

Tales From Thailand, 2020, #1

Hello again, dear readers.
Yes, this time I really am in
Thailand, and back home at
my retreat center, where I am
the official International
Volunteer. I can't seem to resist
featuring this fellow (left) that I
found while gardening today,



though he's actually double that size. And below it, little Maechee Pim, age 9, is showing me the onions that she waters every day.



I was given a royal welcome and taken to “my” house, which is always saved for me. (I still don't understand why or how I am given these absolutely unique blessings... but I've given up worrying

about that.).

Many of you, dear readers, have surely been wondering this year, as I have:

Will humans make the curve in time to survive on planet Earth, in any recognizable fashion? How many species will survive?

And why aren't more people responding to this upcoming scenario?

I was greeted with a basket of organic cottage industry toiletries , and fruits. (The word is out that I don't eat sugar or flour.)...and almost immediately taken to the Zero Waste center, and the



Organic Products center next door. This fills my heart with hope, because it's a huge 180 degree shift, in less than a year.

My buddy Dee-Dee, who has volunteered here in the kitchen and cafe forever, was inspired to single-handedly institute a *zero-waste policy* in the dish-cleaning area. This was totally uplifting news!!



Above, a giant crate, which is itself made of tetra pak juice, milk, soy milk cartons, is nearly full with many hundreds of clean, flattened boxes. The straws and bottle caps are recycled separately. I plan to start sending mine back to CO., along with anyone who cares to bring me their cleaned, flattened boxes, when I return to Fayetteville.

Some of you may remember when I rather dramatically made my plea

to the entire community here last year, concerning the changes we

have to institute here at S.D.S. in order to be a role model for Bangkok, if not Thailand. Hundreds and occasionally thousands of visitors/retreatants pass through here every week...

(I'll attach that episode at the end of this Tale, for those of you who missed it.)

than



Dee-Dee's English is better my grasp of Thai, but still minimal. I was deeply touched when I heard, via a translator, that my plea last year initiated a heartfelt desire to serve the Mother. Dee-Dee said that she heard a voice, telling her to steward all the resources she could, however she could. She's received a lot of resistance; people resent having to change their habits.

We can all relate to that, on either side of the equation.

Dee-Dee, whom I now refer to as Captain Zero-Waste, said that the current inundation of garbage relates to the garbage in our hearts. And that we must first confront that, to become Zero Waste Warriors.

I have been studying under her since the day I arrived, and am slowly learning to gently direct folks in this necessary new mindset

and management. I try to get there at dawn, so the stations will be ready by the time she arrives.

LOTS of folks sneak their bags full of miscellaneous, disgusting garbage and leave them for us to sort and clean. If I'm not careful, I see judgement/anger/resentment start to curdle my mind. This too is an unsustainable version of toxic waste, which circles us back to the original dilemma.

Isn't life fascinating, friends?

Another small/gigantic aspect of my learning curve each morning:

Dee-Dee is impeccably CLEAN and exacting. I, on the other hand, am quite "peccable" in my habits and my life: "sorta clean" has always been my *modus operandi*.

So I am slowly, lek lek, shepherding this speedy inner child to STOP and carefully rinse every paper cup, every water bottle, every surgically opened tetra carton, mop up any water that spills, sweep the forest leaves and berries every hour or so... and SMILE as I gently redirect the nefarious garbage-culprits, if I catch them in the act.

Without a doubt, garbage is our Shadow.

Dee Dee's health is failing, I see. I'd like to get her a LOT more emotional/physical support, and perhaps a renewed perspective on nutrition. Yesterday, I made her a bag, at the



children's craft station.

We sing and laugh and dance as we clean the garbage station.

Otherwise, my life since I arrived here at S.D.S has been overflowing with my very favorite activities, in a way that only Green Tara/Mother Mary could have choreographed.

Does this all relate to my second-chakra integration; healing the Infant's ancient trauma, so I can grow stronger and more confident, be less critical? I thoroughly believe so.

Dance: From the first day's arrival, I've been sharing some form of playful dance and/or yoga. First we'd meet surreptitiously in secretly arranged circumstances....sort of a "don't ask, don't tell"

policy, since formal patriarchal Buddhism doesn't have a place for dancing. (Green Tara's playful energy is, however, wending her way into everyone's hearts.)

Word leaked out somewhere, because a couple days later, Khun Mae/MC Sansanee asked me to share dancing with Everyone during



Sunset on the roof under the Tibetan Stupa, on New Year's day...truly a dream-come-true.



the New Year's retreat, with hundreds of retreatants.

Wow.

At the end of our session, everyone lay down on the grass and I asked them to check inside and see if there was a child inside, who would like to be more free?

Are you willing to listen to him or her?

We got some amazing feedback, later.

Now, dance is out of the bag here at S.D.S.

Flute

One of the primary messages I received from my parents (who did their very best to keep me safe and help me fit in with the tribe) was:

Try not to bother anyone.

And so, when I offered to play the flute this year, instead of waiting to be invited... it felt like a shift somewhere inside.



Every day since then I have shown up at 1 p.m. to accompany the nun playing the singing crystal bowl (we have a large variety of sizes). It's an hour of heavenly nap time for the retreatants. And a flight into new realms for me. We're all delighted.

For the Serene Mind Day, many sets of pregnant moms and their partners show up for sacred nap time. The maichee (a.k.a. nun) plays a short video on Emoto's "Messages From Water". The crystal bowl has water in it, which is served to everyone at the end, as a special blessing to the growing infant inside.

I played the flute again today, at the end of a yoga session for the maichees, during Savasana/corpse pose.

Gardening

I still set aside a few hours every afternoon to do some gardening/nursery work for Ajahn Chom, the gardener. I'd initially planned (HA!) to initiate a film about Chom's soil and water renovation techniques...but that plan is now becoming a wispy figment.

There just aren't enough hours in the day, and the principle movers/shakers in my fantasy scenario are otherwise occupied.

Chom always gives me tiny little plants to pot the first day. Every ensuing day, the plants get bigger, and I am given more autonomy. I love that space. Various nuns or retreatants stop and chat, or help me, or I teach them a song while we work.

Photo on the right is the second day's assignment. Now the pots are more likely to be five-gallons! Apparently, Chom sees that I won't break, with a little hard work.

I'd like to dedicate this Tales issue to Louise Mann, who is our local Shadow Slayer, working tirelessly to bring these issues to the



forefront. It can be a lonely place, I see. Thank you, Louise!! 🥰🙏

As promised, I end this note with a recap of last year's plea to the community, for those of you who missed it or would like to review it.

Early winter, 2019

And here is the second sequel to our lek-lek, cha cha (little by little, slowly, slowly) story of garbage here at S.D.S., for you eager readers...

In the opening sequence, I impulsively separated out the plastic from the food waste, with my hands, in the 55-gallon kitchen trash barrel, and was met with

“the Blink”.

This did have some impact on the local psyches, but not quite enough to change their deepest inclinations.

A few days later, I attended the all-staff and maichee/nuns check-in meeting, armed with some hastily scribbled notes, and Nawng-Joy, as my interpreter.

I had to check in with Spirit and my pendulum about the appropriateness of this presentation, and indeed, still felt my adrenaline pulsing as I stood up to talk about:

My Mother Sawadkha. I am so happy to be in this beautiful place with wonderful people. My heart is full.

However, I have a problem and I need your help:

It's about my mother... She's in big trouble... Her name is Mei Torani (Earth Mother).

In her bloodstream - the ocean, there are islands of plastic larger than Thailand, floating there, killing the fish and all the wildlife.

In her lungs, the air - she can not breathe properly, because the mixture of gases is no longer correct - too much methane and carbon dioxide.

The problem is so severe that the European Union banned single-use plastic last month. That is all the little plastic bags, all the straws, all the plastic cups. Can you imagine that? I'm sure a lot of companies are not happy about that...because we all like convenience.

So, we too are a part of our Mother's health. What can we do? Sathien Dhamma Sathan is always on the pioneer edge of important solutions.

***Perhaps we can ask everyone who comes to buy a reusable drinking cup, and bring it back next time? We can raise the price of drinks to include that, at Spiritual Sip, and Open Secret?*

***We can also sell reusable shopping bags, instead of giving out plastic bags at the store. It can become a very ching ching*

fashion, na kha? Groovy SDS shopping bags!!! with dhamma slogans on them.

***We can buy reusable containers and take them to the market, instead of accepting a dozen little plastic bags, perhaps? It is more trouble, I understand, but would you do it for your mother?*

Here at SDS, Ajahn Chom has been thinking about this for twenty or thirty years. He prays every day, he told me. He has been using the same reusable cup for eight years. I would, too, but I always lose mine.

Ajahn Chom is cleaning our canal water every day, so we can stay here in paradise.

***He cleans it three ways:*

He makes vinegar from the kitchen scraps and pours the vinegar into the canal water. It has over 500 beneficial types of bacteria and fungi in it. It's easy if the kitchen scraps do not have plastic garbage mixed in

He maintains this entire world of worm condominiums. They not only enrich the soil and eat the scraps, but their pee cleans the water incredibly well. Worm pee has 4,000 types of beneficial bacteria and useful fungal properties. It's also useful for insect control and as a fertilizer.

Ajahn Chom then aerates the canal water several times, putting it into a reservoir, and then piping it all over SDS.

The essence of our gardens comes from the composting operations. Veggie waste can be made into soil like magic. Unless it is mixed with plastic garbage. Then it becomes nasty and difficult.

Garbage food mixed with landfill creates more methane for our overheated planet.

I'd be happy to create two sets of garbage cans in the kitchen....right next to each other. We could paint the Mei Torani one bright pink and put paintings on it.

We need to role-model new habits that can help our Mother recover. People all over the world look up to us and learn from us!

Lek lek, cha cha (little by little, slowly slowly)

Next, Chom, got up and asked the group:

Why do we need a falang/foreigner to come here and tell us these things?

He was crying.

There was a bit of silence....I didn't see any BlinkS. And Khun Mae asked the group,

How can we incorporate these ideas into Children's Day this weekend? The children are our future.

Since then, I've seen many little ripples flowing outward, as we each do our best for Mother.

Dear readers, there is so much more to tell, but this is plenty for now.

May we rise above the fear and anxiety in these wildly shifting waters of events....and find our own hearts for ballast, in this new year. Do we even have a choice?

