THE MEANING, REASON, & PURPOSE OF “TEVODA”
Dear Readers,

For our very first newsletter, Cambodian Tevoda Organization would like to offer you an introduction to the organization. We hope to provide you with a greater insight into Tevoda, as a community-based organization that works within the context of the country’s culture and values. Our aim is to explain 1) a deeper understanding for the sacred meaning of tevoda, 2) the necessary reasons for the creation of the organization, and 3) the purpose that the organization will carry out for the development of the country.

I hope you enjoy our very first newsletter!

Sincerely,

Miss. Sarong Vit-Kory

Executive Director

Sarong Vit-Kory is a Cambodian-American who returned to Cambodia to start Tevoda in her mother’s village with a goal to build leaders for the country’s next generation.
Historic Cambodians carved tevodas on ancient temples, so they are protected for centuries to come.

Tevoda as the Mother of Cambodia

In Cambodia and in Cambodian Buddhism, a tevoda is believed to be a guardian angel who presides over its land and its people. In the spiritual realm, Tevodas play countless roles in the lives of Cambodians. In one respect, they control the weather, which to the many agrarian Cambodians is the essence of survival. A tevoda is therefore the Mother of Cambodia. She is the fertility of their land and is thus a symbol of survival and continuation of the Khmer ethnic. Cambodian Tevoda Organization is a metaphorical angel whose role is to guide the country towards a future of peace, prosperity and happiness.

Tevoda as the Path to Human (Spiritual) Development

Cambodian Tevoda Organization, as a social development entity, believes that the ends of human development foretells an image of a Tevoda – a spiritually moral and rational being. In Buddhism, a tevoda is a divine goddess, who after having surpassed the material world, has transcended to the spiritual realm that is in absence of greed, hatred and illusion.

In our current world affairs, political and economic development takes precedence over human social development. Cambodian Tevoda Organization reinforces the idea that all forms of development lie in the domain of developing moral virtues and righteous characters, and these should dictate other dimensions of development.

When humanity reaches a stage where individuals no longer have to worry about meeting their basic survival needs, people can have the freedom to aspire towards a positive goal. The life effort and work put towards accomplishing their goal is the processes to understanding their inner potential. When individuals are said to have reached and realized their potential, they become aware of their own sense of spiritual being and purpose.

Ultimately, in this realization, as individuals become fully aware and conscious, they identify themselves as nothing but a spiritual consciousness. The highest form of development lies within the discussion of spiritual human development. Each individual has a spiritual consciousness that awaits to be awake, as a formless and genderless conscious that is highly alert and fully knowledgeable. These are the attributes of a celestial being, a tevoda - one that is content and balanced. Tevodas are neither disturbed or in doubt and is in a complete state of “mindfulness”, just like the Enlightened Buddha.
Poverty in Cambodia

Cambodian Tevoda Organization defines poverty as the deprivation of individual entitlements and capabilities. Human beings must have certain met conditions in order to live with freedom, happiness and justices. Poverty in Cambodia is seen in all facets of the country’s life.

The foremost discerning causes of poverty in Cambodia regards the country’s dependence on the weather for basic survival. 86% of the farmers yield 500-600 US Dollars a year from harvesting rice. The situation is worsen for landless individuals. These families, who are predominately women and children, migrate to the urban cities and work as beggars. Limited income equates to limited consumptions to two meals per day, as well as restricting their diet to mostly carbohydrates extracted from rice.

Cambodians health condition is hampered by the lack of sanitized water - a common cause of illnesses in the country, but the lack of proper infrastructure, efficient transportation, and limited income prevents access to health facilities and receiving proper health care.

The 21st century witnessed a boom in the country’s garment industry. Consequently, female enrollment in school dropped. For this reason, illiteracy rate in Cambodia remains abnormally high.

Despite all the aforementioned factors that characterize Cambodia’s poverty, the most notable event is the 1975-79 genocide that eliminated all forms of intellect investment in the country. To this day, the war has instilled a psychological fear of the government in the Cambodian people, which explains why most Cambodians chose to abstain from political involvement to preserve peace.

This brings us to our last form of poverty – a deprivation from experiencing and possessing social capabilities that must be necessarily met in order to perform basic functioning so that individuals can live accordingly to their values and interests. In order to alleviate such form of poverty, governments and civil society should create opportunities that will allow people with the ability to choose with choices. Females and children are the groups who carry the most social burdens, affecting their capabilities to be free. Freedom is the required conditions for the pursuit of spiritual individual awareness and fulfillment.
To Empower Individuals

WE VALUE:

i. An enhanced state of spiritual consciousness, inspired by Buddhist teachings, as a means to producing transformative beings and the art of living an ethical life

ii. The spiritual culture of the “Cambodianess”, that is in striving to reach a height of cultural perfection

iii. The pursuit of the intellect, governed by reason and objective thinking within a proper frame of mind, for a harmonic society based on justice and equality

WE ENVISION

A spiritually, culturally and intellectually developed Cambodia where all individuals are empowered to reach and realize their potential

OUR MISSION

Is to revitalize Cambodia’s spiritual, cultural and intellectual life

OUR GOALS ARE TO

i. Engage children and youth in spiritual activities to develop moral principles and cultivate virtuous qualities so that they can conduct an ethical life

ii. Revitalize Cambodia’s classical performance arts to preserve, perfect, and prolong the country’s ancient cultural heritage

iii. Prepare students and community members with an intellectual foundation, providing them with educational and social development knowledge

We aim to empower individuals with programs that serve to comprehensively build future leaders, while encouraging them to address development issues and maintaining the country’s cultural identity.