

## **Chapter III**

### **The Status and Role of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in Social Development**

#### **3.1 The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Response Conflicts.**

##### **3.1.1 Social Conflicts.**

The Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs's role in Buddhist activities and social activities bring benefits to people. However, there are also a lot of social conflicts as debating, arguing, disputing, jurisdiction, haggling, bartering. In order to reduce these problems, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha follow the Buddha's teachings and address the 'social welfare,'<sup>1</sup> as well as the 'human's benefit'<sup>2</sup> of Buddhist activities. Dignāga mentioned that "The Buddha became a valid person because he possessed the mind that wished to benefit others".<sup>3</sup> Therefore, today the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs maintain a wish for social welfare and engage themselves in the society through activities that are beneficial to everyone.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thich Nu Nhu Thanh who summoned a congress of the Mahāyāna Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. During the first congress in 1956, all the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs from Northern, Central, and Southern Vietnam gathered at Hue Lam temple. The aim of the second congress, which gathered in 1972, was to review the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's activities after

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<sup>1</sup> James Midgley, **Social Development: The Development Perspective in Social Welfare**, (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1995), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Thich Tri Quang, **Engaged Buddhism and Development**, (Ho Chi Minh City: Culture and Information Publisher, 2008), p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Dalai Lama 14<sup>th</sup>, **Generating the Mind of Enlightenment and What Can Religion Contribute to Mankind**, tr. by Phan Chau Pha and Tieu Nho (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 1992), p. 67.

16 years of development. At present, there is the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thich Nu Tinh Nguyen who was the President of “The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee,” which has 18 of the Most Venerable Bhikkhunīs as vice presidents, and 200 of the Most Venerable Bhikkhunīs are responsible leaders and guide 26,500 Bhikkhunīs in providing services and support in the whole country.

So, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha has helped the disabled and orphans. They have built houses of gratitude, bridges, and dug wells; and provided relief for people suffering from natural disasters floods. In addition, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs guided them in the observance of the five precepts, the practice of meditation, and in preaching Dharma. Those are activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs in response to social conflict.

Remarkably, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs use skillful methods that provide assistance (Upāyakusalya)<sup>4</sup> for the awakening of loving hearts and compassion in the mind of people. Whether there are problems or conflicts with economics or other aspects of life, the human mind must still find motivation. If the motivation is good, then the consequent actions will be positive. This is the main point, which the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha were addressing and is currently doing in response to social conflicts. How can the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha respond to social conflicts? To answer this question, first, we need to know how the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha defines social conflicts.

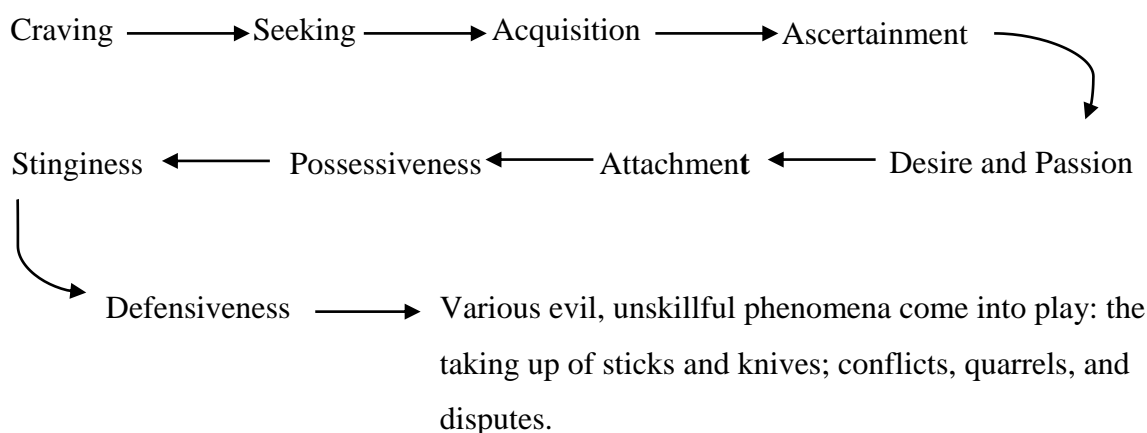
‘Social conflicts’ are conflicts in society, and they relate directly to peoples’ lives. Conflicts have many meanings and they manifest in all the motivations of people in life. In general, human beings

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<sup>4</sup> Tran Nguyen Trung, **Buddhist Dictionary Vietnamese-English**, (Vietnam: Ha Noi Religious Publication, 2004), p. 269. Upāyakusaly means an expedient method that is strategically correct or extraordinary skillful. It is a good and virtuous practice that Buddhas and Maha-Bodhisattvas use to follow and adapt to the individual capacity, personality, and inclination of sentient beings to aid and transform them from unenlightened to enlightened beings.

have many desires to satisfy based on their demands in life. The need to satisfy these demands can cause conflict. To respond to the problems of social conflicts, we must find out the reasons for the conflicts. According to Phyllis Beck Kritek, “Some conflicts are merely a denial of reality, an unwillingness to accept results, and are troublesome to confront.”<sup>5</sup> Scholar Edward Azar mentioned conflict resolution as one of the first attempts to methodically understand other problems.<sup>6</sup> According to Marx, conflicts lead to changing relations within the social structure<sup>7</sup>. The change is beneficial when the reality of the social conflict is aligned with the process of social change.

According to Buddhist teachings conflicts occur due to the craving. Mahānidāna Sutta in Digha-Nikāya explains step by step how the craving leading to the conflicts due to the mental stages occur in the individual’s mind.



<sup>5</sup> Phyllis Beck Kritek, **Negotiating at an Uneven Table - A Practical Approach to Working with Difference and Diversity**, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), p. 53.

<sup>6</sup> Edward E. Azar, **The Analysis and Management of Protracted Social Conflict**, in the *Psychodynamics of International Relationships*. Vol. II: *Unofficial Diplomacy at Work*, eds. J.D. Volkan, J.V. Montville and D.A. Julius (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1991), pp. 93-120. And also see Edward E. Azar, **The Theory of Protracted Social Conflict and the Challenge of Transforming Conflict Situations**. Monograph Series in World Affairs, 20, 2 (1983), pp. 81-99.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis A. Coser, **Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change**, the *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 8, No. 3. (Sep. 1957), p. 197.

Social conflicts arise around the social impacts of being human. Humans are social creatures and need to socialize and be in control, to some degree. Hence, there will always be some sort of conflict between us, regardless of how small or large. Therefore, the following question arises: Is ‘social conflict’ due to the human mind? The human mind consists of, desire, selfishness, claims, interests, disputing, competing, distinction, self-opinionated with tradition, culture, language, class, religion, arises conflicts.<sup>8</sup> In the Dhammapada, it is concluded that:

The mind is the forerunner of (all evil) states.  
The mind is chief; mind-made are they.<sup>9</sup>

So, we can agree that when the human mind is active it can create conflicts. In other words, the human mind thinks and then the body acts as the result of those thoughts. People’s actions can depend on the degree of good or evil that the human possesses. The results of those actions depend on how the actions were received. Therefore, social conflicts follow two patterns: (1) the social conflict brings a negative result and (2) the social conflict brings a positive result. What are conflicts with negative meanings? How about social conflicts with positive meanings? Let’s begin with social conflicts that lead to negative results.

There are many reasons to get negative results from social conflicts. First, the three poisons, desire (lobha), anger (dosa), and ignorance (moha), are always present because they are not well managed. Moreover, the three poisons lead human beings to perform negative activities, and those negative activities create conflicts that lead to a

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<sup>8</sup> G.A. Somaratne, The Document of the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Buddhist Research Seminar, Vol. 1 (January 8-10, 2010), “Buddhism: Truthful Knowledge and Quality of Life”, **Buddhist Analysis of Conflict**, (Thailand: The Buddhist Research Institutes, MCU), p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Narada, **Dhammapada**, trans, Thich Tri Sieu, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Religious Publication, 1995), p. 34.

destabilized society, economic losses, physical, mental, and spiritual problems.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, a negative conflict wastes social resources because it is useless, and will more than likely bring negative results. So, how do we process relief from the conflict, in accordance with the requirements for the development of the social objective? To relieve some conflicts, humans must work hard to minimize and prevent the spread of the negative consequences of a given social conflict.

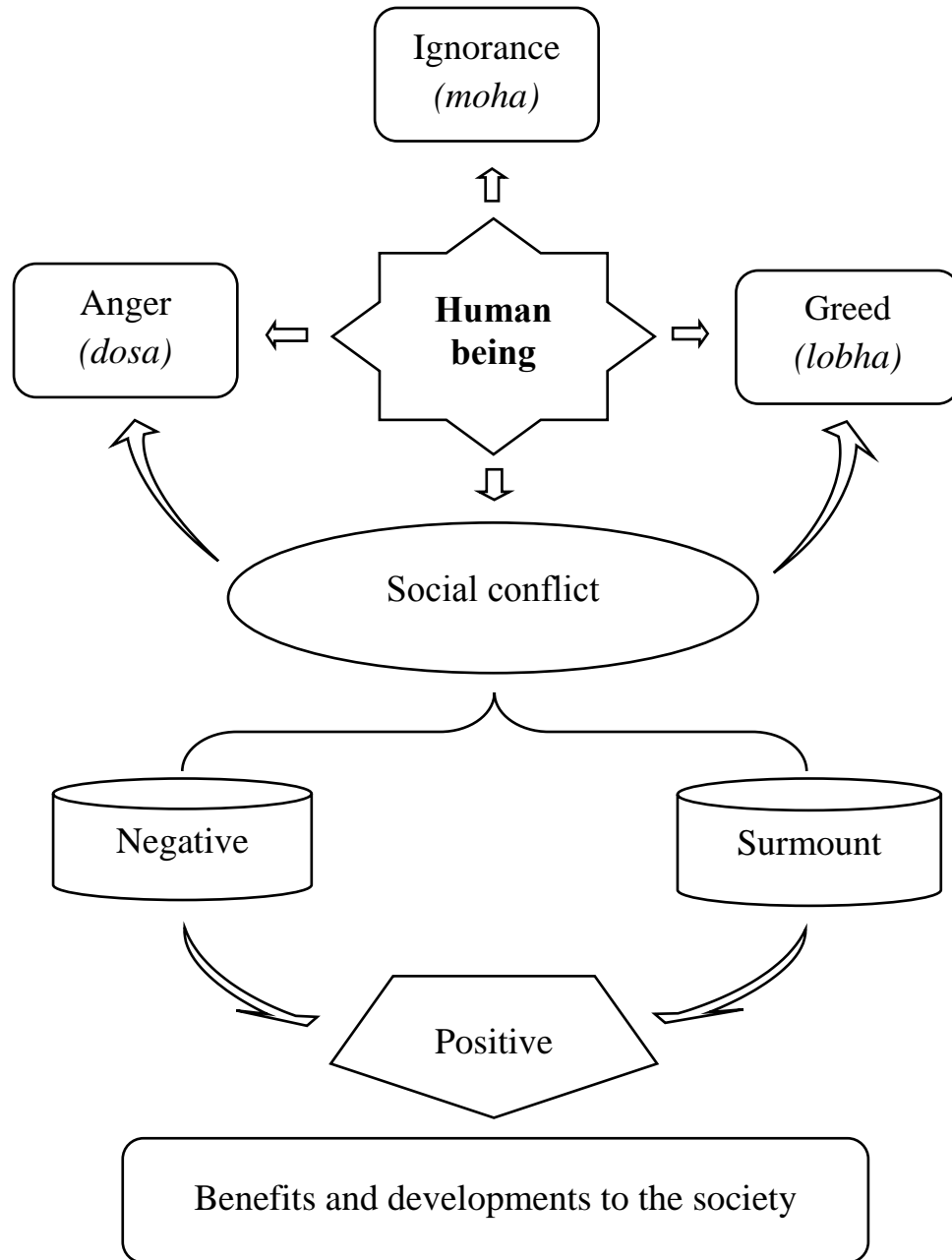
Consequently, the social conflict leading to negative results is a problem that must be surmounted, because negative conflict leads to many negative issues and unfortunately causes great damage to human beings. With that, we could conclude that the consequences of positive actions could be to our social welfare.

How about social conflicts that lead to a positive result? As we know, all organizations, in society, have conflicts, yet it is important to know that not all conflicts are negative or bad because there are many negative conflicts that could lead to positive results. This is shown very clearly that social conflicts, from the aspect of an objective perspective, scientific, and positive to “social stability” bring benefits to human beings as well as good results to society.<sup>11</sup> The following Figure offers a view of the concept:

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<sup>10</sup> HR Nishadini, “Buddhism and World Crisis”, The 12<sup>th</sup> of International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2015, May 28-30, 2015, **Buddhist Social Conflict Management Approach**, (Thailand: MCU, 2015), p. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Phramaha Hansa Dhammahaso, **Wisdom for A Harmonious and Awakening Society**, (Thailand: Bangkok, 745 Nakornchaisri Road, Dusit, 2014), pp. 55-61.

Figure 3 (3.1) **Social Conflicts.**

Based on the aforementioned information, it can be said that the conflict leads to good or bad, negative or positive results, depending on one's ability and proactive. Because each type of the conflict has content and different forms of expression, the process of the conflict is also different. Thus, in different conflict situations, a positive purpose generally leads towards goodness. This allows one to determine the

necessary changes for ensuring the well-being and development of human beings in society.<sup>12</sup> That is a positive outcome, and it is also the purpose. We have discussed the general meaning, reasons for social conflict, the social conflicts leading to negative and positive results, and the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in response to the conflict in social development. What about family conflicts? Let's discuss that in the next section, along with the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in responding to family conflicts in regard to social development.

### 3.1.2 Family Conflicts.

Every family is so important for social development because the family is the nucleus of society. It is the sum of the relationships, behaviors, values, personalities, emotions, morals, obligations, and responsibilities to the community and nation. The stability of the family is the foundation for social development. 'The families are the real hearth of the society'.<sup>13</sup> So, a healthy family also means a healthy society, and a healthy society leads to the national economy development. Moreover, everyone wants to have a peaceful and happy family life. Nevertheless, there are various family conflicts in the life. Therefore, there are happiness and conflict in every family. This section aims to discuss family conflict and solutions used by Vietnamese Bhikkhunī in responding to family conflict.

There are many causes leading to family conflict in our society nowadays. Some of the notable causes are differences in ideology, lifestyle, educational level, behavior, sexual life, economic condition, gender inequality, and so on. These causes tend to be more popular and getting more complicated. These causes may lead to conflicts between

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<sup>12</sup> Bhikkhunī Dieu Ngo, Sakyadhita: The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, "The 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam", Vol. II. **The Dedication of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs in Social Activities**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> Martinson, Floyd M, **Family in Society**, (USA: New York, 1970), p. 5.

parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, or husband and wife.

In dealing with family conflict, firstly, one should understand that there are many conflicts occurring within the family.<sup>14</sup> Do you experience conflict? Of course, all of us undeniably do. In a family, one must be dutiful, loyal, moral, perform rituals, keep obligations, and be faithful.<sup>15</sup> There are also duties that members of the family perform together, such as chores. Sometimes, conflicts operate as a means to keep peace and happiness in the family or develop the family towards goodness. It can be said that conflict is a part of life. Therefore, we do not need to be afraid of conflict. The important point is to know and understands ways of responding to or resolving conflicts, which can lead to positive results.

So, the acceptance of conflict can be used as a method of cleansing that allows misunderstanding to be brought to light. Now the members of a family can smile knowing that the conflict is an opportunity to heal the relationships between members of the family and to help families develop better, which is also an aspect of social development.

Additionally, since there are many different causes of family conflicts, there are many responses to them. One of the key elements in family conflict solving is loving kindness (Metta). The Vietnamese Bhikkhunis use different methods to develop loving kindness: listening, understanding, sympathizing, sharing, encouraging, showing acceptance, loving and forgiving, and tolerance in response to family conflicts leads to good results.

As we know, there are many situations that can lead to family conflict. They are sometimes very serious problems that are very difficult

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<sup>14</sup> Heath E. Canary & Daniel J Canary, **Family Conflict**, (UK: 65 Bridge Street Cambridge CB2 UR, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Dinh Phuc, **The Dharma Tide**, (Vietnam: Publication Hong Duc, 2012), p. 429.



to solve. Nevertheless, when hearing the words of forgiveness, conflicts become positive. Forgiveness facilitates tolerance, which opens a loving mind and inspires sympathy. At that time, the problems and mistakes that lead to the conflict will disappear, leaving behind penance for one's faults, and a mind inclined to do good.

Finally, a happy family is a family which every member observes morality. This morality can be based on personality or regulated by the society. According to the Buddhist's teaching, a happy family is built on the foundation of five precepts. By observing the five precepts, every family member lives in respect, love, and responsibility with each other. Therefore, to protect and preserve the peace and happiness in family, the lay Buddhists should live a moral life in accordance with the five precepts.

By applying the Buddha's teachings on loving-kindness, understanding and especially the five precepts, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs have helped many families to reconcile their conflicts. In the next section, we will look at how the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha contributes to the national economy.

### **3.1.3 National Economy Conflicts.**

The national economy plays an important role in social development. Therefore, when the national economy is the security of a country, it must certainly be confronted with conflicts. Those conflicts are methods used to help people realize and discover the truth of life and social development. So, are there conflicts related to the national economy in social life? Obviously, there are many fields or situations that involve conflicts. This section will focus on the essential demands of people's lives.

How does the influence of conflicts impact people's lives in society? Many more questions arise from that simple question such as the following: What are the conditions that promote the social welfare? Are there conflicts between the national economy and family life? How does

influence conflicts to the national economy? Who solves these problems? What are the methods of solving conflicts related to the national economy? Who or what can solve conflicts, which are two-sided in nature, whereas the commodity of production is based on labor? How does one gain prosperity and security?

It is the responsibility of everyone to address these questions, including the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. According to the Buddha's teaching, the Bhikkhu Saṅgha and Bhikkhunī Saṅgha are the spiritual leaders of society. They should respond and contribute positively to the national economy development of a country. As the Most Venerable Bhikkhu Ngoc Lam said that "People clergymen (pravraj)<sup>16</sup> have devoted their lives to the Buddhadharma and their good works are beneficial to all human beings."<sup>17</sup> It means the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs apply the Buddha's teachings to improve people's hearts, social security, and not only deter people from crime but also contribute to the national economy development, so life has more value. It can be said that the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha's response and social service are one of the ways the direct contribution to the national economy.

Accordingly, in the field of national economy today, we are all increasingly dependent on each other for survival and for social development. Thus, the current policies must be based on a wider perspective, including a more altruistic attitude, which will produce better results.<sup>18</sup> The Kūṭadanta Sutra said that the Buddha's advice should be directed towards national economy development instead of the forces designed to reduce crime. The government should use its national resources to improve economic conditions in the country. With the use of

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<sup>16</sup> Pravraj means to leave home and family, or to get out of a family and to become a Bhikkhus or a Bhikkhunīs. Ordination in Buddhism is initiation into the Buddhist Saṅgha in the presence of witnesses and dedicating oneself to monastic life.

<sup>17</sup> Bhikkhu Tinh Van, **The Escape Cycle of the Mundane**, Thich Quang Do trans, [Thoat Vong Tuc Luy], (Vietnam: International Buddhist Academy Publication, 1987), Chapter 12, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Dalai Lama 14<sup>th</sup>, Ibid, p. 111.

natural resources, a government can embark on the development of agriculture and rural expansion. This can be done by providing financial support to the contractors and dealers and by paying fair wages for workers to maintain a decent life with dignity<sup>19</sup>.

In the above scriptural passage, the expression relating to national economy development is used in a positive way. So, we see that the determinant of all that is expressed is focused on people. In other words, human beings are centrally important. Therefore, our negative thoughts lead to conflicts. That is certainly something we can be doing to have peace and happiness within a government. That is an important ability, which all of us, including the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha, possess when responding to conflicts that could lead to the development of the national economy.<sup>20</sup>

One example showing the role of Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs contributing to the national economy is that they try to promote the Eightfold Path teaching, especially Right Livelihood. The teaching of Right Livelihood helps the Buddhist to earn their living rightly and honestly. They can earn a lot of money and get rich, but they should not harm and lies others in order to make money. Right Livelihood also helps people to reduce competition in business.

Another teaching can be applied to national economic development is the teaching of karma. By understanding karma, people realize that what they get in this life is the result of many previous lives. Similarly, what they get in the future is the result of what they are doing now. Therefore, they understand that if they create conflicts in business with others, they will be suffered in the future. Thus, the teaching of

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<sup>19</sup> DN. I. 5. 11.

<sup>20</sup> H.S. Shukla, “Buddhism and World Crisis”, The 12<sup>th</sup> of International Buddhist Conference on the United Nations Day of Vesak 2015, May 28-30, 2015, **Economic Conflict Resolution: A Buddhist Perspective**, (Thailand: MCU, 2015), p. 29.

karma helps to reduce conflict in business and improve social development.

Finally, one of the main practice of Buddhists is generosity. The Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs actively promote this teaching to the people and apply this in their business. By sharing and helping others, we do not lose anything but will get more in the future. For example, when a company is in the difficult time, other companies can help this company to overcome the hardship. By doing so, the national economy can develop and be more stable.

Thus, human beings can respond to conflicts, which could lead to good results. Along with that meaning, those conflicts have led to the Buddhist education of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. The next section will discuss the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in responding to the role of Buddhist education in social development.

### **3.1.4 Education Conflicts.**

In 1916, Vietnam and its people experienced a period of the conflict against France.<sup>21</sup> So, during this period, the situation between the two countries was difficult in all aspects. In addition, for the development of Buddhist education citizens had to confront the conflicts. What were the conflicts of the Buddhist education of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in Vietnam and how did the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs's respond to those conflicts?

Truly, the responses to these conflicts did not simplify the overall goal of Buddhist education. The overall mission of education, as it relates to training, talent, and virtue of the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs, is very important. The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha and Buddhist Saṅgha try to join forces to solve these difficulties within the education and to make Buddhism prosper.

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<sup>21</sup> Thich Nu Nhu Duc, **A Brief History of the Vietnam Mahāyāna Bhikkhunī Saṅgha**, (Vietnam: HCM City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 170.

First, how can the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs establish Buddhist schools? Who will supply the educational materials, facilities, and any other needed resources? How will we get standards for teachers at Buddhist universities? As the country experiences difficult situations, how will the citizens solve those problems? There are many other questions to be put forward relating to these problems. To create conditions for improving Buddhist education, the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs may face very difficult problems.

Second, what are the standards of Buddhist education, for both the government and the temples' educational systems? Also, how does the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs solve conflicts in Buddhist education? Consequently, Buddhist educational conflicts were prolonged through an interval in time, but the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs's responses followed other interval periods such as:

(1) The Most Bhikkhunī Dam Soan was the first Bhikkhunī ever to be invited to the royal palace to teach the Dharma for the Queen, the concubines, and female officials serving in the court of the Nguyen kings<sup>22</sup>.

(2) In 1920, during the Buddhist revival movement, the South Vietnam Buddhist Mahāyāna Bhikkhunī Saṅgha started its operation. There were many Buddhist Schools, Dharma sessions, and Summer Rains-Retreat courses were organized everywhere. That was done in order to enhance the Bhikkhunīs's knowledge about the Buddha's teaching as well as encouraging their education.<sup>23</sup>

(3) In 1956, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha was established, the educational system was also established, to improve knowledge of the Dharma for the novice monks and nuns (samaneri and samanera), novice

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<sup>22</sup> Thich Nu Nhu Duc, Ibid, p. 166.

<sup>23</sup> Tran Hong Lien, 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita, International Conference on Buddhist Women, 'Eminent Buddhist Women', **The Formation of the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha of South Vietnam**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p. 260.

observers of nuns (siksamānana) and Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs. Many Buddhist educational centers have been established. However, before 1975, slavery and war within the country limited Buddhist education.

(4) In 1981, the Vietnamese Buddhist Saṅgha established schools, and during this period, they focused on the development of Buddhist education. There are many Buddhist universities and other Buddhist Schools that were established and developed throughout the Northern, Central, and Southern parts of the country.

(5) Thirty years after the Vietnamese Buddhist Saṅgha was established (1981-2011), Buddhist education rapidly developed.<sup>24</sup>

(6) The institutions developed between 2011 and 2016.

Table 11 (3.1.4)

<b>Buddhist Education<sup>25</sup></b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Levels</b>	<b>Total Class</b>
1	Primary School	100
2	Secondary School	31

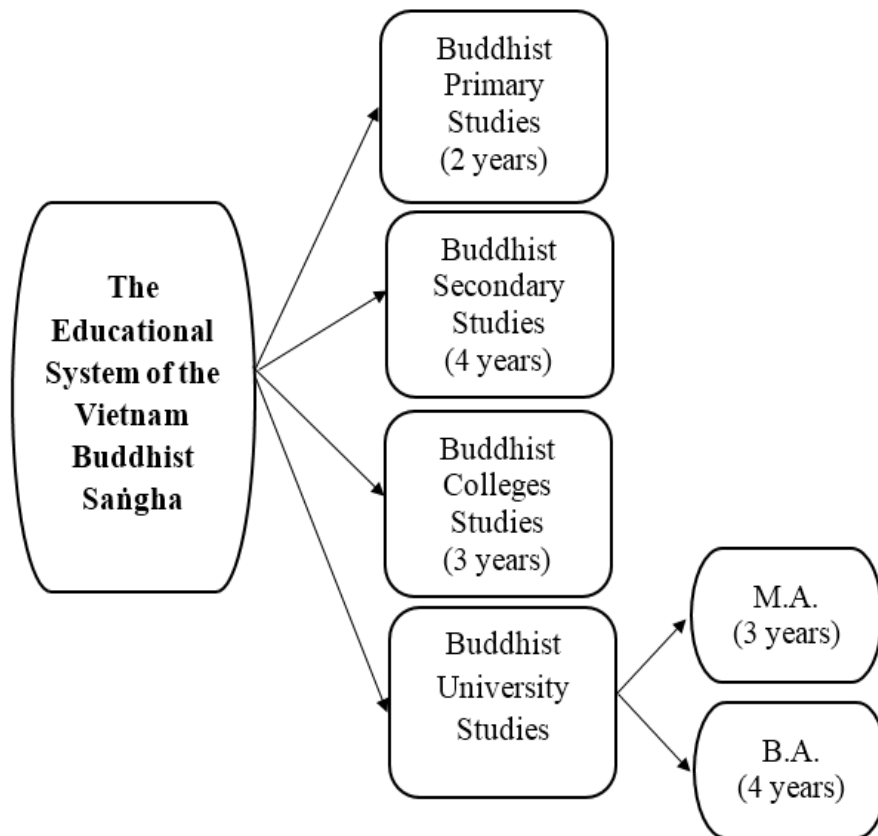
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<sup>24</sup> Thich Tri Quang, “The Vietnamese Buddhist Saṅgha 30 Years Establishment”, **The Summary Record of Seminar Commemoration 30 Years Vietnamese Buddhist Saṅgha Establishment (1981-2011)**, The Vietnamese Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 28. Explaining: (1) Buddhist University of Vietnam in Ha Noi Capital, (2) Buddhist University of Vietnam in Hue City, (3) Buddhist University of Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City, (4) Buddhist University of Vietnam in Can Tho City. (5) This year, on August 5, 2016 inauguration of the Buddhist University Le Minh Xuan Base, at A 13/14 Mai Ba Huong, 1 hamlet, Binh Chanh District, Ho Chi Minh City.

<sup>25</sup> Thich Thien Nhon, **A Brief History of Buddhism in Vietnam - A Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in the Term VI (2012- 2017)**, on October 26, 2016 at Congress of National Buddhist Delegates, in Ha Noi, in Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha, p. 56.

3	College School	8
4	Buddhist University	5

Figure 4 (3.1.4) **The Educational System of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha.**



(7) According to statistics collected by the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha, there are 13,250 Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs<sup>26</sup> learning and preparing for graduation ceremonies at all levels. To develop such large numbers, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha has faced many difficulties and overcame conflicts.

In summary, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs are determined to continue to do their best to respond to the difficulties and conflicts of the

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<sup>26</sup> Thich Thien Nhon, “Vietnam Buddhist Education Oriented and Development”, **Buddhist Education Inheritance and Development**, (Vietnam: Ha Noi Religious Publication, 2012), p. 22.

Buddhist educational system. Nowadays, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha is working hard to continue strengthening systems of education and training for all levels of Buddhist studies while advancing towards a modern society. Moreover, the development of Buddhist education is playing a very important role and is making a great impact on the development of a more stable society. So, the purpose of the Buddhist educational system is to advance the training, talent, and virtue of the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs in order to propagate the Buddha's teaching to citizens as a means to create a happy and peacefully society.

So, this overview is worth noting if the conflicts did not lead to positive results. The conflicts are essential, and overall they add value when understood and treated as a natural part of development within a human society. The conflicts addressed by the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha led to developing family, those conflicts led to the development of politics, those conflicts led to the establishment of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, and those conflicts led to the development of the Bhikkhunī's education system, all resulting from the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's responses. It shows that the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in responding to the conflicts reduced a lot of the problems in society by resolving many social conflicts. It was the concrete responses of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs that led to the beneficial activities in 1956, and more recent responses from 2009 to today. The Buddhist education of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha contributed significantly to society and Vietnam as a whole.

Accordingly, human beings can respond to conflicts, which could lead to good results. Along with that, those conflicts have led to the social activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. The next section will discuss the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in responding to the role of social activities in the development of society.



## 3.2 The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's Activities<sup>27</sup> in Social Development.

### 3.2.1 Social Activities.

The social activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha have a relationship between the lay Buddhists and society. The activities as charitable relief, charitable building, charitable medicine facilities, the charitable at local, the establishment of charity funds help the poor, elderly, disabled, orphans, street children, and homeless people; to open free clinics to diagnose and treat diseases, to provide poor patients with eye surgery, wheelchairs, bicycles; to dig wells, to build bridges, construct roads, to build houses of gratitude, and the construction of charitable houses, built hospitals, schools, floods relief.<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs provided monetary support to reduce poverty, to provide money and medicine to lepers, the leprosarium, ethnic minorities, to people who live in deep, remote areas, Tay Nguyen areas and on islands.<sup>29</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha cooked vegetarian meals and the distributing meals weekly at the hospitals for poor patients.<sup>30</sup> They joined with the Red Cross to build houses for poor families. They have actively supported movements for

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<sup>27</sup> **The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's activities:** *See pictures in the Appendix 2, Section 2, pp. 194-199.*

<sup>28</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Record Present Ceremony of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, Term VI (2007-2012)**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, "The Conference Documents of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council Standing Committee", **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2015**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Office II Publication, 2015), p. 155.

<sup>30</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, "The Conference Documents Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha", **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2015**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Office II Publication, 2016), pp. 28-30.

poverty reduction and distributes rice three times a year to poor people. They also financially support disabled soldiers. The giving of scholarships helps students who find it difficult to attend school. Gifts support needy children in the provinces, the opening of vocational schools, creating jobs for the youth, and poor adolescents. In addition, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs guided them in the observance of the five precepts, practicing meditation, and preaching Dharma for them understanding the Buddha's teachings.

The social activities and contributions of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha summarized Table as below:

Table 12 (3.2.1)

<b>Social Activities</b> <sup>31</sup>	1	The established charitable funds.
	2	The charitable activities at local.
	3	The charitable medicine facilities.
	4	The charitable relief activities.
	5	The charitable building activities.

<b>The Social Activities of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha</b>		
<b>No.</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Responses</b>
1	The established charitable funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The money and products help to the poverty.</li> <li>• The poor people, the disabled people.</li> <li>• The orphans, street children, homeless persons.</li> <li>• The offered wheelchairs, bicycles to the poverty.</li> <li>• The wounded soldiers contributed to the country.</li> <li>• The gifts to needy children in the difficulties provinces.</li> </ul>

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<sup>31</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Record Present Ceremony of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, Term VI (2007-2012)**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 51.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping Tay Nguyen areas and on islands.</li> <li>• The creating jobs for the youth, poor adolescents.</li> </ul>
2	The charitable activities at local <sup>32</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To cooked the vegetarian foods for the poor people.</li> <li>• To distributed the vegetarian foods to the poor patients in the hospital.</li> <li>• To participate supported movements for poverty reduction.</li> <li>• To distributed rice charity for the 3 times in a year.</li> </ul>
3	The charitable medicine facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diagnoses oriental and western medicine.</li> <li>• The acupuncture, pulse, prescription.</li> <li>• The diagnoses, treat diseases, eye surgery for the poor patient.</li> <li>• The medicine to lepers, the leprosarium.</li> <li>• To distributed medicine free for the poverty.</li> <li>• To combined with the Red Cross helping the poor people.</li> <li>• The counseling center, support for people with HIV.</li> </ul>
4	The charitable relief activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relief to the flood Northern Provinces.</li> <li>• The relief to the flood Central Provinces.</li> <li>• The relief to the earthquake in Nepal.</li> <li>• The relief to the natural disasters people.</li> <li>• The relief to the people lives deep, remote areas, and ethnic minority.</li> <li>• The relief to the lonely, handicapped.</li> </ul>

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<sup>32</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, “The Conference Documents of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council Standing Committee”, **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2015**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Office II Publication, 2015), p. 155.

5	The charitable building activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The building schools for students poor.</li> <li>• The building hospitals.</li> <li>• The building bridges, roads, dig wells.</li> <li>• The building houses of the gratitude.</li> <li>• The building of the charitable house.</li> <li>• The building nursing for the mental people.</li> <li>• The building nursing older person's homes.</li> </ul>
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According to Table 12 (3.2.1), the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha has been activities in the fields of society. In addition, guide and teach to the lay Buddhists takes refuge in the Triple Gem, observance of the five precepts, practice meditation, and preaching Dharma for them to understand the Buddha's teachings. In general, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha activities to do all the charitable society bring the benefits to the human beings.

To close this section on the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in responding to the social activities involved in the development of society. It can be said that all the social activities are great contributions to humanity. So, how about the role of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in Buddhist activities? Now we continue to discuss it.

### 3.2.2 Buddhist Activities.

The Buddhist activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha supported and participated in the annual activities, including conferences, festivals, ceremonies, serving activities, and temples activities. The conferences as Buddhist Affairs Nationwide, Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha, the National Women's Conference, Sakyadhita<sup>33</sup> International

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<sup>33</sup> Sakyadhita, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Speeches of the 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam**, at Ho Chi Minh City, (December 28, 2009- January 3, 2010), Vol I, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p .1. See more: The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities of the**

Conference Buddhist Women, the summary report of the Buddhist activities of the VBSCS and VBSPS. They supported the festival organization of Vesak, Vu Lan Ullambana,<sup>34</sup> a retreat for three months (*vassa*).<sup>35</sup> They are on visiting the Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs central temples in *vassa* time at provinces and cities throughout the whole country.

In addition, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha has trained Bhikkhunīs in translation languages such as Han, English, Chinese, and Pali. Translating and publishing are excellent ways to serve the needs of Buddhists and people, particularly those who learning the Buddhadharma, such as researchers of Buddhist Studies. They organized the establishment of the central sanatoriums to take care of the elderly Bhikkhunīs who had no temples and no disciples. This was done by visiting and kowtowing to the elderly, the sick, and the Most Venerable Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs.

Additionally, at the temples, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs's activities were concentrated around the *vassa* at the big temples, with the number of congregants including hundreds to thousands of Bhikkhunīs.

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**Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2016**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2016), p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> **Vu Lan - Ullambana** is a Buddhist holiday, held annually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar. It is a time to show the gratitude to one's parents. It is one of the main holidays in the Buddhist religion (Mahāyāna tradition) and a Chinese custom. This ceremony coincides with the Happy New Year Trung Nguyen of the Han people, and coincides with the full moon day in Oriental customs. According to the world beliefs, this is the opening day prison, the amnesty for manes should be offer foods to the manes (in the afternoon) for the homeless souls helpless, no have place of the worship. This day manes in hell have the opportunity to pardon, to be free to born in the realm of the comfortable peaceful.

<sup>35</sup> According to the Vietnamese Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, held annually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar, all the Bhikkhus Saṅgha and Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha enter a retreat for three months (*vassa*) at temples and leave on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the calendar. There is little difference between entering and leaving the *vassa* in both the Mahāyāna and Theravādā traditions.

They make offerings to the temple vassa. They chant Bhikkhunī pātimokkha (Uposatha)<sup>36</sup> one time every month. They teach pātimokkha, Buddhist rituals, and temple rituals to Bhikkhunīs. Besides, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs organized a day for the observance of eight precepts. The Dharma course has one week for lay Buddhists. The summer course has two weeks for youth students to attend the schools while going to the temple to practice the Buddhadharma.

The Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs's activities are organized a weekly course of the Dharma talk, Sunday's course, Buddha recitation, meditation, and practice Dharma at the big temples for all lay Buddhists and students.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs communicated the five precepts for people who take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha to become lay Buddhists.

The Buddhist activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs at the temples organized the chanting and praying of the lay Buddhists. They requested praying for the protection, health, death, shows gratitude to the ancestor, grandparents, and parents or offers foods to the Bhikkhunīs at the Dining Hall temple. The Buddhist activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs at the temples aim to serve human beings, as well as the Buddhists.

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<sup>36</sup> **Uposatha:** According to the Vietnamese Buddhist culture, the Bhikkhunī chant the Bhikkhunī pātimokkha twice on day 15 and 30 monthly of the lunar calendar.

<sup>37</sup> The Central Subcommittee Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, "The Conference Documents Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha", **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities of the Central Subcommittee Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in 2014**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2014), p. 142.

Table 13 (3.2.2)

<b>Buddhist Activities</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Responses</b>
<b>Conferences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Buddhist Affairs Nationwide.</li> <li>• The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha (VBS).</li> <li>• The National Women's Conference.</li> <li>• The 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita<sup>38</sup> International Conference Buddhist Women.</li> <li>• The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee (VBSCS).</li> <li>• The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincial Subcommittee (VBSPS).</li> <li>• The summary report of the Buddhist activities of the VBSCS &amp; VBSPS.</li> </ul>
<b>Festivals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Vesak,</li> <li>• The Buddha Amitabha's Birthday.</li> <li>• The Buddha Avalokiteshvara's Birthday</li> <li>• The Memorial Saint Patriarch Bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpati Gotami.</li> <li>• The retreat for three months 'vassa'<sup>39</sup>.</li> <li>• Ullambana<sup>40</sup> (the gratitude to the ancestor, and parents).</li> </ul>

<sup>38</sup> **11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita:** *See pictures in the Appendix 2, Section 2, p. 195.*

<sup>39</sup> According to the Vietnamese Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, held annually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar, all the Bhikkhus Saṅgha and Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha enter a retreat for three months (*vassa*) at temples and leave on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the calendar. There is little difference between entering and leaving the vassa in both the Mahāyāna and Theravādā traditions.

<sup>40</sup> Ullambana is “Vu Lan” a Buddhist holiday, held annually on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month of the lunar calendar. It is a time to show the gratitude to one's parents. It is one of the main holidays in the Buddhist religion (Mahāyāna tradition) and a Chinese custom. This ceremony coincides with the Happy New Year Trung Nguyen of the Han people, and coincides with the full moon day in Oriental customs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The great three full moon January 15, July 15, &amp; October 15, lunar.</li> </ul>
<b>Ceremonies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The great Ordination Ceremony.<sup>41</sup></li> <li>• Chanting Bhikkhunī pātimokkha.<sup>42</sup></li> <li>• The teaching Buddhist rituals.</li> <li>• The teaching rituals in the temple.</li> <li>• The teaching meditation, chanting at the temple.</li> </ul>
<b>Serving activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The activities to the Buddhist education.</li> <li>• The translation scriptures (Pali, Han, English, Chinese).</li> <li>• The offering products to the temple vassa.</li> <li>• The homage the Most Venerable Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs.</li> <li>• Take care sick of the Most Venerable Bhikkhunīs.</li> </ul>
<b>Temple Activates<sup>43</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guiding practiced meditation to the lay Buddhists.</li> <li>• The opening Buddhadharma Course one week to the lay Buddhists.</li> <li>• The Sunday's Course Buddha Recitation.</li> <li>• The Dharma talk to the lay Buddhists.</li> <li>• The communication five precepts to the lay Buddhists.</li> </ul>

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According to the world beliefs, this is the opening day prison, the amnesty for manes should be offer foods to the manes (in the afternoon) for the homeless souls helpless, no have place of the worship. This day manes in hell have the opportunity to pardon, to be free to born in the realm of the comfortable peaceful.

<sup>41</sup> **Great Ordination Ceremony:** *See pictures in the Appendix 2, Section 7, pp. 207-213.*

<sup>42</sup> **Uposatha:** According to the Vietnamese Buddhist culture, the Bhikkhunī chant the Bhikkhunī pātimokkha twice on day 15 and 30 monthly of the lunar calendar.

<sup>43</sup> The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, **The Conference Documents-The Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2016), p. 160.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guiding lay Buddhists practice eight precepts.</li> <li>• The guiding takes refuge in the Triple Gem to the lay Buddhists.</li> </ul>
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According to Table 13 (3.2.2), it shows the positive activities of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha to the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha and society.

Moreover, the Buddhist activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha followed the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha organized by the “Great Ordination Ceremony” All the Most Venerable Bhikkhunīs who work as the leaders in guiding, teaching, reviewing applications, and communicating precepts to the thousands of novice nuns (samaneri), observers of novice nuns (sikkhamānana), and Bhikkhunīs ordains<sup>44</sup> who received precepts (sīla) to become disciples of the Buddha and members of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha.

Additionally, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s activities have opened more Buddhist Schools in the provinces and cities, for education and training. The Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs have progressed in their Buddhist Studies. As a result, today, there are many Bhikkhunīs teachers at Buddhist universities and other schools. The Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs worked together in the Central Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha. The Bhikkhunīs training included the propagation of Dharma and preaching the Dharma.

In addition, the Buddhist activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha both the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee and the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee

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<sup>44</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2016**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2016), p. 52.

followed the leadership of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha<sup>45</sup> to put forward and to carry out the activities in the spirit of unity and harmony.

Through the Buddhist activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha above, all those Buddhist activities from general to specific contributed great bring benefits not only Buddhist Saṅgha but also people's life in the development of society. So, the Buddhist activities and contributions of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha had been ability as the Bhikkhu Saṅgha. As the Most Venerable Thich Tu Nhon said that “the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha exist to go abreast with the Bhikkhu Saṅgha had been great the organizations, activities, and contributions for protected in the long history of the country over 2000 years”.<sup>46</sup> This speech proved that the Bhikkhu Saṅgha and the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha had been great contributions to the success of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha as well as society.

To summarize the social activities and Buddhist activities of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, we read again the word of Prof. Senarath Wijesundara who wrote that:

“In our present era, very few people are willing to dedicate their lives to pave the path to Nirvana. Many ladies who are willing to become Bhikkhunīs need to be encouraged in their endeavors, as they will greatly help to keep the Dharma, the Buddhist way of life and the Buddhist tradition of the people

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<sup>45</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2014**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2014), p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> The Buddhist Activities Central Committee, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, Ibid, p. 5. Thich Tu Nhon was a Member of the Proving Council, Vice President of the Executive Council, Vice Standing Committee Central Committee Buddhist Affair of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha.

alive. The Bhikkhunīs will be an important force to advance the welfare of Buddhism in the country”.<sup>47</sup>

The paragraph displayed the importance of the activities and the contribution of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s role in the development of society. So, how about the impact of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha? Let’s discuss it.

### **3.3 The Achievements, Difficulties, and Unresolved Issues within the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha.**

At present, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha has a remarkable position in society as well as in the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha. It can be said that this is a result of their striving for themselves and the supports of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha. Therefore, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha reaffirmed their role and possibilities regarding organizational activities in the development of society. In regard to organizational activities, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha meet with achievements and difficulties.<sup>48</sup> So, what are the achievements of the organizational Buddhist activities and social activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha?

#### **3.3.1 Achievements.**

The organizational achievements of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha can be shown in the following section in general areas such as:

(1) Under the direction of the Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha and the Buddhist Affairs Central Committee, the

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<sup>47</sup> Pubbiliye Maithree Moorthree, **A Critical Study of the Re-Establishment of Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in Sri Lanka**, (Thailand, Bangkok: Mahāchulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Press, 2548), p. 54.

<sup>48</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee. **The Summary Report Present Ceremony of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, Term VI (2007-2012)**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 9.

Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee (VBSCS) has recognized the achievements in Buddhist activities. The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha was established on December 6-7, 1956.<sup>49</sup> This anniversary marked a glorious history for the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. On January 1, 2009, “The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee” officially presented itself before the public at the Central Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha.<sup>50</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha organized the 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam, from on December 28, 2009, to on January 3, 2010.<sup>51</sup> This year, on March 16, 2016, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha organized the Great Ceremony of the Memorial Saint Patriarch Bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpati Gotami, at Tu Dam temple, Hue City in Vietnam<sup>52</sup>. These events were successful. Especially, on February 6, (lunar) yearly, at Tu Nghiem temple,<sup>53</sup> abbess Thich Nu Nhu Hai who was an organization of the Great Ceremony of the Memorial Saint Patriarch Bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpati Gotami, in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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<sup>49</sup> Thich Nu Nhu Duc, **A Brief History of the Vietnam Mahāyāna Bhikkhunī Saṅgha**, (Vietnam: HCM City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 216.

<sup>50</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Sangha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Report Present Ceremony of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, Term VI (2007-2012)**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> **Sakyadhita**, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Speeches of the 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam**, at Ho Chi Minh City, (December 28, 2009-January 3, 2010), Vol I, (Vietnam: HCM City, 2010), p .1.

<sup>52</sup> The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, **The Conference Documents-The Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2016), p. 160.

<sup>53</sup> Tu Nghiem Temple is the office of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee from 1956 to now. Yearly, on June 6 (lunar), the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs from the provinces come back Tu Nghiem Temple to participate in the Great Ceremony of the Memorial Saint Patriarch Bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpati Gotami.

(2) The achievements of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, as well as the Subcommittee Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provinces, is that they have close contacts with different levels of government, governmental institutions, functional departments, and the Department of Home Affairs, which ought to facilitate the achievements of Buddhist activities and social activities.

(3) At present, many provinces have come together to establish the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee. The members of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee activities followed the Buddhist Affairs Central Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha, and the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee to put forward and to carry out the activities in the spirits of unity and harmony. Each province has organized the Great Ordination Ceremony<sup>54</sup> for thousands of ordinations of people who identify as samaneras, samaneris, sikkhānāmas, Bhikkhus, and Bhikkhunīs.

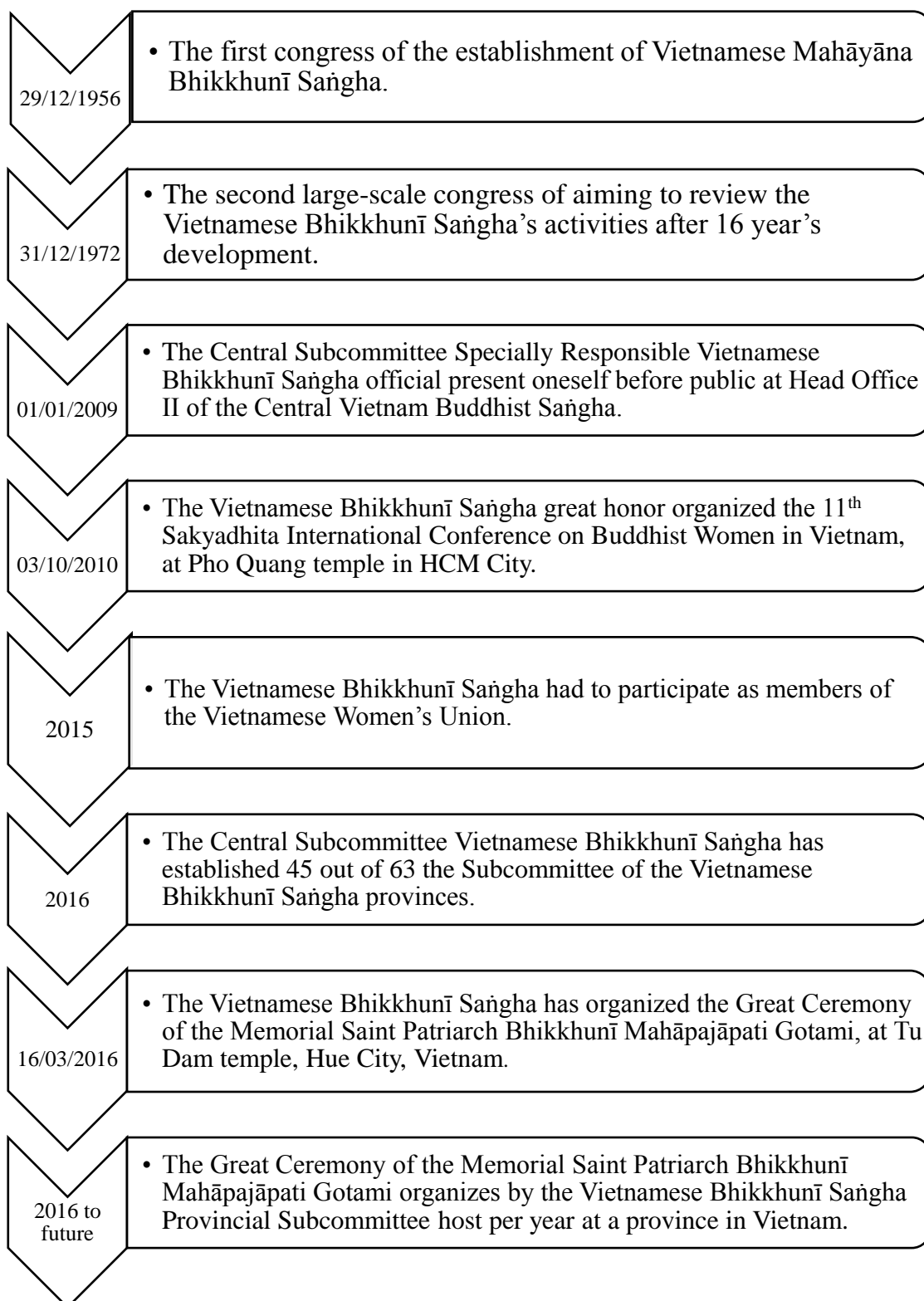
(4) The organizational achievements of Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs about the number had 26,500 Bhikkhunīs,<sup>55</sup> and there is 13,250 Bhikkhunīs's education. So, to track the number of Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs teaching in Buddhist Universities, the Bhikkhunīs participation in Buddhist activities, Dharma propagation committee and social charity committee. This is convenient and beneficial when keeping track of activities and achievements.

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<sup>54</sup> **The Great Altar of Sila Ceremony** is a meeting place for all ordination people (become nuns and monks) to receive the precepts (vinaya) of the novice monks (samaneras), novice nuns (samaneris), novice observers of nuns (sikkhānāmas), monks (Bhikkhus), and nuns (Bhikkhunīs).

<sup>55</sup> Huynh Ngoc Thanh, who was Vice Director of the Department of Internal Affairs Chief Committee of Religion, Ho Chi Minh City speech, **The Summary Report Present Ceremony of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, Term VI (2007-2012), (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 55.

Figure 5 (3.3.1) Achievements.



Besides, the achievement activities of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha have benefited to the society, there are still some difficulties.

### 3.3.2 Difficulties

The achievements are always accompanied by difficulties. So, what are the difficulties of organizing activities within the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha? To answer this question, we will discuss the following problems:

(1) The reality of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Subcommittee is still a problem in some provinces because the subcommittee is not established there. So, that means the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee does not have the ability to play a role in such provinces.<sup>56</sup>

(2) Some of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee<sup>57</sup> have not yet realized the regulations and send the summary report of the subcommittee's Buddhist activities in order to send the information to the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee.<sup>58</sup>

(3) The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, as well as the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provinces Subcommittee, have not yet engraved the seal (stamped) of the Subcommittee

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<sup>56</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Document Conference the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2010 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, op. cit, p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> In 2015, forty-five out of sixty-three Subcommittee Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha provinces had been established, all of who's going to the activities went under the leadership of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee.

<sup>58</sup> The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, **The Conference Documents-The Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha**, op. cit, p. 157.

Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in order for Buddhist activities to be synchronized into the Vietnamese Buddhist Saṅgha's departments.<sup>59</sup>

(4) The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee has not yet established a large base to facilitate the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee's activities and its work. The accommodations for the Bhikkhunīs, designed to receive the Bhikkhunīs from provinces to the city, consist of having accommodations for the practice of the Dharma and the cultivation of Buddhadharma.<sup>60</sup>

(5) Some the Most Venerable Bhikkhunīs have not yet bravely participated in the activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee and would not be able to know the information, the activities, and the charter of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha.<sup>61</sup>

(6) The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee still met with difficulties in the convocation of the commissioners meeting for the deployment of activities for the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha.<sup>62</sup>

(7) The organizations still have shortcomings. For example, they are not yet unified about the activities and do not have a schedule.

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<sup>59</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Document Conference the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2010 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Publication, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Document Conference the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2012 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, Ibid, p. 15.

<sup>61</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, op. cit, p. 96.

<sup>62</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Document Conference the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2015 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Publication, 2015), p. 202.



Some local Bhikkhunī do not actively participate in the activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha due to inadequate accommodations.

(8) The expenses of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha are still very high and there are many difficulties in determining when to carry out the duties of each of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincial Subcommittee.

(9) Some provinces often have disasters, such as major storms and floods,<sup>63</sup> and the economic difficulties affect people and the activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee

(10) Due to the Bhikkhunīs's busy schedule from performing Buddhist activities at temples, they are sometimes tardy in progressing on the work of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee.

Table 14 (3.3.2)

<b>The Organizational Difficulties</b>	
<b>No.</b>	<b>Reasons</b>
1	Some provincials subcommittee is not yet established.
2	The summary report delay of the subcommittee.
3	The VBSPS has not yet engraved the stamped.
4	The VSBCS has not yet established a large hall.
5	The Bhikkhunīs have not yet bravely participated in the activities of the VBSCS.
6	The VBSCS still met with difficulties in the convocation of the commissioners.
7	The organizations of VBSPS still have shortcomings.
8	The difficulties in determining when to carry out the duties of each of the VBSPS.

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<sup>63</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Document Conference the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2014 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Publication, 2014), p. 96.

9	Some provinces often have disasters, floods, affect activities of the VBSPS.
10	The Bhikkhunīs to be busy with activities at temples.

According to Table 14 (3.3.2), those issues mentioned above are a general summary of the difficulties, the defects, and the determination of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha with the help of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha, as well as a summation of the competent authorities working to solve those problems satisfactorily. So, how does one solve these problems?

### 3.3.3 Solving Difficulties.

The organizational Buddhist activities and social activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha were considered important contributions to social development.<sup>64</sup> So, all the difficulties and defects from the organizational activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha began with the purpose of overcoming and solving such difficult problems as:

(1) The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee solve difficulties of the establishment of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee. The implementation of the charter and activities of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sakyadhita, The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Speeches-The 11th Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam**, Vol II, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p. 33.

<sup>65</sup> The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, **The Conference Documents - The Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha**, op. cit, p. 159.

(2) The enhancement of the spiritual responsibility of each member in the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, they encouraged harmony and solidarity for the benefits of the Buddhists and the society.<sup>66</sup>

(3) At present<sup>67</sup>, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee petitioned the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council and the Buddhist Affairs Central Committee, to be allowed to give the engraving seal (stamped) to the established Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee.

(4) To create good conditions for all the talented Bhikkhunīs they must have a good environment for training succeeding generations about the talents and virtues necessary to set a good example in life.

(5) The synchronization and recording of complete data regarding charitable programs. Simultaneously, by developing more charitable activities with the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, as well as the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee, more charitable programs exist.<sup>68</sup>

(6) To encourage gifted Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs when they are studying in the Intermediate and Advanced level classes of the Dharma Lecture by the Central Preaching Committee. The organizations are designed to strengthen lecturers and teachers in order to meet the needs of

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<sup>66</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Meeting Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2011 and the Orientations Activities in 2012 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Publication, 2010), p. 141.

<sup>67</sup> According to the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2015 and the Orientation Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2016**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2016), p. 161.

<sup>68</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Document Conference the Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2014 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Publication, 2014), p. 74.

the inviting lecturers at the big Bhikkhunīs retreat (*vassa*)<sup>69</sup> It also exists to encourage the young Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs to have the gifted and spirited in service of studying in the program with Pedagogical University Kindergartens, organized by the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee and the Buddhist University of Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City the combinative organizations.<sup>70</sup>

(7) The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha proposed the initial activities in the provinces, but the locals must commit to solving the essential problems for the Subcommittee Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha. One such task includes fundraising for social charities that are helping poor people.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, the help and directions solved the difficulties and the defects problems mentioned above. We now see that the efforts of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha play a major role in the directional activities and the guidance of the Central Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha.<sup>72</sup> In that spirit, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee and the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Provincials Subcommittee follow the direction of the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha aim to bring stability and development to the Buddhists as well as their contribution to building a country of peace and happiness.

To summarize this part, it can be said that the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha was capable of confronting the achievements, the difficulties, and unresolved issues in order to perfect the organization of

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<sup>69</sup> **Vassa:** See pictures in the Appendix 2, Section 5, pp. 203-204.

<sup>70</sup> The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, **The Conference Documents - The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council Standing Committee**, op. cit, p. 160.

<sup>71</sup> According to **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities in 2015 of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee**, (December 10, 2015), P. 5.

<sup>72</sup> The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council, **The Conference Documents - The Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha Executive Council Standing Committee**, op. cit, p. 160.

the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in regard to activities and in making contributions to Buddhism and society.

### **3.4 The Impact of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's Role in Social Development.**

The activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha impacts in the social fields. Their charitable activities to set up a good relationship between lay Buddhists and society. Lay Buddhists seek their kind advice to the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs not only on questions connected with Buddhism and meditation but also on problems they are confronted with in their daily life. In this situation, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha is a very welcome to guide and helps lay Buddhists follow Buddhism.

Table 15 (3.4)

<b>The Role of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha</b>				
	<b>Impact ⇔ People ⇔ Society</b>			
Dharma	Meditation	Education	Activities	Relationship
Propagation	Guiding	Teaching	Helping	Working
Promoting	Practice	Training	Building	Organization
Contribution	Peaceful	Response	Supporting	Visiting

According to Table 15 (3.4), the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha has been spiritual leaders and have held important positions in many fields of society. Indeed, the status and role of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha had a great impact on the welfare of people, peace, and a prosperous Buddhadharma.

Table 16 (3.4)

<b>Impact Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha</b>	
<b>People</b>	<b>Society</b>
Teaching people the Buddhist way	Supporting Dharma talk to people

of life.	for the welfare of the community.
Guiding people practice meditation.	Dharma Course three days for the peace of lay Buddhist community.
Helping poor families and rural areas.	Dharma Courses a peaceful day for blind people.
Visiting elderly people who are living alone. <sup>73</sup>	Organization meetings to discuss people problems in society life.
Teaching Dharma at Sunday schools to children.	Helping peoples to render great service to the community.
Guiding lay Buddhists in the observance of the five precepts.	Training in family counseling, child and maternal care, health, and nutrition for lay women in society.
Building houses for the elderly, disabled, natural disasters. <sup>74</sup>	Propagation Buddhadharma bring benefits to the people and society.
Relief money, products, medicines, gifts, rice to poor people.	The activities of the charitable society.

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<sup>73</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, “The Conference Documents Standing Committee Executive Council Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha”, **The Summary Report of the Buddhist Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2012**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2014), p. 61.

<sup>74</sup> Thich Nu Nhu Duc, **A Brief History of the Vietnam Mahāyāna Bhikkhunī Saṅgha**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 237. See also: The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Record Present Ceremony of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, Term VI (2007-2012)**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City Religious Publication, 2009), p. 55. See more: Sakyadhita, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **Speeches of the 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam**, at Ho Chi Minh City, (December 28, 2009-January 3, 2010), Vol II, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p. 132.

Guiding lay Buddhist practice Dharma at the temple.	The construction of schools, hospitals, orphanages.
Guiding people charitable activities help another.	Promoting unity to achieve successes in society.

According to Table 16 (3.4), it shows the activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha to the public welfare. Furthermore, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs Saṅgha attend the Buddhist activities and social activities just like the Bhikkhus without any distinctions.<sup>75</sup> They are invited by lay devotees to carry out all the traditional Buddhist activities connected with merit making and delivering sermons. At present, Vietnamese people turn without distinction to the Bhikkhu Saṅgha or the Bhikkhunī Saṅgha for their Buddhist rites and ceremonies.

Moreover, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha lives in the development of society, study, practice, and act well, and then share their experiences with lay Buddhists. In this sense, Fourfold Assembly<sup>76</sup> can benefit everyone and helps with the progress of Buddhism and society

So, to prove the specific impact of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha to the Vietnam Buddhist Saṅgha and society, let's read again the words of the President of the Republic Socialist of Vietnam:

Buddhism has existed in Vietnam for more than 2,500 years. Every period has the Most Venerable Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunīs stand out to help the country. Among them, there are many

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<sup>75</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2015**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2015), p. 223.

<sup>76</sup> **Fourfold assembly**: Four groups of followers of the Buddha are: The Bhikkhus (Monks), Bhikkhunīs (Nuns), Upāsakas (lay men) and Upāsikās (lay women).

Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs to be admired for their virtue, altruism, inclination to do good, to connect Buddhism with life, and patriotism. With this precious tradition, the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha will be actively participating in the conference, practically contributing to the Buddhist world and humanity, to prevent conflicts, contradictions, to reduce the risk of poverty and suffering, to lead people to a happy life, and to foster peace and friendship, cooperation, and development between nations.<sup>77</sup>

The passage expresses the role and impact of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in social development. The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha has, in the spirit of equality, developed social activities, inspired by Buddhism, which has greatly contributed to the nation. In other words, all the activities and contributions of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha have good impacts on society. Those activities are highly appreciated and recognized, to honor the excellent example of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunīs.<sup>78</sup>

To close this section on the impact of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha's role in social development, it can be said that the

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<sup>77</sup> Nguyen Minh Triet was President of the Republic Socialist of Vietnam, letter sending to the Central Especially Responsible Subcommittee Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, on December 27, 2009 of “The 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women” in **Document of the 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam, at Ho Chi Minh City**, (December 28, 2009-January 3, 2010), (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p. 33.

<sup>78</sup> Mrs. Nguyen Thi Thanh Hoa was the Central Party Member, President of the Vietnam Women's Association speaking at the conference World Buddhist Women's Central Vietnam Women's Association, on 28/12/2009, in **Document of the 11<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women in Vietnam, at Ho Chi Minh City**, (December 28, 2009-January 3, 2010), (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, 2010), p. 37.



activities of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha are great contributions to Buddhism and human beings.<sup>79</sup>

To summarize this chapter, the researcher concluded “the status and role of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in social development” consists of: (1) the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha response to conflicts, include social conflicts, family conflicts, national economy conflicts, education conflicts, (2) the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s activities in social development, include social activities and Buddhist activities, (3) the achievements, difficulties, and solving difficulties of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s activities, and (4) the impact of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s role in social development. Knowing the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s role will help us fully understand the important of Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha’s activities contributions to the Buddhist Saṅgha and social welfare.

For realizing more information of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha, let’s advance to the next part of the working model of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha in social development chapter four.

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<sup>79</sup> The Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee, **The Summary Report of Buddhist Activities of the Vietnamese Bhikkhunī Saṅgha Central Subcommittee in 2016**, (Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Office VBSCS Publication, 2016), p. 151.