

**Public Education, Religious Education and Media**

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To achieve the goal of “Wealthy people, strong country, just and civilized society,” in the situation of Vietnam integrating into the process of globalization, Vietnamese government has energetically performed lots of measures including Public education, Religious education and Media.

1. Public education:

So far, the rate of literate Vietnamese people makes up 91% of the whole nation's. Why so? It is because, addition to the system of training students seeking for the schools of various levels, which are in the system of regular or supplementary, in-service, common or specialized, technical – scientific education administered by the Ministry of Education & Training, the Government also concerns about the education of the masses in various fields, i.e., science and life, socio-economy, preserving the nation identity, environment, mankind peace, and security, namely: The child learns about science; Science and Life; Marriage and Family guidance; the World everywhere; the Rural areas nowadays; Friends of the farmer: organic fertilizer for hygiene agricultural product; Techniques of cultivation and cattle-breeding; Trees for poverty-alleviation; To get rich being not hard; The highway code; The house of affection and gratitude; The green ivory bamboo; Culture and Life; To open the fund of knowledge; The fundamentals of family; To teach English; The famous men in the Vietnamese soil; The loving nation: Culture of the trade village in Hue; Population and development; The world of technology; Art and Life; Family and Kids; Good health for everybody; The green globe: watching the changes of climate; To protect environment; Environment: to swarm into feeding catfish and the risk of breaking through the environment; The gift of life: to figure a peaceful world; A talk about vigilance.

2. Religious education:

The population of Vietnam is composed of 82,689,518 people in 2004. Vietnam is a country having lots of people embracing a faith. Buddhism makes up more than 70%; Catholicism 10%;

Protestant 606,000 followers; Islam more than 64,000 followers; Caodaism nearly 2,500,000 followers, and Hoahaoism nearly 1,232,000 followers.

The ordinance of Vietnamese State on religion is that “The State guarantees the freedom of worship and religion of the people. Nobody can violate the freedom...The priest has a responsibility to educate the followers to love their country, to carry out their right, duty of citizenship, and to have sense of executing the law...But (citizen) must not take advantage of the freedom of a faith, religion to undermine the peace, independence and unity of the nation...Vietnamese Fatherland Front has a responsibility to gather the compatriot having religious faiths in order to build a great national unity, to build and to protect the Fatherland.”

In general, the religions in Vietnam, which educate their followers to have a sense of “Good faith – Fine world”, develop their Congregations in the nation’s heart, and to live in harmony together.

Buddhism, a great religion, has been introduced into Vietnam since the first century A.D. In 1981, nine schools of Buddhist thought were united into an organization “Congregation of Vietnamese Buddhism” with the course of action “Religion – Nation – Socialism.” Vietnamese Buddhism is now composed of 38,866 monks and nuns including 7,602 Khmer monks. Vietnamese Buddhism now possesses 4 universities, 7 junior colleges and 30 high schools nationwide. There have been 40 Buddhist monks and nuns completed their Ph.D. in abroad, all of whom are now serving the Congregation, and more than 200 are now studying overseas. In addition, to strengthen the education of laity, the Congregation has trained 4 courses of advanced lecturers. For more effective in the religious education, the propagators have combined the lectures and gifts for the poor fellow-citizens in the remote areas. The Congregation has also organized the examinations of Buddhist doctrines for the laity in the North – Central – South Vietnam, then the central examination. The Congregation organized various forms of training, such as Fasting day in observing the 8 precepts, Recitation of the name of a Buddha...For creating further believing mind of the laity, the Congregation has organized a number of relief – social works, for example, voluntary blood donation, relief work, offering for the people in remote areas, charity-school, the disabled, or taking part into the programs of preventive measures of HIV, AIDS, or giving lectures at the centers of rehabilitation of human dignity.

Catholicism has been introduced into Vietnam since 1533 and has existed almost cities, provinces here. In 1980, the Vietnam Council of bishops was founded with the course of action “To live up

to the Gospel in the nation's heart." There have been now over 2,772 Catholic priests, 73 monastic orders with nearly 13,000 monks and nuns, and 7 grand seminaries. Catholic dignitaries have trained at home and abroad.

Protestantism built the first bases in Vietnam in 1911, and in 1927 Religious Society of Vietnam Protestant was officially founded nationwide. In 1958, the Religious Society of Vietnam Protestant (Northern Vietnam) was founded with the course of action "To love Fatherland, to protect peace, to perform justice, humanity, freedom, equality of labor." At present, this Society is composed of over 6,000 followers. Meanwhile, the Religious Society of Vietnam Protestant (Southern Vietnam) was legal status recognized by the State in 2001 with the course of action "To live up to the Gospel, to serve Christ, to serve Fatherland and Nation." This Society consists of over 600,000 followers, hundreds of Protestant Evangelists. This Religion is allowed to open Elementary training courses of Bible in Summer, and to improve the dogmas quarterly for the Protestant Evangelists. This religion develops its strength in two areas of Vietnam: Northwest and the West Plateau.

Caodaism came out officially into society in 1929 in South Vietnam. Doctrines and practices of this religion are based upon the combination of other religions, especially the idea "The three traditional religions in Vietnam (Buddhism-Confucianism-Taoism)" and the features of culture and faith of South Vietnam. This religion includes various sub-sects. From 1995 to 2001, those sub-sects were gradually recognized by the State as legal organizations. This religion operates according to the course of action "Serving Religion – Loving Country." This religion comprises nearly 10,000 dignitaries, 1,250 bases of worship in 37 cities and provinces in the whole country; especially, primarily gathered in South Vietnam.

Hoahaoism was first introduced to South Vietnam in 1939. The founder of it was Huynh Phu So. The practice of this religion is to study Buddhism, to perform the Four Debts of Gratitude: Debt of gratitude to one's parents; Debt of gratitude to the rulers of the nation; Debt of gratitude to the Triple Gems (Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha); and Debt of gratitude to all living creatures. In 1998, this religion was legal status recognized by the State in 1998 and advocated the course of action "For the Religion, For the Nation." This religion has come into operation primarily in the western part of South Vietnam, and there have been classes of studying or improving the holy doctrines.

Islam was officially introduced to Cham ethnic minority group living in the south part of the Central coast. This religion comprises two sects: One is orthodox Islam and another is a combination of three elements: Islam, Hinduism and matriarchy of Cham (*Bani*). Organizationally, there have been three organizations of Islam, all of which were gradually recognized by the State in 1992 and 2006. This religion is composed of 695 dignitaries, 77 mosques, and gathers primarily in south of Central Vietnam and in South Vietnam.

Apart from the six religions mentioned above, in Vietnam, there have been some religions either at home related to Buddhism and popular faith or from abroad, e.g. *Tịnh độ Cư sĩ Phật hội*, *Bửu Sơn Kỳ Hương*, *Tứ ân hiếu nghĩa*, *Tổ tiên chính giáo*, *Ngũ chi minh đạo*, Hinduism, Bahai...all of which are estimated around 1,000,000 followers and hundreds of worship bases. And, the State has been considering to permit their activities in accordance with the law.

### 3. Media:

Nowadays, the outbreak of information technology with modern communicative means help the public and religious education more favorable. State Broadcasting and State Television stations are present nationwide; especially, information transmitted by sound wave from Capital or Cities to the remote areas is usually switched on twice per day, i.e., at dawn before people going working and at sunset when people going back home. Furthermore, there have been a number of journals, websites, electronic newspapers, cassettes, CDs...

Buddhism is possessed of “*Tuần báo Giác Ngộ*” (Enlightenment Weekly Newspaper), “*Tạp chí Văn hoá Phật giáo*” (Buddhist Culture Review), “*Tạp chí Phật giáo Nguyên Thủy*” (Early Buddhist Magazine), a number of Vietnamese Buddhist websites like [www.phattuvn.org](http://www.phattuvn.org), [www.langmai.org](http://www.langmai.org), [www.daophatngaynay.com](http://www.daophatngaynay.com), [www.vinhnghiem.com](http://www.vinhnghiem.com), lots of internal journals and speaking books in the form of CD-MP3, such as “*Đại Tạng Kinh Việt Nam*” (Vietnamese *Tipitaka*) and “*Diệu Pháp Âm*” (Wonderful Sound of Dhamma).

Catholicism issues the journals “*Công giáo và Dân tộc*” (Catholicism and Nation) and “*Người Công giáo Việt Nam*” (Vietnamese Catholics). Protestantism circulate the news-letters: “*Thông Công*” (Spiritual Communication) and “*Mục vụ*” (Mission). Hoahaoism is possesses the journal “*Hương Sen*” (Lotus flavoring).

**CONCLUSION:**

Thanks to the concern and sponsorship of the State towards religions, the religious organizations in Vietnam have made every effort in their activities on public education, religious education and media by various forms, all of which make their devotees understand the value of culture and spirit of religions and the role of religions in society. As a result, the religious organizations, dignitaries and devotees have made active contributions to the keeping of social order and to the construction of a peaceful life. Vietnam is now a safety destination for foreign tourists and there are more and more overseas Vietnamese desiring to come back to their native soil for rebuilding their country or for living peacefully with their blooming beloved religions there.