

RELIGION AND...

A Call to Peace

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In Cambodia/Kampuchea there has been too much suffering. The children weep for the dead. The violence of over ten years has resulted in great tragedy. Every act must have a consequence, and more violence will bring more suffering. Now is the moment to begin a new meditation, a new prayer, a new vibration for peace. We need to pay attention to the Buddhist principles of nonviolence, neutrality, compassion, wisdom, and truth. In the past year we have been meditating with thousands of Khmer in Thailand, France, the United States, and Cambodia/Kampuchea who have come to live the Buddhist life of nonviolence again.

In June of 1980, 150,000 Khmer prayed and meditated together in Thailand for peace, nonviolence, disarmament, and neutrality in our country. They are just like the millions of Khmer everywhere, including in Cambodia/Kampuchea; and they have the support of religious leaders from all over the world, including the Holy Father in Rome, Muslim leaders, Hindu leaders, Jewish leaders, and Buddhists everywhere.

Some say that peace is impossible for Cambodia/Kampuchea. But we know that peace begins this very moment in our hearts and wills; we can make it so.

Seven Principles

As we go forward making powerful vibrations of peace, may we remember seven basic principles:

1. that Cambodia/Kampuchea has a distinctive people, culture, religion, and heritage that must be preserved and maintained;
2. the Khmer people must obtain all basic human rights, including self-determination and the right of people freely to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development;
3. that nonviolence is the primary precept of the culture and religion of Cambodia/Kampuchea;
4. that Khmer people overwhelmingly desire nonviolence, disarmament, and neutrality under United Nations supervision;
5. that Khmer people everywhere need to be invited to join in this meditation and effort for peace;
6. that the reconciling, universal, and unifying spirit of Buddhism offers a point of departure;
7. that the way of the eightfold path will bring peace.

Three Actions

With these seven principles as a guide, may we now call for three actions that are of critical importance for our country.

First, may all Khmer join together. We call for all Khmer cultural, religious, and political leaders to begin talking and working together for peace. We can meet wherever it is convenient, in neutral countries, neighboring countries, or in Cambodia/Kampuchea. But we can begin now with an international conference of Khmer from all over the world.

Second, may all the countries that have an interest in Cambodia/Kampuchea come together in an international conference, as was called for in the U.N. resolution. Cambodia/Kampuchea wants to be neutral and friendly to all countries, especially our neighbors. We cannot do so without the help of the United States, China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam, and the ASEAN countries, as well as others. We need them all.

Third, we shall ask for the support, prayers, communications, and effort of all the world's religious leaders to provide the worldwide spiritual leadership necessary for our future.

Eleven Factors

The richness of the Khmer Buddhist culture includes eleven factors:

1. The Khmer are fearless because they can overcome greed, anger, and delusion.
2. The Khmer are humble and courteous and noble.
3. The Khmer are grateful to their mother and father, to their leaders, their land, and the whole world.
4. The Khmer keep the five precepts (the constitution of humanity) and the *dharmma* of goodness.
5. The Khmer have mindfulness and clear comprehension as their protection.
6. The Khmer practice loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.
7. The Khmer have patience; they can bear and forebear difficulties, suffering, and hardship.
8. The Khmer forgive and forget the wrongs of other people. They learn the lesson of the past; they use the present to build the future.
9. The Khmer are truthful, well-behaved, according to righteousness, and they follow the middle path.
10. The Khmer have the distinction of their culture and tradition, the summit of Southeast Asia. They are soft, smiling; the mind is pure and the speech is clear, fragrant, vibrant; it is the perfume in ten directions. The speech has the power of unifying the whole world, the power to pacify and free the mind from worrying, to purify and to make the mind stronger and stronger.
11. The Khmer have the tradition of solidarity (*samaki*).

The Lord Buddha did not hide in the jungle or even in the Temple. He came to the place of conflict and he called for peace. He called for unity. He called for compassion and loving kindness. He called for neutrality. As Buddhas all, may the Khmer leaders be peacemakers. Then in the tradition of our sacred land, may we all celebrate unity, loving kindness, and peace in a ceremony and meditation of gratitude.

We will ask all the spiritual leaders from all over the world to join us. Jews and Muslims and Hindus and Christians and Buddhists may join together to meditate, pray, and celebrate peace, freedom, neutrality, and nonviolence in Cambodia/Kampuchea.

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Venerable Maha Ghossananda is the principal mover of the Office for Buddhism and Peace in Cambodia/Kampuchea, with headquarters in New York, seeking to open channels of communication between and among all Khmer.