

## **The Individual in Society in the Light of Early Buddhist Teachings and the Writings of Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari**

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### **Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari**

In April of 2004, a four day international conference was held on the thought of Ayatollah Morteza Mutahhari in Tehran. The conference was co-organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) and Tehran University, and attended by eighty scholars from thirty countries and students of Tehran University. The purported goal of the conference was to “familiarize Iranian youth with the martyr (Mutahhari)’s ideology and thoughts” and “to encourage religious and philosophical centers throughout the world to study and analyse Mutahhari’s ideas.”<sup>1</sup> Then Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, and the supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khomeini, both addressed the opening of the conference, and offered very contradictory points of view, which were highlighted in the Iranian press releases about the conference. While then President Khatami described Morteza Mutahhari as “a man of dialogue who indulged in scholarly discussions not only with Islamic thinkers but international scholars as well,”<sup>2</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini emphasized that Mutahhari offered a scholarly critique of foreign ideas, and that “the jihad against ideas imported from both the East and the West initiated by the martyr continues to this day.”<sup>3</sup>

As organizer of a series of Buddhist-Muslim dialogues initiated in 2001 by Dharma Master Hsin Tao, the founder of the Museum of World Religions, in response to the destruction of the Buddhist statues in Bamiyan, it was my good fortune to be invited to attend the conference together with the Dharma Master and Ven. Liao-yi shih, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the Museum.<sup>4</sup>

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1 [www.khamenei.de/news/news2004/apr2004.htm](http://www.khamenei.de/news/news2004/apr2004.htm).

2 “Khatami says Martyr Motahari was a man of dialogue” (P.I.R.I. News Archive, April 25, 2004).

3 “Supreme Leader Stresses Need to Continue Motahari’s Jihad Against Foreign Ideas,” [/www.khamenei.de/news/news2004/apr2004.htm](http://www.khamenei.de/news/news2004/apr2004.htm).

4 About the Museum, see REIS HABITO, Maria, “Master Hsin Tao’s Vision; The Museum of World Religions,” in: SHARMA, Arvind (ed.), *The World’s Religions after*