

**REPORT
ON THE GUARANTEES AND PROMOTION OF THE ROLE OF
BUDDHIST SHANGHA OF VIET NAM**

*Submission for the consideration of the 3rd Report on the Implementation of the
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the
Social Republic of Viet Nam*

**I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF THE BUDDHIST SANGHA OF
VIET NAM**

1. The Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam

- The Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam (BSV) was established in 1981 as the voluntary unification of 9 Buddhist organizations and Buddhist Sects in Viet Nam and has the legal status as the legal person representing Buddhist monks, nuns and followers in Viet Nam and overseas, as well as being a member of international Buddhist organizations.

- The Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam is a social organization and a member of the Fatherland Front of Viet Nam. Currently, the Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam has 96 Dharma Council members (“Hội đồng Chứng minh”), 225 Executive Councilmembers (“Hội đồng Trị sự”) and 45 standing members. The Buddhist Sangha of Viet Nam comprises of 13 Buddhist Divisions and Central Specialist Institutes: Interior Affairs, Buddhist Education, Guiding Buddhists, Buddhism Dissemination, Buddhist Rituals, Culture, Finance, International Buddhism, Social Charity, Legislative Affairs, Monitoring, Information and Communication and Buddhist Research. The BSV has unified organizational system from central to locality. As a result of 37 years operation, the BSV established the executive local councils in 63 provinces, cities in over the country and enhanced the administrative systems in province levels. The SBV manages the operations of 12 Buddhist Follower Organizations in foreign countries with all operations complied with the SBV’s Charter.

2. Objectives

The SBV’s objectives are to promote Dharma (Buddhist doctrines), to develop the SBV in Viet Nam and overseas, to participate in protection of the Motherland, to serve the nation, and to contribute in creating peace and happiness for the World.

3. Motto

The motto of the SBV is Dharma, Nation and Socialism based on the respect, the compliance with Buddhist rules, Prohibitions laws and Vietnamese laws.

- Monks and Nuns: 53.941 monks and nuns (including 38.629 of Mahayana Branch; 8.574 Khmer Theravada Branch and 1.754 Kinh Theravada Branch (with 1.100 monks and 654 nuns); 4.984 Buddhist Medicant Branch).

- Approximate 50 millions followers and persons believe in Buddhist: 18.466 worship places (including: 15.846 Mahayana Branchlibraries; 454 Khmer Theravada Branchtemples; 106 Kinh Theravada Branchtemples; 541 temple's libraries, 367 Viharas, 998 NPD, 54 Chinese temples).

II. ACHIEVEMENTS IN GUARANTEE AND PROMOTING THE ROLE THE OF BSV

In recent years, the BSV continuously promotes its administrative roles in monks and nuns activitis in implementing Buddhist Rules, Prohibitions, contributing in social charity;leading the great national unity; enhancing the unity of monks, nuns, Buddhist branches within the BSV to build the constantly growing BSV in Viet Nam and in the international integration. All the activities bring good results,restates the role of BSV and creates a belief among monks, nuns in Viet Nam and abroad as well as Buddhist international community in the era of development and international integration.

1. Religious education and dissemination of Buddhism to people

Religious education and dissemination are the core and effective activities of the BSV. Buddhist institutions (Viet Nam Buddhist Academy in Ha Noi, Hue, Ho Chi Minh and Can Tho)have about 7,000 graduated monks, nunsin Buddhist bachelor and currently have 2,000 monks, nuns as students up to date. At college level, there are 8 Buddhist classes with about 2,000 graduate students and over 1,000 monks, nuns studying. There are 31 Buddhist Colleges in all over the country which currently teaching about 5,000 monks, nuns and have approximate 10,000 graduated monks, nuns. Most provinces have Buddhist training courses at elementary level.

Buddhism dissemination (Hoàng pháp) contributes to bringing Buddhism to all people, increasing the number of followers, enhancing the belief as well as creating happiness and stability for stay-at-homeBuddhists.

After 7 terms, there have been 10 training courses for Buddhist teachers with 890 graduated monks and nuns. Various training courses in intermediate and advance level are organized to enhance the human resources for religious

dissemination, to find suitable teaching methods for each learning groups and areas; to form, to visit, to teach and to enhance the effects of religious branches, follower clubs, and to diversify the dissemination method: to gather juniors, colleges and universities students through interesting religious activities, to organize Buddhist rules contests, to combine religious teaching with other religious festival activities and activities of Social Charity Division, follower clubs under Guiding Buddhists Division, International Buddhism Divisions in Europe, Russia, Czech, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Australia, United States, etc....

One of the major point is the guidance for Buddhists has become more diverse over time to enrich the Buddhists activities. Activities for Buddhists families remain necessary and play important role in activities of Buddhists. Thus, Guiding Buddhists Division of BSV focuses on various social classes and compositions, especial the juniors and intellectuals. Thousands of Buddhists have participated in religious classes and training courses organized by Administrative Division, Guiding Buddhists Division, Buddhism Dissemination Division in local areas that highly satisfied the needs of studying of people.

Furthermore, many religious camps, Buddhism studying summer courses, activities to support students in exam seasons, blood donation campaigns are organized in the country that attracts the participation of all social classes and the attention of society to contribute to creating a mindset towards the good, morality, lifestyles which compliant with traditional culture and laws among people.

2. Printing, publishing Bibles, religious books/materials to fulfill the needs of monks, nuns, religious experts in Viet Nam and overseas

In recent 37 years, Viet Nam Buddhist Research Institute and its sub-institutes have translated and printed 5 Nikaya Buddhism Scriptures, 4 āgamas and various scriptures of Khuddaka-nikāya that reaching 33 chapters with nearly 200,000 pages, and currently reviewing the translation of Mahāyāna Buddhism scriptures. Hundreds of religious books have been published such as Buddhism scriptures, Buddhism rules, Buddhism philosophy, history of Viet Nam Buddhism and history of Buddhism.

The centers under Viet Nam Buddhist Research Institute have been and currently translating, publishing versions of Buddhism scriptures, researches on Buddhism, and collecting, drafting the research proposals, etc.... Magazines, such as Buddhism Culture, Enlightenment, Buddhism Origin, Uḍumbara, Buddhist Research... are regularly published to contribute promoting the pureness and positivity of Buddhism, to satisfy the need of studying, researching of monks, nuns, Buddhists as well as religious researchers.

3. International cooperation as the most significant international integration activity of BSV

In recent 37 years, BSV has actively engaged and restated its role in international integration. BSV is member of various Buddhism organization in the world: founder member of International Buddhism Alliance (India), International Buddhism for Dissemination of Buddhism Rules, Organization of Students of Great Tathāgata (Sri Lanka), United Nation International Commission of Great Festival Vesak (Thailand), Commission of International Buddhism Universities and Colleges in Thailand, International Sakyadhita, and the leading member of Viet Nam Buddhists Association in Russia, France and Europe.

The relationship between BSV and other oversea Buddhist organizations are tightening through exchanging groups to visit each other. BSV has sent delegations to participate in 66 international meetings, conferences in Thailand, Lao, Cambodia, Myanmar, China, United States.... Especially, delegations of BSV participated in 15 United Nation Great Vesak Festival in Thailand and in the United States.

With great efforts, BSV organized United Nations Great Vesak Festival in Ha Noi in 2008 and in Ninh Binh in 2014 with the participation of more than 90 countries and territories over the world which was appreciated by Buddhist countries and international organizations. BSV also successfully organized 10th World Conference on Buddhist Women in Traditional Buddhist Culture Center in Ho Chi Minh City.

In 2014, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka attended Great Vesak Festival in Ninh Binh Province marking an achievement of international Buddhism. In September 2016, Prime Minister of Republic of India visit BSV's headquarter and in his Joint Declaration with Prime Minister of Viet Nam, there are provisions to grand the scholarships for BSV's monks, nuns to study and research in India, which show the role of BSV's in social international integration. Leader monks, nuns of BSV participated in Viet Nam Head of State's delegation officially visiting Cambodia in 2014, the Republic of India in 2018; and in Viet Nam delegation visiting the United States in 2015.

4. Social charity with varied and practical methods, bringing good results and contributing to enhance the living conditions of peoples in general and people in difficulties and receiving the compliments from society

Since social charity is one of the core activities of BSV, BSV's monks and nuns actively and regularly carried charity activities and other activities to take care of social welfare. Charity activities focus on supporting 50 social

institutions for orphans, lonely elders, people with disabilities. BSV currently has 150 medical centers and 655 traditional medical centers and 01 general clinics which effectively working, giving free medical examination and drugs for thousands of rounds of patients.

BSV also gives assistance for people in natural disasters and actively participates in campaigns for the elimination of poverty; gives charity presents, builds bridges, roads, free wheelchairs, supports blood donation, education funds; supports soldiers in Paracel and Spratly Islands.... BSV has raised about 13000 billion VND for charity funds over 37 years.

Especially, BSV took part in international aid, such as supporting tsunami victims in South East Asia, earthquake victims in North West Japan and tsunami, earthquake victims in Nepal; helped build religious school in Vientiane, Lao.

Furthermore, BSV also carried other social activities, such as: to build kindergartens, social institutions for children, children with disabilities, children affected by Orange Agent... to give to reduce the difficulties for children's families and society. BSV's monks, nuns and Social Charity Division in provinces and Buddhist have done various activities, such as to build bridges, roads in rural areas; to create wells, donated blood; to give donation for charity funds for people in poverty, children in need of education, women in poverty; to give away free bicycles for students, free wheelchairs for poor patients; to give free canoes, coffins; to aid free optical surgeries for patients in poverty, free surgeries children having congenital heart disease; to give gifts, free meals for children in need, patients in poverty in hospitals, general clinics...

5. Places for worship

BSV has 18,466 worship places, including 15,846 places of Mahayana branch; 454 pagodas of Khmer Theravada branch and 106 pagodas of Kinh Theravada Branch; 541 temple's libraries, 367 Viharas and 54 temples of Chinese

III. EVALUATION OF THE GUARANTEE AND PROMOTING THE ROLE OF BSV

1. Advantages

- Viet Nam has the legal framework to guarantee the freedom of religion and belief; Constitution, laws, Law on religion and belief have provisions on guarantees, promotion of religious activities in general and Buddhism in particular that suitable for political, socio-economic conditions, international integration, expansion of exchange and international cooperation of Viet Nam to develop economy, culture and society and guarantee the national defend, security, society's order and safety.

- The Government has the responsibility to respect, protect freedom of religion and belief of people; to guarantee religious places, facilities and other legitimate religious assets of religious organizations; to protect cultural and moral values of religion, belief and the tradition of ancestor worship; to praise the people who contributed to development of the country and society; and to meet the spiritual needs of people.

- The Fatherland Front of Viet Nam, of which BSV is an active member, has responsibility to unify all people who have or does not have religion, belief; to create the great unity of the whole country to build and protect the Fatherland; to refer promptly the opinions, aspirations, requests of Buddhists and people on the matter of religion and belief to the competent authority; to disseminate, mobilize people, monks and nuns to obey the laws on religion and belief; to monitor the performance of authorities, organizations, people's representatives as well as public servants, officials in the implementation of national policies, laws on religion and belief. The activities of the Fatherland Front create favorable conditions for religious organizations, including BSV, to promote their roles.

- The laws have clear provisions on the religious organizations, activities... as the important basic guidelines for religious organizations in general and BSV in particular to better conditions for performing their roles.

- The increase of society's awareness of the roles of religions, including Buddhism, as well as valuable social activities of religious organizations is important elements for the religious organizations to promote their roles.

- Through relentless efforts based on reputation, responsibility in all recent years, BSV is granted 02 Ho Chi Minh Medals – the outstanding praise of the Government for the performance of BSV and its monks, nuns, as well as all Buddhist in Viet Nam and abroad.

2. The action plan of BSV in future

- To continue promoting the unity of monks, nuns of BSV and all of its branches for the development of BSV in the era of international integration; to educate monks, nuns to serve based on BSV's motto "Dharma, Nation, and Socialism".

- To enhance the administration of monks, worship facilities to guarantee the morality of monks, the pureness of Buddhism and the nice image of BSV.

- To re-structure the Buddhism education system to better adaption in a new era.

- To disseminate continuously the Buddhism rules and philosophy to bring the enlightenment of Buddhism to all people and to create peaceful, happy community; especially, to focus on the dissemination of Buddhism in remote areas and serving Buddhist communities abroad.

- To renovate the administrative methods; to apply new achievements of 4th science-technology revolution in organizing the activities of BSV, guiding Buddhists, especial the juniors for better morality of the society.

- To conserve and promote the cultural heritage of the nation, including Buddhism heritages, as well as religious tourism through the cultural Buddhist festivals.

**On behalf of the Standing Committee
Chairperson**



Thích Thiên Nhơn