

BUILDING TRUST AND SOLIDARITY: THE BUDDHIST PATH IN A MODERN WORLD

By His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon
Executive President of Vietnam Buddhist Sangha

On this auspicious occasion of the 19th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebration in Thailand, which coincides with His Majesty the King's birthday, on behalf of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and Vietnamese people, I extend my warmest greetings to the esteemed organizers, delegates, and participants gathered at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and the United Nations Conference Centre Bangkok.

This year's theme, "*The Buddhist Way of Building Trust and Solidarity*," resonates deeply with Buddhists worldwide. The Buddha's core teachings of ethical conduct (*sīla*), mental discipline (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) form the foundation for a peaceful and harmonious society. Trust, a cornerstone of social cohesion, flourishes when individuals cultivate these qualities.

1. Building Trust and Solidarity in a Modern World

The *Pāli* Suttas offer a timeless framework for building trust and solidarity, even in our world of conflict. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* emphasizes the importance of surrounding oneself with virtuous friends (*kalyāṇa-mittatā*) who embody ethical conduct and wisdom. This fosters trust within communities as individuals learn to rely on each other's integrity and commitment to the righteous path (*dhamma*).

The Sutta Pitaka promotes the practice of generosity (*dāna*) as a cornerstone for building solidarity. By offering material or spiritual gifts without expecting anything in return, individuals cultivate a sense of interconnectedness. In a world rife with conflict, this selfless act breaks down barriers and fosters a sense of shared responsibility for all beings' well-being. By reviving these core Buddhist principles, we can cultivate trust and solidarity, offering an antidote to the hatred and violence that permeate our world.

2. Mindfulness for Health and Wellbeing in Daily Life

The *Pāli* Suttas offer valuable insights into applying mindfulness for health and well-being. The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* outlines four foundations of mindfulness: contemplating the body, feelings, mind states, and mental objects (*dhamma*). By cultivating present-moment awareness through these practices, individuals can observe their mental and physical processes without judgment. This self-awareness empowers them to effectively manage stress, negative emotions, and physical discomfort.

The benefits of mindfulness extend beyond personal well-being. The *Majjhima Nikaya* highlights the importance of mindfulness (*sati*) in leadership, fostering trust and respect among colleagues. Similarly, mindfulness can be integrated into daily activities, from mindful eating for healthy habits to mindful communication for clearer and more compassionate interactions in personal and professional settings. By drawing upon the wisdom of the *Pāli* Suttas, individuals and leaders alike can harness the transformative power of mindfulness to enhance health, and well-being, and foster a more mindful and harmonious world.

3. The Buddhist Path to Trust and Global Partnership

The *Pāli* Suttas help us build trust and foster global partnerships. The *Dhammapada* emphasizes the importance of conquering oneself as the foundation for conquering the world. By cultivating inner peace, compassion, and understanding through Buddhist practices, individuals transcend self-interest and develop a capacity for genuine collaboration. This resonates with the concepts of loving-kindness (*metta*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) found throughout the Suttas, which encourage individuals to see the well-being of all beings as interconnected. This shared humanity forms the basis for trust and fosters a spirit of cooperation, essential for forging strong global partnerships.

The *Pāli* Suttas promote the concept of generosity as a cornerstone for building trust and reciprocity in partnerships. The *Jātaka* exemplify the power of generosity in fostering positive relationships. By offering material or intangible gifts without expecting anything in return, individuals cultivate a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence. This selfless act breaks down barriers between nations and cultures, fostering a foundation of trust and mutual respect, crucial for successful global partnerships. By adhering to these principles outlined in the *Pāli* Suttas, nations can move beyond self-interest and forge collaborative relationships that address global challenges and promote a more peaceful and prosperous world.

4. Relevance of Buddhist Education for Harmonious Society

Buddhist education offers a practical framework for building a more harmonious society. The *Kālāma Sutta*, a key text, emphasizes critical thinking and questioning beliefs over blind acceptance. It encourages students to learn from reliable sources and evaluate information before taking it as truth. This fosters intellectual curiosity, a questioning mind, and respect for diverse viewpoints – all essential ingredients for a tolerant and inclusive society.

Buddhist education, as outlined in the *Pāli* Suttas, prioritizes ethical conduct. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* provides five core principles for ethical living, including honesty, generosity, non-violence, and responsible behavior. These principles serve as a moral compass for students, shaping them into individuals with strong ethical foundations. This, in turn, fosters a sense of social responsibility and contributes to a more peaceful and harmonious society.

By adhering to these educational principles rooted in the *Pāli* Suttas, Buddhist education equips individuals with the tools to navigate the complexities of the modern world. This fosters a society built on critical thinking, ethical conduct, and mutual respect.

May the spirit of Vesak inspire us all to walk the path of trust, solidarity, and well-being. May the Buddha's teachings guide us towards building a more peaceful and harmonious world.

On this occasion, on behalf of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, I respectfully invite all Buddhist leaders around the world and delegates to come to Vietnam to attend the 20th United Nations Day of Vesak in 2019. 2025 in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

His Eminence Thich Thien Nhon