

**A Practical Way of Buddhist  
Peace-building for the World Peace:  
An Applying the Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma  
to Everyone's Life for Peace**

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Jinwol (\*)

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## **Introduction**

It is a privilege to have an opportunity to present my thoughts about Buddhist Peace-building at the 11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Day of Vesak (UNDV) Celebration and Conference in Vietnam 2014. Having announced, the main theme of the event is “Buddhist Perspective towards achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and one of the sub-themes is “Peace-building and Post Conflict Recovery.” Since UN General Assembly made a resolution in 1999, appreciating and recognizing the Vesak, the thrice-sacred day of the Birth, Enlightenment and Passing Away of Sakyamuni-buddha, to be celebrated by all humanity, it seems that Buddhists have more concerned about and cooperated with UN, which stands for world peace. The eight MDGs, which range from halving extreme poverty

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and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015, were set in 2000 with aspiration of the new millennium. As a blueprint agreed by all the countries and leading development institutions of the world, MDGs have been a global mission and a successful anti-poverty push in history. It has been possible because governments, international organizations, and civil society groups around the world have worked in cooperation. On this occasion, we Buddhists, as members of the global community and supporters of UN, should pay attention to the MDGs and Peace-building to find out a Buddhist way to contribute to achieve the common purpose for wellbeing of all sentient beings in the world.

To reflect the past years of the works on MDGs, firstly let's remind the 2013 Report about the situation mentioned by Ban, Ki-moon, UN Secretary General, and then, its momentum commented by Wu, Hongbo, Under-SG for the ECOSOC Affairs:

Significant and substantial progress has been made in meeting many of the targets—including halving the number of people living in extreme poverty and the proportion of people without sustainable access to improved sources of drinking water. The proportion of urban slum dwellers declined significantly. Remarkable gains have been made in the fight against malaria and tuberculosis. There have been visible improvements in all health areas as well as primary education... .. Our resource base is in serious decline, with continuing losses of forests, species and fish stocks, in a world already experiencing the impacts of climate change... .. In more than a decade of experience in working towards the MDGs, we have learned that focused global development efforts can make a difference. Through accelerated action, the world can achieve the MDGs and generate momentum for an ambitious and inspiring post-2015 development framework. Now is the time to step up our efforts to build a more just, secure and sustainable future for all.

Efforts to achieve a world of prosperity, equity, freedom, dignity and peace will continue beyond 2015. The United Nations is working concertedly with governments, civil society and other partners to build on the momentum generated by

the MDGs and to craft an ambitious, yet realistic, post-2015 development agenda. A successful conclusion to the MDGs will be an important building block for a successor development agenda. And volumes of experience and lessons learned along the way can only benefit the prospects for continued progress. The analysis in this report, based on a wide range of statistics, shows that the actions of all stakeholders are coalescing in the achievement of many of the MDGs. At the same time, many items on the agenda remain incomplete. The results of this report give us a clear indication where our efforts must be directed in the days remaining before the 2015 deadline.<sup>1</sup>

It is the time to consider that how we complete the MDGs in the next year and think about the post -2015 regarding the matters and other challenges. However, I think that MDGs have been basically focusing on urgent matters of physical and material aspects of people's lives but not much about the metaphysical and spiritual ones, considering dignity and integration of human being. Therefore, as a Seon (Zen) practitioner, I would like to bring attention to the religious and spiritual aspects of human being in terms of MDG and peace through a Buddhist perspective. In common sense, Buddhism has been known as the most peaceful religion in the world. Having organized for world peace, UN properly recognized Buddhism and Sakyamuni Buddha, as a peace advocate and great teacher for all human beings who need wisdom and compassion to manage their lives in peace. Therefore, Buddhists should contribute to UN and the world for wellbeing of all people by the way of peace-building not only for the physical and material aspects but the mental and spiritual dimensions for all human beings on the Earth.

Generally, Bodhidharma, an Indian master, has been known as the first Patriarch of Chan (Zen), a Buddhist meditation practice and a Mahayana school in China. However, whose spiritual heritage has been influential in Korea, Japan and around Asia. The Buddhist meditation practice makes mind peaceful and compassionate. Anyone's speech and action are derived from one's mind. Therefore, it is important to understand that peace-building in one's mind should come first

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1. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

before the one's any action as the fundamental or primary condition for peace-building in the world. Let me first introduce the peace-building and peacekeeping efforts of UN to understand situations of the world as a base to discuss about Buddhist point of peace. Then I will find out and point a Buddhist way of contribution to the world in cooperation with UN regarding profound and lasting peace.

### **Peace-building and Peacekeeping Efforts of UN**

#### ***Concept and Mission of the Peace-building and Peacekeeping of UN***

Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist host countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace. Peacekeeping has unique strengths, including legitimacy, burden sharing, and an ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates. UN Peacekeepers provide security and the political and peace-building support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.<sup>2</sup>

As two of the UN's four main purposes of the Charter, "To keep peace throughout the world, and to develop friendly relations among nations," UN organized Security Council as a main body, which has been responsible for maintaining international peace and security, established Peacekeeping Mission as a subsidiary organ.<sup>3</sup> The Peacekeeping mission is lead by the Department of Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO) and works to create the conditions for lasting peace in a country torn by conflict. UN peacekeeping has been comprised of civilian, police and military personnel, as of 31 January 2014, workforce in the field consisted of: 85,269 serving troops and military observers with 13,075 police personnel from 123 countries; 5,190 international civilian personnel and 11,698 local civilian staffs (31 October 2013); 2,003 UN Volunteers. They have also been assisting in political processes and reforming judicial systems, as

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2. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/peacekeeping.shtml>

3. <http://www.un.org/en/sc/subsidiary/>

well as training law enforcement and disarming with supporting the return of internally displaced person and refugees.<sup>4</sup>

Let us reflect concepts of the key words and set a working reference. The term 'Peacekeeping' means, as an adjective, "intended to help stop people fighting and prevent war or violence in a place where this is likely,"<sup>5</sup> and refers to prevent the resumption of fighting following a conflict.<sup>6</sup> It is noticeable that 'Peacemaking' also refers to stopping an ongoing conflict to make peace. Then, 'Peace-building' means to describe interventions that are designed to prevent the start or resumption of violent conflict by creating a sustainable peace.<sup>7</sup> It is an approach to an entire set of interrelated efforts that support peace. Accordingly, peace-building efforts refer to reduce structural or direct violence and aim to manage, mitigate, resolve and transform central aspects of the conflict through diplomacy as well as through civil society peace processes and informal dialogue, negotiation, and mediation; to change beliefs, attitudes and behaviors to transform the short and long term dynamics between individuals and groups toward a more stable, peaceful coexistence. Generally, the conflict means an incompatible state of discord caused by the actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests, which can be internal or external. Therefore, a social conflict refers to the perceived incompatibility of interests or aspirations of groups in a society and,

4. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/about>

5. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.1114.

6. It is defined peacekeeping as an instrument for peace and security by three mutually reinforcing core principles: the consent of the parties to the conflict, impartiality without favor or prejudice to any of the parties to the conflict, and the refrain from the use of force, based on credibility, legitimacy and ownership. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/peacekeeping.shtml>

7. It is said that Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung first created the term peace-building in 1970s through his promotion of systems that would create sustainable peace. Such systems needed to address the root causes of conflict and support local capacity for peace management and conflict resolution. Galtung's work emphasized a bottom-up approach that decentralized social and economic structures, amounting to a call for a societal shift from structures of coercion and violence to a culture of peace; American sociologist John Paul Lederach also proposed a concept of peace-building as engaging grassroots, local, NGO, international and other actors to create a sustainable peace process.

an international conflict is based on the refusal of governments to negotiate territorial issues or to allow freedom of religion, language and culture.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it seems that conflict resolution and peace-building show similarity and go together to a situation for common purpose for peace. However, it can be said that peace-building has broader and more inclusive meaning than peacemaking and peacekeeping; then, it is needed more around the world in meantime.

It is remarkable that peace-building activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize society politically and socioeconomically, to ensure civilians have freedom from fear, before, during, and after violent conflict. However, the UN Secretary General's Policy Committee defined peace-building in 2007 like this: "Peace-building involves a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development." Peace-building tasks have been various depending on the situation and the agent of peace-building. Successful peace-building activities create an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace; reconcile opponents; prevent conflict from restarting; integrate civil society; create rule of law mechanisms; and address underlying structural and societal issues. Therefore, the civil components have been deployed in all DPKO-led peacekeeping operations and the most special political missions.<sup>9</sup> It seems that there is more possibility of civil participation in which religious and spiritual leaders of peace initiatives could contribute to the Peace-building task of UN Peacekeeping Mission.

### ***Civil Aspects of UN Peace-building and Peacekeeping Mission***

*Just as I am struck by the diversity of challenges that peacekeeping is required to address, and the range of mandates we must fulfil, Civil Affairs Officers' roles can vary greatly from mission to*

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8. Sungho Kang, John W. McDonald and Chinsoo Bae eds. *Conflict Resolution and Peace Building: The role of NGOs in Historical Reconciliation and Territorial Issues*, Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2009, p.13.

9. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/about>.

*mission. Even in one mission, the role of Civil Affairs Officers can change significantly during different phases after the conflict. However, the fundamentals remain at the core of success for peacekeeping missions: building relationships with local actors at the community level; listening to, liaising with and supporting local efforts at stabilization, conflict resolution and peacebuilding; and supporting and building local capacity at the community level in order to strengthen the reach and authority of the state. When the conflict ends and the peace agreement is completed, the media spotlight will focus on the capital and the high-level political processes. But it is local communities and their leaders who must perform the difficult daily work of securing and building the peace... Together we are strengthening the capacity of peacekeeping to meet the hopes for peace of millions of people around the world. (Herve Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UN)<sup>10</sup>*

From the above quotation, we can understand the importance of the civil efforts and function, regarding the peace-building and peacekeeping mission. It is obvious that there would be no real peace among people in the place where conflicts are not seen under the control of military and police power without civil and humanistic management. Therefore, it is critical that civil participation to any peace-building and peacekeeping mission of UN and other local conflict managements. Among civil components, religious and spiritual leaders should be counted as local and community leaders of the society who have concerned and interested in peace-building for the people, not only regarding UN mission but also any peace related affairs. It is known that since the 1990s of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations, have demonstrated their abilities to help reduce conflict, and there have been many thousands of individuals and organizations outside governments and inter-governmental organizations that have worked for peace and achieved significant results around the world.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it is natural and imperative that Buddhist leaders should take parts in

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10. [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/civilhandbook/Civil\\_Affairs\\_Handbook.pc,p.4](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/civilhandbook/Civil_Affairs_Handbook.pc,p.4)

11. Sungho Kang, op.cit., pp.13-14.

the peace-building mission anywhere and anytime no matter how situation is difficult, because genuine Buddhists, who must take care of all sentient beings, have to be the peace advocate and peace-builder in Dharma and compassion. Let me introduce a Buddhist way of peace-building and peacekeeping among people around the world for both the individual and communal dimensions in terms of inner peace of one's mind and outer peace of people of the society.

## **A Practical Way of Peace-building of Bodhidharma**

### *Life and Image of Bodhidharma*

It is known that Bodhidharma was a Buddhist monk and Dharma master who lived in India and China during the 5-6th century CE. He was the third son of a Tamil Pallava king from Kanchipuram, India. It seems that Bodhidharma travelled from south India to China by sea through Sumatra, Palembang, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. He has been traditionally credited as the transmitter of Dhyana (Chan/Seon/Zen), a Mahayana Buddhist meditation practice, to China, and regarded as its first Patriarch of the Chan order in China, as well as he also began the physical training of the Shaolin monks that led to the creation of Chinese martial arts such as Shaolinquan. However, little contemporary biographical information on Bodhidharma is extant, and subsequent accounts became layered with legend.<sup>12</sup> It is recently expected that joint researches about Bodhidharma should be carried out in cooperation with related countries such as India, China, Korea Japan, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. There might be a lot of potential data for the studies on the archeological and historic resources of India and other countries considering recent discovery and works in the south Indian region and interdisciplinary scholarship of global context.<sup>13</sup>

It is said that "in the Zen Buddhism Bodhidharma is universally looked up to as the prime originator of its doctrines. The ultimate of

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12. *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bodhidharma>

13. Tsutomu Kambe, *Bodhidharma*, Chennai: Institute of Asian Studies 2012, p.xiii.



Zen Buddhism is always taught in terms of the words and thoughts of his and thereafter, the study of Bodhidharma means the fundamental understanding of Zen Buddhism itself and the grasp of its depths at the same time.<sup>14</sup> It is true as Dumoulin said that images of founders often get obscured by legend and their supposed teachings detached from the past in order the better to highlight their uniqueness and originality. For example he pointed out the famous four-line stanza attributed to Bodhidharma, "A special transmission outside the scriptures, not founded upon words and letters; by pointing directly to [one's] mind it lets one see into [one's own true] nature and [thus] attain Buddhahood." For latter generations these words represented the quintessence of Zen as embodied in the figure of Bodhidharma.<sup>15</sup> It is written about Bodhidharma in the *Transmission of the Lamp* that:

The six congregations all vowed to take refuge [in the teaching of the Master]. Accordingly, his influence covered southern India and his reputation spread across the five [regions of] India. Scholars both far and near turned to him as grass and tree bend before the wind. During the passing of some sixty years innumerable people were delivered [from bondage to freedom... ..The Emperor declared, "since my accession to the throne, temples have been built, scriptures copied, and monks saved without number. What kind of merits has been accumulated?" The Master replied, "No merit." The Emperor asked, "Why no merit?" The Master explained, "(Such deeds) bear but mall fruits in human and heavenly [worlds], and are causes of births and deaths. They are like shadows following objects. They look as if they exist but have no reality." The Emperor asked, "Then what is true merit?" The Master answered, "The pure wisdom is wonderfully complete, and the nature of its essence is immaterial. Such merit as this is not to be sought by worldly [means]." Again the Emperor asked, "What is the first principle of the Sacred [Teaching]?" The Master replied, "It is vastness itself. There is nothing holy." The Emperor demanded, "Who is it speaking to

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14. Shindai J. Sekiguchi, *A Study of Bodhidharma: Thoughts of Bodhidharma & Development of Zen Buddhism*, Tokyo: 春秋社, 1960, "An Abstract" p.2

15. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History vol. I: India and China*, Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005, p.85.

me?" The Master answered, "I don't know."... ..Hui K'o asked, "May I hear about the dharma-seal of Buddha?" The Master said, "The dharma-seal is not something which can be heard about from others." Hui K'o said, "My mind is not yet at peace. Pray set it at peace for me, Master!" The Master said, "Bring me your mind, and I will set it at peace for you." Hui K'o answered, "I have searched for it, but in the end it is unobtainable." The Master said, "Your mind has been set at peace."<sup>16</sup>

From the citation above, we can understand greatness and characteristics of thoughts and attitude of Bodhidharma in terms of spiritual practice and view of merit of life. It is remarkable story and message that how Hui K'o, the Second Patriarch of Chan (Zen) tradition of China, could make his mind peace by Bodhidharma who let his disciple realize the own mind.

### ***A Way of Peace-building for An Individual and Peoples of the World***

Among several texts attributed to Bodhidharma, the *Outline of Practice* is known as genuine one of his authorship. Let me introduce the essential parts of the text:

Many roads lead to the Path, but basically there are only two: reason and practice. To enter by reason means to realize the essence through instruction and to believe that all living things share the same true nature, which isn't apparent because it's shrouded by sensation and delusion. Those who turn from delusion back to reality, who meditate on walls, the absence of self and other, the oneness of mortal and sage, and who remain unmoved even by scriptures are in complete and unspoken agreement with reason. Without moving, without effort, they enter we say by reason. To enter by practice refers to four all-inclusive practices: suffering injustice, adapting to conditions, seeking nothing, and practicing Dharma... ..First, suffering injustice...I accept it with an open heart and without complaint

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16. Tao Yuan, comp., Sohaku Ogata trans. *The Transmission of the Lamp*, Wolfeboro, New Hampshire: Longwood Academic, 1990, p.67-69.

of injustice. The sutras say, “When you meet with adversity don’t be upset, because it makes sense.” With such understanding you’re in harmony with reason. And by suffering injustice you enter the Path. Second, adapting to conditions...while success and failure depend on conditions, the mind neither waxes nor wanes. Those who remain unmoved by the wind of joy silently follow the Path. Third, seeking nothing...All phenomena are empty. They contain nothing worth desiring... The sutras say, “To seek is to suffer. To seek nothing is bliss.” When you seek nothing, you’re on the Path. Fourth, practicing the Dharma...The Dharma is the truth that all natures are pure. By this truth, all appearances are empty. Defilement and attachment, subject and object don’t exist... ...Thus, through their own practice they’re able to help others and glorify the Way of Enlightenment. And as with charity, they also practice the other virtues.<sup>17</sup>

From the quotation above, we can say that the message of practice is simple and clear to understand and practice for everyone. It could be apply not only to an individual but also peoples of states around the world. Here the Way or Path (Tao) refers to Dharma, Bodhi and Nirvana or Zen.<sup>18</sup> I think it is possible that the Path here to build for both individual person and communal society in terms of peace and happiness. Practice of Bodhidharma is well harmonized in balance with reason and practice. We should believe and treat others as us considering that “all living things share the same true nature” although “it’s shrouded by sensation and delusion” which could be eliminated and overcome by recovering the original true nature through Zen meditation practice. It is obvious in common sense that if one seeks peace and happiness then, the other one seeks the same things too; if one doesn’t like fighting and unhappiness then, the other one also doesn’t like the same things, because it is the reason of Golden Rule in a situation. If one overcomes ones egoism as well as defilements, one could attain freedom and liberation from the tension and suffering of conflict with others.

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17. *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, Red Pine trans. New York: North Point Press, 1987, pp.3-7.

18. *Ibid.* p.115.

Regarding the practice we should reflect the reality. When those who search for the Path of peace encounter adversity, it is encourage that they should think to themselves, "in the past I've wandered through all manner of existence, often angry without cause and guilty of numberless transgressions. Now though I do not wrong, I'm punished by my past. Neither gods nor men can foresee when an evil deed will bear its fruit. I accept it with an open heart without complaint of injustices."<sup>19</sup> It is a practice of patience to overcome one's egoism and hatred as well as to care of others friendly. Generally, as mortals in the situations, we're ruled by conditions, not by ourselves. All the sufferings and joy we experience depend on conditions. If one should be blessed in peace as reward, it's the fruit of seed planted by one in the past. If conditions change, it ends. If we want peace, we should build and keep conditions of peace. We should overcome ignorance through realizing reality of conditions. Most people of the world are deluded and longing for something in greed. However, the wise wake up and choose reason over custom. They fix their minds on the sublime and let their bodies change with the seasons. If one wants peace, one should overcome one's greed and share one's resources with others friendly. The Dharma is the way we should go for peace and happiness. It seems that the Dharma is the law to build and keep peace and harmony in people's minds and societies around the world. If one wants peace and happiness, one should practice Dharma and to realize them.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it can be said that the best way for peace-building in the individual and people around the world is practicing Dharma without hatred, greed and ignorance.

### **Conclusion**

It is known that Buddhism is the religion and culture of peace. As a Buddhist monk and Seon (Zen) practitioner, I have reviewed first the MDGs and Peacekeeping efforts of UN, considering how Buddhists could contribute the UN and the world for the peace-building. Then I introduced the teachings of Bodhidharma, who was an Indian Buddhist monk and the first patriarch of Zen tradition in China. His way of meditation practice has been beneficial for not only the personal but

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19. Ibid. p4-5.

20. Ibid. p5-7.

also people of societies around the world in terms of the peace and happiness. I believe that if anyone practice the Zen meditation and overcome hatred, greed and ignorance by compassion and wisdom, peace and happiness should be realized in the mind of anyone and on Earth. It is a Buddhist way to contribute UN for achieving the MDGs and Peacekeeping in the mental and spiritual dimensions beyond physical and material aspects in terms of humanity and civil effort. I hope that everyone practices the way of meditation of Bodhidharma, and attains Enlightenment and the ultimate freedom, as well as experiences peace which could make a change not only for oneself but also society around world, including UN.