specific model of the Four Noble Truths learned at our meetings.*

1) Jill Jameson in her training course at Ven. Dhammananda's temple reported, "Immediately after our meeting I went to Ven. Dhammananda's temple and was able to follow up with a Think Sangha agreement to train her Sangha on 'conflict transformation'. I too found the use of the Four Noble Truths helpful, as well as an exercise from Joanna Macy's book, *Coming Back to Life*, based on the Brahmaviharas."

2) Sotha Ros in Cambodia reported that, “We are using the 4 Noble Truths as a tool to address any social issue. These have been practiced by me and my network so little, but I have come to realize that they are very important for individuals and groups for social development. I will encourage my members to practice the same. In fact, during my last Advocacy Expert Training, I also introduced the 4 Noble Truths to my participants alongside other scientific theories.”,

3) Ouyporn Khuankaew of IWP reported, “Buddhist principles, practices and values have become the core elements/focus in our project work. For example, this year we ran a six week Buddhist peace building training course for women leaders coming from South and Southeast Asian communities. We incorporated different forms of meditation practice into the training course on a daily basis. We used the Four Noble Truths as a core methodology to guide training participants to analyze problems and look for solutions both at the personal and social level.”;

4) In Tokyo at Taisho University, the reporter here used the Four Noble Truths to teach a class on Buddhist Approaches to Violence modeled on the format of the 2003 Think Sangha meeting. His co-teacher, Yoshiharu Tomatsu, is also using this model of the Four Noble Truths in his courses at the Keio University School of Medicine. Finally, this model is now being used and adapted for workshops run every two months at the Engaged Buddhist Kenkyukai in Tokyo. It appears that a number of different engaged Buddhists in Japan are finding this framework useful and powerful for running their educational programs. *[see attached in an appendix the reporter here's paper on using the Four Noble Truths as a tool for social activism]*

In conclusion. Ouyporn Khuankaew, the host of the last two meetings, reaffirmed the importance of Think Sangha activities and meetings in this area when she reported that, “From the meeting it was clear to me that we Buddhist activists

have to develop curricula, tools , teaching materials, platforms and strong networks among ourselves to support and nurture our small movement. This is not only to benefit ourselves but also a very important step to contribute to a larger group of activists, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. My awareness and commitment to this is very strong....Every two or three years Think Sangha can help organize a meeting among Buddhist activists, with more focus on the regional or international level. This helps activists who are isolated to gain support, and also helps to create space, energy and movement of Buddhist activists who are committed to bring Buddhism into social change.”

3) Personal Connection and Growth

These comments by Khuankaew highlight the final achievement of the past year’s work, personal connection and growth. As noted in the beginning of this report, the participants in the project are social leaders in their local communities. Often they cannot readily find colleagues with similar advanced abilities to share with and learn from. Also, as leaders, they can feel somewhat alone and isolated in the face of larger, more powerful forces from secular society as well as conservative forces from within their respective Buddhist traditions. In this way, the Think Sangha meeting provides a time for solidarity and mutual nourishment by which the participants have been able to find renewed vigor for their work.

1) Jill Jameson reported, “In terms of how the meeting has affected me, briefly, I feel the subtle and practical and encouraging support of the Think Sangha network a little more deeply, as well as reflecting on some of our discussions and sharings.”;

2) Ouyporn Khuankaew reported, “The meeting made me feel more committed to my personal daily practice. I have made new friends and also reconnected with old

Buddhist activist friends who share similar values and also are committed to bringing Buddhist practices into social work.”

3) Finally, Mangesh Dahiwale reported, “Many of my earlier held beliefs were challenged when I heard about the suffering of people, particularly the stories about the suffering of the Shan people when we visited their settlement on the Burma border....The process of coming together shattered some of my previously held positions. In work, I tried to apply openness of thinking and checking my own beliefs before interacting with other people. I also felt that the Sangha, which is trans-national, trans-sex and trans-race is possible, provided we listen and understand each other.”

5. Future Areas to Be Pursued

One notable future goal developed out of the meeting itself. A number of participants at the meeting who have been active in running training courses over the past five to ten years on socially engaged Buddhism want to hold a small international meeting to develop a manual on training in socially engaged Buddhism. This manual will not only include a basic approach to socially engaged Buddhism but also contain specific sections on Buddhist approaches to certain issues like gender, environment, media and consumerism, peacemaking, youth development, etc.

Although no firm agenda has been set, such a project would seem to be quite timely. Not only are there needs among the participants themselves, but there is also the growing interest in training and cultivating young engaged Buddhists through the larger INEB network. Concerning Japan, specifically, there is also a movement towards this kind of work. However, in all quarters, there is the need for a good systematic training process with a variety of different processes.

I think such a project could be especially significant, because it represents much of the aim Think Sangha has held since its inception. While we were more issue driven in our first years (i.e. Think-like), in our last five years we have become more concerned with how to develop and sustain ourselves and others as socially engaged Buddhists activists (i.e. Sangha-like). This past meeting did not really develop much “intellectual” content, but it certainly marked another step in how we all understand our work and how we need to go about realizing its fullest potential.

I think we have learned much from exploring deeply the other pole of method. Now we know that while we still need to engage in issues, we must be very mindful of the method of our engagement. On the other hand, if we want to deeply develop a group process, we must commit greater time to the task. Thus, future Think Sangha meetings may depart from our usual five day gatherings and explore new ways of meeting, according to the issue and method requirements.

At this point, I hope that Think Sangha will continue to engage with issues by creating writing projects on Buddhist approaches to various *issues* as it has done in the past. There is already a new process being initiated by some old core Think Sangha members in the United States to create a Think Sangha “North” meeting of American, Korean and Japanese Buddhists to work on the very pressing issue of militarization, especially in America.