

VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST THOUGHT IN TRADITION AND INTEGRATION

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This paper concentrates on analyzing the main characters and the achievements of Buddhist thought in Vietnam as well as its changes in New Age of Religion and Cultural Pluralism through three points: 1-Vietnamese Buddhism; 2- Vietnamese Buddhist thought; 3- Buddhism's opportunities and challenges in the new age.

- Buddhism was the first foreign religion introduced into Vietnam and integrated with the native belief. After that, more than three times it integrated with other foreign religions and thoughts (Confucianism, Taoism, Western thoughts, including Marxism) in various contexts of culture, economy and politics. Therefore Vietnamese Buddhism is considered more practical and flexible in comparing with Buddhism of other Buddhist countries. However, Vietnamese Buddhism preserves well its basic tenet of internal (personal) liberation in process of intercultural communications. It is a synthesis of traditional and foreign religions and thoughts.

- Vietnamese Buddhist thought is the outcome of intercultural communication, integration and acculturation. Its role in Vietnamese history of thought had been trained and tested through long history of defending, building and developing the country not only in peace, but also in war times. Vietnamese Buddhism never directly took political role (in other word, political power), but as a profound philosophical thought it deeply penetrated into Vietnamese thought and contributed its effective part in promoting and preserving traditional spiritual values. It has been recorded a traditional and patriotic religious-thought of Vietnam.

- Nowadays, in the general tendency of globalization, Vietnamese thought will have more opportunities to develop and apply its internal philosophy of liberation, while other ideal models of human liberation would not appear to be true in this life, even scientific ones. However, there are also more challenges to Buddhism in general and Vietnamese Buddhism in particular both from outside and inside. This new context requires more effective role of religious-philosophy of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Nowadays, Vietnamese Buddhism needs to resolve its own problems and to develop its own abilities on behalf of the nation's identity, benefit and independence as the strategy it did successfully in history.

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Today, in the context of globalization, *plural religious and cultural integration* comes to be a prominent phenomenon, and it is expressed by words as a new terminology. According to the meaning of this term, while studying the history of introducing and developing Buddhism in Vietnam, it is interesting to learn that *religious and cultural pluralism* is not a new phenomenon in history of Vietnamese cultural exchange and integration among countries, regions and continents through Buddhism. However, today the term “*religious and cultural pluralism*” is especially treated of their modern meanings as mutual exchange, mutual acceptance, mutual supplementation optionally in peace on global scale, not concentrating on their bad meanings as coercion, compulsion forced by one side as before. In concerning this modern meaning of integration, Vietnamese Buddhism should be mentioned as a typical successful example of *plural religious and cultural integration*.

Buddhism was introduced from India into Vietnam, and right at the first time it integrated with native belief. After that, during Sino-domination period Buddhism again imported from China together with Confucianism and Taoism. Three of them all together made the “*Three traditional religions*” – the basic foundation of traditional thought of Vietnam. From that time on, Buddhism has been considered as an important component of traditional thought and philosophy; in addition, in process of integration with various thoughts and religions, Buddhism continuously preserves and enriches its own tenet. Nowadays Buddhism is also a possible candidate of Vietnam to integrate with other religions and cultures in facing the modern challenges of the global age.

1-Vietnamese Buddhism

Vietnamese Buddhism has had a long tradition of plural religious-cultural integration since ancient time.

In ancient time, Vietnam was treated by India and China -- two greatest cultures and civilizations in the East -- as a bridge between them. So Buddhism was introduced early into Vietnam from both India and China, from both ways -- sea and land routes -- and Buddhism was consequently imported into Vietnamese not less than three times in different contexts.

First time, through sea route, in other words, the *ceramic route*, Buddhism brought by Indian business men introduced directly from India into Vietnam at Tonkin, means ancient “Eastern Capital” (or Red River Delta now). At that time Vietnamese native belief was still as simple as totem religion, and Buddhism was easily imported and accepted to support and enrich the Vietnamese’s system of knowledge about human being and human society as a religion more than a system of philosophy. At that time Buddhism was introduced not in philosophical form but through legend or fairy story, which were simple enough to understand and remember even by working and illiterate people. For example, this first Buddhist introduction was recorded in some famous legends and fairy tales such as: *Chu Dong Tu and Tien Dung* and *Story of Mosquito*, or *Story of Tam and Cam* ... In these stories, the name “*Buddha*” was changed into native language, and called “*Bụt*”. *Bụt* was expressed as a benevolent saint of working people in the lessons teaching about the way of life and behavior between man and man or man and nature, etc. As a first imported religion, Buddhism had deep impact on the orientation for accepting Buddhism in other times, and even for accepting other foreign religions and thoughts into Vietnam in later periods as well.

Right at the first time, Buddhism as “*Bụt*” was not a religion or philosophical theory of royal or learned aristocrat, but of common people and it was peacefully mixed with native belief and became a part of their way of flexible life. Due to the introduction of *Bụt*, Vietnamese Buddhism has never been so strict or hard as Buddhism in other Buddhist countries, where Buddhism was imported as a religion or philosophical theory for the aim or benefit of royal learned aristocrat. This first introduction of Buddhism took special decisive meaning for the entire tendency of establishing its own features through long history. Vietnamese Buddhism was firstly a religion and thought or culture of common people, in other words, it was a popular Buddhism. It was the basic root for the whole structure of religious and cultural pluralism of Vietnam.

Second time, by land route, or *silk route*, Buddhism indirectly imported into Vietnam via China. This second Buddhist importation happened during Sino-domination period. And in this time, “*Phật*” in Vietnamese was also Buddha’s name but translated from Chinese language. That is why there are two words: *Bụt* and *Phật* together denoting the same Buddha in Vietnamese. They are different results of different historical periods of Buddhist importation in Vietnam: popular and scholastic Buddhism. Because, before imported into Vietnam, in China Buddhism had communicated with local Confucianism and Taoism and then became Chinese Buddhism with higher standard of religion and philosophy. In this second time, Buddhism was introduced by Chinese ruling mandarins who were dominating the Vietnamese. Hence, it was possible to say that *Phật* was Buddhism of the scholastic or learned and ruling class. From this time on, there had been being both popular Buddhism and scholastic Buddhism in Vietnam, they both influenced each other and together formed special characters of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Due to the sympathy with *Bụt* from India in the first time, while protesting against Chinese invader and their strategy of Sino-assimilation, but the Vietnamese did not hate *Phật* of Chinese Buddhism. In contrary, the term “*Phật*” together with Chinese Mahayana theory of Bodhisattva liberation were received by Vietnamese intellectual circles more systematically in order to complement their own knowledge of ontology, epistemology... In this second time, scholastic *Phật* had contributed its particular part in enriching *Bụt* (national religion) and national philosophy as well. More than that, in a certain context, both *Bụt* and *Phật* took part in appreciating national traditions. For example, right after the Sino-domination, under an independent state and peaceful condition, many pagodas were erected in the country wide. At the same time Buddhism again took the position as a national religion while it together coexisted and developed with other religions (Confucianism and Taoism) as three main parts of thought and culture in history of Vietnam. Buddhism was decided to be one major subject in the national examination by Vietnamese feudal court.

Vietnamese Buddhism’s contributions were often prominent when the nation had to face foreign invasion or urgent needs of the nation to affirm its identity or power. Buddhist teachings basically concentrate on personal emancipation, not on politics or military or economics as Confucianism and Taoism. Nevertheless, in fact, some great historical achievements of the nation were assigned to Buddhism. Thus, it is necessary to comprehend the acculturation of the three Buddhism-Confucianism-Taoism religions in Vietnamese culture and thought to understand how Buddhism took its very important role in historical decisions. For instance, the victories over Sino domination and Yan invaders (1228 AD) were considered firstly as Buddhist achievements. And the pagoda’s name of

“Khai Quoc” means Foundation of the Nation (now “Tran Quoc” = Defending Nation Pagoda) which were erected under Ly dynasty, that implied the declaration of national independence through or by Buddhism. In the same way, many exploits of defending and building the nation under Ly and Tran dynasties were attributed to Buddhism and Buddhist venerable bonzes. During that time, Buddhism had got its height of respect, and even some kings ceded his throne and lived a monastic life as monks in remote pagodas to study Buddhist scriptures and preach Buddhist teachings. Some of them were famous, such as Ly Phat Ma (1000-1054), Ly Nhan Tong (1066-1128) or Tran Thai Tong (1218-1277) and Tran Nhan Tong (1258-1308). Among them, Tran Nhan Tong was considered as the founder of Yen Tu school of Buddhism in the North of Vietnam. In addition, many venerable Buddhist bonzes were not only profound in Buddhism, but also in Confucianism and Taoism. Some famous of them were respectfully used by the feudal court as political or military advisors or “national teacher”. They were named sages and philosophers, such as venerable Khuong Viet (933-1011), Van Hanh (...?1018), Hue Sinh (...? - 1063), Vien Thong (1080-1151), Phap Loa (1284-1330), Huyen Quang (1254-1334), or even lay Buddhist Tue Trung Thuong Si (1230-1291). Consequently, we can say that Vietnamese Buddhism is a mixture of various religious and philosophical theories from Indian Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism, Mahayana Zen, Confucianism, Taoism, etc...The historical achievements in politics and military should not be understood simply as the private contribution of Buddhism only, but it must be rationally understood as the achievements made by the three traditional religions together, in which Buddhism was a prominent part.

Third time, Theravada Buddhism was introduced from Thailand and Cambodia into Champa Kingdom (now Binh Thuan province) and other parts in the Southern West of Vietnam during 5th to 15th centuries but it mostly expanded in ethnic minorities. However it also contributes its particular part in the whole picture of Vietnamese Buddhism and really makes it a diversified Buddhism. Now we can say that, in South-Asia and East-Asia or in other Buddhist countries, except India, only in Vietnam there are both Mahayana and Theravada sanghas (religious communities) co-existing for long history.

Fourth time, Catholicism was firstly introduced into Vietnam in 1525, but latter on, it followed French colonialist (about 1858) to import into Vietnam as a religion of foreign ruling class who invaded Vietnam and ironed the Vietnamese. During this time, while there were Resistance movements against French domination in Vietnam, Buddhism never appeared as a movement or a force, but always as underground stream of national religion to support all resistance movements against French domination. So that there was not any communication between Buddhism and Catholicism as a conversation between the East and the West. Most of pagodas in the countryside in Vietnam were secret places of the Communist Party’s (later as Viet Minh) force and patriotic organizations in war time. Catholic church has introduced and developed in Vietnam with the support of foreign ruling class and Vietnam feudal Government at that time, but it could not replace the spiritual role of Buddhism. For example many Catholic followers still keep an altar at their home to burn incense for their ancestors in annual ceremonies or on the first and the fifteen days of every lunar month. This was a native ritual preserved by Buddhist followers as traditional one of Vietnamese Buddhism.

For the *fifth time* Marxism as a socio-political theory and philosophy was introduced into Vietnam. The Communist Party (Viet Minh), I have mentioned above, as a national revolutionary force, who led the national revolution to struggle against French colonialist and the old feudal regime, and finally they successfully attained independence of the nation. Leaders of Viet Minh had studied and accepted K.Marx and F.Engel's dialectical and historical materialism and the theory of Communism, they claimed themselves the Communists. In 1945, after the victory of the August Revolution, President Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) as the Vietnamese Communist Party's founder stated the "*Declaration of Independence*" of Vietnam. This declaration also means the victory of communism over feudalism and colonialism. Consequently, Vietnam national revolution continued to step in socialist revolution period. From this time on, Marxist philosophy has become the ideology of the communists, and it has been being the orthodox thought of Vietnam. Marxism or materialism is quite opposite to religion, so that, in general speaking, in that time Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism were not mentioned as spiritual weapon in building and defending the country. However under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh, other religions were not forbidden or destroyed so that Buddhism as the same as Confucianism and Taoism were still silently flowed in the vein of traditional culture.

Then, in 1945 Vietnam was divided into two parts: South and North Vietnam. In the South, under war condition, Buddhist theory of non-violence (*Ahimsha*) was a particular influenced on common people's patriotic actions. It was applied actively through patriotic spirit in the war time without rigidity. For them nation's suffering is as the same as Buddhist sangha's suffering. Thus, in facing the nation's suffering many Vietnamese Buddhists took off their robes, took weapons and go to the front to struggle against violence and evil power to liberate the country. Even, in emergency of the nation's existence, Vietnamese Buddhists "*took swear an oath of burning his temporary body*" to make a patriotic torch as a demand for freedom of belief of Vietnamese Buddhism. We can not forget the Buddhist *patriotic-body-torches* such as Thich Quang Duc (self-immolation on 11 June 1963), Thich Nguyen Huong (4 August 1963), Thich Thanh Tue (13 August 1963), Thich Dieu Quang (15 August 1963), and Thich Tieu Dieu (16 August 1963). The extraordinary sacrifice of the Vietnamese only can be flexibly explained by Buddhist theory of non-violence, no-killing (*Ahimsha*) and super-tolerance *through patriotism leading to both personal and national liberation*. Vietnam victories over two big enemies, French and American imperialists, also recorded Buddhist material and spiritual contributions and never forgot great examples of Buddhist patriotism.

In the North of Vietnam, as mentioned above, during subsidized period, Buddhism did not developed much because it was treated as appearance or form of idealism, which is contrary to materialism of Marxism. However, in general speaking, through the long history Buddhism has firmly rooted in all aspects of culture and spirit of the Vietnamese. And Buddhism is the main *inner feeling*-religious life of the Vietnamese and they actively and lively practiced it in their daily life. For example, pagoda was always considered as a complex functional space not only for Buddhist cults but also for traditional customs and ceremonies or folk festivals. Pagoda has been called "*Zen gate*" where every one can go to introspect oneself, to cultivate one's mind and moral both in free time or in emergency. Every village always has a pagoda as spiritual place for the whole commune. At home, people also kept practicing meditation and worship Buddha and Avalokitesvara or Maitreya

Bodhisattva together with their ancestors on the same altar, or follow Buddhist fast, pray and keep practicing five radical Buddhist precepts together with other Confucian moral rules...

After the Vietnam War, the whole nation entered a peace period but with a lot of difficulties remained that need to be healed, rebuilt to gain back the national self-confidence to stand up from absolute destruction. Doi Moi (1986) was a revolutionary movement in economic policy carried out by the Vietnamese government and people. Then, in 1996 the resolution of the 8th General Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam concentrated on culture's role and function for socio-economic development. According to this resolution, religion was considered as a part of culture, and of course, Buddhism was treated as a traditional and important one.

It is possible to say that in Vietnam, Buddhism is a part of an integration of more than three religions and thoughts which has been acculturated in various contexts. However, Vietnamese Buddhism has successfully fulfilled its function and role in defending and building the nation both in war time and peace time, and became an important part of the traditional religions and thoughts in Vietnam. How should Vietnamese Buddhism together with the nation integrate with religious and cultural pluralism in the age of globalization is the question I would like to find the answer from aspect of history of Buddhist thought.

2. Vietnamese Buddhist Thought

The basic foundation for Vietnamese Buddhism's development and integration with various religions and cultures in the global age should be explained right from its philosophical system. Vietnamese Buddhist thought is a mixture of religious-philosophical pluralism selectively inherited from Indian and Chinese religious-philosophical systems. In Vietnam, Buddhist thought is a component of the three main parts of traditional religions (Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism) which all together combined with other modern philosophical systems (Marxism, and other Western philosophies) to make the sustainable potentiality of Vietnam to enter global age.

In origin, primitive Buddhism was one of Indian cultural quintessence. Buddhism inherited Indian religious philosophy of human liberation and developed as the third period of Indian thought, from mythological Veda to philosophical Upanishad, and turned from theocratic thought into humanity one considering man and human being as the center of its religious-philosophical system. Buddhism was a religious philosophical system concentrating on personal suffering and personal liberation.

However, it is important to mind that right at the beginning, Buddhism was a revolutionary movement against theistic authority and hard division of religious castes of Brahmanism. In Buddhist teachings every one is equal in suffering. Suffering is neither special for any caste nor except any one. This thought of suffering and liberation was inherited from Veda by Buddha, but its revolutionary point was the affirmation that every one is equal in ability of attaining enlightenment and equal on the way to liberation; especially, the way to emancipation is not paved by any god or supernatural power; on that way every one must decide by oneself, step up by oneself and attain it by oneself... and each one has to pass the life of oneself with his entire *believe, wisdom* and *morals*. This thought was a very important and necessary for the Vietnamese to strengthen their own confidence when their nation was always invaded and controlled by great empires and invaders in its long history.

In Buddhist system, religion combines with philosophy through internal (introspective) theory and practice. This combination of religion and philosophy in Buddhism was not the same as other primitive religions and philosophies. In general, for a primitive system of thought, a religion was often established firstly before philosophy did. Primitive religions were always constructed by legends in which forms of nature and society were personalized or deified because people did not know how to control them and utilize them for their own benefits, but almost controlled by them. But primitive Buddhism was not the same as a primitive system of thought of human at the first period of civilization. Firstly Buddhism appeared as a philosophy more than a religion. It was a product inherited from Indian religious-philosophical history but already contained progressive spirit about *equality* and *de-theocracy (atheistic theory)* which are sustainable factors of humanity. This profound philosophy was the first one introduced into Vietnam and made a very fundamental foundation for the later spiritual intercommunication with other religions and thoughts of the Vietnamese.

The potential internal motive for Buddhist development, expansion and acculturation has depended deeply on its religious-philosophical system which consists of sustainable values of humankind. Buddhist tenet did influence many countries in the East, and further attracts the West in modern and post-modern time.

The reasonable core of Buddhist teaching is in its *philosophical approach on human being*. Buddhism considers human person as its *universal object*, as a *total whole*. Human person in Buddhist religious philosophy totally combines ontology, epistemology and theory of liberation all together in a unity. It is constructed by the intermediate (madhyamika), and introspective method which forms the prominent character of Buddhism in particular, and the Eastern thought in general.

According to this internal approach, Buddhism is obviously different with Western classical philosophies, but it is so close and similar to non-classic and post-modern (Western) philosophies on some new issues such as: 1- human being is the center issue of non-classic philosophy; 2- Humanism is treated as a standard value of non-classic philosophy; 3- Humanity is considered as intermediate approach to resolve challenges of post-modern time.

Vietnamese Buddhism was not so scholastic as Chinese Buddhism, but may be, because both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism were continuously introduced into Vietnam not less three times by different ways and under various conditions, and communicated with other great philosophies (Confucianism, Taoism...), so that it is much more open than Buddhism in other Buddhist countries (Srilanka, Laos and Cambodia....or China, Japan and Korea). This can be considered as an advantage of Vietnamese Buddhism in the global age. However, Vietnamese Buddhism needs to resolve its own problems and to develop its own abilities on behalf of the nation's identity, benefit and independence as it did successfully in history. One of the most difficult challenges to Buddhism is on behalf of a traditional religion and philosophy how Buddhism should contribute its part in building *modern* cultural, religious values but at the same time preserving well its preeminent values in process of integration in global age well. In other words, it is just the problem of Buddhism's opportunities and challenges in modern times.

3- Buddhism's Opportunities and Challenges in the New Age.

Waves of modern civilization in the world gives two directions of opinions about Buddhist opportunities and challenges in the global age, they are quite opposite to each other.

The first group of opinions criticizes Buddhism for its conservativeness, pessimism and sluggishness because it does not encourage people to change and transform the world, or to control the nature, but convince people only accept and bear actual states, which even trampling upon human “worldly sufferings”. This group believes that Buddhism is one of the main reasons make the East left behind in aspect of civilization and science technology in comparing with the West. M. Weber and some others of this group concentrated on analyzing Buddhist countries’ backwardness in economy, politics, education... from Buddhist characters of thinking, belief..., and they come to conclusion that Buddhism is only appropriate to old and backward societies, in other words, to the traditional ones, which cannot contribute for developed and modernized societies.¹ They are problems facing Buddhism in Vietnam – a developing country -- in particular, and Buddhism in general, in process of modernization and under condition of globalization today.

The second group of opinions appreciates Buddhist role and its ability in modern civilized society. These opinions are forced by the personal human crises appeared in Western civilized societies. They believe that the post-industrialized civilization are coming to its impasse where personal person is to face to himself and lose his direction, and in danger of destroying the human nature. In this context, Buddhism is considered to be one of possible spiritual ways to resolve the impasse of internal, psychological, mental and personal person in modern and post-modern society by its internal (introspective) approach which concentrates on human being as center of the atheistic world, where there is not any external, super power for resolution of existence. Thanks to these opinions, Buddhism has been being introduced easily in many Western countries, but mostly among intellectual circles.

Especially, from end of the 19th to the 20th century some of the world top-ranking minds began paying special attention to Buddhism and expressed their words in praise of Buddhist values. For example, H.G. Wells (1866-1946), a distinguished historian, especially evaluated that, “Buddhism has done more for the advance of world civilization than any other influence in the chronicles of mankind.” He further predicted, “It is possible that in contact with Western science, and inspired by the spirit of history, the original teaching of Gotama, revived and purified, may yet play a large part in the direction of human destiny.”² Bertran Russell (1872-1970), one of the great minds of the 20th century, said: “Buddhism is a combination of both speculative and scientific philosophy. It advocates the scientific method and pursues that to a finality that may be called rationalistic... It takes up where science cannot lead because of the limitation of the latter’s instruments. Its conquests are those of the mind.”³ William Macquint, an American writer also said: “With the advance of science and psychology many of the older faiths have suffered. Their belief went against the new knowledge and the new knowledge won. But in this conflict the teaching of Buddha required no adjustments... Over 2,500 years ago the Buddhists had already solved many of the problems that modern psychology is still discovering... Knowledge of Buddhism is being sought with increasing interest in the West, for it offers a personal philosophy to counteract the fragmented condition of Western society where many individuals no longer feel part of, or responsible for, the community in which they live.”⁴

Especially, Albert Einstein (1879-1955), the great scientist of the atomic age, expressed his good intention to Buddhism while augured: “The religion in the future will be a cosmic religion. It should

transcend a personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description". He further said: "If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism."⁵

Good opinions and praise words for Buddhist values from Western scholars and philosophers should be considered as good advices for us to trust more in Buddhist capacity in the new age. Because, may be forced by industrialization and modernization's problems, the Western scholars realized the shortage of their thoughts and philosophies and turn to Oriental ones with the wish to find out more effective remedies for the post-modern society's impasse. This fact also reflects that on the universal theoretical forum about human and society, not any ideal model should become the earthly paradise. Even the model of communist society, the ideal model which is drawn by dialectical materialist philosophy, is being challenged by modern reality. Facing this fact of religious-philosophical systems, Buddhism with its particular theory of personal suffering and personal liberation is still being a necessary sympathy for human being on their way to find a humanist model. Buddhism in this worldly life, firstly is a possible "way" to choose by oneself, not as a promise given by any god for the next life.

On philosophical aspect, it is possible to assert that Buddhism as a model of Oriental thought is recognized by humankind and world philosophers in term of philosophical system. Further we can say that it is impossible to use only system of Western classical philosophy to summarize or to systematize all Oriental thoughts in general, and Buddhist one in particular. In addition, when humankind is facing the personality crisis in the West, there appears the question: Is only the model of Western thought/philosophy correct? In process of developing human knowledge to resolve living problems, modern philosophers of the West did respect Oriental philosophy, including Buddhism. For example, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), the German philosopher, one time said: "If I am to take the results of my philosophy as the standard of truth I should be obliged to concede to Buddhism the pre-eminence over the rest."⁶

More than 2,500 years now, Buddhism had taken its roots in traditional way of thinking of many countries in the world. With its religious values of personal liberation full with humane, altruism, tolerance... Buddhism was introduced and accepted into many countries in the East and also in the West willingly. Especially, not as the same as other religions or system of thoughts, Buddhism has been accepted as a supplementary for the native spirits, never as a revolution to reform traditional thought of the imported country. This is also one of criterions for evaluating and considering a successful process of cultural exchange and integration in the modern time.

Coming to Buddhism and highly praising Buddhist cultural and religious values is not an impermanent phenomenon in the West, but it is a logical development of mutual acceptance, spontaneous integration between East and West, in order to reach a higher, more general, more humane cultural values. Human culture and civilization continuously develop and Buddhist spiritual values will be the common property of humankind. Buddhism itself also would be over passed by Western culture or even by Eastern modern culture on one or some certain aspects. This situation already appeared in Buddhist history of secularization. However the humankind's values contributed by Buddhism will be preserved along with Eastern and human culture as well. Now, to build a society of civilization, modernization and humanity together, we should neither depend on the power of

modern science technique, nor on ideal (religious) believe, but must be on high standard of human values. This is the sustainable foundation for Buddhism to strengthen its interestingness as a system of religious philosophy in which religion and philosophy are integrating together in human being values. This is one of Buddhist powerful potential for its communication and exchange with other system of thoughts of human being in the new age.

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Through the long history Vietnamese Buddhism already contributed its brilliant marks in building and defending the nation. Now Vietnam has just become a member of WTO, and it will be much influenced by the global tendency of modernization, industrialization. This way of development should cause the same consequences for personal life of the modern society in Vietnam as the same as in the West. Therefore, to develop the nation sustainably, at the same time, Vietnam cannot only accept human's progressive achievements of industrialization and modernization, but also tries to preserve and develop its own preeminent characters and human dignity. Vietnamese Buddhist thought on behalf of a traditional system of humanist thoughts will contribute its part as a religion and philosophy in building modern cultural, religious values in process of integration in global age well. /.

NOTE

¹ Reference Nguyen Van Dung, "Max Weber and other Western Minds on the Role of Buddhism in Eastern Societies". *Religious Studies*, No 2, 2000 p. 23-36. (in Vietnamese language)

² Phra Rajavaramuni (Prayudh Payutto). *Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World*, Bangkok, Unity Progress Press, 1985, p. 149.

³ Phra Rajavaramuni . Ibid. p.149.

⁴Reference: Wiliam Macquint. *Buddha*, Viking Press, New York, 1996, p. 123-125.

⁵ Phra Rajavaramuni . Ibid. p.148

⁶ Phra Rajavaramuni. Ibid. p.149.