



An Analytical Study of the Concepts of Peace and Harmony in the
Teachings of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda in Cambodian Society
ศึกษาวิเคราะห์แนวความคิดสันติภาพและความสามัคคีในคำสอน
ของสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์ในสังคมกัมพูชา

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Abstract

The thesis, “An Analytical Study of the Concepts of Peace and Harmony in the Teachings of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda in Cambodian Society, had three main objectives: (1)to study the life and works of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda for peace and non-violence in Cambodia,(2) to study Samdech Mahāghosananda’s concepts of peace and harmony in Cambodia, (3) To analyze the concept of peace and harmony of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda and its influence in Cambodian society. This research was based on two methods: documentary research and fieldwork. The documentary research aimed to study the life and work of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda and his teachings on non-violence (*ahiōsa*) by his Dhammayietra or the pilgrimage for peace and reconsolidation for the nation and the world, while fieldwork aimed to study the concepts of his prominent disciples and his genuine supporters by interviewing a few key informants. The findings were presented with the descriptive analysis.

The result of the findings clearly indicated that Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda was the great Buddhist monk in Cambodia who devoted his whole life to seek peace and harmony for the Cambodian people and the world by absolutely adhering to the *Ahiōsa Dhamma* or non-violence principle. It was clearly found that Cambodia and its people both monks and

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lay people obtain peace and happiness by following the method of Samdech Ghosananda. It was said that where was Ghosananda, there was no war, no violence, there was presented only cool peaceful mind and authentic well-being only because Samdech Ghosananda was the great political leader of ahimsa as Mahatma Gandhi. The best technique to find peace and harmony of Samdech was Dhammayietra, preaching the simple message of non-violence with its benefits, sharing loving-kindness and compassion, keeping noble silence to be in peace with oneself and be generous to others.

Finally, the researcher would conclude from the findings that Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda was the accurate peaceful monk and the peacemaker for Cambodian people and the world. All of his disciples believed in him very faithfully and still regard him as a small Buddha or a spiritual angel in their hearts forever.

Keyword; Peace, Harmony, Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยเรื่อง ศึกษาวิเคราะห์แนวความคิดสันติภาพและความสามัคคีในคำสอนของสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์ในสังคมประเทศกัมพูชาโดยมีวัตถุประสงค์ ๓ ประการ ๑) เพื่อศึกษาชีวิตและผลงานของสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์ เพื่อสันติภาพและอิทธิพลในประเทศกัมพูชา ๒) เพื่อศึกษาแนวความคิดสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์ในเรื่องสันติภาพและความสามัคคีในประเทศกัมพูชา และ ๓) เพื่อวิเคราะห์แนวความคิดสันติภาพและความสามัคคีในสังคมกัมพูชาของสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการเรียนการสอนของสมเด็จพระสังฆราช สังคม การเมือง เศรษฐกิจและแนวความคิดลูกศิษย์ของสมเด็จพระสังฆราช งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยเอกสาร (Documentary Research) โดยการใช้วิธีศึกษาจากคัมภีร์พระพุทธศาสนาที่เกี่ยวข้องและหนังสือของท่านกับลูกศิษย์ท่านต่างๆ และการศึกษางานภาคสนาม (Fieldwork) โดยการสัมภาษณ์กลุ่มเป้าหมายนำผลมาวิเคราะห์ประกอบวิทยานิพนธ์นี้

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า สมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์เป็นพระสงฆ์ที่ดีในประเทศกัมพูชาที่อุทิศทั้งชีวิตของท่าน เพื่อแสวงหาความสงบสุขและความสามัคคีให้ที่ประชาชนกัมพูชาและทั่วโลกโดยท่านยึดมั่นในอิทธิพลหรือหลักการทางไม่รุนแรง และพบว่าประเทศกัมพูชาและประชาชนทั้งพระสงฆ์และฆราวาสได้รับความสงบสุขและความสามัคคีโดยการปฏิบัติตามวิธีการสอนของสมเด็จพระสังฆราชที่ได้มีการปฏิบัติความหลักคำสอนของสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์



ที่นั่นก็จะมีสงคราม ไม่มีความรุนแรงที่นั่นมีแต่จิตใจที่สงบเย็นและความสุขอันแท้จริง เพราะสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์เป็นผู้นำทางการเมืองที่ดีแบบหลักอหิงสาเหมือนมหาตมะ คานธี วิธีการของสมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์ในการแสวงหาสันติภาพและความสามัคคีคือธรรมาตรา แบบอหิงสา การบรรยายพระธรรมเทศนาเป็นข้อความง่ายๆ ในการไม่ใช้ความรุนแรงและในการไม่เบียดเบียนกัน การแผ่ความเมตตาและความสงสาร การสร้างความสงบให้กับตัวเอง และการเป็นคนมีน้ำใจกับคนอื่น ๆ เป็นต้น

จากการศึกษาวิจัยพบว่า สมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์เป็นพระสงฆ์ที่รักความสงบ ความถูกต้องและเป็นผู้ทำการประนีประนอมสำหรับคนชาวกัมพูชาและคนทั่วโลกด้วยลูกศิษย์ทุกคนของท่านมีความเชื่อท่านมากโดยความเคารพและเขาก็ยังให้การยกย่องว่าท่านเป็นพระพุทธรูปองค์เล็กในหัวใจหรือว่าท่านเป็นเทวดาที่มีจิตวิญญูณอยู่ในหัวใจของพวกเขาจนถึงปัจจุบันนี้

คำสำคัญ: สันติภาพ, ความสามัคคี, สมเด็จพระมหาโฆสนันท์

1. Introduction

In the world today there are many issues and problems occurring in certain places. Some of the problems are serious and some are continually emerging in different parts social of the world. While these problems are coming to manifest, then we will see some good people struggling to solve these problems to establish peace and harmony for the nation by following the way of nonviolent technique. For instance, Mahātmagandhi is as a great hero for India during the time when India was colonized by England. Meanwhile in the case of Cambodia during the holocaust of Pol Pot or Khmer Rouge, the most Venerable Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda was a great hero who worked hard by devoting himself to solve various problems to be peace and harmony, the way of nonviolence for Cambodia. Well, Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda was the supreme leader of Cambodian Buddhism, represents to many the essence of sweet generosity and unstoppable courage of heart. Just to be in his presence, to experience his smile and the infectious loving kindness that flows from him is healing to the spirit.

In all these situations, his heart has been unfalteringly compassionate to Cambodian children, as a translator and scholar of fifteen languages, as a meditation master for Western students, as a peacemaker at the United



Nations, and as one of the living treasures of Cambodia, leading the Khmer refugee communities around the world. Almost alone at first, he worked to restore Cambodian Buddhism after the holocaust of the Pol Pot years: training new monks and he emanates the teachings of simplicity and love. He would and has offered the robes off his back and the food in his bowl to anyone who needs them.

The Venerable Mahā Ghosananda¹ was born in 1929 in the fertile plains of the Mekong Delta, into a farming clan in a small village of Takeo Province, Cambodia. At the age of eight, he began serving as temple boy in his village Wat. The monks were impressed by his keen interest in monastic life, and they offered him much encouragement. When he was fourteen, Ghosananda asked for his parents' blessing to become a monk, and it was granted.

After graduating from the Buddhist University in Phnom Penh,² Mahā Ghosananda took up advanced studies at the Buddhist University of Battambang. He then left the country to complete his doctoral program at Nalanda University in Bihar, India, where he passed his Pāli exams and received the title “Mahā” before reaching the age of thirty. His monastic name, Mahā Ghosananda, means “Great Joyful Proclaimer.”

To complement his university training, the monk visited Buddhist centers throughout Asia, studying with some of the greatest contemporary masters. In Rajgir, India, Ghosananda became a student of the Japanese monk Nichidatsu Fujii, founder of the Nipponzan Myohoji sect devoted to world peace. It was from Master Fujii, a close associate of Mahātma Gandhi, that Ghosananda received his training in the skills of peace and nonviolence. He also received training from the late Samdech Preah Sangha Raja Chuon Noth, the Supreme Patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism. To be accepted as a student of the patriarch was an honor and testimony to young Ghosananda's spiritual progress. Through his extensive travels and studies, Mahā Ghosananda became fluent in Hindi, Bengali, Sanskrit, Pāli, Sinhalese, Burmese,

¹SantidhammoBhikkhu, **Mahāghosananda the Buddha of the Battlefield** ed., (Seattle, Washington April 1/ 2007), p. 9.

²Jack Kornfield, DithPran, and Jane Sharada Mahoney, **The Making of a Monk : Cambodia's Mahā Ghosananda**, (Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, 1992), p. 1.



Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai, Japanese, French, English, German, and several Chinese dialects.³

In 1965, at the age of thirty-six, Mahā Ghosananda left Cambodia and journeyed to the isolated forests of southern Thailand, where he became a disciple of the noted meditation master, Achaan Dhammadaro. Mahā Ghosananda had been in the monastery just four years when the United States began bombing his country, and a full-scale ground war broke out the next year. “They told us, ‘Do not let Cambodia’s suffering imprint on your minds. Do not let it disturb your concentration.’ Still,” he says, “we cried for Cambodia every day.”

But he remained in his Thai forest retreat for nine more years, as the war and then holocaust in Cambodia raged. Practicing Mindful meditation, Ghosananda’s inner peace grew, and he waited and prayed for a chance to help his people.

The dusty road to Sakeo was teeming with war-torn refugees. Under the scorching sun, streams of men and women, elders and children - bodies thin and broken, eyes sunken, faces baked and cracked from heat and exposure-wove their way along the dry, red earth. They staggered from exhaustion and wept from thirst, moving slowly and haltingly.

It was 1978. These were the survivors of the killing fields, fleeing the horrors of war, forced labor, genocide, and religious repression in Cambodia. Behind them were the bones of loved ones, the ashes of cities and villages, rice fields and temples. Ahead, just over the border with Thailand, were refugee camps and hope for survival.⁴

Fifty miles away, on a steep, winding pass, an ancient bus creaked its way down the mountain. Mahā Ghosananda was perched cross-legged on a hard seat with his head bowed, his eyes closed, and his saffron robe draping gracefully to the floor. Overflowing with compassion, Mahā Ghosananda was making his way toward Sakeo Camp. One of just a few Cambodian monks who had not perished under the Khmer Rouge, he traveled alone, arriving at Sakeo’s gates three days after the first refugees.⁵

³Nhem Kim Teng, **Step by Step**, (Phnom Penh : Santipheap Publisher, C.E. 1999), p. 34.

⁴Nhem Kim Teng, **Samdech Mahā Ghosananda and Peace**, (Phnom Penh: Meng Hao Publisher, C.E. 2011), p. 36.

⁵Ibid., p. 37.



Passing through the checkpoint, Ghosananda walked slowly toward the center of the camp, and as he did so the gloom that had enveloped the camp instantly turned to excitement. Refugees rushed to gaze at his saffron robe, the long-forbidden symbol of Buddhist devotion. Many peered from a safe distance, overwhelmed with anxious memories of the years of Khmer Rouge rule, when to express such devotion was to invite torture or death.

Ghosananda reached into his cloth shoulder bag and pulled out a handful of tattered pamphlets-copies of the *Mettā Sutta*, the Buddha's words of compassion and forgiveness for the oppressor. He offered one to each refugee within reach, bowing his head in the traditional gesture of respect.

In that moment, great suffering and great love merged. Centuries of Buddhist practice rushed into the consciousness of the refugees. Waves of survivors fell to their knees and prostrated, weeping, their cries reverberating throughout the camp. Many say that the Dharma, which had slept gently in their hearts as the Bodhi tree burned, was reawakened that day.

Since that first visit to Sakeo, Mahā Ghosananda has worked tirelessly for peace and for the rebuilding of Cambodia. It is a task that he has had to begin again and again, as the successive attempts to bring stability to that long-suffering country have collapsed or fallen victim to factionalism, incompetence, or the greed of corrupt leaders. Following the example of the Buddha, all of Ghosananda's efforts have been permeated with loving kindness the force that he believes is powerful enough to "overcome the world."

In short Ven. Mahā Ghosananda (popularly known as "Cambodia's Gandhi") is a peace activist, winner of the Alternative Peace Prize, nominee for the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, Buddhist monk, and the Supreme Patriarch of Buddhism in Cambodia.

The popular message of his prayer for Cambodia and Cambodian people during Khmer Rouge Regime period out of his hearted compassion as:

A Prayer: "The suffering of Cambodia has been deep. From this suffering comes Great Compassion. Great Compassion makes a Peaceful Heart. A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person. A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Family. A Peaceful Family makes a Peaceful Community. A Peaceful



Community makes a Peaceful Nation. And a Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World. May all beings live in Happiness and Peace”.⁶

By the above wonderful statements and Holy life of fighting violence and convert it into nonviolence of the most venerable Samdech Mahā Ghosananda with meaningfulness and very useful for all people both in small society and the world. This main reason of supreme patriarch Mahā Ghosananda, Great Buddhist Monk of Cambodia, the researcher of this thesis would like to do research as an analytical study about his works and life to write down the thesis title “An Analytical Study of the Concepts of Peace and Harmony in the Teachings of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda in Cambodian Society”.

2. Objectives of research

1. To study the life and works of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda for peace and harmony in Cambodia
2. To study Samdech Preah Mahaghosananda’s concepts of peace and harmony in Cambodia
3. To analyze the concept of peace and harmony of Samdech Preah Mahaghosananda and its influence in Cambodian society.

3. Scope of the study

This thesis focuses on Samdech PreahMahā Ghosananda’s methods of Dhammayatra propagation for harmony and peace in Cambodian society rather than on the content taught or his life history which have been well studied elsewhere. We cannot, however, do justice to his teachings methods without some consideration of both the content taught and his own biography.

⁶Mahā Ghosananda ed Dith Pran and Jack Kornfield, **Step by Step**, (Printed in the United States of America, 1992), p. 28.



4. Research method

This research work is a qualitative research and documentary research is also included. The research methodology can be divided as the following:

1. Documentary research

1. Related *Tipitaka* volumes, Commentaries, Sub-commentaries on peace (*Santi*) and non-violence (*ahiōsa*).

2. Printed data on biography and history of Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda: Written texts, books, researches, newsletters and newspapers both in Khmer and English.

3. Non-printed data: VCDOs of Dhammayatra, tape-cassettes of Dhamma-talks, CD-Mp3, and liable software on Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda's overseas links.

2. Field Research Interviews of the knowledgeable disciples and some valuable persons or key informants total 15 persons (i.e. Monks 5, Laymen 5, and Laywomen 5)

3. Analysis of Data This study is a qualitative research. A triangulation method was used that involved (1) content analysis of documents (2) data from interviews and questionnaires, and (3) observation of retreat Dhammayietra programs as well as multiple visits came to support him and related areas. Data findings from these methods were analyzed and concluded and suggestion were also provided.

5. Advantages of Research expected to gain

The researcher of this thesis strongly believes that this research will serve as a very useful guide and do utmost benefits for everyone settling a good example as follows:

1. To better understand the life and significant works of Samdech PreahMahā Ghosananda for peace and harmony in Cambodian society.

2. To know clearly about Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda's concepts of peace and harmony in Cambodia without using violence to solve the problem.

3. To better analyze the concept of peace and harmony of Samdech Preah Mahaghosananda and its influence in Cambodian society.



6. Concluding research

This analytical study of the concepts of peace and harmony in the teachings of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda in Cambodian Society has led to great understanding of the real concepts of Samdech Mahāghosananda's technique to guide the people who were suffering from great misery during war time to achieve freedom of spirit and peacefulness in Cambodian society. From the study it was found that Samdech Ghosananda vigorously adhered to the *Ahiōsa Dhamma* or non-violence to remedy the issues.

1. The researcher found that the life and work of Samdech Mahā Ghosananda was very wonderful and unbelievable. He devoted himself, his whole life to heal the problems in Cambodian and some parts of the world and restored peace and harmony by non-violence. Samdech Mahāghosananda was the holiest Cambodian monk and peaceful monk who is still faithfully respected by many people in the world, not just in Cambodia. That was the reason why he was named proudly 'Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda' or 'Preah Songsantipeap' for Cambodians and the world. Moreover, because of his perfect serene life and holiest celibacy in Buddhist disciplines, he was regarded as 'an angel' or 'one god' in the heart of his disciples and also regarded as 'a small Buddha' in the honest hearts of the world community.

2. With respect to his concepts of peace and harmony in Cambodia, the researcher found that Samdech Ghosananda was a real peaceful monk with himself first and then he worked hard to promote his loving-kindness to help other people to be peace and harmony both with oneself and altogether living in the society, especially when the Cambodia had confronted with political problem under the occupying of the Pol Pot or Khmer Rough regime. His technique of cultivating peace and harmony was very simple to teach other persons to understand both the Buddha's teachings and his own sought experiences. Ideally, the best way of Samdech Ghosananda prominently practiced was Dhammayietra (pilgrimage) with *Ahiōsa Dhamma* or non-violence. By doing so, it was found obviously that the real peace, happiness and harmony or reconsolidation in Cambodia and the world was secured and intense stable eventually.



3. On their hand with regard to the influences of Samdech Ghosananda’s teaching on culture, society, politics and economics in Cambodian society has found that (1)-Culture: Samdech Ghosananda always showed his personal culture such as gentle smile, respecting to anyone paid homage to him, well dressing orderly as a Buddhist monk’s uniform with well restraining all faculties, everywhere he went be with the books reading, speaking politely, and keeping in noble silent and peaceful culture. (2)-Society: He was a good example monk to help the Khmer people in the society when they needed him to give the Dhamma so as to lessen their suffering in daily life. He built up a lot of beneficial things both spiritual conception and some materials to Khmer society and the world. Moreover, for society aspect, the supreme Ghosananda established Buddhist monasteries in the refugee camps along the Thai-Khmer border. Building the Buddhist temples in the camps was to provide an opportunity to the thousands of people come to stay and take safe shelter in the monastery, especially in order to escape from the soldiers shot each other, and to provide good opportunities for those who did not want repatriation so they could be stayed long days more. Anyway, Samdech ordained a lot of monks and novices for Buddhism’s treasure as well. (3)-Politics: Concerning with political ideal, the supreme Ghosananda always adhered unequivocally the *Ahiṃsa Dhamma* (non-violence) to settle the problems for peace in the country and the world. He was not partial to any political party but his political method was following the Buddha’s path. In fact, he always proclaimed the ten King’s norms and the four *Brahmavihāra* to control the country, and inspired the leaders and simple citizens to abide by the five Buddhist precepts as for living together in peace, harmony and liberty. Herein is his own motto while he sought the peaceful resolution for Cambodian nation:

“Peace is possible!”

“The suffering of Cambodia has been deep”

From this suffering comes Great Compassion., Great Compassion makes a peaceful Heart. , A Peaceful Heart makes a Peaceful Person., A Peaceful Person makes a Peaceful Family., A Peaceful Family makes a Peaceful Community., A Peaceful Community makes a Peaceful Nation., And a



Peaceful Nation makes a Peaceful World., May all beings live in Happiness and Peace”.⁷

(4) Economics: relating to the economics, It was found that there were many supporters from generous people, organizations and associations both in nation and the abroad during the time of Samdech Ghosananda sought the peaceful reconciliation for Cambodia during the period of Khmer Rouge ruling and after the Khmer civil war was ended. It was really showed that while Samdech Ghosananda made the pilgrimages for peace and harmony in Cambodia, there were many people joined and supported with the four requisites (i.e. clothes, food, dwelling places, and medicines). Moreover, after the Pol Pot time was vanished we saw that there were a lot of budgets and properties aided to Cambodia from other countries.

On the other hand, under the influence of the Samdech Ghosananda’s teachings with *Ahiōsa Dhamma* (non-violence) or peaceful seeker caused his disciples both monks and laypeople to clearly understand the way how to apply *Ahimsa Dhamma* with oneself and others in the society. Samdech Ghosananda is regarded as the Buddha in the battlefield and a real peaceful monk (*Preah Songsantipheap*) on account of his great quality of non-violence which was similar to Mahatma Gandhi and his authentic principle was peace to resolve the Cambodia’s problems while Cambodia was felt into the holocaust of Khmer Rough. To days, it is found that all of his disciples can keep practice and follow his method of non-violence to solve their problems in daily life and they have also confidently held that begin with peace. Peace begins with you. Peace in heart must be brought to everywhere and with everyone accompanied with cool loving-kindness, compassion and reasoning in the name of the same person. As a consequence, Samdech is still lively presented as an angel or a small Buddha in his disciples’ heart forever.

⁷Mahā Ghosananda ed., Mahoney and Jack Philip Edmonds, **Step by Step**, (Printed in the United States of America, 1992), p. 28.



7. Suggestions

7.1 General The researcher understands that people all over the world face with a similar set of problem. Those problems are part of the human condition. Everybody has to deal with physical and mental suffering, and one has to do so in his or her own way. In a way, Samdech Ghosananda was the great pioneer of peacemaker for Cambodia and some parts of the world; he devoted himself to help the Khmer people to get rid of sufferings; especially he was the first holy peaceful monk who generated prominently the Dhammayietra of non-violence to resolve the Cambodian problem during the time of holocaust of Pol Pot. This dissertation of Samdech Ghosananda for peace and harmony in Cambodian society was completed, but the researcher apprehends that despite his sincere efforts there may remain some mistakes and the researcher hopes that all the readers would understand this case. The documents related to Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda were scarce; however, the researcher wills that all of the Venerable's wonderful works and all of his masterpieces stay for long to inspire generations to come.

7.2 Suggestions for further research My recommendations for ongoing research that invites to other new researchers for further study are: 1) A comparative study of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda and Mahatma Gandhi with reference to non-violence (ahimsa). 2) An analytical study of peace (santi) of Samdech Preah Mahāghosananda with respect to Buddhist perspective.

There is more interesting information about Buddhist scholars in Cambodia available for research. Buddhism in Cambodia is also well known in the world which can help and create the people in this country to be wise and intelligent under the lineage of Theravāda Buddhism. Therefore, the Khmer people and Buddhism are very connected to each one since the ancient time until present day.

My utmost wish in this thesis might stimulate and encourage its readers into pursuing such further aspects of *Santi* (peace) or non-violence of Samdech Preah Mahā Ghosananda, the peacemaker of Cambodia.



Reference

(๑) ภาษาอังกฤษ

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