

# **THE BUDDHIST CONTRIBUTION TO GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**By Most Venerable Thich Tri Tam  
Chief of Rituals, Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in-the-Dharma,  
Dear ladies and gentlemen,

The Vietnamese Buddhist Delegation, have the honour of participating in the fourth International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2551, held at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand in honor of the 80th Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, especially the conference on the contribution of Buddhism in government and development of nations. We respectfully have an opportunity to work with the Supreme Sangha Council of Thailand.

First of all, we would like to wish King Bhumibol Adulyadej a long-lived life and we wish Brothers and Sisters in-the-Dharma all over the world happiness in body and mind.

Now, we would like to present two ideas: the roles of Buddhism in governing and developing nations and the history of establishment and development of Buddhism in Vietnam.

Historically, since coming into being in 551BC, Buddhism has given a great contribution for nations in such aspects as spirits and peace.

When the Buddha was about to finally pass away and leave his followers, rather than appoint an individual to take his place he said this: "Whatever Dhamma and Vinaya I have pointed out and formulated for you, that will be your Teacher when I am gone." (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, [D.16])

Follow His teachings, monks, nuns and lay Buddhists continue to carry on Dharma Wheel from one country to another and always to keep Basic Precept: "No killing". Heart of Compassion in Buddhism is clearly recognized in history. Buddhism uses to take refuge into Triple Gems. A late Great Venerable once said:

If all beings have no Karma of killing, there will be no war. If everyone does good things, the world will be peaceful for ever."

If all citizens implement the five precepts of Buddhism, that is no Killing, Stealing, Adultery, Lying, or Use of intoxicants, the nation will become peaceful, their family will be happy. The government no longer will be worried about social evils.

Buddhism was originated in India in the 6th century B.C. Since then, Buddhism has evolved and adapted to the various cultures and countries it has encountered, which has enabled it to survive and develop throughout the world. In each country, Buddhism always gives its great contribution to the nation in many fields such as

culture, arts, spirits, etc. Monks, nuns and lay Buddhists along with local residents make efforts to seek equality and bring happiness to everyone in society. These are clearly shown in His teachings:

Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world.

By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased.

This is a law eternal.

Dhp.05

It is because of the understanding and enlightenment that Buddhism on its development is warmly welcomed and respectfully adopted in every country.

Now, we would like to present the history of establishment and development of Buddhism in Vietnam.

For nearly 2000 years, since being brought into Vietnam and Buddhism has become a dominated religion and taken an important role in defending and developing our country.

It is clear that our country always follows and preserves traditional values to protect the integrity of our land and our people. Whenever Buddhism is prosperous, our nation also becomes wealthy and peaceful. The Dynasties of Dinh, Le, Ly and Tran are typical examples. Vietnamese Buddhism always greatly affects many fields of the community such as morality, literature, politics, and foreign diplomacy. Another example is that when the Dynasty of Tien Le had just been set up, King Le Dai Hanh often invited Zen Master Phap Thuan to the courts in order to discuss politics and foreign diplomacy. One day, the emperor asked him about the stability of the nation. He answered:

“Whether the nation is stable or not depends on the harmony and solidarity of the army and civilians, love for peace of all subjects”

Especially, during the Dynasty of Ly Tran, There were many emperors who deeply believed in the Buddha and many zen masters who reached the peak of the way. Therefore, people lived and work in peace and contentment. King Tran Nhan Tong, who had vigorously defeated foreign enemies, withdrew from his position, descended his throne to his son and left to become a Buddhist. He became the Great Zen Master of the Yen Tu Ch’an Sect, a typical Vietnamese one, and still has certain influence up to now.

During those historical times, many great Buddhist masters hold important positions in the courts. Furthermore, many others were brilliant poets, distinguished diplomats and exceptional scholars. They used their abilities and skills to serve our nation, which made Buddhism have prestige in the community. This proves that Buddhism is not pessimistic, passive but optimistic and active in defending and developing our country.

After April 30, 1975, Vietnam was united. It is a key factor to urge high dignitaries, monks, nuns and followers of all Buddhist organizations and individuals in every region to unite in developing Vietnamese Buddhism. Therefore, a conference was hold from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> of November, 1981 at Quan Su Pagoda, Hanoi in order to form the Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation. Since

then, this congregation has become the representative of Vietnamese monks, nuns, and lay Buddhist living in Vietnam and abroad as well. It has a key role in managing Buddhist work to meet the social development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is 26 years since it was established, the Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation has its management boards and representative boards in all provinces and cities. At present, there are 39,371 monks and nuns including Mahayana, Theravada, and Sangha Bhikshu in Vietnam. There are 13,775 pagodas and monasteries in every region of Vietnam. In order to educate and cultivate monks and nuns the Congregation has built three institutes located in Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City and 31 intermediate Buddhist schools. Eight intermediate Buddhist courses and hundreds of elementary ones have been organized so far. Dissemination of Buddhism and charity, cultivation of lay Buddhists, religious etiquettes, financial affairs, Buddhist culture, international public relations, etc... all have developed well. The Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation has been on good relationships with Buddhist Congregations of many nations as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Korea, Sri Lanka, India, Japan, France, China, Mongolia and many other countries.

The great achievement is the result of participation, contribution, and solidarity of all monks, nuns and lay Buddhists irrespectively their sects.

At the same time, we always make efforts to follow our predecessors' valuable traditions. That is to participate in various fields of society such as politics, economy, education and culture in order to make Vietnam become a peaceful, wealthy, happy one.

Based on mutual international friendship, the Vietnamese Buddhist Delegation greatly appreciate to attend the fourth International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2551 in Thailand, a beautiful, hospitable country with its long-standing tradition of Buddhism. We wish all dignitaries, brothers and sisters in-the-Dharma to follow The Buddha's teachings: "capable of enlightenment, enlightening for others and perfect enlightenment". We work in harmony with Sangha. We believe that Buddhism will give much more contribution for human beings.

Once again, we would like to thank the Managing Board of the fourth International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2551 - 2007, the Buddhist Congregation of Thailand and the Government of Thailand. Furthermore, we respectfully wish King Bhumibol Adulyadej a long-lived life and happiness.

We would be grateful to the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for its support of our participation in the Fourth International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2551 in Thailand.

We would like to wish all dignitaries, brothers and sisters present here as well as those living all over the world happiness in body and mind.

Thank you for listening.

Nha Trang, May 7, 2007

