

# Virtual Reporting Towards the Development of Discourse on Religious Environmentalism



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First part:

Narratives of three students  
enrolled in ENRM 252  
(Environmental Advocacy) of  
their experiences in Virtual  
Reporting

Second part:

Output of the Virtual Reporting which are the environmental initiatives of a Filipino priest and a Thai Buddhist Monk

How was online  
collaboration used in the  
development of a  
discourse on religious  
environmentalism?

*“The following narrative describes an example of what a student faces and the future possibilities in modern distance learning, particularly types that are delivered via electronic means”*

Viewed from this position stories of lived experience (data) are co-constructed and negotiated between the people involved as a means of capturing complex, multi-layered and nuanced understandings of the work so that we can learn from it (Etherington)

# *The beginning*



**Task: Virtual reporting on  
an environmental  
advocacy approach of  
your choice**

*“When our instructor informed us of the ‘Virtual Reporting’ and listed the topics out, I was immediately attracted to working on Religious Environmentalism”*

**Three students =  
common interest in  
religious  
environmentalism**

It was not a bed  
of roses!

# Challenges, right from the start:

- Difficulty finding the 'right' group mate
- Changing group composition
- Difficulty in finding time to have an initial discussion

# Challenges, right from the start:

- Difficulty in communicating with one another
- Unclear output and expectations on the part of students

*On Developing the  
Sub-topics:*

**Constant  
communication through  
e-mails, yahoo  
messenger, and mobile  
phone**



Exchanges online were  
recorded and  
documented

**Group members were proactive and always came prepared for their online discussions**

**Main challenge was on  
miscommunications**

Overcoming this challenge  
allowed the students to  
think outside the box and  
become even more  
creative

*On Interviewing  
Subject Matter  
Experts*

Students dialogued with a  
Catholic priest and a Thai  
monk face to face



# Bong dialogued with Franciscan Missionary Friar, Fr. Pete Montallana at Quezon City









# Kim dialogued with the head-monk of Wat Nawakaram, Tavorn Pattanakit

*Putting them all together*

*“Classmates A and B,  
I continue to upload 17-minute  
interview w/ (the expert), kanina  
mga 50% (5hours) sana but biglang  
na-hang ang connection, kaya ulitin  
q uli using the ‘advance Uploading  
of Video sa YouTube’.”*

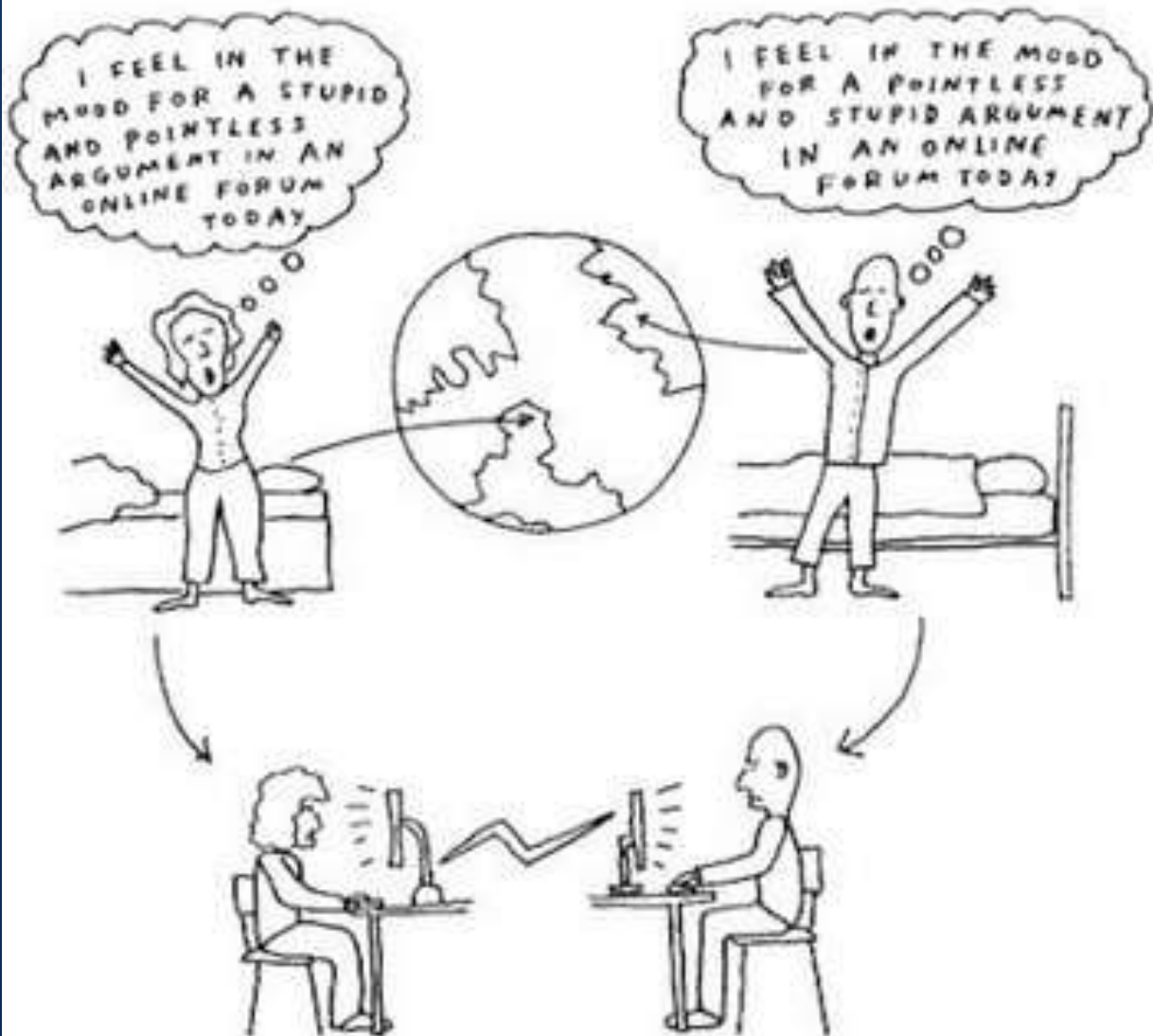
- Sending of reports back and forth
- Uploading of videos through youtube
- Editing and sending them again
- Face-to-face visits of group members based in the Philippines

# *The Ending*



*“ What occurred in the entire duration of our virtual reporting is really a different experience and learning for me. I never thought that it is possible for three individuals who are far from each other, seldom or no face to face meeting at all, have different religious beliefs and have other differences can produce a final report like what we finished.”*





HOW THE INTERNET BRINGS US TOGETHER



- ODeL allows for experimentation and innovation
- Offers many promises in terms of learning
- Empowers the learners to be co-creators of knowledge
- Allows learners to create their own scholarly spaces

# Realizations:

- Technological challenges  
(but despite the challenges,  
technologies such as  
compressed video see  
continued growth in the area,  
Valentine 2002)

## Realizations:

-Group dynamics challenge

*“It was within the dynamics of the group that the learners felt the most challenged.”*

Students in these communities feel less pressure to perform individually, and more pressure to collaborate and be part of the team (Greenberg)

- The three learners were able to create spaces despite the challenges. They exhibited “tolerance for ambiguity, a need for autonomy, and an ability to be flexible” (Threkeld & Brzoska)

# *The* Output...

Religious Environmentalism:  
Towards a Better  
Understanding of the Role,  
Belief, Practices, Relevance of  
the Christian Filipinos and  
Buddhist Thais



Environmentalism is a movement that aims to protect biodiversity; reduce fossil fuel consumption; reduce and clean up source of pollution; use of alternative energy sources; sustain use of water, land, and other scarce resources; and preserve endangered species.

Religious Environmentalism is the deliberate application of religious attitude toward the environment and viewed to potentially solve environmental crisis.

These two cases exhibit the value of community and approaches developed by those with little formal education or information about environmental matters, building on a more powerful motivator – faith and worship.

# CASE 1: Inter-religious dialogue and immersion with Sierra Madre Mountain dwellers, the Agtas and Dumagats

Fr. montallana was assigned in the Sierra Madre mountains in the areas of Quezon province and Aurora province as missionary to the Dumagats and Agtas, the indigenous peoples in the said areas for 18) years

Fr. Montallana fought for environmental balance in the ecosystem, consistently fought against loggers operating in the area.


His mission in the areas is not to proselytize the natives (believers of animism) to be converted into christianity/ catholicism but to have christian-native dialogue among themselves as stakeholders and stewards of god's creation.

# CASE 2: The Thai Perspective

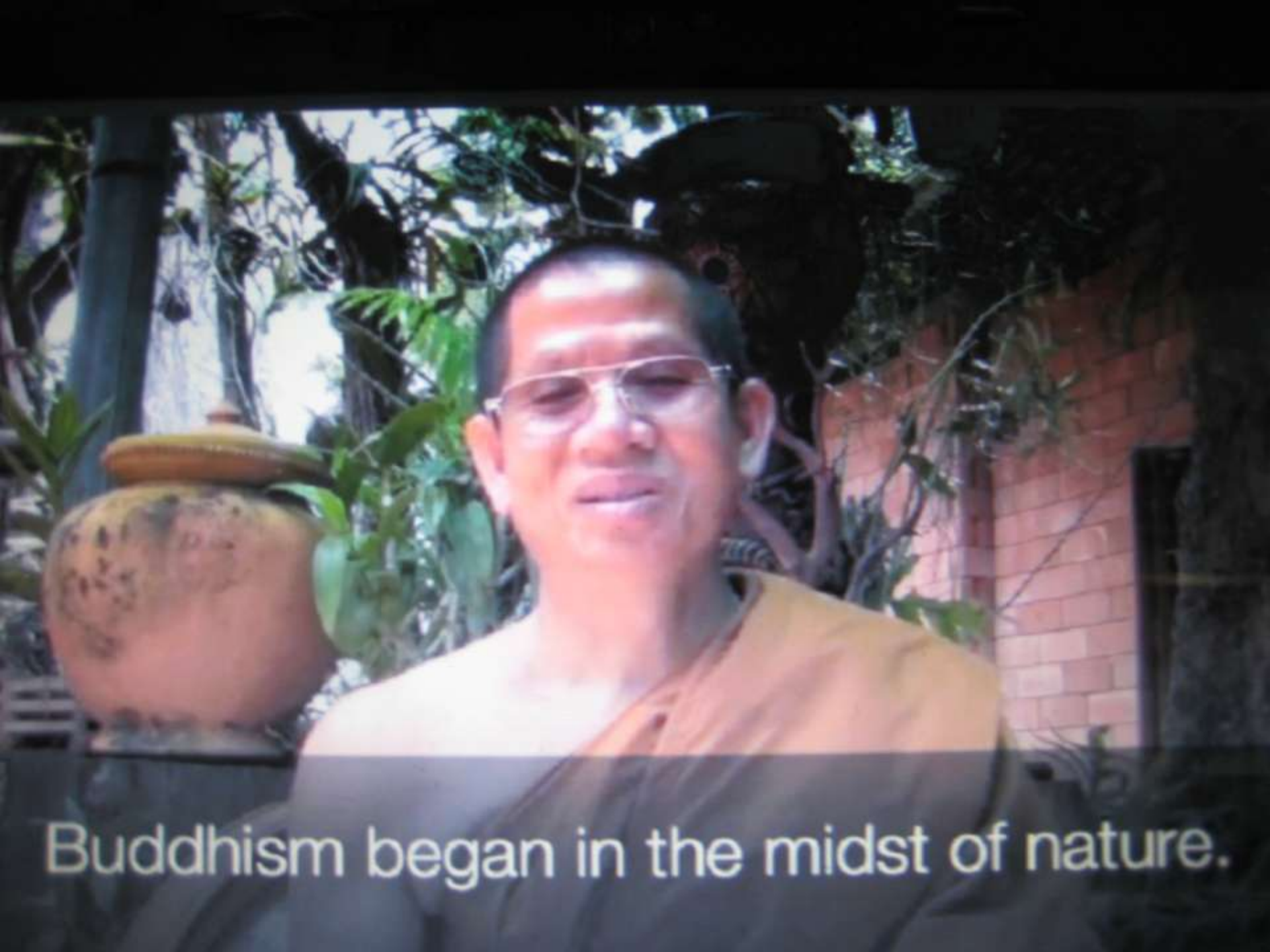


**An abbot with a title Royalty bestowed by the King – Phra Kru-Tavorn Pattanakit established the 99,999 trees to counter the effects of land conversion from forest to rice paddies and monocropping**

**Buddhists consider the environment as a living organism and is directly connected to humans, largely spurring from the basic truth of inter-relatedness**

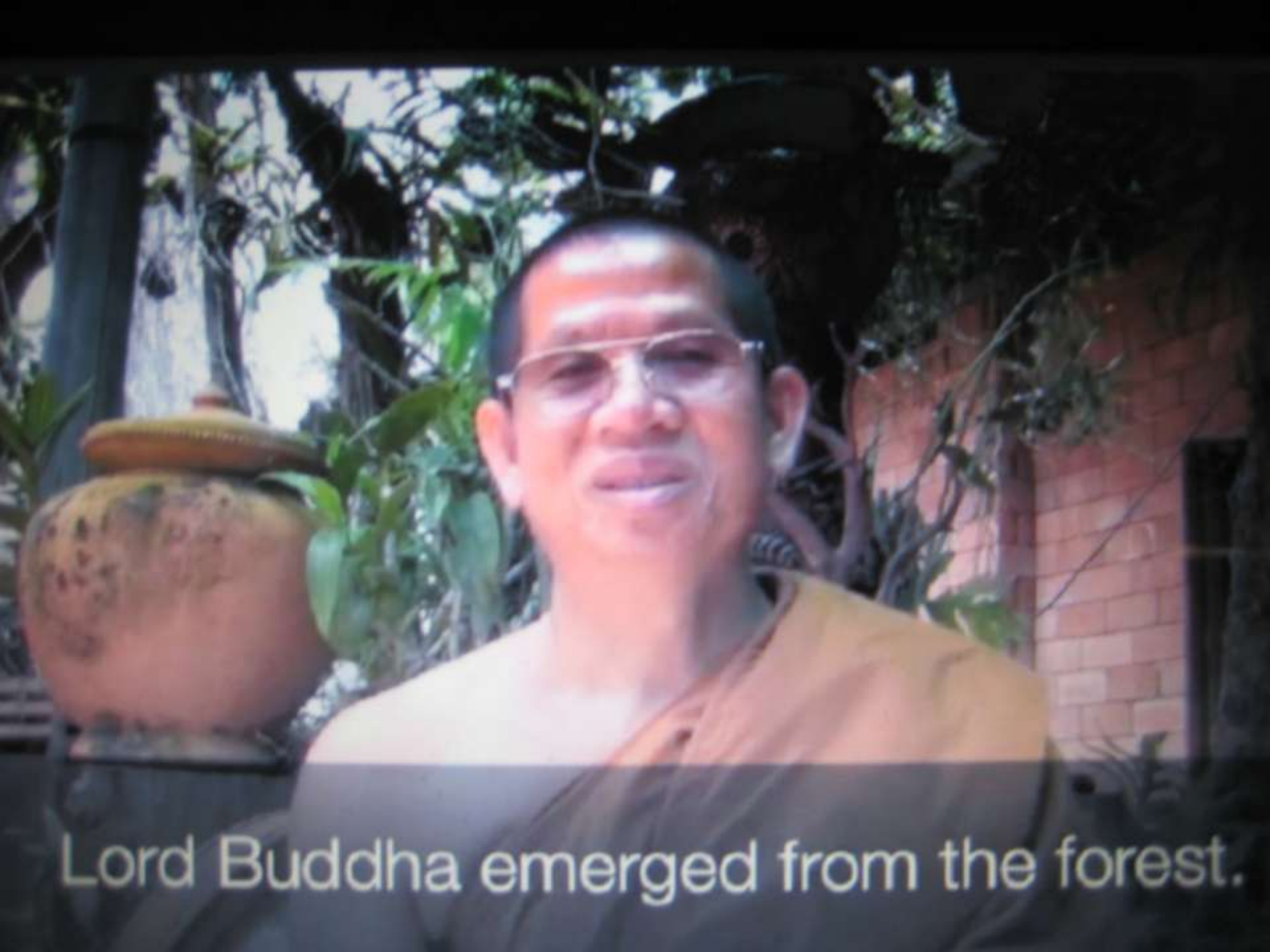
A man with glasses and a brown robe is speaking in a forest. He is looking slightly upwards and to the right. The background shows trees and a brick wall. A large, rounded, light-colored object is visible on the left side of the frame.

People cut the trees... and destroy the forest.



Buddhism began in the midst of nature.





Lord Buddha emerged from the forest.



(Playlist: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMibfQLgzYA&list=PLFD7B97A212480003> and  
Alternate: <http://www.youtube.com/user/kimescobin17?feature=movie>)