

**Report on the Audience with
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama
by Viet_Vajra Foundation
October 16, 2007
Washington D.C., United States of America**



*His Holiness 14th Dalai Lama Smiling at Audience
Photo: Andy Vu (2007)*

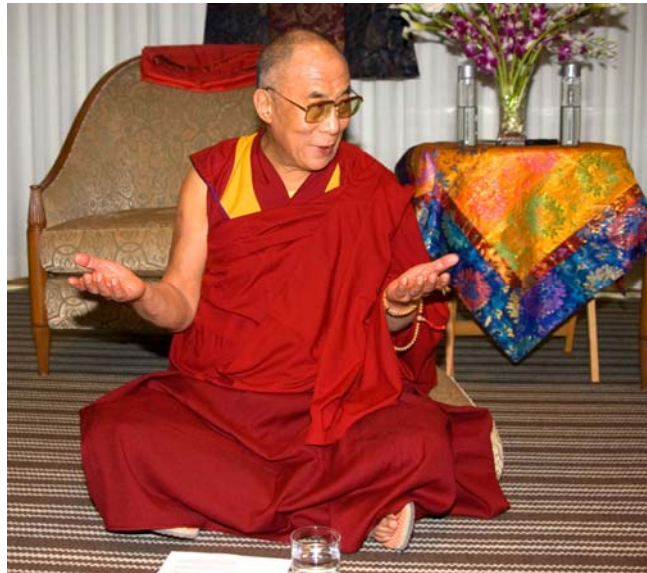
At 3 o'clock in the afternoon of October 16, 2007, members and friends of Viet_Vajra Foundation¹ were granted the permission to have an audience with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. It was such an auspicious and exceptionally meritorious opportunity for us, given that His Holiness the Dalai Lama was to accept the Gold Medal Award by the American Congress on the following day, October 17, 2007. Though His Holiness' schedule is always busy and his stay in Washington D.C. only lasted a few days, Viet_Vajra Foundation's request to have an audience with him was nevertheless approved by His Holiness' Special Envoy Lodi Gyari Rinpoche. Viet_Vajra Foundation has been very fortunate to receive support and encouragement from Lodi Gyari Rinpoche on several Dharma projects, and has also been previously granted an opportunity to personally meet with Rinpoche in his office of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Our audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama lasted over 40 minutes in a small and but comfortable hotel room in Washington D.C. While awaiting the arrival of His Holiness, together we contemplated and quietly chanted the auspicious mantra '*Om Mani Padme*

¹ The name of our organization has been legally changed to Viet Nalanda Foundation starting November 2007.

Hum'. The whispered chanting of the mantra, like the soft and silky white *katags* that we would offer to him, meandered its way through the hallways of the hotel.

When His Holiness the Dalai Lama stepped into the room, all of us bowed down and kept our eyes on the floor with *katags* in our hands over our heads. Interestingly, the first thing we recognized was the pair of sandals His Holiness is wearing. The sandals looked as simple as his walk and gesture.



*HHDLTM in His Sandals
Photo: Andy Vu (2007)*

As he approached the armchair that we previously covered with an embroidered red cloth, the security officers quickly lifted the cushion and folded the cover to make sure the seat was safe. While the security officers performed their duties, His Holiness spoke a few words in Tibetan to his attendant, then turned around facing us and suddenly lifted his robe and sat down on the floor. The attendant and translator were caught by surprise, and only had enough time to quickly grab the chair cushion for His Holiness to occupy. It was such an unexpected and extra-ordinary moment, which we never planned for, and such an emotional feeling for us, realizing that His Holiness was sitting cross-legged on the floor right in front of us. Recognizing that we all felt awkward standing before him, His Holiness hand-gestured and told us, 'Sit down, sit down!' We then proceeded to prostrate to His Holiness three times, and then sat down.

Before the audience started, together, we chanted the four verses of the Mind of Bodhicitta in English. Next, the founder and representative of Viet_Vajra Foundation presented a letter seeking His Holiness' advice on several issues, and the letter was read to him. (** Copy of the letter is attached at the end of this report*)

His Holiness the Dalai Lama attentively read the letter from Viet_Vajra Foundation while listening carefully to the representative speaking. Whenever approaching a part that required clarification, His Holiness stopped us and raised his question. During the audience, His Holiness' insightful advice and invaluable instructions were mixed with his well-known sense of humor, bringing smiles to all.

Being within such a close proximity to His Holiness, a deep sense of respect and dedication to him arose within each of us, and a few of us were moved to tears. Sitting cross-legged on the floor with the sandals underneath his maroon robe, and sharing this cozy room with us, this holy man made us feel as if we were embracing a beloved father who has just returned home after a long absence. The absence seems like it never happened while we were comforted by His Holiness's boundless love and compassion.



*HHDLTM Sitting on a Small Cushion Giving Teaching
Photo: Tien-Anh Nguyen (2007)*

Initially, His Holiness put his hands together in the lotus gesture and said that we are all children of Buddha. Regardless of our traditions - Theravadin, Mahayana or Vajrayana - we all need to practice and are bounded by Buddha's Dharma. As Buddhists, we need to possess a profound knowledge of Dharma, diligently study and contemplate the teachings, and apply the Dharma in our daily life to become model practitioners.

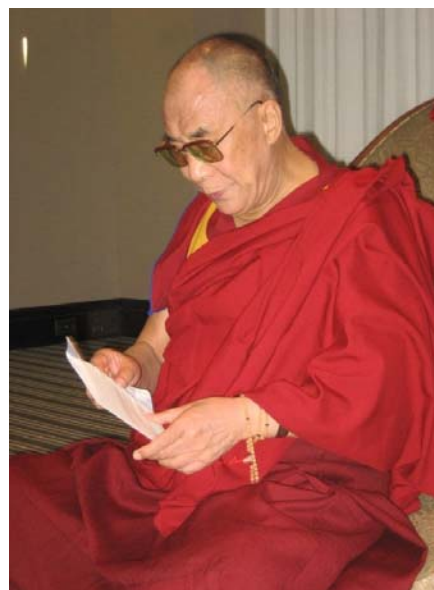
Afterwards, His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasized that he would more than welcome any monks, nuns or sincere Buddhist practitioners, who would like to engage in Dharma studies at the Tibetan monasteries in India. He also granted us permission to contact and

work directly with His Holiness' Representative in New York and Lodi Gyary Rinpoche in Washington D.C. on these Dharma training projects. He mentioned that the doors of all Tibetan monasteries in India always remain open to welcome every Buddhist practitioner from around the world. According to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, it would take a monk or a nun 20 to 30 years to complete the program of study. He also mentioned that the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India currently house over 10,000 monks and nuns. Among them, 4,000 to 5,000 are local Indians, Mongolians, Chinese or Westerners. Language is not a barrier for Mongolian or Nepalese students, but many challenges lay ahead for the Chinese and Westerners to master the Tibetan language.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that Buddhism is today a religion with an international status as it attracts quite a number of new followers with keen interest in its philosophy. Buddhism upholds the sense of loving kindness, patience and tolerance, as well as promotes the non-violent approach in all aspects of life. More and more scientists develop serious interest in learning and researching about Buddhism to enhance their understanding of the Mind Science, especially in the areas of human's emotions and functionalities of the mind.



*Presenting letter of the monk Ngawang Tsultrim Zangpo to HHDLMM
Photo: Andy Vu (2007)*



*HH DLLM opening the letter
Photo: Maithy Lam (2007)*

A representative of Viet_Vajra Foundation also presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama a letter from a young monk in Vietnam, seeking opportunity to travel to India for the Tibetan language and Dharma training according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Not long before that, this monk traveled a long way from Vietnam to Nepal in order to receive the novice monk's vows and the Dharma name of Ngawang Tsultrim Zangpo from the great Tibetan Lama, Trulshik Rinpoche. Trulshik Rinpoche is the respected High Lama of the

Nyingma lineage who had given teachings to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and is one of the eminent Lama Zopa Rinpoche's gurus.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama read the letter and saw Ngawang's picture during the audience. We believe that this is an extremely auspicious merit for the young monk as he received His Holiness' direct blessing from half way around the world. His Holiness was very pleased, and instructed that whichever monk or nun who wants to pursue Dharma studies according to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition should primarily master the Tibetan language. He also added that there are currently no Tibetan monk in Dharamsala with working knowledge of the Vietnamese language, while there are about 100 who know Chinese. His Holiness is hopeful that there would soon be enough meritorious causes for some Tibetan monks and nuns to master the Vietnamese language skills.

His Holiness said that due to the urgent need of learning Buddhist Dharma, there is a great demand for translation of Dharma texts and skillful translators. He hopes that in the near future, not only important scriptures in Tibetan are to be translated into Vietnamese, but the ancient scriptures missing from the Tibetan Buddhist literature, which were translated from Pali or Sanskrit sources to Vietnamese, should also be translated into Tibetan. He informed us that several scriptures in Chinese, which were not part of the Tibetan collection, are currently undergoing the translation process into the Tibetan language.

He reminded us of the rigorous learning tradition at the famous ancient Nalanda University in India between the 5th and the 12th century, the birth place of many great Mahayanist Saints such as Nagarjuna, the founder of the Madhyamika philosophy, Shantideva, Aryadeva, and Chandrakirti... His Holiness the Dalai Lama is convinced that the Buddha Dharma taught at Nalanda University firmly shaped Tibetan Buddhism and according to him, Tibetan Buddhism should have been known as Nalanda tradition rather than Vajrayana tradition. The reason is that the teachings of the Pali tradition and the Sanskrit tradition (including Mahayana and Vajrayana) both exist within the Nalanda tradition's framework. The fact that we divide Buddhism into the three Yanas - Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana - is not based on sound judgment. His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that Theravadin has always been the logical component of Mahayana and formed an unequivocal learning foundation for Mahayana.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama added that the term 'vajra' in the name of Viet_Vajra Foundation, or in the Buddhist tradition of Vajrayana, if applied outside of the Buddhist context or in a different linguistic context can easily be misconstrued as a symbol or practice of Hinduism since Hinduism also utilizes 'vajra' and has a Vajrayana tradition. He then repeated that Buddhist Vajrayana tradition should have been called Nalanda tradition.

At that moment, a founding member of Viet_Vajra Foundation asked if Viet_Vajra should be re-named Viet Nalanda as His Holiness expressed that the term 'vajra' in Viet_Vajra Foundation is not appropriate. His Holiness the Dalai Lama seemed very pleased with this question and joyfully responded, 'Viet Nalanda, very good! Very good! The name Viet Nalanda sounds much better!'

His Holiness also encouraged Viet_Vajra Foundation to continue establishing friendships with other Dharma friends and Buddhist groups consisting of Vietnamese practicing Tibetan Buddhism in different parts of the worlds, such as France, New York, California, etc. He also said that the Vietnamese and Tibetan expatriates, sharing the same fate of being in exile, should be close friends and take care of each other.

Forty minutes with His Holiness went by quickly like a fragile dream! Before ending, a friend of Viet_Vajra Foundation asked if His Holiness foresees that he would be traveling to Vietnam in the near future to teach the Buddha-Dharma. His Holiness responded that he anxiously looks forward to visiting Vietnam when the situation becomes suitable. Similar to the situation in Vietnam, His Holiness said that Buddhists in Laos, Kampuchea, Thailand and Mongolia etc. are hopeful for an opportunity to welcome him, and he himself also cannot wait to visit these countries.



*Presenting Gifts and Signing Books
Photo: Andy Vu (2007)*



*HHDLTM at the Tibetan Children's Village
Photo: www.tcv.org.in (1960)*

The audience with His Holiness finally came to an end, and together, we chanted His Holiness' four personal favorite verses by the great Shantideva. These beautiful verses were engraved on a plaque dedicated to him. We also presented His Holiness with the monetary offering for the Tibetan Children's Village (www.tcv.org.in) - a non-profit organization devoted to educating Tibetan children in India. After His Holiness the Dalai Lama went into exile in India in 1959, he established this village. Since then, his own

sister has been in charge of the administration, education and caring of the Tibetan orphans, who lost their parents during the escape from Tibet.



*Viet_Vajra Foundation Group Photo with HHDL M
Photo: Andy Vu (2007)*

Each one of us left the meeting with different aspirations and sentiments; however His Holiness' insightful advices will always echo in our minds. Words cannot express how grateful we are for this precious opportunity to be with you, His Holiness; and we prostrate to you with our body, speech and mind. May each one of us find the way to subdue our mind, never forget your golden speech, and may we dedicate these merits for the benefit of all sentient beings!

☸ Reported in Vietnamese by Tam Bao Dan with comments given by members of Viet_Vajra Foundation (2007). Translated into English by Duyet Do (2008).