

## Engaged Buddhism Movement Affects Social Life

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**Abstract:** In the twentieth century, a politically and socially involved form of Buddhism known as Engaged Buddhism arose, quickly growing into a vast and powerful movement across Buddhist Asia. Then it became popular in Western Buddhism. This Buddhism movement developed into a forum for expressing people's political aspirations. It developed into psychological and functional emancipation for marginalized peoples and economic prosperity for the disadvantaged. In this article, the author examines a small portion of creating a modern Buddhist movement and its participation in social life. As they formulate their different responses to their specific crises and challenges, the New Buddhist movement's founders and leaders all draw on traditional Buddhist ideas, values, and principles. Their common grounding in traditional Buddhism connects the numerous Engaged Buddhist groups. In other words, Engaged Buddhism is based on conventional Buddhist values. Economic, environmental, and ecological teachings were all taught by the Buddha. All comes into being through a process of causes and conditions, etc., according to this definition, also known as dependent origination. In other words, Engaged Buddhism is a form of spiritual activism that also happens to be social activism.

**Keywords:** Buddhist movement, spiritual, social activism

### I. Introduction

Engaged Buddhism is a movement that demonstrates the spirit of service to society, political and economic activities, and conflicts resolution, and human rights. Vietnamese Zen monk ThichNhatHanh founded this movement in the Vietnamese War. As mentioned in chapter I, ThichNhatHanh led the attacks, rebuilding villages and resettled refugees after the War. He established educational institutions, Buddhist monasteries. He opened international peace negotiations and published many articles, magazines, and many famous works related to his country and Buddhism's crisis. His disciples and followers of Buddhism were killed and imprisoned by the then-religious regime. After the Vietnam War, ThichNhatHanh went into exile to the south of France, and there he spread the doctrine of Buddhism involved in many genres such as prose and poetry. This movement was widely and strongly developed in Asia and the West in the 1960s. This movement's primary purpose was on human rights, peace, non-violence, and structural change in society. This is inspired, and the same opinion with many great thinkers aimed at protecting human rights without discrimination, and everyone has the right to respect.

B.R. Ambedkar converted and opposed the Dalit (untouchable) movement in 1956. Sarvodaya Shramadana was the peace movement of Sri Lanka by AT. Ariyaratne in 1958. The fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, who led to reclaim land in China, invaded his country in 1959. In Thailand, Sulak Sivaraksa was a Buddhist writer and reformer, and he was known as the father of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). In 1965, ThichNhatHanh founded the Order of Interbeing and introduced the fourteen precepts as the basis for resolving religious conflicts, economic, political, social, cultural, and so on. A unique feature of the fourteen principles that ThichNhatHanh gives is traditional Buddhist ethics and contemporary social concerns. At that time, six members were ordained, and they took the vow to study, practice, and follow these precepts. At present, these fourteen precepts are widely developed around the world and are applied by those who believe in Buddhism, love peace for social welfare, morality, and conscientiousness fight hatred and divide.

### **The fourteen precepts are:**

- 1) “Do not be idolatrous to any religion, philosophy, or ideology, even Buddhist ones, or be bound to them. Buddhist thinking structures are guiding tools; they are not absolute reality.”
- 2) “Don't assume that the experience you currently have is an immutable, absolute reality. Avoid being narrow minded and tied to the opinions of the present. Learn and practice non-attachment from convictions to be open to the views of others. In existence, the reality is sought and not simply in intellectual awareness. Be prepared to learn at all times in your whole life and to experience truth in yourself and throughout the universe.”
- 3) “Do not force anyone, including children, to follow your views by any means whatsoever, be it by authority, threat, money, propaganda, or even education. Support others renounce fanaticism and narrowness, however, through compassionate discourse.”
- 4) “Do not avoid contact with pain before suffering or close your eyes. Do not lose knowledge of the presence of misery in world life. Find ways, including personal touch, visits, pictures, and sounds, to be with those who are suffering. By such means, awaken yourself and others to the world's truth of misery.”
- 5) “Do not accumulate wealth when starving for millions. Do not take fame, profit, money, or sensual pleasure as the purpose of your life. Live with those in need and share time, energy, and material resources.”
- 6) Do not hang on to hatred. When they are still seeds in your mind, learn to penetrate and turn them. As soon as they emerge, to see and appreciate the essence of your hatred, turn your attention to your breath.”
- 7) “In dispersion and your surroundings, do not lose yourself. To return to what is happening in the present moment, practise conscious breathing. Be in contact both inside and around you with what is marvellous, refreshing, and healing. To promote the work of transformation in the depths of your conscience, plant seeds of joy, peace, and understanding in yourself.”
- 8) “Do not utter words that can create discord and cause a split in the group. Make every attempt, however small, to reconcile and settle all disputes.”
- 9) For the sake of personal interest or to please individuals do not say untruthful statements. Do not utter words that trigger hate and discord. Don't share the news that you don't know for sure. Don't denounce or reject anything you're not sure about. Always speak

constructively and truthfully. Have the courage to talk about circumstances of injustice, even when your own safety can be endangered by doing so.”

- 10) Do not use the Buddhist culture or turn your community into a political party for personal benefit or profit. However, a religious group should take a firm stance against racism and inequality and work without intervening in partisan disputes to improve the situation.”
- 11) “Do not live with an obligation that is detrimental to humans and nature. Please do not invest in businesses which deprive others of their opportunity to live. Find a vocation that helps to understand your caring ideal.”
- 12) Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect others' property, but prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.”
- 13) “Own nothing that is meant to belong to someone. Respect others' land, but prohibit others from profiting from human misery or other species' suffering on Earth.”
- 14) “Do not have your body mistreated. Learn to treat it respectfully. Don't just look at the body as an instrument.”

The first three precepts are based on relationships between religions creating mutual trust and interreligious dialogues, which are the essence of nonviolence and cohesion. The principles are not something as rigorous as we think. They are just rules that help those concerned about it and have a more realistic view, not trying to avoid it. To prove this, the fourth precept has mentioned the nature of suffering. The first suffering is the noble truth of the four noble truths, which is the foundation of Buddhist teachings. ThichNhatHanh interpreted suffering as a spiritual medicine and a practice method to help others alleviate suffering without avoiding it. In the Buddhist doctrinal system, whatever method Gautama Buddha gave out to his practitioner had its purpose; his dharma is for practice; it is not to study or avoid it, but to face it. If we seek to prevent it, it is impossible to touch the ultimate truth but understand it most intensely. This is the essence of the Mahayana thought that ThichNhatHanh applied to engaged Buddhism. Fourteen precepts that ThichNhatHanh introduced to help his society change the battle situation; we want everyone to have a more objective perspective with compassion, no selfishness, and immorality. It is the responsibility of each individual.

A peaceful world, a prosperous society, a happy family, etc. Only when every individual in that society renounces the three poisons (greed, hatred, and delusion). Also, with sympathy, practicing mindfulness; is a process of perceiving and transforming the mind to realize its true nature. It means that all things and phenomena in this world are interdependent, like a chain of the twelve conditions, karma and rebirth. All things are impermanent (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and no-self (anatta). When realizing the truths, the mind becomes peaceful and happy. All individuals are so glad; the world will be calm, there will be no war, kill, and rob each other. The Buddhist movement of commitment was established in the context of people losing trust in each other. There was a conflict that conflicts between people and brought with them many political, social, economic implications, culture, and religion so on.

### Political aspects

The country was in an increasingly tense situation; the Buddhist monks could not sit in the meditation hall to practice; they left the meditation halls to join politics, with the primary purpose of helping others avoid initiating bombs and ammunition, minimizing casualties. They worked in mindfulness to find the best way to solve the problems without affecting others. At that time, mindfulness is a necessary element during participating in the movement

of engagement, not harming oneself and harming others. The essence of nonviolence is mindfulness. ThichNhatHanh and his disciples engaged in political activities in their country's context in danger, people's hearts filled with hatred. They have engaged the movement all their hearts peaceful, loving, and compassionate to give the best solutions to real life's problems. Only love can relieve pain and loss. Peace-building is a long and positive process. It could last for a year, two years, and even decades. Peacemaker needs patience, wisdom, and compassion. Violence is founded on greed, jealousy, and delusion; when the mind is established by love and compassion, all desire and hatred disappear. Hatred cannot dispel hatred; only loving kindness can remove hatred.

Na hi verenaverāni, sammantīdhakudācanām, averenacasammanti, esadhammosanantano.” “Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a Law Eternal.” Buddhism is one of the earliest community organizations in human history. A community is built on the principle for the benefit of all people with six concords (six principles of living in harmony), adapting to all ages from past to present. Herein, harmony for noble purposes, for the benefit of ourselves and others, not passively and weak, or using tricks to take advantage of ourselves silently.

When brothers do not get happy with each other in the family, their love is broken. If husbands and wives are not getting happy in harmony, their relationship becomes unhappy; their children are influenced by their parents' way of life and suffer. If we are not on good terms with neighbors, not harmoniously always find unsatisfied, conflicts, quarrels, lawsuits, fights, and harm to others.

If there is no harmony in the same group, the unit will disintegrate before or after because there is no unity and sympathy for each other. Therefore, we know how to apply spiritual harmony in daily life; people know to love and help each other with human love. Nations that do not adhere to peaceful coexistence will have unwanted wars. As a result, people will take sufferings and pains that are the dangers of discord. Harmony is the most crucial factor in all jobs, all organizations, and the community. A family knows how to living in harmony, that family is happy, a nation is harmonious, that nation becomes stable and long-term, everyone knows how to living in harmony, the world will have no more war and turmoil. By compassion, the Buddha has given out his disciples and humanity the six concords, which are methods of peaceful coexistence both physically and mentally.

They are:

## 1) The concord of the body

It means that we should live harmoniously with everyone, in all circumstances, at work, school, traffic, etc. In any case, situations we should not have force or bad speech with each other. In the family, we must be respectful and be in concord with each other's as between wife and husband, brothers and sisters, parents, and children also have absolute respect and respect for each other. In Vietnam, we have a folk song: It means: "Oh! Calabash, you must love the squash, although you are of different kinds, you are on the same pergola". Calabash and squash although are a different kind but they are living on the same pergola. Similarly, all sentient beings on this earth are different skin colors such as black skin, white skin, yellow skin, high nose, low nose, etc. But we must live in harmony, no conflict, no fighting. Although skin color is different, blood is the same color, red color, and warm heart.

Therefore, we are living in the same circumstances, conditions. We should always live in harmony, help, should not harm each other.

## 2) The concord of speech

Having seen the importance of bodily concord, we should the speech concord. The word plays a vital role in communication, which can cause all conflicts and alleviate others' suffering. Words can make people closer together, and it also can keep people apart forever. Because people an defeat each other verbally, ridicule, tease and criticize each other verbally. Therefore, we should have gentle and kind words to each other. Wife and husband can break by a bitter expression. In a family won't harmony if without kindly words. In society, too, which will have conflicts, fighting, and even have wars comes from words. Therefore, the Buddha had said that we should use the gentle, kind, and polite word to avoid harming each other. Although very simple, it is easy to make communication mistakes if we do not care about using common names.

## 3) Concord of the mind

The Gautama Buddha has said in Dhammapada verse 1 " Mind precedes all mental states. The mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox." The mind is an essential factor in all actions. Having the nature of mind understood, the Buddha has taught his practitioners should cultivate mental concord the virtues. He taught his disciples to cultivate the virtues of harmony of mind through the cessation of greed, hatred, delusion, and attachments that our mind becomes calm and mindful. If we control them well by an external power, the mind is not really in harmony and broken. Therefore, we must cultivate the virtues of concord of mind, which formed on sympathy and equanimity.

## 4) The concord of morality

A person's morality and good conduct are always essential in building a peaceful and happy society. In an environment or an organization, all people must respect and obey the general disciplines. In Buddhism, in a sangha community, each individual should abide by the commandments depend on each person's hierarchy. In the Mahāyāna tradition, the Bhikshu, two hundred fifty and precepts (250 sīla); the Bhikshuni, three hundred and forty-eight precepts (348 sīla); the srāmanera and the srāmaṇerī (male and female novice), keep ten principles (Dasasila); the laity keeps five precepts (Pancasila). a Buddhist family, if all members of the family do not get along, do not follow the general rules of the family, that family will not be harmonious and happy. In school, tudents do not obey the laws of the school. They learn and play according to their individual preferences. That place cannot be called a school. In a society, people live without discipline, disobeying that country's rules, that nation will be rebellious. Therefore, all of us living in an organization or working together in any organization need to follow that society and organization's rules. We try to live in harmony, and we will become happy.

## 5) The concord of knowledge

When a person has a full understanding of the study dharma and the practice dharma, they should share that knowledge with others who do not have the experience yet. If we don't share our knowledge with others, we become greedy, selfish, and people will hate it. In this case, if people understand right and know right without expressing their views and opinions to everyone right and wrong, it will lead to division and harm to each other.

## 6) The concord in the distribution of sustenance

In Buddhism, if someone gives food, clothes, blankets, medicine, etc., they must be divided equally, not for their love, give someone less; give someone more, should fairness follow a small and significant hierarchy with respect. To all people, be happy and content.

In society, the reason for inequality with each other is conflict, class division, and not known for mutual benefits, which is a critical condition to ensure the harmony of a collective. Following this principle, everyone no longer distinguishes between individual interests and collective interests. Seeing that all material values are shared, everyone must be equally divided regardless. If we practice the six concord well above, every member will become happy and harmonious in the family. In a society that will become peaceful, prosperous, rich, and powerful, and there will be no more conflicts, killing each other. The Buddha has given out these six principles of life that help us have more in-depth insight and have mindful. When our minds have mindfulness, we can stop all conflicts and help others avoid them, which also means that we are peacebuilding. In the fourth precept, the order of interbeing by ThichNhatHanh mentions suffering. Suffering is a state of mind that is not mindful; when greed, hatred, delusion, and attachment cease to exist, which means that we have contributed to the alleviation of individual and collective suffering, the world will be peaceful when our minds are mindful. We should not view conflict as the source of problems and violence and as an opportunity for knowledge enhancement, healing, and personal growth. Engaged Buddhism has supported peacebuilding through actively adopting alternative, nonviolent strategies for conflict resolution, such as dialogue, law enforcement, negotiation, and diplomacy. ThichNhatHanh founded this movement to solve conflicts and topple the dictatorship and religious discrimination regime in Vietnam in the 1960s.

## Engaged Buddhism And Education Problem

For nearly three thousand years, the point of view on Buddhist education is still valid today. Nowadays, Buddhist education is concentrated in the Sangha and develops out of the social community in all classes from teenagers to young people, the middle-aged and the elderly increasing tendency to learn about Buddhism.

The direction of Buddhist education does not promote or promote blind belief; on the contrary, the right understanding is the foundation for enlightenment and liberation. It is a driving force to promote social development and a foundation for love and understanding. Because only wisdom and compassion can repel nefarious acts such as social evils, school violence, and family; vested interests, etc., stems from ignorance.

According to a survey by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, in December 2020, school violence is one of the hottest problems in schools today. 80% of students reported having experienced gender-based violence in school at least once; 71% experienced school violence within the previous six months. Of these, 73% of students experienced emotional violence, including cursing, intimidation, punishment, harassment, humiliation, 41% physical violence and 19% sexual violence.

An effective solution in Buddhism to deal with school violence is that parents should encourage their children to come to the monastery to plant the seeds of love, compassion, and understanding of humanity's roots, distinguishing right and wrong, thereby preventing violent acts. Many Buddhist monasteries across the country regularly hold a one-day retreat. A summer retreat is valuable for them to cultivate personality and morality and close contact with friends, compassion, sympathy, sharing. Through the monasteries' courses that allowed them to see their

mistakes, many of them, after taking part in the monks' Dharma lessons, have become more active in their lifestyles. In addition to teaching knowledge, schools need to teach children the moral path by bringing in schools lessons of filial piety to their parents, respecting teachers, and learning educational methods of Buddhism to awaken your kindness. - First, bring compassion and non-violence to the school to love each other, help each other, and give up their grudge in friends' relationship. - Second, encouraging students to participate in retreats to relieve stress, anxiety, and Buddhist ethics retreats will help them experience and understand cause and effect, human morality. Then, the students will be aware of their actions. - Third, Buddhist families should apply the five moral precepts of Buddhism and the spirit of six harmonies to educate their children. If we try to apply these methods in schools, school violence will decrease, students also learn well, have good morals, are respectful with their parents, and make a well civilized society.

## The Environment And Ecology

In no small part, a dedication to environmental conservation based on ecological consciousness, which is the center of Buddhist thought and practice, has inspired the rise of engaged Buddhism. Natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis, etc., often endanger individuals. In the history of humanity, these are the issues that people have to bear. Today, people are also the main reason for the rise in this disaster. Regular natural disasters, such as air pollution, groundwater depletion, soil erosion, desertification, climate change, and habitat degradation, are other terrible hazards affecting humanity. Those catastrophes happen everywhere, anyone who can feel them, too. But amid all the risks, nature is increasingly mistreated by people because of the needs of life and economic development.

In many instances, such as hunting, fishing, killing, deforestation, over-mining, misuse of pesticides and contaminants in many different types, the actions of damaging nature by humans in the environment have lost much natural beauty. The Buddhist views of ecology take the human to the core of the universe. People need to be valued, and it is essential to respect and protect the environment. People should also be aware that forests are also called nature lungs, supplying people with shade and fresh air, but forests.

When the lungs stop functioning, people die; Nature will be lost if the forest is destroyed, too. The theory of dependent origination in Buddhism holds that life is reciprocal between species and everything; nature is a part of the human body; man cannot exist without the environment. If the environment is seriously polluted, the human physical body, or human life, will be destroyed. The protection of the environment is also the protection of human life. Buddhism respects the life of all kinds of sentient beings, encourages the maintenance of friendly relationships, sustainable harmony between people and all things, with nature and the universe as a condition to protect life. Faced with the current deteriorating environment problem, engaged Buddhism into environmental protection is the encouragement of the Buddhist followers to be vegetarian and vegetarian and protect the health of vegetarians themselves. It is also a way to protect the environment; organize retreats with rich and diversified contents, in which environmental protection is focused.

From the Buddhist point of view, its members' well-being is seen as an integral part of the ecosystem, whatever the growth of a career in modern society. Since then, social development has been facilitated in a safe way that does not affect the natural world in which individuals live. Therefore, the earth is the home of all living beings and non-sentient beings, and love, loving-kindness, and morality are the spiritual value of man introducing to nature, which is a positive contribution to social construction and the protection of a healthy environment. In comparison to other religions, Buddhism does not position humans and their development above and against the natural world of animals, plants, and physical environments, some scholars have argued. Pancasila (The First Precept in the Five Precepts) The Buddha speaks of not killing sentient beings, including not damaging plants and flora. There are variations in the practice of rainy retreat (vassāvāsa) for Buddhist monks and nuns from 15 April to 15 July according to the Mahāyāna tradition. From 16 June to 15 September (purimikāvassupanāyikā) according to the Theravāda tradition, depending on each country; these months are the rainy season of the year, insects multiply, the Sangha is a Buddha disciple, and he will step on them if he goes out for alms. Therefore, the three months of the rainy retreat of Sangha also stem from this relation. When Buddha was still alive, he, along with his disciples, has chosen quiet forests shrouded by trees for meditation practice to blend his breath with nature. Nature as a friend, the trees shields the sun; the fresh air is the breath for all beings. Such harmony with nature is also found in the poems of the Theragāthā (verse: 1063,1068,1070 and 992). Buddha's life was also associated with nature, he was born under an Ashok tree, and when he walked, seven lotus flowers bloomed under his feet. During his teenage years, he meditated under the plum tree, his first sermon at the Deer Park, and achieved enlightenment under the bodhiree. When he passed away, he lay between two Sala trees; suddenly, a rain of unseasonal flowers fell over his body as reverence. Many consider it all to be a coincidence.

Still, given the Buddhist ideal, it is a chain of cohesion for human relationships with animals, trees, and landscapes worthy of praise. A peaceful, non-violent society always takes the right livelihood as the basis, does not harm others for personal benefit. This idea is linked to the six rules of harmony that the Buddha spoke to his sangha: harmony in thought, speech, deeds, morality, knowledge, and sustenance distribution. The Buddhist approach is engaged in social and economic development that takes human morality as the standard. The economy thrives, does not affect the nation's good traditions, creates a close relationship, and supports both sides; a fair society without conflict often contributes to the ecosystem's overall beauty. The Buddhist tradition encourages individuals to abstain from unnecessary luxury, simplicity, contentment, fulfillment, detachment, rich compassion, and modesty, making a positive contribution to creating a healthy ecosystem. Forests play an essential part in the meditation practice of Buddhist monks. In addition to practicing meditation, they take shelter in the woods to preserve and protect endangered wildlife and establish a close bond between them. A forest is a place that enables monks to develop wisdom and mindfulness, they are genuinely content with the world apart from others, and it is tranquil and a good condition for the practice of meditation. Their attitude towards the wild, in particular, is very optimistic, and they have let go of their needs and are content with simplicity. As the Zen master NhatHanh said: "We classify other animals and living beings as 'Nature', a thing apart from us, and act as if we're somehow separate from it. Then we ask, "How should we deal with Nature?" We should deal with Nature the same way we should deal with ourselves: nonviolently. Human beings and Nature are inseparable. Just as we should not harm ourselves, we should not harm Nature."

Cooperation and mutual support is the point of engaged Buddhism, ecosystem, and sentient beings, not abusing, manipulating, or dominating each other. Man is like all forms of life and is part of the world, so man must protect nature.

The mother of all animals, including man, is nature. Therefore, people should not struggle with the essence of cruelty and conserve wildlife to maintain their better and better habitat. It's individuals who do well by themselves. The Buddha said: "enjoins a reverent and non-violent attitude not only to all sentient beings but also, with great emphasis, to trees. Every follower of the Buddha ought to plant a tree every few years and look after it until it is safely established, and the Buddhist economist can demonstrate without difficulty that the universal observation of this rule would result in a high rate of genuine economic development independent of any foreign aid. Much of the economic decay of Southeast Asia (as of many other parts of the world) is undoubtedly due to a heedless and shameful neglect of trees." In Buddhist philosophy, all human suffering is rooted in the arising of greed. Natural disasters, accidents, floods, coronavirus, etc., are also rooted in human greed. If people do not have greed, like cutting trees for profit, there will be no mountain failures. Not because of the desire to take over the world economics and geography, there will be no pandemic covid 19 happening. That is the unknown danger of ending and returning freedom and fresh air to all humankind. Every day in the world, hundreds of thousands of people die from the covid-19 virus plus the global economic crisis. Many people are unemployed, many businesses, large and small, have to close down, all stemmed from the greed and lack of awareness of the human. Therefore, individuals ought to be masters of both their thoughts and actions to have no regrets. Non-violence (ahimsā), loving-kindness (mettā), and compassion (karunā) contribute to an ecological activity that is not confined to humans but other species as well. Nature has been agriculturalized and regulated since the development of science and technology. Because of our convenience, that has affected sentient beings: for that development, so many people had to migrate, so many animals perish each year, the earth itself heats up. The pioneering standard that government policy should follow in Buddhist philosophy, economic and social growth, is the well-being of all society members as a whole. Economic growth should be aimed at improving the social order's health and well-being, without regard to the natural structures in which humanity resides. Buddhism promotes moderation, simplicity and contentment, equanimity, compassion, and morality by pointing out that the trivial pursuit of luxury and excess is the source of misery. It is a significant contribution to the development of a stable ecological society.

### **Conclusion**

The engaged Buddhism movement ushered in a new era of Buddhist thought and practise. Not because being a Buddhist makes these ideas and approaches to social activity better or worse than traditional Buddhism, but because they are a new way of applying Buddhist thought. Rather, practitioners practise the Dharma to enlighten themselves, but they also engage in society with compassion to help others reduce suffering and achieve enlightenment. Participating in the society of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is based on this concept.

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