

THE SELF-IMMOLATION OF VENERABLE THICH QUANG DUC ACCORDING TO MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE



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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the particulars of Venerable Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation which has created the discussion about right or wrong. Because, the Buddha prohibited his disciples that they have not been deprived their own lives. Possible problems are presented in the simple analyzing his self-immolation according to: The standards of Mahāyāna principles, the perspective of Bodhisattva ideal, and the important purposes of his self-immolation. Firstly, according to Mahāyāna principles, this case will be adjudicated in two main aspects: Mahāyāna Vinaya and Bodhisattva precepts. Secondly, according to the Bodhisattva ideal, his self-immolation will be considered as: The Dāna Paramitā, the expression of The Compassion Mind, the expression of the Fearlessness (Abhaya). Thirdly, the important purposes of his self-immolation were the targets which he endeavored in order to attain as: The Protection of Buddhism, the Spiritual Non-violence, and the Spiritual Engaged Buddhism.

Keywords: The self-immolation, Mahāyāna principles, the Bodhisattva ideal, the purposes of Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation.

INTRODUCTION

In 1963, Vietnamese Buddhists had overcome the disaster that was destroying by the strategies of Southern Vietnamese Government. They tried to change the belief in southern Vietnam to Catholic: “Diem wants to unify the country into a Catholic bloc and convert all religious sects and parties to Catholicism [...] if you want to be rich and wealthy, if you want to be high-ranking officer, you must be a Catholic”.¹ Ngo Dinh Diem directed to upset the flag of Buddhism on 06 May 1963², also did not allow to hoist Buddhist flag at any public place, beset the Temple, arrest the monks and lay people or calumniate Buddhists are the Communists, and so on. On midnight 20 August 1963 and dawn on 2 August 1963, the Especial Force of Government totally attacked to the temples all over country. Not less than one hundred Buddhists were killed³ and 1400 people included monks, nuns, and laypeople were detained.⁴ In such case, Buddhism was compelled to have some actions in order to protect Buddhism also protecting the cultural Nation. As well as, there were the rally of the Buddhist followers, Students; the hunger-strikes of Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists; the self-immolation of Buddhist monks and other sacrifices etc.

Especially, Ven. Thich Quang Duc has been praised as a Bodhisattva by the action of self-immolation to rescue Vietnamese people, and also protected Vietnamese Buddhists. He immolated himself in the intersection of Phan Dinh Phung Street and Le Van Duyet Street in Sai Gon City (Now is Ho Chi Minh city) on 11 June 1963 in order to conflict the suppressive policies of Ngo Dinh Diem government. His self-immolation had begot the great shock over the world by the self-immolation image of him which he had strongly sat inside the flame until he passed away. But his action did not receive the sympathy visions from Theravāda Scholars. There was some counter opinion and some question asked that action was right or wrong according to the Vinaya and Dhamma of the Buddha. According

¹ Jerrold Schecter. *The New Face of Buddha: Buddhism and Political Power in Southeast Asia*. Tokyo: John Weatherhill, Inc, 1967, p. 172.

² Thich Nhat Tu-Nguyen Kha. **The Buddhists Crisis in 1963**. HCM: Hong Duc Publishing 1996. house, 2013, pp. 403-404.

³ Avro Manhattan. **Vietnam: Why Did We Go?** CA: Chick Publications, 1984, p. 71.

⁴ Nguyen Lang. **Essays on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism**. Vol.I. Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 2000, p. 1102.

to Walpola Rahula, that action is not right and not appropriate with the Buddha's teachings.⁵ So, researcher will analyze the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc according to Mahāyāna Buddhist perspective in order to give clearly identity about the case self-immolation of him and understand strongly the concept of self-immolation in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The meaning of self-immolation is a deliberation and willing sacrifice of oneself often by fire.⁶ In other hand, self-immolation is also the suicide which is the action of killing oneself intentionally⁷ or the action of killing oneself deliberately, a course of action which is likely to be very damaging to one's career, position in society.⁸ And there is a definition like that: "Self-immolation is voluntary sacrifice or denial of oneself, as an ideal or another person".⁹ So the self-immolation can be understood that is the action to conflict the difficulties in the life of human beings. There are many reasons which prompt a person to suicide or self-immolation as: They are depressed, impulsive, crying out for help, having a philosophical desire to die, they have made a mistake, there are many people who have believed about extremeness doctrine of religions or terrorist group, There are many cases which people have wanted to die because they feel the pain of sickness. In summary, suicide always has a lot of reason, but it has common reason which they always want to give up the difficulties and hope to get the better life after that. Sometimes, they only make the alert to their friends that they have difficulties, and they need the sympathy and help. Therefore, suicide is the expressing of the hopelessness of a human being.

In Buddhism: Self-immolation is commit suicide; for a monk to commit suicide is said to be against the rules.¹⁰ However, the Mahāyāna meaning of self-immolation will be focused on the meanings of the killing, suicide, sacrifice and self-immolation.

⁵Walpola Rahula. **Zen and the Taming of the Bull: Towards the Definition of Buddhist Thought**. London: G. Fraser Publisher., 1978, p. 114.

⁶Merriam-Webster. **Webster's New Explorer Encyclopedic Dictionary**. USA: Federal Street Press, 2006, p. 1737.

⁷Judy Pearsall-Partrick Hanks. **Oxford Dictionary of English**. London: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 1766.

⁸Catherine Soanes & Sara Hawker. **Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English**. UK: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 1037.

⁹Webster. **Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary**. New York: Random House Value Publishing, 1996, p. 1737.

¹⁰William Edward Soothill. (2000). A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms. Delhi: Motilal-Banarsi Dass Publishers, 219a.

1) Killing

The killing had been promulgated in the abstaining the killing precept: From the Buddhas, saints, monks, and parents; to the insects; if there they have the life, we are not killed, tried to kill, have others killed, or happy when others kill.¹¹

2) Suicide

The suicide in Mahāyāna has the meaning as Theravāda which was the action to deprive the own life of many monks. These cases had mentioned on the book of rules. There were many monks who had disgusted their body or there were many monks who had got serious sick; they deprived or had someone killed their own life.¹²

3) Sacrifice

Sacrifice practice the Dāna Paramitā, one of six paramitā; to rescue living beings who are living in the difficult condition. So the sacrifice has been done by the benefit for all living beings. The Bodhisattva precepts also mentioned: "... They should break off their meat of arm or legs give to hungry tigers, wolves, lions, and all kinds of hungry ghosts..." .¹³

4) Self-immolation

According to Mahāyāna dictionary, the self-immolation is the suicide. However, the perspective Lotus Sutta has considered as the true offering when Bodhisattva Sarvarūpasamdarśana self-immolated his body to pay homage the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśrī.¹⁴

In conclusion, the meanings of the word “self-immolation” in Mahāyāna Buddhism have the complex meanings as well: suicide, sacrifice and self-immolation is the great offering. The concrete meaning depends on the essential of each case. Thus, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc will be considered based on his purposes.

¹¹ Thich Tri Quang. **Monk's Rules Synthetic.** HCM: Van Hoa Sai Gon Publication House, 2010.p.1347.

¹² Thich Dong Minh. **Five Sections of Rule.** Vol.I. Ha Noi: Hong Duc Publishing House, 2011, p. 83.

¹³ CBETA, 2011, p. 848, a12-18.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.* CBETA, p. 53, b11-16.

THE ADJUDICATION OF SELF-IMMOLATION OF VENERABLE THICH QUANG DUC BASED ON MAHĀYĀNA PRINCIPLE

The Mahāyāna Pātimokkha

The Pātimokkha is the standard in order to regulate about the behavior, routine and life style of monks. Therefore, who has ordained to become a monk, he must really observe the precepts in Pātimokkha and he cannot commit any precepts. Whenever who commits any precepts, the Sanghas will base on the regulations on Pātimokkha to punish him. Especially, the regulations on Pātimokkha are always based on the expression of body and words. So the existence of Pātimokkha is only limited on the existence of body and words.¹⁵ Base on this aspect, whenever body and words of any one commit the precepts in Pātimokkha, he is really wrong.

Herein, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc, he was a Buddhist monk, he self-immolation in the movement of Vietnamese Buddhists in 1963. When, we analyze the expression of that activity base on the aspect of Pātimokkha, he committed the Thullaccaya¹⁶: “If you kill yourself, you will commit Thullaccaya”.¹⁷ Thus, when we consider about the right or wrong through that teaching, the suicide is not right if that action had done.

Moreover, the suicide was definite that: to commit suicide; for a monk to commit suicide is said to be against the rules,¹⁸ It means who monk deprives own life; he will commit the prohibited rule which was promulgated by the Buddha.

We must consider about the Buddha’s blame to the monks who had deprived their own lives: “You were very stupid, when you had done wrong action. You did not follow my teachings to undertake protecting all beings. Why did you forget it?”¹⁹ The Buddha had blamed because there were many monks; they misunderstood the Buddha teaching, they forgot the ultimate goal of monks. Moreover, the duties of monks must try to get enlightenment for them and help others to get happiness, delight, and get rid of suffering or get enlightenment.

¹⁵ *Op. cit. CBETA*, p. 74.

¹⁶ Rhys Davids T. W. and William Stede. **Pāli-English Dictionary**. London: The Pāli Text Society’s press, 2009, p. 346.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.* Thich Dong Minh, p. 83.

¹⁸ *Op. cit.* William Edward Soothill, 219a.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.* Thich Dong Minh, p. 85.

The self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc, he self-immolated to kindle the hopeful fire for the movement of Vietnamese Buddhist in order to protect Vietnamese Buddhism under the government persecutions. Because the administration with banners and the hunger strike of Monk, Nun and lay Buddhists also were inefficient and there was not any concession from government. In order to make the new vitality to break the standstill of the movement, Ven. Thich Quang Duc had decided to self-immolate.²⁰

Thus, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc was not done by the private and negative reason as mentioned in Āgama, Cakkhali²¹, Channa²² and Godhika²³ the disgusting bodies of many monks were mentioned in Vinaya. He really self-immolated by the benefit of Vietnamese Buddhists and Vietnamese Buddhism.

In conclusion, when we consider and analyze the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc base on the perspective of Vinaya, he committed the rule of Pātimokkha and it is wrong action. However, his motivation was not like any motivations of monks who had suicided in the Buddha time. Therefore, his self-immolation was wrong according Pātimokkha, but it should be considered in other sides as well as: the meaning of the Buddha's blame before he promulgates the third defeat, and many times he did not apply the rule to resolve the case of suicides.

THE BODHISATTVA PRECEPTS

The regulations on Pātimokkha are always based on the expression of body and words. So the existence of Pātimokkha is only limited on the existence of body and words.²⁴ Based on this aspect, whenever body and words of anyone commit the precepts in Pātimokkha, he is really wrong, some offences he will be lost his precepts as Pārājika. Whereas, Bodhisattva precepts are contrary, there is the ordination to observe the precepts, there are the offences; but there are not the losing precepts: "Buddhists! Whenever you have ordained and received ten precepts (Bodhisattva Pārājika), [...], from this life to others lives, these precepts do not

²⁰Thich Nhat Tu-Nguyen Kha. **The Buddhists Crisis in 1963**. HCM: Hong Duc Publishing 1996.house, 2013, p. 263.

²¹*Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 346, b7-347, b13.

²²*Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 347, b13-348, b1.

²³*Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 286, à-286, b21.

²⁴*Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 74.

lose; precepts always go together with them until they become the Buddha".²⁵ Because the Bodhisattva Precepts always base on Bodhicitta and Bodhisattva perceives the Buddhahood to be the ultimate goal. Thus, all Layperson Bodhisattvas, Bikkhu Bodhisattvas and the Saint Bodhisattvas always depend on minds to cultivate.²⁶

Herein, we are analyzing the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc who followed the doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, we must base on Mahāyāna doctrine to consider. Especially, if we want to know clearly about the meaning and essential of his self-immolation, we should depend on his mind or his thought to consider. In order to do that, we must know about the standards which he had observed and done.

In the sixteenth precepts in secondary precepts of Bodhisattva has mentioned that: "They should break off their meat of arm or legs give to hungry tigers, wolves, lions, and all kinds of hungry ghosts".²⁷ In the precept regulate that Bodhisattva should break off their meat of arm or legs give to hungry beings. This case had been done many times in the previous lives of the Buddha. He gave his own body to rescue living beings. Those living beings were staying difficult condition; they would be died if there was not food. Thus the sacrifice is the necessary action and it must be done immediately to rescue living beings.

However, Human beings not only have one kind of food but they have four main kinds of food: Edible food, sense-impression, Volitional Thought, consciousness.²⁸ The first belongs to material food, three continue kind belong to food of mind. The food of mind is the meal of Buddha's Dhamma which is not lack in the life time of human beings: "If anyone were to live for one hundred years, wicked and unconcentrated, living for one day would be better for him having knowledge and meditating".²⁹

Therefore, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc was the dedicating for the human beings who were hungry about the foods of mind; because Buddhism has been the part which cannot be deficient in the daily life of Vietnamese persons.³⁰ When Ngo Dinh

²⁵ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, p. 1021.

²⁶ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, p. 1021.

²⁷ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, 848, a12-18.

²⁸ Nyanaponika Thera. **The Vision of Dhamma**. Sri Lanka:Buddhist publication Society, 2000, p. 215.

²⁹ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, 564, c8-9.

³⁰ Le Manh Thac. **History of Buddhism in Vietnam** Vol.I. HCM City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1999, p. 25.

Diem government had tried to destroy Vietnamese Buddhism; this action was protested by whole Vietnamese people, eighty percent of whom were Buddhists. So the sacrifice of him was the way to help Buddhism remain and also give the spiritual food for all Vietnamese Buddhist who were living in the hungry of spirit. Therefore, the self-immolation is really appropriate to the Bodhisattva precepts.

In conclusion, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc is appropriate to the perspectives of Bodhisattva precept which is the sixteenth precept in the secondary precepts of Bodhisattva. He had done for the benefit of many, for the happiness of many.

THE SELF-IMMOLATION OF VENERABLE THICH QUANG DUC IS CONSIDERED AS THE BODHISATTVA IDEAL

The Dāna Paramitā

The Dāna Paramitā include in three cases: “almsgivings, giving of the doctrine, giving of courage or fearlessness”.³¹ I will analyze the great offering of him as the almsgiving as: Giving of goods includes outward (money, materials) and inward giving (eyes, ears, brain, etc.). This action was mentioned in the Lotus Sutra when Bodhisattva Sarvarūpasamāndarśana self-immolated his body to pay homage the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśrī. The Buddha had praised that action like:

Splendid, splendid, O son of a virtuous family! This is the true perseverance. This is called the true Dharma offering to the Tathāgata. It stands no comparison, even if one were to pay tribute with flowers, perfumes, necklaces, burning incense, scented powders, ointments, divine silk banners, canopies, perfumes of sandalwood from the inner seacoast of Mount Sumeru, and various other things like this. It stands no comparison, even if one were to offer one's kingdom or wife and children. O son of a virtuous family, this is the supreme offering. This is the highest and best of all offerings, because you offer the Dharma to the Tathāgatas.³²

³¹ Venerable Thich Thien Hoa. **The General Doctrine of Buddhist Studies**. Ha Noi: Religious Publishing House, 2012, p. 572.

³² *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 53, b11-16.

If the self-immolation was considered as appropriate action according to the Buddha teachings in the literal meaning; it would misunderstand the Buddha's teachings; and it will misunderstand the truth meaning of the self-immolation which had been done by the Bodhisattva Sarvarūpasamādarśana. It must know clearly that teaching in the abstract meaning as well as the self-immolation is only the imagery and it means the eliminating of clinging about the form. When anybody eliminates about their form and destroy the ego, they will not concern all difficult situations in order to spread the Buddha's teachings to another people and also bring the benefit to all beings.³³

Herein, when Vietnamese Buddhism had the crisis and the persecution from the government, Ven. Thich Quang Duc had volunteered to participate in the movement of Vietnamese Buddhists. The self-immolation was the last offering of him to Vietnamese Buddhists when the movement had been staying the most difficult situation³⁴ and the self-immolation had offered the spiritual meal to all Vietnamese Buddhists and the movement of Vietnamese Buddhists. Thus, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc was the inward-giving; he had given all his life to the Vietnamese Buddhists and also done for the happiness of many, for the benefit of many.

In other hand, the inward-giving has been mentioned many times by the dedicating of the Buddha in the previous lives. He had given his life to rescue the hungry tigers³⁵; given blood to feed the hungry ghosts³⁶; burn his hand to make a light to lead the people who lost the way escape from the dangerous path³⁷; or sacrifices his life to hunter who would shed his skin to rescue so many people³⁸; etc. Bodhisattva had given his life to rescue living beings who were staying the difficult situations, all most them were dying or their lives were dangerous.

Herein, the situation of Vietnamese Buddhists was staying dangerous condition. It could be compared to the dangerous case which the bodhisattva had rescue living beings:

³³ Thich Thanh Tu. **The Lotus Sutra Explanation.** Ho Chi Minh: Van Hoa-Nghe Thuat Publishing House, 2012, p. 667.

³⁴ Thich Nhat Tu-Nguyen Cong Ly-Truong Van Chung. **Review About The Buddhist Movement in The South of Vietnam in 1963.** HCM: Hong Duc Publishing House, 2013, p. 263.

³⁵ *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 352, c27-29.

³⁶ *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 360, b8-c13.

³⁷ *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 392, c25-393.

³⁸ *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, 366, a17-b367.

From 1959 to 1963, in Phu Yen province, there were fifteen cases compelled Buddhists change to Catholic; two cases menaced and killed Buddhists, and the cases which two Buddhists were buried alive in one pit.³⁹

It has been reckoned, and the figures although lacking any official confirmation are considered to be concretely reliable, that during this period of terror—that is from 1955 to 1960—at least 24.000 were wounded, 80.000 people were executed or otherwise murdered, 275.000 had been detained, interrogated with or without physical torture, and about 500.000 were sent to concentration or detention camps. This is a conservative estimate.⁴⁰

When human beings were living in the dangerous condition even death, Ven. Thich Quang Duc had self-immolated to protest the evil. He wanted the Government would stop the evil and also the unequal religious policies. Thus this action could be wrong to the Buddha's rule, but it was consider as the race cases which Bodhisattva had forget their benefit in order to rescue others. His self-immolation was the inward-giving.

THE COMPASSION MIND

The Compassion mind is Immeasurable Compassion, a mind of great pity, or infinite compassion: Boundless pity, to save from suffering. Here a monk, with a heart filled with compassion. Thus he stays, spreading the thought of compassion, above, below, across, everywhere, always with a heart filled with compassion, abundant, magnified, non-boundary, without hatred or ill-will. Compassion also makes the heart quiver when others are subject to suffering. It is the wish to remove the suffering of others, and it is opposed to cruelty.

In order to know about the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc, researcher will quote some vows of great Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism to illuminate his action and also his vows.

Firstly, the compassion of the Buddha is always the greatest compassion. That compassion likes the love of the father give to his son. In Lotus Sutta, the compassion mind of the Buddha had been compared to a father who went to the firing house to rescue his sons. He had never feared the dangerous. The Buddha also like that, he had gone to the world where there were a lot of impurities as: desire, hatred, delusion; he was born in

³⁹ Nguyen Lang. **Essays on the History of Vietnamese Buddhism.** Vol.I. Ha Noi: Literature Publishing House, 2000, p. 1035.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.* Avro Manhattan, p. 89.

this world to help all beings to get rid of sufferings.⁴¹ Moreover, the Buddha also likes the greatest doctor who can depend on the sickness of living beings to give the medicine.⁴²

Secondly, the compassion mind of Bodhisattvas who always do for the benefit and happiness of many like the great vow: “Sentient beings are numberless (countless), I vow to save them all.”⁴³ Herein, researcher will mention two bodhisattvas who have the great vows to help the sentient beings in the saha world; those are the vows of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva is the best representative of the Bodhisattva in Chinese Buddhism. Because he made twelve great vows to liberate all sentient beings in the saha world.⁴⁴ He always does for the happiness of sentient beings as well as the vow: “Use religious life practices to create the boat, Bodhisattva went along in the sea of suffering for bless all beings”.⁴⁵ Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, he has made the great vow to help all sentient beings who are staying the hell. In a long time ago, he was from a Brahmin family, converted to Buddhism and took a vow before the Buddha that, “He would never become a Buddha if there was still even one being in the hell.”⁴⁶ He also wanted to become a Buddha, but not before he had liberated all beings from the cycle of life and death. Depend on the compassion, Bodhisattvas have for sentient beings; is like the love that parents have for their children. In order to fulfill any need, they will sacrifice even their own lives. The Bodhisattva’s great loving kindness and compassion look after every sentient being like the sun shines on every corner of land.

Herein, Ven. Thich Quang Duc also had loving kindness and compassion mind for all Vietnamese people who were persecuting on the terrorism of the government; and he had witnessed a lot of pain and suffering of man people under the persecuting of Ngo Dinh Diem. He was absolutely pity with the suffering which had covered the country as well as the way of government dealt to Buddhism and people. He had made many vows before self-immolating:

⁴¹ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, pp. 46-78.

⁴² *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, pp. 95-102.

⁴³ Robert H. Smitherram. **For All Living Beings: A Guide to Buddhist Practice**. Los Angeles: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2010, p. 130.

⁴⁴ Master Hsing Yun. **The Core Teachings**. USA: Buddha’s Light Publishing, 2008, p. 145.

⁴⁵ Doan Trung Con, Do Minh Tien. **The Gateway to Every Direction Sutta**. Manifested by Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva. HCM: Religion Publishing House, 2010. p. 30.

⁴⁶ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, p. 781.

1. To wish the Buddhas aid for Ngo Dinh Diem president, he can be penetrating to accept 'Five Demands' of Vietnamese Buddhism.
2. To wish the Buddhas aid for Vietnamese Buddhism to be existed forever.
3. To wish the Buddhas help Vietnamese monks, nuns and lay Buddhists can avoid the terror, arrest and confinement of the ferocious persons.
4. To pray that the country has peace, the people can be lived in the happiness.⁴⁷

Thus, all his vows and his self-immolation had expressed the compassion to all Vietnamese people as mentioned above and even Ngo Dinh Diem President

THE INTRINSIC PURPOSE OF VENERABLE THICH QUANG DUC'S SELF-IMMOLATION

The Protection of Buddhism

Buddhist doctrine was discovered and spread in the world by Sakyamuni Buddha after he had overcome a lot of difficult situation. The function of this doctrine is the boat to pick up being from suffering shore to happy shore or deliberating shore. Therefore, Buddha's teachings have made more benefit to living beings; so whenever, Buddhism has been dangerous, Buddhists must use anyways to protect it. As we mentioned in the previous section, because of keeping the vows Bodhisattvas willingly dedicated their lives to make benefit to all living beings. This is also a way to save and spread Buddhism to others. Moreover, Mahāyāna sutras have praised the cases of Bodhisattva willing sacrifice their lives to protect Buddhism: "The person who is following Mahayana, sacrifice one's life in order to protect or save Buddhism to be better than person also follow Mahāyāna but does not sacrifice one's life to protect Buddhism".⁴⁸ Herein, the sacrifice is known as the volunteer bring back the benefits of others, even they can die. Therefore, Mahāyāna has not admonished the sacrifice to protect Buddhist teachings.

In addition, Mahāyāna has accepted the protecting Buddhism is the important duty which Buddhists must do. Mahāyāna Buddhists have willingly dedicated their lives to take care for the existing of Buddhism. The Buddhists can do anything for the Buddhism is

⁴⁷ Le Manh Thac. **History of Buddhism in Vietnam**. Vol.I. HCM City: Ho Chi Minh Publishing House, 1999, p. 25-26.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, p. 84, a2-24.

simply rescued and still stayed in the world. Therefore, the sacrifice or the self-immolation can be considered as the last method and also the duty to maintain Buddhism. Mahāyāna sutra mentioned the martyr as the highest duty: “If Bodhisattvas saw the monks who conflict and make a lawsuit, Bodhisattvas should reconcile them; they must support and protect Buddha’s teachings even give up their lives”.⁴⁹ So the dead which dedicate for the existing of Buddhism; imply the meaningful action and it can be acceptable. Bodhisattva has never die useless and untimely; they only die when they know that is necessary in order to be safe and good for Community and Dhamma.

Herein, there are three elements which express the damage to the existence of Vietnamese Buddhism: The policies to persecute Buddhism, the massacre Buddhists, the policies change Vietnamese conscience to become the Catholic country.

There are many cases which the blood of Vietnamese Buddhists had shed by the evil policies of government. And the top of the destroying Buddhism was the massacre at the Vesak’s day in Hue province which killed 8 persons, and the government had strictly lowered the Buddhists flag. It had attacked to the heart of Vietnamese Buddhists and all Buddhists over the world in general.

Standing in front of the existence or evanescence of Buddhism, Ven. Thich Quang Duc and all Vietnamese Buddhists could not keep quietness without doing nothings. Thus they had made the Movement in order to protect Buddhism; and the most remarkable activity was the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc. He had kindle the torch which was made by his body; in order to shine the way to all Vietnamese Buddhists who were struggling for the equality of religion and the existence of Vietnamese Buddhist. Ven. Thich Quang Duc had obeyed the Buddha’s teaching to protect Buddhism: “This lovely custom founded by me you should maintain; do not you be the last man after me.”⁵⁰ He also followed the image of Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta (Never Despising) who always went to everybody in order to talk about the Buddha’s teachings even there were many person to be angry and bite him, but he still keep his ideal; because the Buddha’s teachings was forgot and the human being had more bad Kamma. Thus that Bodhisattva endeavor to save the Buddhas’s teaching, he had sacrificed his life. Herein, the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc also is the great sacrifice for the existence of Vietnamese Buddhists.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit. CBETA*, 2011, p. 477, a16-17.

⁵⁰ I.B.Hornor. **The Collection of The Middle Length Sayings**. Vol.II. Oxford: The Pāli Text Society, 2000, p. 272.

SPIRITUAL NON-VIOLENCE

In 1963, Vietnamese Buddhism had stayed in the difficult situation. With the loyal heart to the Buddha teachings, all Vietnamese Buddhist had stood up to against the evil policies of government. However, they absolutely obeyed the Buddha's teachings, and also struggled by the way of non-violence. In order to see the non-violence perspective in Buddhism, researcher will quote some case the Buddha had taught about that: "We live very happily indeed without hate among those who hate; among men who hate we dwell without hate".⁵¹ "For not by hatred are hatred ever quenched here, but they are quenched by non-hatred. This is the ancient rule".⁵² Thus the Buddha had taught his disciples about the non-violence which had developed the great compassion to the monks. In the Buddha time, there were many case the Buddha and his disciple had applied the compassion and non-violence to tame the evil person and animal as well as the way which the Buddha tamed the drunkard elephant⁵³, the robber Angulimāla.⁵⁴ The Buddha and his disciple always used the standard of non-violence to treat the hatred, the anger, the violence.

In addition, the non-violence was also expressed in the Lotus Sutta through the image of Bodhisattva Sadāparibhūta (Never Despising) who had never been angry with anybody ever they had bitted, reviled him. He was still calm to practice the Bodhisattva path. He still did not evade the evil people; he had approached them and instructed them about the good thing of Buddhism.

Herein, Ven. Thich Quang Duc had also followed the image of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha in order to participate into the movement of Vietnamese Buddhists: "A Bodhisattva does not use weapons of any kind. He does not hate any being and cannot kill a living creature even in thought... Ahimsā (not Killing) is indeed the highest virtue. From all these motives and considerations, a Bodhisattva abstains from taking the life of any living being".⁵⁵ He followed the statement to struggle in non-violence of the officer monks who were the leader of the movement:

⁵¹ *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011,; p. 567, b18-19.

⁵² *Op. cit.* CBETA, 2011, p. 562, a19-20.

⁵³ E.B. Cowell. **The Stories of the Buddha's Former Births**. Cambridge: At The University Press, 1905, p. 175.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.* I.B.Hornor, pp. 284-292.

⁵⁵ H. Dayal. **The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sankrit Literature**. Delhi: Motilal Banarsiadas Publishers, 1999, p. 199.

We have understood that we are living in the complicated political situation. We must express the perspective of Buddhism in our struggle. Thus, we vow to sacrifice everything we have. That sacrifice is the energy to awake the consciousness of president and his staffs; it not only vibrates the policies of government. Right now, we can state strongly that all Vietnamese Buddhist Monks, Nuns who will be ready to imitate Gandhi, the saint of Non-violence...We who are struggling by non-violence, will struggle in the limit of the country's law. We are ready to sacrifice to the end by this method.⁵⁶

Ven. Thich Quang Duc had not used any weapon to conflict the evil policies of government. He absolutely followed the spiritual non-violence. He used own body to make the weapon, the weapon of non-violence: "Today, I vow to self-immolate. To make the light enlightens the dark place. Fragrant smoke has disillusioned the miscreant. White ash razes the inequality pit". This weapon had touched to the heart of all human beings; and it is also the bracket in the struggle of Vietnamese Buddhists. It helped to consolidate the belief about the non-violence struggle. His self-immolation had destroyed all fear and given more energy to the Movement of Vietnamese Buddhists. It encouraged every Buddhists should be bold to overcome all difficulties: "Non-violence and cowardice go ill together. I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true non-violence is impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness".⁵⁷

The non-violence of Ven. Thich Quang Duc was concluded in the consideration of Asst. Pro. Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Dung, it was the highest level of the non-violence struggle of southern Vietnamese Buddhists:

The method struggle in non-violence indeed dedicated Buddhist value in order to vanish the ignorance and atrocity in the individual of authority; volunteered to dedicate the own life in order to express the love to country and race; awakened and prevented the massacre of the despot. The demonstration of Vietnamese Buddhist without weapon conflicted with the guns, tear gas from the troop and police of Ngo Dinh Diem government;

⁵⁶ Le Cung. **The Southern Vietnamese Buddhist Movement in 1963**. Hue: Thuan Hoa pressed, 2003, p. 229.

⁵⁷ Dr. Rajendra Prasad. **The Teaching of Mahatma Gandhi**. India: Indian Printing Works, 1945, p.137.

the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc on 11 June 1963, was the highest level of the non-violence struggle of southern Vietnamese Buddhists.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, Ven. Thich Quang Duc had sacrificed his life to do benefit of Vietnamese Buddhism, it was the honorable action. His self-immolation had reaffirmed the great ideal of Bodhisattva path which always do for the happiness and delight of many. Ven. Thich Quang Duc had made the radiant for Bodhisattva path in the twenty century. Moreover, when we accumulate all things which he had done in his life time and the self-immolation; we can see that everything he did, he always did it for the benefit of many, and he always followed the Bodhisattva path. The self-immolation was the last sacrifice of him to Vietnamese Buddhism and it was also the last action which he did to complete the duty of a monk in this life. Because, the duty of a person who is practicing the Bodhisattva path; is the actions to create benefit for others, it is not limited in the time. Thus, he has been considered as completing the duties of this life.

The researcher suggest that: in the progress of science and technology, we have witnessed more and more recession of morality, and this danger is worse than the regression of economy. This problem is not only the problem of society, but also influence to the daily life of many monks and nuns. It has influenced to the fame of Buddhism. Thus, when we have studied about the sacrifice of Ven. Thich Quang Duc; we should restrain ourselves to the Buddha's teachings and cultivate to be appropriate to the sacrifice of him. when we study the self-immolation of Ven. Thich Quang Duc; it does not mean, we are encouraging the self-immolation. Herein, we are studying the action which he had sacrificed own life to do for the happiness and delight of many, and this action had protected Vietnamese Buddhism when it spent on the difficult situation. Thus, his self-immolation is not the suicide but it is the lesson for the person who has plan to suicide; and it is also expressed the contribution of Mahāyāna doctrine in order to resolve the suicide of person who has negative though. So the self-immolation should not encourage but should be study.

⁵⁸ *Op. cit.* Thich Nhat Tu-Nguyen Cong Ly-Truong Van Chung, p. 465.

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