

Buddhist tolerance as an effective way TO PERCEIVE the Other/Otherness

Hoàng Thị Thơ (*)

Abstract: *Tolerance had been a question of humanity discussed both in the West and the East in ancient time and has been continued in modern time when we need to find a sustainable solution for social or religious differences and even conflicts. On a certain extent, Buddhist tolerance should be considered as a really open way, which has operated successfully and peacefully through Buddhist history of adaptation and adoption in various countries and nations, especially from ethical and religious perspectives. The author hopes that a research on Buddhist tolerance will be a contribution to the answer on perceiving the other/otherness through studying Buddhist history of India and Vietnam. Further, it also can contribute some scientific foundations for the policy maker concerning the role and abilities of religions in general and religious tolerance in particular in process of globalization.*

1. INTRODUCTION

At present, under the influence of modernization, industrialization, and specially economic globalization many problems of the value, belief, custom have raised and challenged the common life of people in many nations, not except in Vietnam. They have been continued as conflicts ideologically and politically and can not be resolved by modern technique and high standard of life. On the contrary, they are just the consequences caused by them and even further deepened by them. So that, in global context, we need a new way to resolve these modern problems and challenges for a sustainable development to grow without dissolution, without destroying our own characteristics and identity, as well as the others'. Maybe, *tolerance* is the most suitable paradigm to come to the *other/otherness*, to perceive each other without preconception for 'coexistence' through the recognition of 'difference' and 'diversity'.

On a certain extent, *Buddhist tolerance* should be considered as a really open way, which has operated successfully and peacefully through Buddhist history of

*. Dr., Institute of Philosophy, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences.

adaptation and adoption in various countries and nations, especially from ethical and religious perspectives. In Vietnam, Buddhism was introduced early and through long history it was accepted as one of the traditional religions and its spirit of tolerance have been being promoted in various aspects of life both in war time and peace time. Now, under the condition of globalization we should uphold the Buddhist spirit of tolerance in resolving modern problems of for the common good of the nation and humankind as well.

2. TOLERANCE AS GENERAL CONCEPT

Tolerance had been a question of humanity discussed both in the West and the East in ancient time and has been continued in our modern time when we need to find a sustainable solution for social or religious differences and even conflicts. *Tolerance* was evaluated as an active, flexible paradigm for modern problems and challenges, then in 1995 UNESCO declared the *United Nations Year for Tolerance* and the *International Day for Tolerance* as well as inauguration of the *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* on November 16 in the same year. In this Declaration *Tolerance* was conceptualized in the modern context as:

"Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, gender, language, national origin, religion or disability, and to combat intolerance", and "...individuals, communities and nations accept and respect the multicultural character of the human family", because "Tolerance promotion and the shaping of attitudes of openness, mutual listening and solidarity... among individuals as well as among ethnic, social, cultural, religious and linguistic groups and nations ... to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means".

In long history of social, religious doctrines and movements all over the world, tolerance has been largely mentioned and discussed not less than three times in different periods and in different parts of the world.

In ancient time, in the East, the earliest well-known example of tolerance was in Buddhism founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the 6th century BC), who did pay attention to tolerance and religious tolerance ⁽¹⁾ in his teaching on human suffering and emancipation. Another example, also in ancient India was Asoka, a Buddhist king. He promoted Buddhist ethic and religious tolerance and issued

¹. Siddhartha Gautama (563 BC to 483 BC), religious name after his enlightenment called Buddha.

many edicts in the Maurya Empire ⁽²⁾, India now. In the West, in similar time, under Cyrus ⁽³⁾ the Great's foundation of the Persian Empire ⁽⁴⁾, tolerance was mentioned as a practical principle, that government had to consider the question of which groups and practices to tolerate and which to persecute. In Europe, the subject of toleration emerged about the 16th and 17th centuries, in response to the Protestant Reformation⁽⁵⁾ and the War of Religion and religious persecutions that followed the breaks with the Catholic Church headed by Martin Luther (1483-1546). Then, John Locke developed a theory of tolerance, which consists of a principle of *Separation of Church and State*, *Letter Concerning Tolerance* ⁽⁶⁾ and *Two Treatises of Government* ⁽⁷⁾; they all together basically preceded for the *British Tolerance Act* ⁽⁸⁾ in 1689.

In the 20th century, tolerance emerged as a worthy virtue, a criterion of human rights all over the world. There are typical examples of tolerance, such as: M. K. Gandhi (also called Mahatma Gandhi 1869-1948) with his birth day (October 2nd) is remembered as the *International Day of Non-Violence* with his famous struggle method without violence, named *Satyagraha*; Martin Luther King (1929-1968) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1964) for his efforts of tolerance to end segregation and racial discrimination through non-violent civil disobediences, etc.

In global context, *tolerance* gradually emerges as the most suitable way to come to the other/otherness, to perceive alterity without preconception for 'coexistence' through the recognition of 'difference' and 'diversity' from each other.

². Emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty constructed his edicts during his reign from 272 to 231 BC.

³. Cyrus the Great (ca. 590 BC or 576 — 529 BC or 530 BC).

⁴. The most widespread entity considered to have been a Persian Empire was the Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC).

⁵. The Protestant Reformation was a reform movement in the Holy Roman Empire that began in 1517, though its roots lay further back in time. The Reformation involved cultural, economic, political and religious aspects. It began with Martin Luther and ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

⁶. *A Letter Concerning Toleration* by John Locke was originally published in 1689.

⁷. The *Two Treatises of Government* (in the Former, *The False Principles and Foundation of Sir Robert Filmer*, and in the Latter is an Essay concerning The True Original, Extent, and End of Civil-Government. It is as a work of political philosophy published anonymously in 1689 by John Locke.

⁸. In *1689 Act of the British Parliament* that granted freedom of worship to Nonconformists, allowing them their own places of worship and their own teachers and preachers. The act applied to dissenters from the Church of England.

However, on a certain extent, *tolerance* is commonly considered as the outcome of Western culture and religion ⁽⁹⁾ which developed and conceptualized by Western religionists and philosophers, and largely used in social, cultural and religious contexts, basically reflect the common aspiration of human rights in the context of globalization. Now, to have more thoroughly understanding of tolerance we should combine both knowledge of the Eastern and Western, especially the great spiritual value of the ancient religion (philosophy) with the modern one. In this case Buddhist *tolerance* is an extraordinary one.

Buddhist tolerance, from aspect of religious philosophy, should be considered as the typical active factor which provided internal potential power to support Buddhism as an orthodox religion in India for nearly ten centuries, while it was a country of multiple religions and ethnics, then Buddhism has expanded largely and peacefully over regions out of India since Asoka's time (the 3rd century BC) until nowadays.

3. BUDDHIST TOLERANCE in aspects of philosophy, religion, ethics and history

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) ⁽¹⁰⁾ one time appreciated "The Path that the Buddha showed is, I believe, the only Path humanity must tread if it is to escape disaster." and "His message, old and yet very new and original for those immersed in metaphysical subtleties, captured the imagination of the intellectuals. It went deep down into the hearts of the people... The production of the Buddha is the highest honour so far gained in the history of the world." One of the precious values of India we also want to appreciate here is the notion of tolerance, which was illustrated by Buddha (563-483 BC) and his excellent disciple, King Asoka (304-232 BC) in Indian history.

According to *Jataka*, ⁽¹¹⁾ in Buddha's times Brahmanism was a cruel orthodox, authoritative religion in India. By observing how hardly people practiced this

⁹. "Religion" is also a Western term. In fact, in Oriental system of thought there was not any definite term as "religion", but religion, ethics, philosophy, including history and literature are integrated in each system of thought or doctrine (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism). This is the reason why sometimes Buddhism and Confucianism are argued by (Western) scholars that whether they belong to religion or philosophy or ethics... or non-religion or integration of all of them. In this research I use "religion" as a borrowed term, but in concerning Buddhism as a typical Oriental system of thought.

¹⁰. The First Prime Minister of India

¹¹. Collection Stories of Buddha's life.

religion that were controlled by the Brahmins, Buddha came to realize that the gate to heaven or eternal salvation of Brahmanism was open only to particular followers and the passport was available from priests of one particular caste, who conducted most of the religious rites and rituals, and religious services. That means only Brahmins controlled religious activities, and the low castes and people (for instance: *Sudra* and female) ⁽¹²⁾ in India that time had no opportunity to enjoy any religious service. From viewpoint of tolerance, Buddha did not agree with the religious inequality, injustice and theocracy of Brahmanism and founded another religious way in which all human being are equal.

For Buddha, a person cannot be condemned or honored according to the caste that he belongs. Man becomes noble or ignoble according to his way of life, but not according to his birth. Because people are all common and *without distinction* in many natural aspects of life, such as common in birth, in sickness, in worries, miseries, in calamities and misunderstandings, as in jealousy, hatred and greed, also common in old age, in unsatisfactoriness of life, and finally, common in death, no exception for the Brahmins. Looking for a tolerant religion, different from intolerant Brahmanism, Buddha explored to the deepest root of human ill, which are in the human mind. It is the ignorance of the *no-self*. It is just the cause of all human being's suffering. On the other side, he assumed that the Brahmins were the learned people and the teachers; they also introduced various spiritual practices of good conduct and belief, and even philosophical vision in the name of religion. He selectively inherited the quintessence values of ethics, philosophy from Brahmanism, in order to establish an equal, *de-theocratic* and tolerant religion. This attitude towards values of Brahmanism is very consistent with Buddhist perspective of religious tolerance.

In fact, Buddha made a religious revolution, which was later developed as a socio-religious policy to unite the Indian nation under Asoka's reign (the 3rd century BC). In this paper I consider Buddha's religious revolution as the first example of tolerance in general, and religious tolerance particular in Indian, as well as in Asia and in the world.

It is very interesting to find the Pali terms as "Karuna", "Dana" and "Metta"⁽¹³⁾ with meanings of tolerance in the stock canonical phrase of Buddha's

¹². Before the Buddha, in India women were not allowed to practice religion freely.

¹³. "Karuna", "Dana" and "Metta" meanings are:

primitive scriptures (Dhamma), such as: *Kāḷāma Sutta*, *Dighajanu Sutta*, *Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta*, *Vatthūpama Sutta*, and especially, *Brahma-jala Sutta* in *Digha Nikaya* ⁽¹⁴⁾, probably they are the oldest statements of the Buddhist scriptures, and some of them now extant.

In *Kāḷāma Sutta*, Buddha said: "He keeps pervading the first direction - as well as the second direction, the third, and the fourth with an awareness imbued with compassion. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, and all around, everywhere and in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with compassion: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will" ⁽¹⁵⁾. In this canonical phrase, "Karunā" means compassion, free from hostility, free from ill will. It is an important term in all schools of Buddhism, which is considered as moral norm of every Buddhist on the way to emancipation. For Theravada Buddhist, dwelling in *Karunā* is a means for attaining a happy present life and heavenly rebirth as an Arahant. For Mahayana Buddhists, *Karunā* is a co-requisite for becoming a Bodhisattva. Here, "Karunā" is not a blind and narrow tolerance, but clear and open tolerance "with an awareness imbued with compassion", and "all-encompassing cosmos". "Four directions", in this phrase means four directions of relationship in Buddhist Sangha in society, as well as in family.

In *Dighajanu Sutta*, the term "Dana" concerning the content of tolerance also refers to the practice of cultivating generosity, as the practice culminates in one of the perfections (Paramitas): "the Perfection of Giving (Dana-Paramita). This can be characterized by unattached and unconditional generosity, giving" ⁽¹⁶⁾. It is the exquisite paradox in Buddhist tolerance, the more we give - and the more we give without seeking something in return - the

- "Karuna" [*Karunā*] means altruism, benevolence, compassion, kindness, sympathy, pity, the aspiration to find a way to be truly helpful to oneself and others.

- "Dana" [*daṇa*] is the first perfection in Buddhist system of ten perfections (*Paramis*) of a Bodhisattva. *Dana* means generosity, liberality, offering, alms, giving without expecting any form of repayment from the recipient.

- Metta" [*Sanskrit: Maitrī*] means loving-kindness, goodwill, benevolence, love, sympathy, kindness, benign/benignant, amity, friendship, friendliness, and active interest in others.

¹⁴. The *Digha Nikaya* or "Collection of Long Discourses" is the first division of the *Sutta Pitaka*, and consists of thirty-four suttas

¹⁵. *Kāḷāma Sutta* (AN 3.65), trans. Thanissaro (1994).

¹⁶. In the Pali canon's *Dighajanu Sutta*, generosity (denoted there by the Pali word "*cāga*" which can be synonymous with "*dāna*") is identified as one of the four traits conditioning happiness and wealth in the next life.

wealthier (in the broadest sense of the word) we will become. It is interesting to compare the board meanings of “unattached and unconditional give” or “Dana” in primitive Buddhist scripture with “tolerance” as western term.

The term “Metta”, in *Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta*, explained by Buddha that intentional purity (*Metta*) is threefold of tolerance: *loving-kindness, free from enmity, free from ill will*:

“He abides, having suffused with a mind of loving-kindness one direction of the world, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth, and so above, below, around and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides suffusing the entire universe with loving-kindness, with a mind grown great, lofty, boundless and free from enmity and ill will” ⁽¹⁷⁾

And in *Vatthūpama Sutta*, psychological aspect of tolerance is defined in the following manners, and considered as the root of good *karma*:

“The absence of hate, hating, hatred; love, loving, loving disposition; tender care, forbearance, considerateness; seeking the general good, compassion; the absence of malice, of malignity; that absence of hate which is the root of good (karma)” ⁽¹⁸⁾

There is a typical phrase in *Brahma-Jala Sutta* in *Digha Nikaya*, which is very popular among the orthodox Buddhists, focused on religious tolerance, as follow:

“Should those who are not with us! O Bhikkhus, speak in dispraise of me, or of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you are not on that account to give away to anger, heartburning or discontent. Should those who are not with us, O Bhikkhus, speak in dispraise of me, or of the Dhamma, or of the Sangha, you were on that account to be either enraged or displeased, it is you (not they) upon who the danger would fall; for would you then be able to discriminate whether what they had spoken was right or wrong?” ⁽¹⁹⁾

According to this part of Buddha’s teaching, his perspective on real religious tolerance is not only mere tolerance of other religious beliefs but also the

¹⁷. This particular English text is from the Nyanaponika (1988) translation of the *Vatthūpama Sutta* (“Simile of the Cloth,” MN 7), v. 12.

¹⁸. T.W. Rhys Davids (2002). *A History of Indian Buddhism*. Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, India, pp. 275-276.

¹⁹. T.W. Rhys Davids (2002). *Ibid* p. 229.

tolerance that we have to bear when others try to irritate us by condemning our religion.

These terms *Karuna*, *Dana*, *Metta* were coined and recorded in Buddhist scriptures and popularized in Buddha time with similar conceptual content of "tolerance" as the definition in the *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* (1995). These Buddhist term certainly folds up in its religious philosophy and ethics, through its tenet and history. In other words, they were constructed on a profound system of Buddhist religious philosophy of "emptiness" (*Sunyata*)⁽²⁰⁾, also named the doctrine of "impermanent" (*Anicca*)⁽²¹⁾ or "no-self" (*Anata*)⁽²²⁾.

The whole system of Buddhist tenet consists in the ontological principle of *emptiness* (*Sunyata*), which illuminates all other aspects of Buddhism, as religious and ethics teaching²³. Buddhist notion of tolerance is deeply concerned in the doctrine of "emptiness" ("impermanent" or "no-self"). It is explained that every conditioned existence is without any real substance and any attribute of themselves. Originally, every thing is generated by interdependent causalities. Thus, the original nature of conditioned existence is "impermanent"²⁴. According to this, all compounded and constructed things and states are impermanent. And, for human life, the self embodies this flux in the aging process, the cycle of birth and rebirth (*Samsara*), and in any experience of loss. Every thing is impermanent, then attachment to them is futile, and that leads to suffering (*Dukkha*). Ultimately, the "self" in meaning as the mundane body and mind of

²⁰. In Buddhist philosophy "Emptiness" or "Voidness", is a characteristic of empirical phenomena arising from the fact that the impermanent nature of form means that nothing possesses essential, enduring identity.

²¹. "*Anicca*" expresses the Buddhist doctrine of impermanence, that every conditioned existence, without exception, is inconstant and in flux, even gods. Accordingly, human life embodies this flux in the aging process, the cycle of birth and rebirth (*samsara*), and in any experience of loss. The doctrine further asserts that because things are impermanent, attachment to them is futile, and that leads to suffering (*dukkha*). Under the light of impermanence doctrine, all compounded and constructed things and states are impermanent. Impermanence is intimately associated with the doctrine of *anatta*, according to which things have no fixed nature, essence, or self.

²². In Buddhist philosophy "no-self" or "absence of separate self" [*P@li: anatta, Sanskrit: an@tman*]

²³. There are differences between Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism in teachings, religious rituals and religious life in each Sangha (Buddhist community). The most fundamental distinction between Theravada and Mahayana is the model of emancipation, which is for oneself as Arhant's way or for every living being as Bodhisattva's way. However, original basic of Buddhist tenet on *The Four Noble Truths* and *The Eightfold Path* are preserved and shared together by every branch and sect of Buddhism either Theravada or Mahayana. In fact, this research depends much on the expression of Mahayana Sutra-Pitaka, so that its words and expressions will be influenced by Mahayana's language, it is the limitation of this research.

²⁴. Impermanent in Sanskrit: *anitya*, P@li: *anicca*.

each being is also compounded and constructed of the five *Skandhas* (impermanent constituent elements);⁽²⁵⁾ indeed it is *not the self*. The *true self* or in other word the eternal *Buddhist nature* deeply within each being *is just the no-self* ⁽²⁶⁾. The realization of *no-self* is only fully gained on reaching the awakening (*Bodhi*) through training *introspective self-cultivation*, also named Buddhist meditation. For ultimate judgment, on aspect of Buddhist ontology all living beings are the same, no distinction, and equally by every one's nature. Thus, *emptiness* or *no-self* is just the fundamental philosophical foundation for Buddhism to be basically not as an exclusive religion, but as an open one with profound tolerance, especially in comparing with other theistic religions.

In Buddhist epistemology, "wisdom" (*Prajñā*) is also understood as the *emptiness of consciousness*, and in Western term it is named *intuition*. It is the state of spiritual achievement in total freedom due to the enlightenment of emptiness, attaching neither to being nor to none being, neither to dualism nor to non dualism, even not to any form of spiritual achievement, and no matter how high and deep it is. For Buddhism, there is a distinction between consciousness and wisdom. The aim of Buddhist epistemology is to perceive the ultimate reality - the *emptiness*. It is not the same as truth in common meaning which can be gotten and explained by word or term. However, right at this point Buddhism does not deny human ability of perceiving the ultimate truth of reality, but Buddhism proposed a construction of two levels of truth: *ultimate truth* and *relative one*. According to the doctrine of *emptiness*, word and term are not the target of process of cognition because they are the external reflection of impermanent appearance, not the *empty* (no-self) reality behind them. The ultimate truth only can be enlightened by intuition or wisdom (*Prajñā*), without word or notion. It is the only way to realize the emptiness, the non-substantial character of the ultimate reality. In Buddhist epistemology, wisdom (*Prajñā*) means the emptiness of consciousness, without word and concept. Accordingly, emptiness of consciousness also leads to aware that all word, concept are nothing than but artificially constructed, without any fixed correspondence to the ultimate reality. That's why, Buddha often warned his

²⁵. "Skandhas" means five aggregates (1. form or matter, external and internal matter as the physical world, including the material body and the physical sense organs; 2. sensation or feeling; 3. perception, conception, apperception, cognition, or discrimination; 4. mental formations, volition, or compositional factors, including all types of mental habits, thoughts, ideas, opinions, compulsions, and decisions triggered by an object; 5. consciousness).

²⁶. Sanskrit: anātman; Pāli: anatta.

disciples that his teachings and his words were not the ultimate truth; they were the same as some leaves in his hands, and can not compare with leaves in the jungle. Therefore, his scriptures and teachings are not of exclusive religion, and they are only as those hints or means to help people to awake the ultimate truth. It is really an open system of thought when the religious founder did suggest his followers to consider his words and teachings not as the ultimate truth, but only as means or a torch on the way to ultimate truth. This example should explain why Buddhism was accepted peacefully by many other nations, cultures, religions, and by some meanings, Buddhism has offered them an open epistemology.

As a religion based on the philosophy of *emptiness* Buddhism did not depend on the concepts of God, soul and prayer and cult of animal sacrifice. For Buddhism, in this world, naturally every one is equal in suffering and salvation. Suffering and salvation are neither special for any one, any caste. Buddhism affirms that every one is equal in ability of attaining enlightenment and equal on the way to liberation; especially, this way 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. From the foundation of tolerance, Buddhism is an open way, without any religious distinction, as an *open vehicle of tolerance*. This thought of suffering and liberation expresses typically Buddhist tolerance, which is so ever profound.

In ancient Indian religions, the way for emancipation is closely combined with the ethic way. In common, there were two extremes of religious ethical ways: hedonism and mortification, which were non-stop argued by the ancient Indians. Buddha paved the *Middle Way* (*Madhyamika*) as an approach to prove that the true nature of human is *no-self* (*Anatman*), but because of the leading of ignorance and craving, sentient being misunderstands that there is a real *self* (*Atman*) and they try to possess it, by both ways of hedonism or mortification, so that, for Buddha *Middle Way* is either accepting or not accepting those two extremes, but above both.

Buddhist religious ethical way is clearly formulated in the *Four Noble Truths* ⁽²⁷⁾. *The Truth of Cause of Suffering* (the first truth) analyzes that good

²⁷. Four Noble Truths: (i) The Truth of Suffering: realization of the unsatisfactoriness of this life; (ii) The Truth of Cause of Suffering: the knowledge that there is a cause for this unsatisfactoriness; (iii) The Truth of Cessation of Suffering: the understanding that there is an end to this unsatisfactoriness;

or evil, and right or wrong are neither originally decided by birth nor created or determined by any god, but deeply rooted just in the realization of *self* or *no-self*. Because of ignorance (Avidya) sentient being attaches one's mind to the self, then arising his craving (Kama) and forming his deeds through body action, speech and thought, which would be stored and accumulated as *Karma* that consists of good, evil, right and wrong... So that, the more people misunderstand of the self, the more *Karma* is accumulated and the longer people is floating in the circle of birth and death with suffering. On the way to emancipation, firstly, sentient being has to avoid the ignorance of the *no-self* by *regular introspection* (Dhyana). So that one should avoid the attachment of the self; latter, he need to consciously practice the *self-discipline of concentration* to control his deed (body, speech and thought). By this ethical way every one should change themselves from wrong (even from evil) to right and good; finally, by regular *meditation* (Zen) one should automatically avoid *Karma* and reach the ultimate enlightenment and turn himself to be his own nature of *no-self*. It is the ultimate emancipation where there is no more good or bad, right or wrong, good or evil from the view of *self*... And the perfection of man's natural character is *human's no-self character*. It is really an open ethical character to have sympathy for the other/otherness.

In Buddhist teaching, every one is equal with all others, both from aspect of nature and ethics, and the final judgment of man's deeds is *the law of causes* (Karma) which acts secretly through lives not by any god's decision. Happiness or unhappiness is the fruit caused by oneself good or bad conduct done in the past. The judgment as the *law of causes* admonishes people to be serious with every action (body, speech, thought) of oneself. Buddhist ideal models are Buddha, Arahant and Bodhisattva who already enlighten the essence of the no-self and not be led by any craving or passion... They are omniscient and free from mundane attachment that means the perfect emancipation from the circle of lives, *Nirvana*. Actually, Buddha had more confidence in truth and good than in God (as religious concept). Tolerance in the Buddha's teaching is deeply rooted in the philosophy on nature of human (sentient) being. It is saturated with the spirit of tolerance in its tenet. In conclusion, Buddhist doctrine of *Emptiness* is the foundation for building up a large attitude of tolerance.

and (iv) The Truth of the Way that Leads to the Cessation of Suffering: the practical method to follow in order to end this unsatisfactoriness.

Accordingly, Buddhist notion of tolerance is considered as a system of thought (including ontology, epistemology, and ethics) which has profound content in comparison with Western notion of tolerance as well.

Another outstanding example of tolerance in Indian history was king Asoka, the Buddha's most excellent disciple, the third monarch of the Indian Mauryan dynasty. In the Asian's and Buddhists' mind in general, and in the Indian's one, too, Asoka was the most particular example of Buddhist tolerance, who comprehended deeply the essential notion of tolerance in the Buddha's teaching and applied it personally as his moral practice then renovated himself from a Brahmin into a Buddhist, from a cruel and ruthless king into a wise and tolerant one. He realized Buddhist idea of tolerance as an ideal of religious harmony successfully under his foundation of the Maurya Empire (India now). From the view of tolerance, Asoka's life can be divided into two periods: *intolerance* and *tolerance*. Through Asoka's conversion, the value of tolerance of Buddha's teaching vividly shows its worthy and vigorous truth.

Early in his life, Asoka was told of an exceptionally cruel and ruthless prince, who waded to the throne a sea of blood, securing his position by the massacre of his ninety-nine brothers and he had been described as "the cruel Asoka" (in Indian name is *Chandashoka*). Even in 262 BC, after eight years of his coronation, Asoka's armies attacked and conquered Kalinga, a country (now Orissa state in India). But, finally he realize that the more power and territories he won by wars as an intolerant king, the more loss of life caused by battle, reprisals, deportations and the turmoil that increased as unavoidable consequences of a predatory foreign policy. It seems that Asoka called himself a Buddhist for at least two years prior to the Kalinga war, but his conversion to Buddhism was only when he really awaked to the Buddhist notion of tolerance through his subjects' losses and sufferings in this intolerant war. In his edicts he himself apologized for the Kalinga war and reassured that he replaced it with a policy of peaceful co-existence. Finally, Buddhism brought Asoka a complete change in his personality ⁽²⁸⁾ and in his edicts he claimed himself *Devanampriya Priyadarśin* (in Sanskrit means *Without Sorrow*). After the Kalinga war Asoka dedicated the rest of his life trying to apply Buddhist principles of tolerance to the administration of his vast empire. Buddhism came

²⁸. Vincent A. Smith (1990). C.I.E. Asoka the Buddhist Emperor of India. Lowprice Publication, Delhi, India. p.19-74.

to be the most influential spirit in Asoka's life as a Buddhist king, and he also hoped his subjects likewise would adopt this tolerant religion. Every where he and Buddhist missionaries came, numerous edicts were inscribed on rocks and pillars which imbued with the Buddhist values of compassion, tolerance and respect for all life.

According to the twelfth edict, Asoka's perspective on religious tolerance was so clear. When he was an enthusiastic Buddhist, he was not partisan towards his own religion or intolerant of other religions. He protected all contemporary religions, promoted them and fostered the harmony between them. He considered these actions as one of the duties of the state:

"King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, honours all sects, both recluses and laymen: he honours them with gifts and with very kind of honour. But the beloved of the gods attaches not so much weight to alms and honours as to the desire that the good name and the moral virtues which are the essential part of the teaching of all sects may increase...that every sect should be well instructed, and should possess a religion that is lovely... And this is the fruit thereof; namely, the prosperity of his own sect and the exaltation of religion generally."⁽²⁹⁾

In Asoka's the seventh edict, he paved excellent and large way for all religions, but emphasized the fundamental function of all of them, that would be common good way for human life, as follows:

"King Piyadasi, beloved of the gods, desires that all the sects would dwell at liberty in all places. They all indeed seek equally after the subjugation of one's self and purity of heart: though the people are fickle in their aims and fickle in their attachments. They may pursue, either in part or in whole, the aim they set before them. And let every one, whether he receive abundant alms or not, have self-control, purity of heart, thankfulness, and firmness of love. That is always excellent."⁽³⁰⁾

In addition, Asoka had a crucial part in practicing Buddhist tolerance, that helped Buddhism to spread easily throughout India and over abroad as a big

²⁹. T.W. Rhys Davids (2002). A History of Indian Buddhism, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, India, p.230-231; or another version in English in Vincent A. Smith (1990). C.I.E. Asoka the Buddhist Emperor of India. Lowprice Publication, Delhi, India, p. 182-183.

³⁰. T.W. Rhys Davids (2002). A History of Indian Buddhism, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, India, p.230.

religion. He probably built the first major Buddhist monuments, not only as symbol of religion but also as symbol of religious tolerance. Asoka died in 232 BC in the thirty-eighth year of his reign, but he still obvious in Asian's and all Buddhist's mind and heart as a wise and tolerant Buddhist king. What he did applied Buddhist tolerance is the very vivid example for modern in facing the challenge of religious and cultural discrimination and conflicts.

Buddhist tolerance generally was constructed on a profound system of Buddhist ontology, epistemology and ethics. It is a system of *de-theocratic* religion, in which tolerance is deeply originated in equality of existence as human/sentient being, without any distinction in the origin of emptiness. And in Indian history, Buddhist tolerance, at least one time, under Asoka's reign practiced its role and function successfully as ideology and politics in process of his managing a multi-religious country in peace, harmony and prosperity, and even promoted its value in introducing Buddhism in many neighbor countries as a great influential religion in Asia at that time. Now, under the condition of globalization Buddhist tolerance should be evaluated as one of the most sustainable basics for a new paradigm in perceiving the other/otherness from ethical and religious perspectives, especially.

In Vietnam, the open character of the Vietnamese easily meet Buddhist spirit of tolerance and then produce a distinguished character of Buddhist patriotism in war time and peace time, that influences the major tendency of humanity of Vietnam, and various aspects of their life.

Buddhist Tolerance, an effective way to perceive the other/otherness in Vietnam

Vietnam is a small country (331,690 square kilometers), estimate 87,375,000 population with about more than 74 million of Buddhists, about more than 85% of total population⁽³¹⁾. Vietnam is located in South East Asia, with the South China Sea on the east, Laos and Cambodia on the west, Thailand on the south west borders, and China on the north. Vietnam was named "*Indochinese/Indochina Peninsula*" ⁽³²⁾ that means a bridge in Southeast Asia between India and China, the two most ancient civilizations of Asia, and probably, the most of the world as well. Buddhism was the first foreign religion

³¹. Wikipedia: Vietnamese Buddhists is the eighth country in the list of 10 top Buddhist countries in the world, with 85% of population, in concrete number is 74, 268,750.

³². French historians in the beginning of the 19th century (French colonial period in Vietnam) often used these names mentioning Vietnam in their maps. The term Sino-Indian is also used to describe relation between India and China.

introduced from India directly by sea route into Vietnam⁽³³⁾ early before Christian Era. This beginning had influenced much on open character of the Vietnamese. Later on, other foreign religions were also introduced into Vietnam (Confucianism, Taoism) and they continuously integrated with the former ones. On the other side, Buddhism was also more than three times reintroduced into Vietnam by different ways, of different sects, and under different conditions. Vietnamese Buddhism is considered more open, flexible in compare with Buddhism in other Buddhist countries. And now, Vietnam is the only one country where together exist harmoniously both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism with many sects⁽³⁴⁾. One important feature of the religious attitude of the Vietnamese is their tolerance. There has never been religious fanaticism or religious warfare in Vietnam⁽³⁵⁾. The religious belief of the common Vietnamese is a synthesis of the three traditional religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) which have been coexisting peacefully for centuries in Vietnam.

First time, through sea route, Buddhism introduced directly from India into Vietnam at Tonkin. At that time Vietnamese native belief was as simple as totem religion, and Buddhism imported easily and was accepted as a system of primitive knowledge about human being, human society, human religion and human ethics. In this time Buddhism was accepted among common people, not in particular learned classes as in later periods. According to some famous legends and fairy tales, such as *Chu Dong Tu and Tien Dung* and *Story of Mosquito*, or *Story of Tam and Cam*, etc., "*Bôt*" is the name "*Buddha*" changed into native language. In these narratives *Bôt* was symbol of a benevolent, tolerant deity who always appears in urgent case to help and support all the good, the poor and the weak, and through narratives to teach the people good way of life as tolerant behavior between man and man, and between man and

³³. In the Mahavamsa the name "Golden Land" (Suvannabhumi) was a famous region in South East Asia where Sona and Uttara were dispatched as one of the nine missionary groups abroad by king Asoka. It seems Vietnam also including in the region, because in ancient time Tonkin harbor in North of Vietnam was a convenient place for traders and religious missionaries on their voyage to Southern China Sea.

³⁴. Nguyen Tai Thu (chief editor). *A History of Buddhism in Vietnam* (2008). © 2008 by The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, D.C. ISBN1-56518-098-4 (pbk.), p. 9-15.

³⁵. One time the persecution of Catholics under the reign of Tu-Duc (end of 19th century) was carried out by a government that suspected the missionaries and Christian converts as spies for foreign powers.

nature. In this first-time, Buddhism imported from India, "*Bôt-Buddhism*"⁽³⁶⁾ had influenced on the orientation for development of Buddhism in later periods as well as accepting other foreign religions and thoughts into Vietnam.

Vietnam is a country of water-rice producing, so that when introduced into Vietnam Buddhism certainly sympathized with the life of local people. From aspect of belief, Buddhist symbols as super power quickly mingled with Vietnam local belief of Gods of rain, cloud, thunder, and thunderbolt..., whose powers were very important for the farmer's water-rice harvest. In Red River valley, there still are many pagodas worshipping "Tø Ph, p Khÿ" (Four vessel of the Buddhist Dharma (law)): "Phap Van" (Buddhist power fertilizing cloud of Dharma); - "Phap Vu" (The rain of Buddha-truth which fertilizes all beings); - "Phap Loi" (The thunder of Dharma, awakening man from stupor and stimulating the growth of virtue, the awful voice of Buddha-truth) and; - "Phap Dien" (The lightning of the Dharma)⁽³⁷⁾. For example, in Dau Pagoda these four symbols are together worshiped because they always share with the farmer's happiness and sorrow of their crops and support them in their rural life. They are also understood as a tool or a means to practice Buddhism in the people's every day life. Particularly, these statues always appear in female form, because for the Vietnamese, mother was the typical symbol of mercy and tolerance for all human being.

Second time, by land route, in other word *silk route* Buddhism with various sub-sect of Mahayana Buddhism⁽³⁸⁾ indirectly imported into Vietnam via China. This second Buddhist importation happened during Sino-domination period (from 111 BC to 939 AD). In this time, "PhËt" in Vietnamese was also Buddha's name but translated through Chinese language. That is why there are two words: "Bôt" and "PhËt" together denoting the same Buddha in Vietnamese. They are different results of different historical periods of Buddhist importation into Vietnam. From the view of social stratification "*Bôt-Buddhism*" means popular Buddhism of common people and "*PhËt-Buddhism*" means learned Buddhism of royal and high educated classes. In fact, before imported into Vietnam, Indian Buddhism had inter-communicated with Chinese Confucianism

³⁶. I use the term "*Bôt-Buddhism*" to distinguish between the first imported Buddhism from India and the "*PhËt-Buddhism*" imported from China in later period.

³⁷. In Vietnamese is Linh Nam Trich Quai.

³⁸. Most of them are sub-sect of Mahayana Buddhism, such as: Chan (禪) sect, Vinitaruci sect, Wu Yantong (无 言 通) sect, Pure Land sect.

and Taoism, which were founded approximately 6th-5th centuries BC, thus, a higher standard of religion and philosophy of Buddhist teaching was accepted and explained by the Chinese Taoists and Confucian scholars.

In this second time, Buddhism was introduced by Chinese ruling mandarins who were dominating the Vietnamese. Hence, it was possible to say that *PhĒt* was Buddhism of the learned and ruling class. From this time on, there had been being both popular Buddhism and learned Buddhism in Vietnam, they mutual influenced each other and together formed special characters of Vietnamese Buddhism.

Due to the sympathy with *Bôt-Buddhism* from India in the first time, while protesting against Chinese invader and their strategy of Sino-assimilation, but the Vietnamese did not boycott *PhĒt-Buddhism* from China. In contrary, the term "*PhĒt*" together with Chinese Mahayana theory of Bodhisattva liberation were received by intellectual circles more systematically in order to complement the ontology, epistemology... of Vietnam. So that, learned *PhĒt-Buddhism* had contributed its particular part in enriching *Bôt-Buddhism*. More than that, in a certain context, both *Bôt* and *PhĒt* together rooted in the whole society either in minority or royal court, countryside or city, among poor people and royal family, and they became a spiritual power of the whole nation in defending and building the country in war time as well as in peace time. Their contributions for the nation were highlighted by practice of tolerance. For instance, the victories over Sino domination and Yan invaders (1228) were considered firstly as achievements of Vietnamese Buddhism. After the victory, with Buddhist perspective of tolerance the king released all Chinese prisoners of war. To remember the victory, a state pagoda was constructed in ancient capital and named "Khai Quoc" means Foundation of the Nation (now "Tran Quoc" means Defending Nation Pagoda) which were done by king Ly Thai To, that implied the declaration of national independence through or by contribution of the Vietnamese Buddhism.

Under independent condition, right after the Sino-domination, many pagodas were erected in the city and countryside and Buddhism took the position as a national religion while it together coexisted and developed with Confucianism and Taoism as three main parts of thought and culture of Vietnam. Buddhism was supported by state, Buddhist monks were respected in society. During Ly and Tran dynasties, Buddhism got its height of respect. May

Buddhist masters were utilized by the kings as advisers, royal teachers... They were profound minds of not only Buddhism but also Confucianism and Taoism, and they actively applied this knowledge to help the court in politics, foreign affair, and even in military as well. But, they never pursued the throne. The cooperation between Buddhists and royal court never threat the security of the throne. All of Buddhists never live in royal place; they return back their pagodas after helping the king and the court. This became the traditional relation between them and they were respected by each other. Even some famous kings ceded his throne to his young generation and lived a monastic life as monks in remote pagoda to study Buddhist scriptures and preach Buddhist teachings in countryside, for instance: Ly Phat Ma (1000-1054), Ly Nhan Tong (1066-1128), Tran Thai Tong (1218-1277), and Tran Nhan Tong (1258-1308). Among them, Tran Nhan Tong was the founder of Yen Tu Buddhist sect in the North of Vietnam. In addition, the Buddhist notion of tolerance was vividly realized in aspects of life. These Buddhist kings have created great Buddhist precedent for their successors and their subjects to follow. A favor was especially given to Buddhism by them expressing their perspective of Buddhist tolerance while an emperor supported Buddhism and his retired father, the former supreme emperor traveled as an ordained monk in countryside to promote Buddhism. It specially led to the maintenance of a strong Buddhist presence in the whole country.

When on the throne, the Ly and the Tran Kings did issue tolerant policies to encourage common people to live in peace, justice and harmony. For instance, in 1052, King Ly Thai Tong ordered that a bell had been manufactured and placed in the courtyard of Thien An Palace for the common people to ring to claim their innocence ⁽³⁹⁾. Another famous example of him, during the severe winter of 1055, he told his court officials:

"Living in the palaces heated up with coal stoves and wearing plenty of warm clothing, I still feel this cold. I am quite concerned about the detainees in jails who are miserably locked up in stocks and manacles, without enough food to eat and without clothes to warm their bodies, or some even undeservedly dying while their guilt or innocence has not been determined. I feel a deep compassion for them..." ⁽⁴⁰⁾

³⁹. Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu (The Official History of Vietnam), I:226.

⁴⁰. Dai Viet Su Ky Toan Thu. Ibid, pp. 229-230.

Thereupon, he ordered blankets and mats to be distributed to the prisoners and two meals a day to be provided them. There were many gems in the history of Buddhist tolerance in Vietnam.

Third time, Theravada Buddhism entered Southern Vietnam during the IVth century AD ⁽⁴¹⁾ and introduced into Khmer ethnic group in the Mekong Delta, so that it is called *Khmer-Theravada Buddhism*. It is extant in the South of Vietnam, and its contribution makes the picture of Buddhism in Vietnam not as the same as any other Buddhist countries in Asia, both Theravada and Mahayana co-existing for long history.

In 1945, after the French colonial period, Vietnam was divided into two parts, South and North Vietnam. In the South, again, under war condition, Buddhist theory of tolerance in struggle as non-violence (*Ahimsha*) method was applied by common people's patriotic actions. It was applied actively, flexibly through patriotic spirit in the war time without rigidity. For them nation's suffering is as the same as suffering of Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha. Thus, in facing the nation's suffering under foreign invaders (USA imperialist) Vietnamese Buddhism, from view of patriotism, explained Buddhist *Ahimsha* (Tolerance) in a flexible way for the common good of the nation and the Sangha, that "*instead of keeping oneself clean as obeying the precept of non-killing, it is more tolerance to kill dangerous invader to save the nation, their family and save human being*" ⁽⁴²⁾, they took off their Buddhist robe to join the army to contribute their part in the national resistance against violence and evil power to liberate the country as well as the Buddhist Sangha. Even, in emergency of the nation's existence, Vietnamese Buddhists had "*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 11st of June 1963), Thich Nguyen Huong (4th of August 1963), Thich Thanh Tue (13rd of August 1963), Thich Dieu Quang (15th of August 1963), and Thich Tieu Dieu (16th of 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

⁴¹. Religion and Policies Regarding Religion in Vietnam (2006). Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Government Committee for Religious Affairs; Andrew Skilton (1994). A Concise History of Buddhism.

⁴². in Vietnamese: "N·i s, t sinh đl ®é chống sinh".

liberation. Vietnam victories over French and American imperialists also recorded Buddhist material and spiritual contributions and we never forget the non-violence way of the Buddhists in the Southern Vietnam in their struggle for the nation and Buddhist Sangha, against the atrocities of foreign domination. However, after the war, the Vietnamese always treat well, friendly with the American and the French, and never keep the hate in their mind. It should be considered as great examples of Buddhist tolerance of Vietnam in war time.

In the North of Vietnam, during subsidized period (until 1986), Buddhism did not developed much because it was officially considered as appearance or form of idealism, because it was simply contrary to materialism of Marxism. Buddhism nearly did not develop in this time, but as a main traditional religion, it continuously, potentially functioned its part in defending the country and never turned its back against the common good of the nation. Many Buddhist pagodas were used as school or kindergarten and hospital or paddy storehouse, etc., and Buddhist monk and nun also helped their non-Buddhist people by doing free, simple services of wedding ceremonial or death ceremony... So that, even in this period Buddhism was also close as spiritual support to the commune's life.

In general speaking, through the long history, Buddhism has firmly rooted in all aspects of culture and spirit of the Vietnamese. Buddhist monk and lay Buddhist together actively or silently practiced tolerance in their daily life. For them, pagoda is considered as an open and complex functional space not only for Buddhist cults but also for traditional ceremonies and folk festivals. Pagoda is often called "Zen gate" meaning an open place where every one can come to introspect oneself, to cultivate one's mind and moral both in free time and in emergency. Pagoda is the place to welcome every one, without exception of ethnic group, caste, religion or politics, all who are in suffering, or in stress, or even in their free time. Every village has at least a pagoda as spiritual place for the whole commune. In a pagoda in the North of Vietnam, system of Buddhist religious symbols (as Buddha, Boddhisatva, Arhant...) are always placed in mixing with local symbols (as matri powers: Avalokitesvara in Goddess statue (or Quan-Yn), "Quan Am Thi Kinh" (Goddess of Mercy Thi Kinh), "Quan Am Nam Hai" (Goddess of Southern Sea)...), or with symbols of Taoism and Confucianism... in the same pagoda. It is easy to understand this mixture of

religious symbols from view of religious tolerance, and they can be considered as the appearance of religious tolerance of the Vietnamese.

In every day life, people also follow Buddhist fast, pray and keep practicing five radical Buddhist precepts together with other Confucian moral rules. For example, Confucians male chauvinism and the three subjections⁽⁴³⁾ still has its influence on Vietnamese woman at home and in society, but in pagoda Buddhist lay woman can feel more equality and free. Because they may concentrate on meditation or praying for better Buddha nature in themselves; they can together visit Buddhist sites as pilgrims; they can make donation to relieve other victims of disaster as a Buddhist proverb "*the intact leaf shields the torn one*", etc., and finally they can find themselves.

After the Vietnam War, the whole nation reunited and 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. To meet the need of the country, in 1981, the Conference of Representatives for Buddhist Unification was organized in Hanoi capital with the participation of all nine Buddhist denominations. The Conference unanimously agreed to establish the *Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha* (Gi_ò héi PhĒt gi_ò ViĒt Nam), which reunited all Buddhist denominations in Vietnam as in a family, to strengthen religious solidarity for the common good of "The Dharma - The Nation - Socialism", and Buddhist followers have continued the cause of national development under the motto, "For better secular and religious life". Buddhist perspective of religious tolerance was clearly expressed in the announced among all Vietnamese Buddhists and non Buddhist at home and abroad: "*From this point on, we are no longer Buddhists of the South, Buddhists of the Center, or Buddhists of the North and are no longer split into diversing organizations or forms but are all Vietnamese Buddhists and are all members of the Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha, whether inside the country or outside the country*". Buddhism is one of the major spiritual components in the mind of the Vietnamese, for them Buddhist thought is abundant in teachings and experiences of tolerance, and highly appraised by them.

Modernization, industrialization and economic integration are global trend in the new millennium, and the standard of life will be quite better thanks to

⁴³. "Daughter belongs to her parents, wife belongs to her husband, widow belongs to her children".

progressive of scientific and technical achievements. These achievements are quickly popularized, globalized and become common property of human in the world. However, they are the reasons to speed up the appearance of a philosophical problem of human rights: *What is the real, final, ultimate happiness* because *High quality of life is just not the real happiness!* People in modern society is facing modern "worldly suffering" as in the term "Dukkha" of Buddhism, such as AIDS, drug, corruption, pollution, poverty, nations and races-war, etc. So that the desire of understanding the Self in general meaning once more emerges as a philosophical question and that should be answered by Buddhist doctrine of no-self. In the West, Existentialism, Technoactivism, Psychoanalysis... are the lament of requirements for real Self while high quality of life was not the answer for "human suffering".

4. CONCLUSION

Tolerance is the most flexible path for people to come to the other/otherness, to perceive alterity without preconception for '*coexistence*' *through the recognition of 'difference' and 'diversity'* from each other in the age of globalization. Buddhist tolerance should be evaluated as an effective way for Buddhist countries, including Vietnam. For the Vietnamese, Buddhist tolerance has already operated as an effective ethics of alterity in process of adaptation and adoption simultaneously many foreign religions and systems of thought (Confucianism, Taoism...) while preserving and enriching their own identity. Buddhism has been promoting its spirit of tolerance in various aspects of life both in war time and peace time ideologically and politically.

In general, Buddhism was a selected system inherited from Indian and Asian traditions which has been tested and improved through long history. So that, Buddhist preeminent value of tolerance in general meaning have become common precious values of mankind, not only belongs to Buddhism. Buddhism, which already has its advantage of an *internal, equal, de-theocratic* religion and with its rich and experience of tolerant practices, would be a potential capacity in the modern age to face with modern challenges of globalization as well.

Through the long history Vietnamese Buddhism already contributed its brilliant marks in building and defending the nation and learning, accepting, adopting the other/otherness as well. Now, at the 21st century, Vietnam is much influenced by the global tendency of modernization, industrialization, so that, to develop the nation and country sustainably Vietnam has been accepting

human progressive achievements of culture and civilization, and at the same time tries to preserve and develop its own preeminent characters and dignity. Now, Buddhist tolerance is one of the values of humankind. The Vietnamese as Buddhists and lay Buddhists or non-Buddhists, abroad or at home will together develop it and apply it for the common goal of the nation to resolve our modern problems of integration in this new age.

Historically, "tolerance" as a term was provided by Western religionists and conceptualized by UNESCO and further developed by Western philosophers, writers and social leaders. Now, in the context of globalization we realize that in the East there has been being a treasure of tolerance deeply in Buddhist teachings. The terms are not the same with the "tolerance" of the West, but the notion is quite the same, and they were even constructed on a foundation of philosophy of *no-self* systematically and "Middle Way Approach" is the tolerance way in practice to avoid extremes, to escape conflicts, to keep off destroys... to live in harmony.

I hope that a research on Buddhist tolerance will be a contribution to general studies of the new issues raised from social religious reality in Vietnam, as well as in other Buddhist countries in Asia to the answer on perceiving the other/otherness. Further, it also can contribute some scientific foundations for the Government policy lines and decision-making process concerning the role and abilities of religions in general and religious tolerance in particular in process of globalization./

APPENDIX 1**Indian Chronology****Prehistoric Period: ca. 3000-1200 BC****ca. 3000-2600: Indus Valley civilization: Harappan civilization**

- 2600-2500: Harappan Civilization at its height
- 2000-1900: Harappan Civilization collapses
- c. 1300: Aryans migrate into Indus Valley
- c. 1000: Aryans migrate into Ganges Valley

ca. 1200-500 BC: Vedic Era

- ca. 1200-900: Rig-Veda
- ca. 900-500: Later Vedas and early Upanishads

ca. 550-100 BC: Emerge of Buddhism

- ca 550: Birth of Mahavira
- ca. 563-483: Sidhartha Gautama – Founder of Buddhism

ca. 322-185 BC: Mauryan Empire

- ca. 321-297 BC: Chandragupta Maurya
- ca. 273-237: Accession of Asoka Vardhana Maurya
- ca. 259 BC: Asoka entered the Buddhist Order (rock edicts VII, rock edicts XII)
- ca. 240 BC: Buddhist council at Pataliputra, 9 Buddhist missionary groups dispatched abroad
- ca. 232 BC: Death of Asoka; Accession of Dassaratha
- ca. 188 BC. Extinction of Maurya imperial dynasty
- ca. 185-100: The Laws of Manu

ca. AD 320-540: Gupta Era

- ca. 320-335: Chandragupta I
- ca. 335-376: Samudragupta II
- ca. 376-415: Chandragupta III
- ca. 454-500: Hun Invasions
- ca. 540: End of Gupta Dynasty

ca. AD 500-1001: Period of Political instability**1000-1750: Period of Muslim Dominance****1750-1947: India under British Rule****1947-present: The Indian Republic**

APPENDIX 2

Vietnamese Chronology

ca. 2879 BC -111 BC: Early Dynasties

ca. 2879: Legendary foundation of Van Lang Kingdom under King Hung Vuong

ca. 2897-258: Hung dynasty

ca. 257-208: Thuc dynasty

ca. 201: Kingdom of Au Lac

ca. 207-111: Trieu dynasty

ca. 111 BC – 939 AD: Nam Viet conquered by Han invader

ca. 39: Trung sisters lead rebellion against Chinese invader

ca. 542-544: Ly Bi lead uprising against Liang (Chinese) dynasty

ca. 455-602: Early Ly dynasty

ca. 938: Bach Dang River victory, *ended one thousand years of Chinese domination*, Ngo Quyen defeated Chinese invaders

ca. 939-968 AD: Ngo dynasty

ca. 939-944: Ngo Quyen ruled independent Nam Viet

ca. 968-980: Dinh dynasty

ca. 971: Dinh Tien Hoang took the throne

ca. 980-1009: Early Le dynasty

981: Le Hoan defeated a Chinese invader

ca. 1009-1225: Ly dynasty

ca. 1031- 1054: Ly Thai Tong (r.1000-1054)

ca. 1049: Mot Cot Temple (One- Pile Temple) built, the symbol of Vietnam

ca. 1072-1128: Ly Nhan Tong

ca. 1075-1077: A national army defends the land against Sung dynasty invasion

ca. 1179: Ly Cao Tong ordered monks to sit through a test on Buddhist scriptures

ca. 1179, 1195: examinations on three religions were held

ca. 1225-1400: Tran dynasty

ca. 1218-1277: Tran Thai Tong ascended

ca. 1230-1291: Tue Trung, a great Buddhist scholar

ca. 1231: Tran Thai Tong ordered the people to install Buddhist statues in every public office and place of meeting

ca. 1248: Thai Tong invited the monk Truc Lam to review the Buddhist scriptures before printing

- ca. 1254-1334: Monk Huyen Quang
- ca. 1257-1258: Mongols attacked Dai Viet and be defeated
- ca. 1258-1308: King Tran Nhan Tong, founder of the Truc Lam sect,
- ca. 1258: First Mongol invasion; the capital is sacked.
- ca. 1258: Second Mongol invasion driven back
- ca. 1284-1330: Monk Phap Loa
- ca. 1284-1285: Second Mongolo invasion and defeated
- ca. 1287-1288: Third Mongol invasion defeated
- ca. 1304: Emperor Nhan Tong entered the capital
- ca. 1314-1329: Minh Tong
- ca. 1360-1390: Champa wars, Champa ruled by Che Bong Nga
- ca. 1400-1440 Ho dynasty**
- ca. 1428-1788: Le dynasty**
- ca. 1572-1592: Mac dynasty**
- ca. 1558-1772: Period of opposition between the Trinh and Nguyen clans**
- ca. 1802-1945: Nguyen dynasty (the last dynasty)**
- ca. 1858: French forces seized Da Nang**
- ca. 1859: French forces captured Saigon**
- ca. 1874: Tu Duc signed Treaty of Saigon**, recognizing French sovereignty over all Annam (Vietnam)
- ca. Feb. 1930: Vietnam Communist Party founded in Hong Kong**
- ca. 1946: Start of the first war of independence by Ho Chi Minh**
- ca. 1976: December Vietnam Reunited**