



Bảo Anh Lạc Bookshelf 43

SHARING THE DHARMA

Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

Foreword by
Venerable Bhikkhunī TN Nguyên Thanh &
Venerable Bhikkhunī TN Giác Hương

Nhà Xuất Bản Hồng Đức 2020

Contact:



HUONG SEN BUDDHIST TEMPLE
19865 Seaton Avenue,
Perris, CA 92570, USA
Tel: 951-657-7272, Cell: 951-616-8620

Email: huongsentemple@gmail.com,
thichnugioihuong@yahoo.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/huongsentemple>
Web: www.huongsentemple.com

Copyright@2020 by Bhikkhuni Gioi Huong, Sunyata Pham,
Huong Sen Buddhist Temple in the United States.
All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

i. Notes	<i>Hồng Đức Publishing House</i>	7
ii. Foreword	<i>The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī TN Nguyễn Thanh</i>	9
iii. Introduction	<i>The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī TN Giác Hương</i>	11
iv. Preface	<i>Bhikkhunī TN Giới Hương</i>	14

Part I. DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST NUNS IN MODERN TIMES

1. The Role of Vietnamese Nuns Overseas -	<i>The Most Venerable Thích Như Điển</i>	18
2. Development of Vietnamese Nuns in the USA in the XXI Century -	<i>Venerable Thích Đồng Trí</i>	20
3. Grateful to the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī -	<i>Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh</i>	30
4. The Future-Opportunity- Challenge for the Vietnamese Nuns' Community Abroad -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	32
5. The Liberated Robe for Leading Disciples of the Tathāgata -	<i>Venerable Thích Quang Thuận</i>	39
6. Role of the Buddha's Female Disciples in the United States -	<i>Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ</i>	43
7. Profile of a Prison Chaplain -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	46
8. Young Nuns with the Dynamic Preaching Model -	<i>Bhikkhunī Viên Giác</i>	48
9. Women in the True Dharma -	<i>Nguyễn Giác</i>	55
10. The Figure of Nuns -	<i>Tâm Từ</i>	58
11. The Capacity of Nuns -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	62
12. Vietnamese Nuns in the United States -	<i>Minh Mẫn</i>	64
13. The Preaching for Overseas Nuns -	<i>Bhikkhunī Chân Thiện and Bhikkhunī Chân Diệu</i>	72
14. A Heart Letter to Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī -	<i>Bhikkhunī Ngọc Liên</i>	76
15. Women and Vinaya -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	78
16. Virtuous Examples of Senior Nuns, the Spirit of the Eight Rules of Bhikkhunīs -	<i>Bhikkhunī Như Thủy</i>	82
17. Join Hands Together	- <i>Bhikkhunī Hạnh Minh</i>	85
18. The Hospital Experience of a Nun Chaplain -	<i>Bhikkhunī Phước Nhân</i>	89
19. Nuns in the Modern Time -	<i>Venerable Thích Huệ Giáo</i>	92
20. Paying Homage to Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī -	<i>Bhikkhunī Hạnh Minh</i>	94
21. Practicing Dharma Is a Good Method to Recharge Spiritual Energy -	<i>Bhikkhunī Diệu An</i>	96
22. Dharma Lineage in the History of the Nun Sangha -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	98
23. Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns at University of the West -	<i>Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Hiếu</i>	107
24. Contributions of Nuns in the United States -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	110
25. Can Women become Enlightened? -	<i>Lê Huy Trứ</i>	113
26. Nuns in North America -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	123
27. Thinking of the Roots -	<i>Đàm Liên</i>	125
28. The Anniversary of Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī Is Held for the First Time in California, USA -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	128

Part II. THE CONDUCT OF VIETNAMESE NUNS IN PROPAGATING DHARMA IN THE UNITED STATES

1. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh -
An Exemplary Person of the Nun Sangha In the United States,
An Lạc Temple (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*136
2. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương -
Vạn Hạnh Flower, Vạn Hạnh Temple (Seattle) - Bhikkhunī Giới Hương.....145
3. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Hòa - *The Reverend Master,*
Dược Sư Temple (California)- *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*151
4. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu - Ni sư Đàm Nhật - *The Capacity to Train Nuns,*
Đức Viên Tịnh Uyển Monastery (California) and Tịnh Hải Monastery (Hawaii) - *Ven. Bhikkhunī Giác Hương & Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*155
5. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Lạc & Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tâm - *Enjoy the Renunciate Virtue,*
Diệu Quang Temple (Sacramento & Santa Ana, California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Nguyễn Thành*162
6. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn - *The Grace of Dharma,*
Xá Lợi Temple (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*172
7. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Tịnh and Venerable Bhikkhunī Chơn Viên -
The Pure Characteristic, Đại Bi Monastery (California) - Bhikkhunī Giới Hương..180
8. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Ân - *The Tranquil in Life,*
Quan Âm Phổ Chiếu Nunnery (Maryland) - ... *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*186
9. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Kiên Nguyệt - *The Śūraṅgama Bright Moon,*
Phật Ân Temple (Kansas) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*191
10. The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Từ Liên and Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Trang -
Fragrant Ornament in Reading the Amitābha Buddha's Name,
Tam Bảo Temple (Utah) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*196
11. Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu - *Precepts as the Gem,*
Quang Minh Temple (Colorado) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*200
12. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Phương - *Go and Come Freely,*
Phổ Minh Temple (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*206
13. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Tâm, Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Phước -
Ten Phổ Hiền Conduct, Phổ Hiền Temple and
Linh Quang Temple (Massachusetts) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*212
14. Venerable Bhikkhunī Hiếu Đức - *Toward to Amitābha Buddha,*
Linh Quang Temple (Pennsylvania) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*219
15. Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ - *The Interior Reflection,*
Thanh Lương Temple (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*224
16. Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính - *The Zen Key,*
Vô Ưu Zen Monastery (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*227
17. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc - *Gratitude to Masters,*
A Di Đà Temple (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*234
18. Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương - *A Lotus Bud to You,* Hương Sen Temple (California)
- *Ven. Thích Trừng Sỹ, Bhikkhunī Viên Quang, and Nguyễn Đông Nhật*241
19. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ - *The Zen Dignity,*
Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*258
20. Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Bồn - *The Tranquil Mind*
Kiều Đàm Temple (California) - *Bhikkhunī Giới Hương*268

21. Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Hào - <i>Spreading Buddhism in the Far Island,</i> Tù Hạnh Temple (Hawaii) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	272
22. Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện - <i>The Compassionate Stream,</i> Huyền Không Temple (California) and An Lạc Temple (Indiana) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	282
23. Venerable Bhikkhunī Liên Tiến - <i>A Beautiful Figure of the Mendicant Nun,</i> Ngọc Hòa Vihara (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	288
24. Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nghiêm, <i>An Exemplary Renunciate,</i> Phước Hải Nunnery (North Carolina) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	298
25. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Quang - <i>Skill in Discipline,</i> Phước Quang Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	304
26. Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan - <i>The Orchid under Sunshine,</i> Giác Minh Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	310
27. Venerable Bhikkhunī Quảng Tịnh - <i>The Peaceful Karma,</i> Phật Quang Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	314
28. Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Phước - <i>The Wonderful Merit,</i> Viên Minh Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	317
29. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Chánh and Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Bảo - <i>Service in Three</i> <i>Jewels,</i> Huệ Lâm Temple (Massachusetts) - ...	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	322
30. Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Nghiêm - <i>The Gentle Figure,</i> Hải Ân Temple (Georgia) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	329
31. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương and Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên - <i>Service is a Way for</i> <i>a Blooming Lotus,</i> Viên Thông Monastery (Texas) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	333
32. Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh - <i>Share the Sangha's Works,</i> Thiền Tịnh Đạo Tràng Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh</i>	341
33. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiền Tuệ - <i>Many Honored Rewards,</i> Phổ Linh Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	348
34. Zen Master Diệu Thiện - <i>Wake up to End Rebirth,</i> Phổ Môn Zen Monastery (Texas) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	359
35. Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tuyên - <i>An Upright Spirit,</i> Tịnh Nghiêm Quán Âm Temple (Kansas) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	372
36. Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang - <i>The Favor Teacher,</i> Quán Âm Temple (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang</i>	376
37. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thu Liên - <i>Mind at the Amitābha Buddha,</i> Ngọc Thanh Vihara (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	385
38. Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Thiền & Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Diệu - <i>Smile at the Flower to Open Minds for the Masses,</i> Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Chân Thiền, Phan Tấn Hải and Phước Đổ</i>	394
39. Zen Master Triệt Như - <i>Wisdom is the Main Career,</i> Tánh Không Zen Monastery (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	403
40. Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm - <i>The Open Heart,</i> Phổ Hiền Buddhist Charities (California) -	<i>Bhikkhunī Giới Hương</i>	408
41. Bhikkhunī Ngọc Liên - <i>A Miss Became a Nun,</i> Minh Đăng Quang Vihara (California) -	<i>Minh Quang</i>	416
42. Some Vietnamese Nunneries Abroad -	<i>Võ Văn Trường</i>	421

BẢO ANH LẠC BOOKSHELF438

LIST OF PATRONS FOR PRINTING441

We respectfully acknowledge:

- The Masters, the Patriarchs, the predecessors and the monks and nuns who have compassionately conveyed the precepts, as well as wisdom, and led the good path for us during the past years.

We sincerely thank:

- As the cause for the Triple Gem dwelling forever in the world, the devoted donors and benefactors have sponsored the spirit, as well as materiality, for the Nuns to be presented, maintained, and developed in Abroad.

With all hearts of gratitude, we respectfully offer this collected Book of *Sharing The Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns In The United States* - a spiritual gift to:

- All the venerable Sanghas of Monks and Nuns, Dharma sisters and Buddhist followers, far and near.

i. NOTES FROM HỒNG ĐỨC PUBLISHING HOUSE

Readers have in hand the anthology, *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States*, collected by Dr. Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương, currently the abbess of Hương Sen Temple in the United States.

According to the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyên Thanh (abbess of An Lạc Temple in San Jose, California, USA), “The book, *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States* is a first step and positively contributes a vivid picture of Vietnamese nuns in the United States. The anthology recreates the history of inheritance and continues the Buddha-Dharma network of female Buddhist ranks in the new era - the era of the modern and committed twenty-first century.”

Or, as the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương (abbess of Vạn Hạnh Pagoda in Seattle, Washington) confided, “As a senior nun, to show empathy and to encourage young nuns, I ventured to accept an invitation to write an introduction for *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States*. The book is like a silver thread connecting the nuns living in the United States, joining together in the Buddhas, fulfilling the duties of the Buddha’s daughters who spend their whole lives in spiritual practice with a simple pure life, and constantly cultivate thoughts, sublimate to the peak of wisdom, bring truth in the golden teachings of the Buddha directing people to truth - goodness - beauty. But I also know that in order to fulfill the mission of a Tathagata messenger, the Buddha’s daughters are subjected to many challenges and difficulties.”

Yes, it is true. Reading carefully seventy articles (with 460 attached documentary photos) of over sixty members of the Vietnamese nuns community in the US who daily overcome difficulties - different language, customs, lifestyle. Adapting to the culture of immigrants with indigenous residents, the daughters of the Buddha constantly promote the Buddha-Dharma. As the author Dr. Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương sincerely expresses in the preface, “The flow of nuns from the Buddha’s time has existed, propagated and continued the Dharma through many generations.” The collection is a highlight that records the relationship of the temples that maintain and develop Vietnamese Buddhist traditional practices. These communities are now in many US states in this twenty-first century (since 1975) and they share a devoted belief, a legitimate pride, and a worthy honor. Their experiences should be seen as a handbook for prospective nuns.”

Our Hồng Đức Publishing House understands and sympathizes with what the three organizers, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương, and Dr. Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương are providing. They wish to inform the public about the Dharma treasures offered by the Vietnamese Nun Sangha in the United States, what they have achieved and need to do next on the path of sharing Buddhism. This anthology serves as a history of the nuns and is crucial to maintaining, preserving and developing the Vietnamese Buddhist cultural identity in the United States.

We know that in 2014, two authors, Võ Văn Tường and Từ Hiếu Cồn in the United States released Volume One of the book, *Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Temples*. This is an introduction to seventy-two Vietnamese temples abroad - ten temples are presided over by the Nuns). In 2017, the two authors released Volume Two, introducing 100 Vietnamese temples in the United States (eighteen are overseen by nuns). Volumes One and Two were published by Hương Quê Publishing House, USA (they are now available in the library of General Science in Hồ Chí Minh City).

Now, with the publication of *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States*, we find this is the first book that reflects quite fully on many different aspects and dimensions of the development of the Buddhist house in general and the Dharma sharing of the Vietnamese nuns in the United States in particular, since 1975.

We hope that readers find here the precious knowledge and experience for Buddhist works. As Hồng Đức Publisher, we would like to introduce all readers, far and near, to this useful reference book.

Hồng Đức Publisher

ii. FOREWORD
BY THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ TN NGUYỄN THANH
AN LẠC TEMPLE (CALIFORNIA)

Namo Shakyamuni Buddha
Namo Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī

Dear Distinguished Senior Venerable Monks, Nuns,

Sangha Members and Dharma Friends:

It is an honor for me to write a foreword for the collection entitled, *Sharing the Dharma -Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States* which has been compiled and published by Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương. The book consists of seventy articles from many writers and is divided into two main sections:

I. Development of Buddhist Nuns in Modern Time (twenty-eight articles)

II. The Conduct of Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in Propagating Dharma in the United States of America (forty- two articles).

The special feature of these two parts is to introduce the process of how nunneries were founded and developed, a short biography of the Venerable Bhikkhunī Abbess, the challenges, experiences, as well as the way of sharing Dharma of nuns in foreign countries, with a different culture and language. It is these practices and activities that have made the writings lively and truthful in describing and building the nuns' image in the United States.

The Vietnamese Buddhist Nun Sangha has a long history of transmission that is legitimate and orthodox. Mahāyāna Buddhism and the ideal of the Bodhisattva Path are well-rooted in every Vietnamese Buddhist nun in their path of sharing the Dharma. The twentieth-century remarks are contributions of some great Vietnamese Buddhist nuns, such as the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Không, Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh, Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm, Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải, and Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Tâm Hoa, and many others in the fields of the Buddhist practice, education, building nunneries, ordaining Buddhist nuns, organizing social and charity works.

Since 1950, some Vietnamese Buddhist nuns were sent to pursue higher study in Japan, Sri Lanka, and Western countries. After 1975, many Vietnamese Buddhist nuns travelled and settled down abroad due to many programs. Since then, the Vietnamese Buddhist Nun Sangha has grown in the United States of America, both in number and in their propagating activities of the Buddha Dharma. Latter Vietnamese Buddhist nuns have been cared for and supported by the elder predecessors. They have also lived and taken action in relatively large and spacious monasteries. Therefore, they have more time and chances to study English or pursue programs of general studies or Buddhist studies in different famous universities in the United States of America. Due to these chances, the nuns have met and exchanged with different ethnic and religious groups from which they can introduce to their friends to the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition indirectly. Therefore, most of these nuns are successful in conveying the Vietnamese Buddhist message in other countries.

The book, *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States*, is written in both English and Vietnamese and may need more improvement in the future. However, this is a *first step and a dynamic contribution* that draws a vivid picture of Vietnamese nuns. It is a positive contribution for sketching out a lively picture of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns in the United State of America. It has reconstructed a history of Dharma transmission of the Buddhist nuns in modern times - *an epoch of modernity and engagement in the twentieth and twenty-first century*.

Once again, we would like to introduce the collection to the Senior Venerable Monks, Nuns, Sangha Members and Dharma Friends far and near in the world. Hopefully, we can receive favorable comments and suggestions from you in order that the book will be fully reprinted and supplemented. This collection can be considered as Volume One with hope in the future that with good supported conditions, the second and more editions will be released, when the list of nunneries and virtuous nuns becomes more and more dedicated.

On behalf of the Venerable Senior Bhikkhunīs in the United States, we sincerely appreciate the merit of Bhikkhunī Giới Hương in writing and compiling this collection in both English and Vietnamese. In addition, I would like to express gratitude to all Venerable Monks, Nuns, intellectuals and journalists who have contributed their articles which highlight the will and propagating activities of Vietnamese Buddhist nuns in the United State of America in modern times.

Namo the Merit Forest Bodhisattva Mahasattva.

An Lạc Temple, San Jose, May 21, 2020

Sincerely Yours,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh

anlactu1647@gmail.com

iii. INTRODUCTION
BY THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ TN GIÁC HƯƠNG
VẠN HẠNH TEMPLE (SEATTLE)

For nearly three months, to prevent the spread of coronavirus, some areas were shut down, including Buddhist monasteries. Vạn Hạnh Temple was closed and Buddhists were not allowed to join in activities. I and few my disciples in the monastery recited the Great Compassion Heart Mantra and the Universal Door of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva who listens to the suffering voices of the world.

During the recitation period, with the gentle image of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva bent down to comfort and save sentient beings as my image, I decided to accept an invitation from Bhikkhuni Giác Hương to write an introduction for the book, *Vietnamese Nuns in the United States of America*. I had a thought instantly that “Nuns are the daughters of Buddha; they are *the messengers of love*”. They follow the example of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva practicing the four immeasurables of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity to alleviate the pain of women experiencing uncertainty in life, and to ease the pain of the entire country. The contribution of nuns to the spiritual life of a community brings the truth of compassion and wisdom into human life.

As a senior nun, I have a responsibility to encourage the younger nuns, to show sympathy and to offer support. I accepted the invitation to write for *Vietnamese Nuns in the United States*, seeing it as a string uniting the nuns living in the United States. We work together to fulfill the duties of the Buddha’s daughters, dedicated to a simple but impassioned lifestyle. Only wisdom can bring truth in the golden teachings of the Buddha, directing people to the good and the beautiful. But I also know that in order to fulfill the mission of a messenger of Tathagata, the daughters of the Buddha face many challenges and difficulties.

Studying the history and culture of Buddhism, considering how Buddhism coped within the historical context of India, we see the flexible way Buddhism existed apart from the influence of society and culture, both during the time when Buddha was alive and after his death. Not only does Buddhism continue to exist at its origin, but it has spread to many different countries around the world. Buddhism has experimented with the social, cultural and worldview standards of the countries in which Buddhism sprouted late. It developed to its peak and we could clearly see the magic of the Buddha Dharma, as well as the power of Buddhist teachings presented by the founder.

This overview of history helps us to better understand the characteristics of dependent origination, originality and differences between Buddhism and other religions. As Buddhism spread from country to country, it retained its own characteristics. The appearance has been adjusted to suit the prevailing culture. This is the universal key for us to unravel the difficulties of spreading Buddhism to countries with many different customs and practices.

Since 1975, following the wave of emigration, monks and nuns from Vietnam went abroad to practice and propagate the Dharma. They scattered throughout the continents, but the largest and most numerous was in the United States. Vietnamese nuns came to the United States in many ways, crossing the border, with the guarantee of family or religion, and studying abroad in India. Many were invited by Buddhist associations to go to the United States to propagate, so the number of nuns in the United States exceeds other countries. It gives the nuns much joy, but also a lot of concern.

How do Vietnamese nuns in the United States play a part in spiritual practice and sharing the Dharma within the changes and challenges of a new society in the new era?

Do nuns have enough capacity and wisdom to apply the concept of “dependent on conditions” that the masters of virtue have taught?

The nuns respond: Yes, we do! We are highly trained, educated and well practiced, Preaching in a civilized country like America is a challenge and an opportunity for the nuns. Challenges and opportunities appear in all space and time and we are determined to overcome and fulfill the mission of the renunciate.

*Even though I must suffer thousands of hardships
I am devoted to the sacrifice of religion,
Relying on the light of compassion, seeking enlightenment,
Self-discipline, sense of fullness.*

It is said that Avalokitesvara is heard all over the ten directions of the world. He was a Quan Yin eyepiece who had to endure a lot of injustice and wrongdoing. He was also Prince Diêu Thiện who suffered because his own father did not have faith in the Buddha Dharma and tried to torment him. Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva overcame many challenges to save suffering beings.

Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī was the first bhikkhuni, the top ruler and the leader of the nunnery during the Buddha’s time. On the morning of her death, she went on almsround as usual. It was her last almsround. Together with the assembly of saintly nuns, she bid the Buddha goodbye before she passed to nirvana.

“We have learned to understand the Buddha’s miraculous teaching and have practiced it with complete integrity. Now, all the duties have been done, all the burdens on the shoulders has been laid down, and all suffering afflictions have been eradicated. We have been liberated from family life, and are as free as the birds of the sky. Virtuous conduct has been firmly established, and therefore, nothing can bind us anymore, not the world, heaven, demons, gods, or heavenly beings. So we ask, “What is left in the three realms of this world that can cause us to be entangled?”

Having attended the monks and nuns, we are aware of the prejudice and contempt in Indian society for women. Sometimes, that wall of attachment was very high and very strong, but many overcame it to be ordained and survived. At that time, monastic ordination was not easy, but our master nuns passed to become the first bhikkhunis. Many attained arahantship under the guidance of Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. The nuns’ group quickly thrived with prestige among the masses. The bhikkhunis were praised by the Buddha, the laity and the people.

The old example is still there. The nuns want to survive and grow and the practice of each individual is to have the capacity to overcome difficulties and develop wisdom. To do this, they need to rely on the strength of the nuns' community and the guidance of the eldest nuns. The book, *Vietnamese Nuns in the United States*, meets these requirements. Although now there is only cooperation in the field of books, newspapers and internet, it is a starting point for other activities of the nuns in the future. The sect existing in the United States of America completes the Buddha's work.

The book has the participation of many young writers in the line of nuns. A nun is the chief editor, with a doctorate and she has produced many valuable books. We would like to applaud this merit of the nuns and hope that on the long journey of spreading the Dharma in the land of the nuns, we join hands in the Buddha's work. We earnestly appeal to enthusiastic nuns and to the rows of Buddhist laywomen to support each other. Together, we can encourage and support groups of nuns to share the grace of Dharma with the United States.

Finally, we pray that the Three Jewels will bless the nuns with their determination and strength. May they achieve great results.

Namo Great Pure Bodhisattvas.

Vạn Hạnh Pagoda, June 6 2020
Warm Regard,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương

iv. PREFACE

BY VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ THÍCH NỮ GIỚI HƯƠNG

The flow of life has continued and passed like a bird flying through the air without a trace, like a leaf falling in the autumn, like a mist melting in the early sunshine... but the presence of bird wings, a leaf, a dewdrop still radiate beauty, the scent of meaning in this fragile impermanent life.

The flow of nuns from the Buddha's time has existed, propagated and continued the Dharma through many generations. The collection of *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States* records stories of the determination and courage of Vietnamese nuns in the United States in the twenty-first century. This book can serve as a handbook of religious experiences for future nuns. The collection begins with a foreword by the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh, an introduction by the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương, a preface from the compiler, Bhikkhunī Giới Hương and finally, the notes from Hồng Đức Publishers who have encouraged, published and respectfully introduced this work in recognition of the process of practicing and sharing the Dharma of Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States of America.

The collection is divided into two sections:

Part I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN NUNS

This section contains twenty-eight articles on Buddhist Nuns' history from India to Vietnam and the United States.

The essays include "The Role of Vietnamese Nuns Overseas" by the Most Venerable Thích Như Điển, "Development of Vietnamese Nuns in the United States in the Twenty-First Century" by Venerable Thích Đồng Trí, and "Gratitude of the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī" by Chief Nun Nguyễn Thanh are examples of the brief but profound essays that introduce and emphasize the core content of this book.

After the article, "The Future, Challenges and Opportunities for Vietnamese Nuns in the United States" by Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương, there are a collection of twenty-four essays of many genres where the sincere feelings and views of writers are gently expressed. This contributes to making the book a rich and vivid story of Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns sharing the Dharma in a new country.

Part II. CONDUCT OF VIETNAMESE NUN IN PROPAGATING DHARMA IN THE UNITED STATES

This section contains forty-two articles introducing the history of each abbess, the process of building nunneries, as well as their conduct and missionary programs. Through these forty-two writings, we see respect and honor for these shining examples of Vietnamese

Bhikkhunīs in their tireless missionary careers. This is probably the first project to write in detail about Vietnamese nuns preaching in the United States. The author’s wish is that from these sketches of portraits, there will be more articles, more research works from elder nuns, lay Buddhists and many others who are interested. This portrait of Vietnamese nuns in the United States tells the story of their determination and courage as they find ways to share the Dharma in a new country.

Reflecting on these articles with so much Zen meaning, surely we will remember a poem by the poet, Huyền Không (pen name of the late Venerable Thích Mãn Giác), especially the last two lines:

*The temple roof protects the soul of the nation
The eternal life of the ancestors.
(Thinking of the Temple - Huyền Không)*

On the basis of Precept-Concentration-Wisdom, Merit-Insight, the Patriarchs and Venerable Nuns present each beautiful virtue and each unique ability in establishing Vietnamese Buddhism at their own temples. The title of each article reflects the unique and beautiful virtue of each individual and is offered with sincere gratitude to every Venerable Abbess. For example, the Chief Nun Nguyễn Thanh’s article was given the title, “An Exemplary Person of the Nun Sangha” because she is one of the early nuns present in the United States who has built a network of nuns abroad. She often organized the patriarch memorial anniversaries and summer retreats for nuns from anywhere to attend; the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ’s article with the title, “Enjoy the Renunciate Virtue” because her virtue in the monastic life influences others to be upright; the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lữ with the title, “The Ability to Train Nuns” because in her monastery, under her virtue, there are more than fifty resident nuns and lay Buddhists who practice, and many other conducts.

This collection is a record that researches the lives, deeds, careers and ways of spreading the Dharma by the elder nuns in foreign countries. They are shining examples among women and they encourage and inspire other Buddhist monastics.

The list of Nunneries (may be more than 100) and Venerable Nuns are quite numerous in many states across the country, but because of the time, conditions and context of a world affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, access to information, photos and contact with the abbesses is rather limited. Hopefully, in the future with good conditions, the upcoming second collection will be written in full detail. The collection is offered in Vietnamese and English.

On this occasion, the Editorial Board is sincerely grateful to the Most Venerable Thích Như Điển (Viên Giác Temple, Germany), Venerable Đồng Trí, Venerable Huệ Giáo, Venerable Trùng Sỹ, and monks, senior Bhikkhunīs, journalists, writers, and lay Buddhists who compassionately wrote and provided information for this collection.

Gratitude to the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương, and all venerable Bhikkhunīs for their spiritual encouragement and financial support to publish this collection. Our sincere thanks to the English translation team (*Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Rev. Hiếu Liên and Pamela Kirby*), the Vietnamese Editorial Board (*Nguyễn Tánh and Thanh Phi*), the design team (*Bhikkhunī Viên Quang*), and the typing, printing and publishing (*Bhikkhunī Viên Tiến*), among many others.

We all know that in American society, women are given many opportunities to promote and develop and Vietnamese nuns are given opportunities too, but at the same time, we face many challenges in sharing Dharma. Vietnamese nuns in the United States always keep that reality in mind.

We need to work together, guide, share, persevere and overcome difficulties to improve ourselves and other people anywhere we are living depending on our karma.

Advice from the Buddha:

Please light the torch on your own!

Take refuge in yourself.

Let's hit the road, monastic!¹

Finally, with all respect, the author would like to sincerely acknowledge the Venerable Senior Monks, Nuns and the readers who point out shortcomings. Your valuable suggestions and instructions will be used to revise and supplement future reprints.

Namo the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.

Huong Sen Temple, July 28, 2020
Paying Triple Homage with Respect,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com

¹ Dhammapada (Kinh Pháp Cú). Verse 160, translated from Vietnamese by Thích Minh Châu, Công ty CP Văn hóa Thiện tri thức, 2014.

<https://thuvienhoasen.org/images/file/ZSqWfkb40QgQAJh6/kinh-phap-cu-19-10-2014-.pdf>

Phần I

DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHIST NUNS IN MODERNTIMES

1.1. THE ROLE OF VIETNAMESE NUNS OVERSEAS

When Sakyamuni Buddha was alive, he himself gave women the opportunity to ordain at Vaishali City. The first bhikshuni (Pali: bhikkhunī) congregation was led by the nun patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. The nun sangha had existed in India a few hundred years when Princess Shāghamitā and Prince Mahinda, the daughter and son of King Aśoka, brought Buddhism into Sri Lanka in the third century B.C. The bhikshuni sangha was established there from the first days, but now in this twenty-first century someone who seeks the origin or existence of the bhikshuni congregation in Sri Lanka will find it is hardly as continuous as it used to be. Certainly, the lineage's footprint has continued from Sri Lanka to China and from China to Vietnam, Korea and Japan since the first century A.D.

Our Vietnamese Buddhism is influenced strongly by the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism, from the first days of Buddhism in Jiaochu (Giao Châu, 交州, Guangxi and Guangdong belong to China today) at the time of Kang Senghui (Khương Tăng Hội), Zhi Jiang Liang (Chi Cương Lương), Mou Bo (Mâu Bác), and Mahajivaka (Ma Ha Tăng Kỳ Vực). The nun sangha played an equally important role in the lineage, not only practicing the śrāvakayāna vehicle, but also accompanying the bodhisattva vehicle. So both the monks and nuns of Mahāyāna Buddhism received the monastic Bodhisattva precepts to easily bring the spirit of Bodhisattva conduct into life.

Until the beginning of the eleventh century, under the Lý, the Đại Việt, we had Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Nhân, who was originally from the royal family, talented and flawless. After more than 1,000 years, the nuns' lineage in Vietnam still continues to this day. At the end of the twentieth century in Vietnam, we had Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Không, Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm, Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải, and others who were talented and famous with virtue both inside and outside the country. They translated works, annotations, composed poems and books related to Buddhism, as well as the issue of converting nuns and laypeople.

Since the 1950s, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha sent monks and nuns to study abroad in India, Japan, Sri Lanka, and other countries. As a result, some nuns have played a role in preserving our religion by receiving renunciates, building pagodas, organizing retreats for laypeople, providing the ordinations of samanera, samaneri, śikṣamāṇā, and bhikkhunī for Vietnamese, as well as foreigners. Among the first nuns present in foreign countries were Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Chánh, who studied in Japan, then settled down in the United States and passed away there; Venerable Bhikkhunī Mạn Đà La who studied in Japan and went to France for a long time; Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải who studied in the United States, then went to work for Vạn Hạnh University in Sài Gòn.

From 1975 onwards, there were many Vietnamese nuns coming to foreign countries, like Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lưu who, before 1975 studied in Germany and after 1975 settled down in the United States and erected Đức Viên Pagoda in San Jose, California. Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ fled to Japan and then emigrated to the United States and founded two Diệu Quang Temples in Sacramento and southern California. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Hòa, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh are among the typical nuns arriving for the first time in the United States after 1975. In Europe after 1975, there were Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Tuấn, formerly a refugee in Switzerland. Now she is the abbess of Phổ Hiền Pagoda in Strassbourg City, France. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Diệu Tâm, the abbess of Bảo Quang Ni Tự in Hamburg, Germany. Later, more nuns left for refuge then became nuns in Australia, Europe and America.

From 1994 onwards, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha sent many monks and nuns to India, Taiwan, Korea, the United States, Australia, and Japan to study abroad, and most of these later generations have graduated with bachelor degrees, masters or doctorates. Therefore, the role of nuns has become more and more stable by being lecturers who teach Buddhism at universities and institutes inside and outside the country. There are many popular nuns who preach Dharma to the masses, write books and translate scriptures, such as Venerable Bhikkhunī Giỏi Châu, Venerable Bhikkhunī Giỏi Hương, Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang, Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên, and so on. Just like that, continuing the career of propagation and service, the role of the Vietnamese nun sangha will be further increased.

About ten years ago at the University of Hamburg, Germany, a few days of discussions were held about the role of bhikkhunīs in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. At that time, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet attended. Guests from Vietnam included Professor Trí Siêu Lê Mạnh Thát, who presented in English on the topic of Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Nhân of the Lý Dynasty. Venerable Thích Quảng Ba from Australia, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Hạnh Trí from the United States, and many venerable monks and nuns from Taiwan, as well as myself, were also invited to attend. After a few days of discussing all Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions, even Venerable Bodhi (in the Theravada tradition) also agreed that foreign nuns following the Tibetan Buddhist tradition should be officially ordained as bhikkhunis as they follow the spirit of Vinaya (Four parts of Vinaya).

But in the end, the Dalai Lama said, “This issue is not only my decision, although I am happy to agree, but Tibet is not only one tradition, but four traditions whose sanghas must all agree for the problem to be solved” and he concluded, “What if the Buddha were here, he would help me in this case.”

Since then, Tibetan Buddhism has not yet officially had the ordination ceremony for foreign bhikkhunīs and the simplest response of the Dalai Lama that Tibet has not had the bhikkhunī lineage of nuns from ancient times to the present, so, in Tibet today there are no official bhikkhunīs. For this reason, Western nuns ordained in the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism receive only eight or ten precepts (samaneri). Those who want to keep more precepts must go through other Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions in other countries such as China, Vietnam or Korea to request śikṣamāṇā (female novice trainee) and after training may request bhikkhunī ordination.

Thus, in the overview we observe that Mahāyāna is a kind of Buddhism that is very committed to the Western roots of the present. Especially, Vietnamese women must be proud that they can become Vietnamese Buddhist nuns, the bhikkhunīs, who lead the masses and share the work of the sangha like monks. Then, Vietnamese Buddhism can stand firm today while Buddhist countries who follow Vajrayana, such as Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia-to this day the role of the nun seems to be absent. The role of women in Theravāda Buddhist lands such as Thailand, Burma, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia is still very humble, because the community of monks has not accepted them yet.

Thus, whether Vietnamese nuns in Vietnam or abroad, we should take this as a strong belief to continue engaging in the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Then the voice, as well as the role of women, will be increasingly uplifted in the sangha of the disciples of the Buddha: upāsaka (masculine), upāsikā (feminine), samanera, samaneri, śikṣamāṇā, bhikkhunī and bhikkhu.

Written at Pháp Tạng Temple, Wien Capital, Austria

November 23, 2019

The Most Venerable Thích Như Điển

chuaviengiac2020@gmail.com

1.2. DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAMESE NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

BUDDHISM IS STILL YOUNG IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States has existed for a long time and Americans lived in scattered and undeveloped areas. By the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteen century, Cristopher Columbus made four famous expeditions from Europe to the Americas in 1492, 1493, 1498 and 1502. In the following centuries, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, France, as well as other European powers, competed to explore, conquer and colonize America, which in turn led to the formation of many new groups, new cultures and countries. The US was a British colony with the colonial regime established in 1607 on the James river. By July 4, 1776, the colonies declared independence and became the United States of America.

The first president of the United States was George Washington. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were American intellectual figures studying Buddhism, but Buddhism was officially considered coming to the United States through the special events on **September 8, 1893, when the World Parliament of Religions opened in Chicago** with the participation of delegations from ten world religious traditions. In addition to Christian and Jewish traditions, Asian religions, such as Hinduism (Brahmin, Parsis, Sikhs, Jains), Islam and Buddhism were also present. As for Asian Buddhism, there were the Sri Lanka Congregation, the Thai Sangha (Theravada delegates), the Northern Tradition Buddhism from Japan (Lin-chi Tsung, Taoist, and the Lotus sect) and Chinese Buddhism which actively participated. The Congress was described as “The greatest and most glorious achievement of the century” and was held at the Columbian Exhibition Hall.

Significant efforts to develop Buddhism in the United States include two American Dharma friends, Henry Steel Olcott and Russian Buddhist, Petrova Blavatsky. These two founded the Buddhist Theosophical Society in 1875 in New York. It was the first Buddhist organization in the United States and quickly caught the attention of American intellectuals. Along with the efforts of Olcott and Blavatsky, other important members of the early attempts to propagate Dharma in this country were R.W. Emerson, Walt Whitman (American); A. Dharmapala (Sri Lankan); Soyen Shaku (Japanese); and Paul Carus (German).

Since the World Congress in September 1893, many Buddhist missionaries and leaders have been coming to the United States establishing monasteries and temples, belonging to many different sects, transforming many people to become Buddhists, forming an increasingly strong, promising version of American Buddhism.

The first two Vietnamese monks to actively contribute to the development of Buddhism in the United States are the **Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân** and **Zen Master Nhất Hạnh**.

In the Horse Year of 1966, the Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân, a former teacher at the Saigon Buddhist College, was invited to teach in the professor exchange program by the Asian Cultural Department of the United Nations. That summer, he set out for the United States, teaching at the University of California and Los Angeles University, southern California as a visiting professor of languages and philosophy. Here, students were asked to teach meditation practices and then set up the first Buddhist study group. In the Goat Year of 1967, after finishing the curriculum of the university, Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân intended to return to Vietnam, but Zen American students asked him to stay and teach. He is considered to be the first Vietnamese monk to preach in the United States.

Initially, he rented an apartment south of Vermont Boulevard in Los Angeles to guide American students to learn meditation in the Japanese tradition. Due to the increasing number of young Americans who wanted to learn, he founded the International Buddhist Meditation Center, located in southern California in Los Angeles. Right from the first days of its establishment, there were many American students asking for renunciation. Three years later, he built a temple named the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, the first Vietnamese temple in the US for the Vietnamese community in California, where many often gather to worship and study. In October 1973, he collaborated with American, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan and Sri Lankan educators to found the University of Oriental Studies, a place that attracts a large number of American students enrolled in Buddhist studies, languages, linguistics and Eastern philosophy. The Most Venerable Thiên Ân and the Vietnamese Temple in Los Angeles sponsored many Vietnamese monks to propagate the Dharma in the United States.

There were monks studying in the United States such as Venerable Quảng Liên, Venerable Đức Nghiệp, Venerable Chơn Thiệt, and Venerable Trí Siêu (Lê Mạnh Thát). Zen Master Nhất Hạnh also studied in the United States and had a special dedication. He studied comparative religions at Princeton University in 1962, New Jersey (USA). After finishing his studies at Princeton, Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh was invited to teach at Columbia University, New York. In December 1963, he returned to his home country. In May 1966, he returned to the United States and taught at Cornell University, New York.

He called on Martin Luther King, Jr., a world-famous African American civil rights activist, as well as giving presentations in many places in the United States to find a way to end the war in Vietnam. In 1967, Pastor Martin Luther King nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize. Zen Master Nhất Hạnh founded Plum Village and settled in France, but he often took many trips to the United States sharing Dharma with the American people at stadiums in major cities. He founded the Sangha according to the current lineage (Dòng Tiếp Hiện) at Deer Park Monastery (Tu Viện Lộc Uyển), northwest of Escondido in San Diego County, California.

VIETNAMESE NUNS LAID THE FIRST FOUNDATION FOR NUNS TO PROPAGATE DHARMA IN THE UNITED STATES

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu: The first bhikkhunī to mention is the elder nun, Đàm Lựu. She was ordained as a novice at sixteen and became an orphanage director in Saigon. In 1984, she settled in the United States and founded Đức Viên Monastery in San Jose, California. She tirelessly engaged with the spirit of non-self and altruism as she organized weekly vegetarian meals and collected cans, bottles and cartons to sell to earn an income to build Đức Viên Monastery. She is a diligent, humble, virtuous nun whose life is serving religion and society by creating Đức Viên Pagoda bearing the cultural characteristics of the Vietnamese nation.

Moreover, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu also paid special attention to opening training courses to guide others in the Pure Land method so Buddhists can recite the Buddha's name. Although the Buddhist works are pluralistic, she always kept reciting the Buddha's name when walking, standing, lying down and sitting, in every time and in every situation. In 1999, she passed away, sixty-seven years old in life and forty-eight years old in Buddhism. The number of nuns and Buddhists of all ages who come to study and practice at Đức Viên Monastery is increasing. Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu contribution is imprinted on the Buddhist history of the Tathagata's messenger mission in the United States.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn (1947-2017) was sponsored to settle in the United States by the Most Venerable Mãn Giác, the president of the Presidium and abbot of the Vietnam Buddhist Temple in the United States in 1984. Going through the process of being the abbess and working Buddhist activities in many states in America, eventually she kept the post of abbess of Xá Lợi Pagoda. In 2008, she was promoted to be the General Director of the Nun Sangha in the Executive Council of the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation until her death. With more than thirty years of practice in the United States, she has been invited many times to be a Buddhist lawyer in the great ordination ceremony at Vietnamese Buddhist Temples in the United States. She fulfilled her duty humbly and wholeheartedly for the sangha and Buddhism. She repeatedly wanted to organize a campaign to call young nuns to take refuge in the church, bringing them together to form an organized nun sangha.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ: The Most Venerable Diệu Từ (1943-2018) was the abbess of Diệu Quang Pagoda in California, USA. She ordained when she was thirteen years old, a disciple of the Most Venerable Thích Trí Thủ. In the United States, she had the merit of establishing two Diệu Quang Pagodas, one in the north and one in southern California to help her disciples and followers have places of worship and study. She always supported and cared for the young nuns, and wholeheartedly guides Buddhists on the path of studying according to the right Dharma.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh: The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh was born in 1944 in Phú Nhơn village, Cát Trinh Commune, Phù Cát district, Bình Định Province. She ordained at the age of fourteen (1957) with the late Bhikkhunī Master Tâm Hòa, Tâm Ân Pagoda, Quy Nhơn. She used to be a teacher at a nunnery in Bình Định and founded Lộc Uyển Pagoda, Quy Nhơn City. In 1984, she settled down in the United States, initially arriving at Đức Viên Pagoda to study with the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu for two years (1984-1986). In 1986, she founded Ưu Đàm Temple in Marina, California. In 1988, she bought a four-room house in San Jose to establish Tịnh Thất An Lạc, then gradually consolidated and developed it into the big glorious An Lạc Pagoda in San Jose, northern California.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh has been the treasurer for many years at the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam in the United States. An Lạc Pagoda is the venue for the summer retreat courses for nuns, the great ordination ceremonies (Ten Precepts, Bodhisattva precepts, samaneri), Vietnamese-language school for young Vietnamese-Americans in the United States, nuns' study activities and Buddhist retreats. An Lạc Pagoda also provides religious services praying for the those alive and those deceased at the funeral home and cremations at the cemetery of An Lạc Pagoda. An Lạc Pagoda is also the place to mark the history of the church conferences. She is interested in training the sangha and called for contributions to the Nguyễn Thiều Bình Định Buddhist College and many charitable programs for poor people and patients in Vietnam. She is sincerely devoted and attends many ceremonies, ordinations, and training courses to support a more stable development in Buddhism led by young abbesses.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương: The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương was born in 1944 and became a novice at age fifteen (in 1959) with the Dharma name, Viên Luận, under Master Thích Trí Tịnh at Vạn Đức Pagoda, Thủ Đức. She once participated in a protest and witnessed the historical moment of Thích Quảng Đức, who burned himself at the crossroads of Phan Đình Phùng, Sài Gòn. In 1964, Venerable Thích Tâm Châu received her as a nun disciple and gave her the title Thích Nữ Giác Hương.

In 1972, she graduated with a bachelor of Buddhist studies at Vạn Hạnh University. In 1984, she came to settle down in the United States. Venerable Master Tâm Châu appointed her to be the abbess of Nam Quang Pagoda (Oregon) for five years, Then in 1990, she moved to be the abbess of Vạn Hạnh Pagoda (Seattle, Washington State) in the northwestern United States, and is still there. She is a humble person who lives within herself in the Dharma and Vinaya, speaks the Dharma, as silent as the Dharma, with the fragrance of virtue. Her gentle body, speech and mind are a good example for young nuns and the masses.

These five chief nuns are strong pillars of Buddhism, talented Vietnamese nuns in the early period of integration in America. Over time, the number of nuns who have come to USA has increased and can be divided into three categories:

1. Nuns who have good conditions to absorb solid and intensive education: Many nuns have graduated with master's degrees, doctorates in Buddhist studies, philosophy, religious studies, education studies and related subjects. These include Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Thường, Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Phương, Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ, Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Venerable Tịnh Quang, Venerable Tiến Liên, Venerable Nguyễn Hiếu, and Reverend Ngọc Liên (Miss Bích Liên).

2. Nuns are only equipped with enough luggage to go to the United States: They have not been imbued as intensively as the nun predecessors who received their bachelor's degree of Buddhist studies in Vietnam and later came to share Buddhism in America.

3. Young Nuns are needed to invest in the future: The young nuns who graduated from Buddhist studies intermediate level or lower from Vietnam and newly ordained, have been in the United States less than ten years.

DIFFICULTIES AND PRACTICES OF NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES

The saying, “starts out hard,” describes the early Buddhist period in the United States. Over the past forty years, the Vietnamese nuns have laid the foundation for the introduction, presence and propagation of the Dharma in the USA. Buddhist activities are invariant, flexible and suitable for each situation, psychology, with the ability of personnel to meet the need of the time, space, level and doctrine compatibility. Let us look back, contemplate and analyze the difficulties that Vietnamese nuns have when practicing Buddhism in the United States.

Integrating American language, culture and lifestyle: It is not easy to integrate the language, culture and lifestyle of any country. Particularly for languages, English, an intelligent person takes two years to master basic communication, spends five practicing communication in most cases. But the accent of a Vietnamese speaking English is often different from that of native speakers, in many cases the pronunciation is wrong. Moreover, in the professional field, there are people who have studied the Dharma English Courses, some have studied English in four years of the bachelor's program, two years of the master's program and five years of the doctorate program; a total of eleven years with such Dharma, and they still cannot teach the Dharma in English for children of native speakers. Language is hard. But, infiltrating into American life or culture is more difficult than language. However, if we do not understand the American inborn quality, thinking, culture, how can we share Dharma?

The main religion that influences the United States is Christianity: According to recent surveys, 76 percent of the total US population is Christian. Weddings, festivals and funerals are mostly held in churches. The talks of priests are transmitted directly via television and radio. Many schools, universities and hospitals belong to Christianity. Even when the president of the United States takes the oath of office, when he finishes the speech he always says, “God bless America.” When missionaries are evangelizing to bring Buddhism to Brazil or Africa is not

easy at all! It is said the Tathagata missionaries in the United States of America are working, “Planting Bodhi on the Crosstree,” as we buy a church and turn it into a Buddhist Temple. Zen Master Nhất Hạnh points out the similarities between Buddhism and Christianity in the famous book, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*.

So is there any way of evangelization that helps Americans accept Buddhism, to follow and practice Dharma while their society and traditions are Christian?

Which sangha in the United States should the nuns rely on? The case in Vietnam is simpler. Currently, there is only one Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha, but in free countries, there are many Buddhist congregations coexisting, so which sangha should nuns choose to take refuge in here? The nuns who have different relationships and interests may choose to join different Buddhist sanghas. Monks and nuns in the same sangha take no action (neither one, nor the other) with close, parallel, mutual support, While nuns follow different churches, often attending activities like Uposatha days, ordinations, festivals and retreats at their own congregations. If there are many different churches that exist in the same country, will nuns be able to unify into one congregation?

A formal routine for the nun’s activities has not been established: Buddhism was introduced to Vietnam over 2,000 years ago and many temples have been present in Vietnam for several hundred years. Buddhism in Asian countries has shaped certain traditional patterns. Pagodas and sects also have their own rules, regulations and ordinations. And now in the United States, the land of “a hundred blooming flowers” where each abbess chooses or sets the rules for her monastery, the difference in the rules of living is quite large. For example, how to chant and take a meal, how many chanting courses each day, in what manner, who can be receptionists to talk to guests, whether to go to college and work in society, how to accept offerings-so many differences in detail. In the context of the new environment, the abbess and nuns have to choose and build the most appropriate rules for their monastery so that the people can live peacefully, benefit and reach the sublime.

The tendencies for nuns with a temple: Activities in the pagoda are influenced by lifestyle and social law. There are four reasons why nuns want to go to a private temple to be an abbess or do not need to transplant themselves into a nun or monk sangha.

The laws of the United States allow “a hundred flowers blooming” without limitations of geographical area or the approval of the Buddhist Sangha. In the United States, it is desirable to create many new temples, as long as they are qualified and do not affect residential areas and the surrounding social activities. The board management of a temple is directly involved and receives permission to conduct religious activities from the Ministry of Home Affairs and Religion without having to enter a sangha or through a sangha approval.

There is a movement that started as the nuns looked around at the sisters and Dharma friends who treasure the temple and thought, “Building temples and teaching Dharma is fulfilling the mission of the Tathagatha and we should continue with this important work.” Many temples now have been established and the community recognizes that we have considerable dedication, skill and worthiness. Sometimes the large or small size of temples and the number of lay people in the temple is considered as a measure of professional achievement and the level of dedication to the Dharma. The freedom to develop temples, if skillfully directed with the right person, the right job and the right need, there will be benefit. On the contrary, if building temples is seen as a “race or movement” focused only on improving the reputation and self, then it becomes a crisis of abundance and harm, causing more confusion in lay Buddhists.

Overseas lifestyle promotes freedom and democracy: Children are mature at age eighteen and many do not want to depend on their parents anymore and they rent a private house to live. Their rights are protected. Young nuns do not want to be dependent or submissive to the abbess anymore. Sometimes they think, “Things will be different in the future” and “Who can know who in the world.” That is, looking at a problem with many aspects, right or wrong, right or left is mainly determined by the abbess or the board of directors. Whoever follows their ideas then stays, who argues or is contrary to them, leaves, without comment. That is, in the free US, the younger generation and the members of the nun group do not have to bow to obey. They have their own ideas and in times of disagreement, they leave to build their own facilities and paths. Then, when time passes, the results will be the answer to all doubts about right, wrong, good, bad and so on.

There are young nuns in nunneries who feel crowded, although the work is divided evenly. There is no discord, but rather an underlying feeling from the young nuns that they are not put to work in the right place and are treated without respect. For these reasons, they leave nunneries to build separate temples with the aim of being able to deploy all of their unique potentials, abilities, talents and creations.

Right livelihood to survive-a real challenge: Monks in Theravāda countries like Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka and Cambodia receive many generous offerings. Their people respect and offer basic needs every day as the monastics go for alms. In Vietnam, there are some monastics who must earn money to maintain the temple by making incense, vegetarian food, garments, while renunciates living overseas find it difficult to take alms and rely on offerings of lay Buddhists; the monastics must go to work outside in society or inside their pagodas. The simple reason is that living abroad requires a high standard of living with a high cost. Most of the abbesses/abbots must get loans for items such as a car, air-conditioner, refrigerator, healthcare, land, house, many types of insurance and other bills. If you wish to establish a private temple, you buy a house to set up a temple, then usually you have to borrow and then worry about how to have a regular income each month to pay the mortgage which can last anywhere between fifteen years to thirty years.

It is not like Vietnam where every day, every night, Buddhists visit the pagoda to chant, pray, practice and recite the Buddha’s name. Here abroad, mainly people come on the weekend (Saturday and Sunday) to join the temple’s activities. Buddhists take time off from work to go to the temple. Las Vegas is an exception because people are working on the weekend, so the workers relax in the middle of the week and can come to temple then. So, the monastics are busy helping the Buddhists practice one-two days on the weekend. On the weekdays, they cannot rest if the debts or bills have not paid. That is the reason most of the young monastics (under age sixty-two) have to find work in society and consider it to be “Right Livelihood” to maintain their existence in a long-term way.

From following the “renunciate, a pagoda” movement, the nuns are busy and play many roles, such as receptionists, decorating the Buddha hall, conducting pilgrimages, secretaries, cashiers. Many work inside the temple taking care of the external economic affairs and so on. It makes an abbess tired, not having enough time and energy for cultivating, studying the scriptures in depth, practicing and transforming herself to be steady and tranquil on the Dharma path.

Lacking formal education and consideration from senior predecessors: As mentioned above, the respectful monastics and abbesses are too busy with many duties to have time and energy to take care of and nurture the younger nun generation. In Vietnam, there are Buddhist Studies Schools at the elementary, intermediate, and college level with Buddhist universities.

There are the Most Venerable Hải Triều Âm, the Most Venerable Như Thanh and many others who welcome nuns to enter. Thiện Hòa Nunnery and Liên Hoa Nunnery are examples of nunneries that offer daily basic classes for young nuns. While in America, how do we find such an environment for Buddhist education? Even if the young novices want to attend the ten-day summer retreat, the abbess hesitates whether or not let them attend. The nurturing, accretion, direction and training are very necessary so that future generations can instill and maintain.

ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING AND SHARING DHARMA IN THE UNITED STATES

The above section has pointed out seven types of challenges waiting for the Tathagata's messengers in the United States. So why are more monastics applying for visas to come and want to permanently reside in the United States? Everything has two sides. The United States has many difficulties, but there are also many convenient ways for nuns to study and propagate the Dharma.

Religious freedom and all human rights are upheld: As mentioned above, in the USA you are eligible to build as many new pagodas as you want. If you want to establish many congregations, that is allowed too. If you desire to organize festivals, retreats, teachings, congresses and precept ordinations, you may do so without having to ask for permission. You can do whatever you want as long as there is no disturbance of the environment and if no laws are broken. Government authority venerates religious activists whom they consider the spiritual leaders of believers. In the US, there is separation of church and state and the government may not interfere with a citizen's right to choose their own religion. American government authority respects and supports missionary activities with many policies to help the monasteries such as tax exemptions when registering as a nonprofit. In addition, individuals and businesses donate to the monastery. US law allows offerings to the temple to be written off.

The guaranteed rights: Whoever owns the land or house that turns out to be the temple, they will always be the owner until they transfer ownership to other people. The owner is not obliged to make offerings to the central sangha management, but if they do, then they will be recognized as a religious place (as in Vietnam). The policies of the US offer old-age benefits to the citizens. Monastics are allowed to work in society, including teaching in university classes with the yellow robes of Buddhist monastics (this is not possible in the public Vietnamese schools in Vietnam). Due to a clear and strict legal system, people are assured of investing in all areas, including religious activities, without fear of anyone oppressing them, causing difficulties or depriving them of their legal ownership. The dignity and values of each individual person are highly appreciated and guarantee that no one has the right to infringe upon or oppress anyone.

Healthy environment, food safety: In the Vietnamese environment, there is polluted air, unsecured public sanitation, smoke and dust. This affects health, feelings and practices. Many people want to go to heaven and to the West of Great Bliss because those places are more peaceful. In the United States, everyone enjoys clean, pleasant and safe food atmosphere.

The United States is a land of opportunity; every person can make progress in every field according to their ability and efforts in the right direction. Monastics can subsidize, borrow money to study for a bachelor's, master's and doctorate programs, if they have the ability. Those who have professional ability in Pali, Sanskrit and English, can enter the famous universities to study, such as Berkeley, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Harvard, University of the West, University of California Los Angeles, Columbia, Cornell, Chicago and so on. Vietnamese monastics can study and become Zen masters guided by the international Zen

schools in the United States. If monastics are qualified, they can teach the Dharma at many places throughout the United States, sharing Dharma with young people, students and natives. With US passports, as well as savings, monastics can freely go pilgrimage, study abroad, attend Buddhist seminars, retreats or activities in many parts of the world and Vietnam because a US passport has a number of advantages.

Gender equality and women's rights: The United States is a civilized and progressive country, so women are respected and protected. The nuns in temples are too; they are cared for, treasured and supported. With modern technology machines are applied to heavy jobs. The nuns use machines for labor, gardening and building temples. With encouragement and support from society, nuns will strive to be proactive and promote maximum creativity. They have significant achievements not inferior to the monks, as the example of the five most senior nuns, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh; learning, researching, teaching and composing as Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu, Venerable Giới Hương and Venerable Tiến Liên, the social and charitable activities of Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh and Reverend Ngọc Liên, and many others.

Nuns are proactive without dependence on the Sangha: In Vietnam, for example, nuns who wish to do anything must present it to the authority in the District, Provincial and Central Sangha Boards for permission and direction, while American Buddhist nuns are free to decide on the ceremonies, seminars, ordinations, bhikkhunī's conference and social activities. Nuns can make the great leaps without having to wait and be restricted by any particular form or outer authority.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF VIETNAMESE NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Memorial Ceremony for the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the patterns of the Nun's Congress nationwide: It is possible for the nuns to celebrate the Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī Memorial Ceremony, a model of the annual national assembly of nuns circulating through different monasteries and cities. We review what we have learned to gain new understanding and awareness. In this Memorial Ceremony, there are seminars, presentations, conferences for nuns, love and support for each other to form a harmonious block. The blessings of all the great nuns will create the infinite motivation for every nun in her temple to strive continuously on the basis of the support and expectation of the senior nuns behind her. Nuns can fully set up regional secretaries and liaison boards to create regular contacts and support Buddhist works.

Organize seminars and presentations on important and common issues: Share experiences on many subjects, such as immigration, guarantees, legal procedures, self-reliant monasteries, constructing temples, preaching arts, economic activities, social charity, key points in Dharma teachings, practice methods, Vietnamese nun patriarchs and the way to transform sentient beings and training young talented nuns. There are many challenges and opportunities for Vietnamese nuns in the United States.

Participate regularly with international Buddhist organizations such as Sakyadhita,² International Association of Buddhist Women, the World Buddhism Bhikkhunī Association³, International Bhikkhunī Day, the Alliance for Bhikkhunīs, the Women's Human Rights Institute, the World Buddhist Conferences, Vesak, making pilgrimages and practice in India and being interactive sharing and helping each other in Vietnamese Nun Sangha.

² Sakyadhita: The daughters of Buddha.

³ The World Buddhism Bhikkhunī Association, https://www.wbba2017.org/eng/p1_about.php

Promote the culture and means of communication: The United States Nunnery Sangha Committee of the United States should make a list of bhikkhunī monasteries, addresses, emails, Facebook, Viber, Zalo, phone numbers, websites and so forth to contact. The nuns can create a website or create a category of “Vietnamese nuns in the United States” on the websites of nun temples. This new category can be available to update the activities and expand the nuns’ monasteries nationwide. Reverend Ngọc Liên already has media available through television and radio. Nuns can contact and coordinate to take full advantage. In addition, nuns can publish yearbooks, special journals, Buddhist Dharma journals, linking with Zalo, Viber, Zoom groups to update daily news and share ideas.

Coordinate, organize activities with special events of the Sangha: The ten-day summer retreats, the three-day practice courses, conferences, Buddha’s Birthday, Parent Day (Vu Lan), Về Nguồn (Return Source) Day, the Death Anniversaries and the predecessor commemoration are some special events. Surely the organizing committees and the leaders of the sangha are extending their hearts to welcome the participation of the nuns. The more it is crowded, the more it is fulfilling. In those days, besides the activities organized by the Organizing Committee, the nuns met and shared many necessary issues and shared interests

Aiming to take root and have lasting influence among the Americans: Although it is difficult to create a temple, many people do it. It is even more difficult to build a sangha. After finishing the construction, it must be maintained. It is not like a few of the Chinese temples where after completion, it is left empty. It is necessary to engage in activities that affect the American society and American superstructure such as: guiding and helping prisoners, the elderly in nursing homes, hospitals, people near death, Vietnamese classes, Dharma teaching in English for children and the locals, mindfulness and meditation classes. We provide Dharma talk DVDs in English or with English subtitles, so that readers can easily follow and compare the Buddhist books from Vietnamese to English, write books in English, have TV and Buddhist Dharma radio in English, Dharma website, Facebook and teaching Livestream in English.

When sponsoring a young nun to come to America from Vietnam, she must be considered in terms of aspiration, ability, age, cultural language penetration, organization and preaching. She should have deep learning and cultivation and steadily practice Dharma, aiming to influence with Dharma, not simply thinking of short-term benefits. She must be willing to accept sacrifices, creating favorable conditions to benefit the next generation. The abbess should teach these nuns what to avoid, what to focus on so they do not waste time, but focus on the most important things. They need to organize, assign, put the right people in the right jobs so that each person develops their full potential.

The Buddha taught in the Majjhima Nikaya⁴ that “What belongs to the core of the tree will continue to exist.” The opposite, what belongs to forms without the content will atrophy like “an empty box with a big noise” and will be worn down and destroyed over time. Let us study the teachings of Suzuki, the Dalai Lama, Zen Master Nhất Hạnh, Korean Zen Masters, Burmese, Fo Guang Shan Hsi Lai University, and so on. We can draw lessons from them on how the nuns can learn and practice. The nuns, our personnel, should think, support, guide and organize step by step such things as sharing Dharma with the masses and developing for the future.

⁴ Majjhima Nikaya, Vol I, 30. Cùlasàropama Sutta, Thích Minh Châu translated into Vietnamese. <https://www.budsas.org/uni/u-kinh-trungbo/trung30.htm>

CONCLUSION

Inheriting the grace of Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the nun predecessors are respected senior nuns such as the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Không, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Huỳnh Liên, the Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải and so forth. The Vietnamese nuns in the United States are the Tathagata’s messengers, “bringing a bell to beat in the strange land,” propagating the Dharma, facing many difficulties and challenges. Let’s join together for the sake of many. The book, *Vietnamese Nuns in the United States of America* of Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương is to review the behavior of merit and give example of Vietnamese and modern nuns, who have been embellishing American Buddhist history.

Because of the noble cause and sincere heart, the nuns come together to understand, sympathize, create harmony, sources of love and reason, practice the Bodhisattva Way, and share the Dharma to help sentient beings, to keep the eight rules of the bhikkhuni, to practice the seven dharmas without regressing, along with the six harmonious practices that are the essential connections of Vietnamese nuns in the United States.

For the past forty years in the United States, nuns have shared their experiences to help others choose the right direction. They excel at cleverly combining the abilities and strengths of each person to make great strides for Vietnamese nuns in the United States. Buddhist nuns in the United States have made important contributions to the stability and happiness of practitioners. We trust in you, the present generation of Vietnamese nuns in the United States. Your presence is like fragrant flowers of the Zen garden. They have the conditions to bloom in full, bearing the sweet fruit fragrance for life.

The US Buddhist history page has cherished all of the nuns’ great devotion, the strong women who went halfway around the earth from Vietnam to USA to bring the Dharma light to those who live here.

May the Three Jewels bless the nuns with peacefulness, goodwill, merit and wisdom dignity, and may the Bodhi mind not regress. The Buddhist Sangha in the United States achieves the goodness, often turning the Dharma wheel for the sake of life and religion.

Vesak, Buddhist Calendar 2564, May 2020

Thích Đồng Trí (Thích Minh Tuệ)

thichdongtri@gmail.com

1.3. GRATEFUL TO THE NUN PATRIARCH MAHĀPAJĀPATĪ GOTAMĪ

Namo Sakyamuni Buddha
Namo the Great Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī

Dear Venerable Monks and Nuns!

There is an ancient saying:

*Trees with roots must show branch and green leaves,
Water with sources must spread all over the river.*

Prince Siddhartha was born 2,563 years ago at the Kapilavatthu Palace. After seven days, his mother, Queen Maya, renounced her body and rebirthed to the heavenly Trayastrimsa. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī was the young sister-cousin of Queen Maya. When the queen died, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī replaced her sister and raised the prince until he grew up and became a monk and then a Buddha. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī is the Buddha's stepmother, and also the nursing mother of the Buddha when he was an infant prince.

Mahāpajāpatī is also the first patriarch of Buddhist nuns. After enlightenment, the Buddha traveled everywhere to save sentient beings. Then, his stepmother with earnest sincerity wanted to join the Sangha. She went with 500 royal ladies from the Kapilavastu Palace to the place where the Buddha and the monks were residing to beg for renunciation.

The stepmother's pilgrimage journey was extremely arduous. She traveled with her entourage, barefoot and many miles away, experiencing the hardship of sunshine, dust and wind. The feet of the stepmother and the noble ladies were swollen and bloody. Finally, out of compassion, the Buddha accepted their up spirit request.

After the stepmother ordained, many females and maids also asked to become ordained in the Nun Sangha. Then after that, thousands of women from all walks of life in India were ordained as one of the four disciples' groups⁵ of the Buddha's followers. They are not only free from all constraints and impositions of family and society, but are also honored with the true value of a human being, to live a noble and liberated life.

Over 2,560 years ago, Buddhist nuns not only had a limited presence in India but they traveled to many Asian countries. So far, the Nun Sangha has spread the Dharma to nearly five continents.

In the United States, Vietnamese Buddhism was introduced in the mid- and late-twentieth century, thanks to a number of the most venerable monks and nuns who immigrated to America from Vietnam. They used many means, such as studying abroad, seeking asylum, and appealing to the organization, American Families United.

Early Buddhist nuns from Vietnam who went to the United States were very few. The first ones were the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Đàm Lộ, Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh, Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Hòa, Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương, the late Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Diệu Từ, late Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Nguyễn, and other venerable nuns.

⁵ Four groups: bhikkhu, bhikkhunī, śikṣamāṇā, and samanera.

From the beginning of the twenty-first century, the immigrant law in the United States has been quite easy for those claiming “Religion” (R1). Some young nuns from Vietnam went to study abroad in countries like India, Taiwan and China and others tried to come and settle in America. Therefore, the number of nuns is increasing every day. However, Buddhist nuns in the United States have not yet gathered to make the ceremony to commemorate our First Patriarch. This is something we feel is extremely regretful. And also for a long time, we have looked forward to have an opportunity so venerable nuns can gather to commemorate the grace and virtue of Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, who with great love and diligence nurtured the Buddha when he was a young prince. It is thanks to her that all women have a chance to ordain and participate in the four groups of disciples of the Buddha.

Today (August 30, 2019), we have all the conditions to gather the first time at An Lạc Pagoda in San Jose, California. We solemnly celebrate the “Memorial Ceremony” of our Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. We are also extremely happy to welcome the Venerable Sisters and lay Buddhists who have spent precious time to come together and attend the memorial. We would like to pay tribute to the Elder Venerables, and the men and women Dharma friends. Wishing the memorial to be filled with respect and that all wishes will be fulfilled.

Now that the time has come for the official ceremony, on behalf of the Venerable Nuns, we would like to announce the opening of the Memorial ceremony.

Namo the Great Predecessors
Namo the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.

An Lạc Pagoda, San Jose, California
August 30, 2020

Ven. Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh
anlactu1647@gmail.com

1.4. THE FUTURE - OPPORTUNITY - CHALLENGE FOR THE VIETNAMESE NUNS' COMMUNITY ABROAD

Dear Venerable Buddhist Monks and Nuns,

Today, June 26, 2018, California is sunny and beautiful. At the Summer Retreat in Điều Ngự Temple, the Sangha and the Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh requested me, Bhikkhuni Gioi Huong, to share some ideas about Vietnamese Nuns in the presentation today. I humbly obey and present the subject: "The Future - Opportunity - Challenge for Vietnamese Nuns Overseas."

Namo Amitabha Buddha.



Nuns in the Summer Retreat at Điều Ngự Temple

IN THE PAST

Looking at the past, 2,600 years ago, the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī led 500 royal women across a long distance to beg the Buddha to accept them to be ordained as his nun disciples.

The strength and the passion for Dharma of the great nun shook the heart of Ananda and he was eager to ask the Buddha to ordain the women.

Based on the steadfastness, bravery and ability of women, the Buddha agreed to allow them to be included in the ranks of the Sangha and receive higher ordination with the necessary condition that they must keep the eight respectful disciplines.⁶ These rules are especially dedicated to nuns and protect the pure life for the bhikkhunī. This is a revolution of human history, because the Buddha has promoted the position of women to be equal to men in an Indian society, where females were often referred to as weak and low. The nuns today and forever afterwards, always respectfully and gratefully express their gratitude to the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the Most Venerable Ananda and especially deep gratitude to the Lord Buddha who cared for women's liberation.

After the Bhikkhunī Sangha was established and after the Buddha entered Nibbāna, more than 200 years later, Bhikkhunī Sanghamitta, the daughter of King Aśoka, went to Sri Lanka to convert Queen Anula and 1,500 women to become nuns. They all sequentially attained arahantship. Then over time through the Silk Road, the Nuns' Sangha was passed down through many countries, such as Asia, China, and then to Vietnam and the United States, until today, when we meet the world wide Bhikkhunī community at the Summer Retreat at Điều Ngự Temple.

IN THE PRESENT

Vietnamese Buddhism in the United States was established forty-five years ago, in 1975. Sanghas of nuns and monks from many sects have also been established. However, it can be said that in recent years with the support of the sangha, the bhikkhuni communities have started to cooperate, develop and flourish. In each nunnery, each temple, the nuns have shown their activities in practice, conduct and service:

- Keeping the female manner in each gesture.
- Observing the Uposatha day to recite the precepts (*sila*) of bhikkhunīs, śikṣamāṇā or samaneri, according to their ordination.
- Manifesting respect for the Buddha and Sangha.
- Keeping well the eight laws of the bhikkhunīs (*garudhammas*).
- Chanting, meditation, preaching, Vu Lan festivals, Buddha's birthday, retreats, guiding retreats for the lay Buddhists, reciting the Buddha's name, teaching at the temple, other pagodas and communities.

⁶ The Eight Respectful Books of the Discipline (S. Guradharmā; P. Aṭṭha Garudhammā), Vol V, an English translation of Disciplines, Cullavagga, Chapter X; Sacred Books of the East, XX. pp.354-355.

(1) A nun who has been ordained even for a hundred years must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms and make proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.

(2) A nun must not spend the Rains in a residence where there are no monks.

(3) Every half-month a nun should desire two things from the order of monks: asking as to the date of the Observance [Uposatha] day, and the coming for the exhortation (bhikkhunovada).

(4) After the Rains (the three-months rainy season retreat) a nun must "invite" (pavarana) before both orders in respect of three matters, namely what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected.

A revised version allows bhikkhunis to perform pavarana by themselves.

(5) A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo manatta discipline for half a month before both orders.

(6) When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules (cha dhamma) for two years, she should seek higher ordination from both orders.

(7) A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.

(8) From today, admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden. https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Eight_Garudhammas

Thus, the nuns are playing their role in bringing the light of Dharma into society, expressing compassion, wisdom, self-awareness, as well as other-awareness of the daughters of the Lord Buddha. With a strong will, the nuns bravely carry on the tasks, along with the monks, to share the burden of Buddhism and train the next talented monks and nuns. It can be said that the Vietnamese nuns in America are in the process of preserving and helping the virtuous teachings of the Lord Buddha flourish. This is a memorable point recorded in the Vietnamese Buddhism history overseas.

THE ADVANTAGES

Nuns have many advantages to move ahead:

o Gender between men and women or monks and nuns does not create barriers in the conduct of self-awareness and other-awareness. With female bodies, many venerable nuns still strongly carry the Buddhist works as the great monks in preaching Dharma and converting people for the sake of many.

o Women's nature is gentle, soft, enduring and persistent, so they can easily approach the Dharma and empower beings.

With a strong will, determination and confidence, nuns can share the burden with the great monks in supporting and mentoring young nuns, as well as preserving the spiritual heritage of the Buddha. There are nuns in foreign countries, such as:

- ◆ Most Venerable Đàm Lộ, Đức Viên Pagoda, San Jose, California
- ◆ Most Venerable Diệu Từ, Diệu Quang Pagoda, Santa Ana, California
- ◆ Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh, An Lạc Temple, San Jose, California
- ◆ Most Venerable Diệu Hoà, Dược Sư Pagoda, Santa Ana, California
- ◆ Most Venerable Giác Hương, Vạn Hạnh Pagoda, Seattle
- ◆ Venerable Giới Châu, Quang Minh Temple, Colorado
- ◆ Venerable Như Ngọc, A Di Đà Temple, San Diego, California
- ◆ Venerable Giới Hương, Hương Sen Buddhist Temple, Perris, California
- ◆ Venerable Nguyễn Thiện, An Lạc Pagoda, Indiana
- ◆ Venerable Như Phước, Đức Viên Pagoda, San Jose, California
- ◆ Venerable Thanh Lương, Viên Thông Temple, Texas
- ◆ Venerable Tịnh Quang, Quan Âm Pagoda, Redlands, California

These venerable bhikkhunis and others are the upper ranks of the sergeants, along with the great sangha, in actualizing the Buddhist mission.

For almost-senior venerable nuns, who often advise the young nuns while engaging in Buddhist affairs, they should take quiet time for themselves, in order to strengthen the internal forces to serve sentient beings. This will help them avoid many mistakes and accomplish good results.

o Many nuns have dispelled the ideology that women are somehow inferior. Let's avoid the negative thoughts of women being inferior to men or the pressure to value men above women as it was in the past. Women should strongly take back ownership!

o Many nuns have transformed the thought of being a recluse. Now with great enthusiasm, many nuns are actively engaged in society, both domestically and abroad to build the Nun Sangha.

The images of the senior nuns are always present in the monastic patterns of the world for the young generation of nuns to emulate. The commitment to practice and bringing the Dharma into society is like the yellow sandalwood spreading its fragrance. The Dharma spreads the fragrance of wisdom, talent and compassion.



(From the left) Three speakers: Reverend Nhật Hạnh, Venerable Nguyễn Thanh and Bhikkhuni Giới Hương

OPPORTUNITY - CHALLENGE

In human history, Buddhism is the first religion to mention equality between men and women, while many countries in Asia or the Middle East tend to respect men more than women. The role of women is rather low, often being neglected, not highly valued, less influential, less allowed to hold the higher positions. They often perform housework, give birth and take care children. In the United States, with its cultural pressure to elevate the status of women, the nuns stand up and rise together with the monk sangha to build the Dharma house.

In countries outside of Vietnam, nuns are facing acculturation in countries with diverse cultures. A Vietnamese nunnery can consist of Vietnamese women from Australia, Germany, Canadian and the US - a rich cultural hybrid. To survive and develop Buddhism in those communities, the nuns must be fluent in the English language and harmonize their Buddhist style with the indigenous culture.

Being able to live and study in the United States is a blessing that many people dream of. In terms of improving knowledge, American universities and colleges are willing to provide scholarships if the nuns are ready to study and pursue their aspirations.

The United States is a free prosperous country with modern education and advanced scientific technology. Through the internet, Facebook, and other online resources, not only Buddhism and other religions, but also industries are using the internet to expand globally. If nuns know how to apply and adapt, it will be an effective tool in the mission of sharing Buddhism online.

The nuns living abroad have many challenges and obstacles to overcome but they also have many opportunities and bright futures ahead if they are hardworking, sociable and learn the way to survive and develop. The nuns will do this to fully realize their role, because women possess many characteristics: gentleness, kindness, determination, a strong work ethic, and patience. As the folk saying says, “hard feet to soft rock” or “grinding an iron slab for a needle.”

We not only associate with the nuns who are present at this retreat temple for maintaining the precept-meditation-wisdom (*sīla-dhyāna-prajñā*) of the Nun Sangha, but we also have the duty to associate with the Vietnamese-American nuns who were born abroad, who are fluent in English but speak less Vietnamese. The Dharma preachers must use the English language to communicate with the young Vietnamese-American generation and the local American people who come to the temple to study the religion. To accomplish this mission, in addition to the language (a new tool), the nuns need to have the internal strength and serious practice in order that the sermons are conveyed with true experience and energy. Thus, the necessary point of the preacher is the energy of experience, the energy of practice, the public speaking art and the language of communication.

SAKYADHITA

Sakyadhita is the International Association of Buddhist Women. “Sakyadhita” means “daughters of the Buddha.” It is a multicultural association where skin color, social status, educational level or country of origin are not considered. This association has been known to the world under the leadership of Venerable Bhikkhuni Karma Lekshe Tsomo in San Diego, California. The number of Buddhist women in the world is about 300 to 600 million.⁷

The Sakyadhita Association is also a link between the many Buddhist nuns with the views to improve the position and role of nuns, promote harmony in the international Nun Sangha, encourage learning the Tripiṭaka (*Sūtra-vinaya-abhidharma*), practice the precept-meditation-wisdom (*sīla-dhyāna-prajñā*), engage in social charity and support research, publishing topics related to the Nun Sangha. This is a model of the development of Buddhist nuns around the world from many different cultures.

Returning to the overseas Vietnamese nuns, the scope of our nuns is smaller than Sakyadhita. In this first period, the demand for us will be great, however, there are many challenges as presented above and we would like to provide some temporary proposals in building the present and future Nun Sangha:

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Observance of the Eight Respectful Disciplines (*Garudhammas*) because this is a great way to increase the value of a virtuous nun. The humble manner of a nun generates more respect.
2. The spirit of “respect of master and Buddhism” should be raised in the ranks of the nuns.
3. Strictly proceed to study, preserve the postures and rules of the temple.
4. Spend half a month reciting the precepts (observance Uposatha Day) in each temple.
5. Organize intensive courses on the sūtras, retreats and read the Buddha’s name.
6. Open Vinaya training classes for nuns
7. The leading senior nuns with deep knowledge and profound virtue should call and promote nuns who should stand up, enthusiastically engaging, giving up any negative thoughts of inferiority and self-contained ways to get along with the great sangha, along with the venerable monks, to build a Vietnamese Buddhist house overseas, to contribute to Buddhism or specifically the sangha, who gain many historical golden points.
8. The sangha and the nuns need to have a timely response in the proper use of talents, so that all nuns can realize their responsibility for the Buddha-Dharma. The nuns should implement their aspirations, promote their roles and duties in areas of the United States. The Vietnamese-American community is eager to receive the contributions of nuns.

⁷ Brief History of Sakyadhita International, <https://sakyadhita.org/home/ourhistory.html>

9. Encourage inspiration for nuns who can study, compose and write about the Buddha's teaching for the nuns, the merit of the monks and nuns to society and monastic life so that the world will know about the role, existence and contribution of nuns.

There are many perspectives to manifest the nuns' functions because many websites (such as: www.huongsentemple.com of Hương Sen Temple, Perris, California) are ready to post and wait for the nuns' compositions. The General Department of the Nun Sangha should create a website for the Vietnamese-American Nuns to post the nun's activities.

Create a social network that links nuns together, especially young nuns who have the passion to engage. Then we can visit, give mutual support, respect and share Buddhist activities among temples with one another. Enhance online interaction between nuns and Buddhist followers. This helps the level of Buddhist studies and the application of Dharma in society be enhanced in the world.

There should be chanting and courses in English with an online library of books, instructions, retreats and transmission of information. Constantly innovate and modernize the method of sharing Dharma to harmonize with the cultural style in the United States.

Participate in world-class knowledge in culture, technology, computers, health, social, law - improve both internally and externally.

Train the energetic nuns to practice - nuns experienced in practice who can teach in and outside the country, inside and outside of temples and present Dharma in a coherent profound way to become the bright virtuous nun leaders in Buddhism.

Promote the development of nuns overseas, locally and domestically where karma has placed us to serve. A nun can promote, fulfill and serve the Dharma, sharing the Buddha's teaching as the Buddha, patriarchs and the sangha expect.

According to the book, *When Buddhist Women Meet* (Taiwan University, 2000), Dr. Christie says that the world today has more than 300 million Buddhist women. It is a powerful force to bring a better world. If these women are united, inseparable from society, connect with compassionate social activities and moral training environments, they can become an important force for global transformation.

With the growth and values of the Nun Sangha, the female renunciates will be positive factors contributing to the successes of Vietnamese Buddhism overseas. The nuns will play an important role with the monks to build a fine American-Vietnamese Buddhist society. In this way, the nuns have built their position in the Vietnamese-American society and will be a positive connection at the global level to nurture spirituality for the benefit of all around the world.

The Summer Retreat, June 26, 2018

Best Regards,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



Summer Retreat at ĐiềuNgự Temple, June 26, 2018



(From the left) Three speakers: Reverend NhậtHạnh, Venerable Nguyễn Thanh and Bhikkhunī Giới Hương

1.5. THE LIBERATED YELLOW ROBE FOR LEADING DISCIPLES OF THE TATHĀGATA

The Blessed One is the good father to four species (born from moisture, eggs, womb and transformation). We are following in the footsteps of the Tathāgata whose disciples have shared the Tathāgata's ideal and actualized the Tathāgata's works. Serving beings with gratitude to repay the Tathāgata - there is nothing more important. The Saṅgha or the community of monks and nuns are called the Tathāgata's disciples by the Blessed One. The Saṅgha offers beautiful words from their boundless loving heart, like a father guiding small children.

The Tathāgata's leading disciples consist of bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs. The śikṣamāṇā, sāmaṇeri, upāsaka (masculine) or upāsikā (feminine) are considered as the Tathāgata's next leading disciples who naturally have to rely on senior Dharma sisters and brothers to advance on the enlightened path. The bhikkhunīs are a necessary part of the Buddhist saṅgha system and have received a promoted rank as leading disciples of the Tathāgata. However, to keep this position of honor in the monastic order, bhikkhunīs must have an additional important and valuable element, that is, to keep the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs (Guradharmās or the Eight Respectful Disciplines). These Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs not only help nuns qualify as daughters of the Tathāgata, teachers of heavenly and human beings, but also helps them attain the enlightened and liberated path.

The Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs are like an indispensable coat for the sincere and determined nun on the way practicing to seek enlightenment and liberation. If the nuns do not wear liberated robes, they will neither be the leading disciples of Tathāgata nor will they go to the destination of liberation. Why? Because the eight laws of the nuns are drawn from the endlessly precious result, the great combination of infinite compassion and the supreme enlightened wisdom of the Blessed One, so that it can bring the nuns to spiritual positions the same as the Buddhas, as well as the monks, in ten directions and three times (past, present and future).

The Blessed One is the unsurpassed physician; his teachings are boundless remedies for sentient beings who have so much suffering. Based on the Mahāyāna ideology of the Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sūtra, the Blessed One appears in the midst of this five-dimensional impure world as if it were heavy rain, the rainfall is equal. Rainwater is just a sweet taste, but the small grass and trees are different, so the uptake of rain is not the same.

Because beings cannot immediately jump into the land of the Tathāgata, they must carefully practice each step on the path of liberation. The Blessed One gives medicine unique to each person. When instructing a blacksmith, for example, he might teach them to practice breathing in and out, but for a cemetery worker, the Buddha might teach them to think this body is not clean. There are different methods but each help practitioners achieve the same results. The karma of a male is not the same as that of a woman, that's why asāmaṇeri must practice and study to advance to the sikkhamāṇā stage and then to full ordination. A bhikkhu has only 250 precepts and a bhikkhuni has 348 precepts that must include the Eight Rules of Nuns.

The Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs (Also called the Eight Respectful Disciplines or the Guradharmās):

1. A nun who has been ordained even for a hundred years must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.
2. A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there are no monks.
3. Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of Monks: the asking as to the date of the Observance (Uposatha) day, and the coming for the exhortation (*bhikkhunovada*).

4. After the rains (three-months rainy season retreat) a nun must “invite”(pavarana) before both orders in respect of three matters, namely what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected. A revised version allows bhikkhunis to perform pavarana by themselves.

5. A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo manatta discipline for half a month before both orders.

6. When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules (*cha dhamma*) for two years, she should seek higher ordination from both orders.

7. A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.

8. From today, admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden.

As we all know, Buddhism is a voluntary religion. Buddhism neither forces any monk or nun to cultivate nor requires them to receive ordination. When we are fully ordained, it seems that we have the full means to cultivate. Like a car, if you want to go from point A to point B, you must have enough gas. Without petrol, we will never reach the destination. Thus, if a monk or nun does not have full ordination, it will be difficult for them to accomplish the liberated path.

In regard the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs, here is a question and answer to encourage reflection and contemplation:

Is it true that the majority of nuns believe that additional precepts are due to the Blessed One's bias for monks or nuns?

Have the nuns ever questioned what monks are thinking about the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs? For example, in the first of the Eight Rules, a bhikkhunī, even if she has been ordained a hundred years, when she meets a newly ordained monk, she must bow down, pay homage and practice all the proper duties with respect to the monk.

If we look at this first rule with the mundane mindset full of fame and high position, it is inevitable that there will be frustration that a one-hundred-year-old elder nun is required to bow down and pay homage to a new young monk.

Hence, if you don't practice the right view with mindfulness, you will think like that. In fact, cultivating is not only going up to the main hall for meditation and chanting, it's also reflecting on each breath, thought and action. Prostration is a method of practice. Spiritually speaking, when a monk receives a prostration from an elder nun, he gains, loses or reduces his merit. If he does not know the proper way to eliminate the egoness, if he is proud of himself that the bhikkhuni bowed, then surely his merit will be reduced. The bhikkhunī who prostrates to the bhikkhu will certainly have complete benefits, because she takes action exactly as the Buddha taught. No-self is Nirvana - the greater the self, the more suffering. The more afflictions, the deeper the depression. Thus, the Blessed One was completely biased in favor of the nuns, rather than the monks.

The Blessed One placed more and more heavy responsibilities on the shoulders of the monks. Recalling the time when we were still young monastic students, we studied of the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs. We looked at one another with surprised eyes, and lamented why the Blessed One was so biased toward the monks. The Venerable teacher responded that the nuns blamed the Buddha of being in favor of monks (who do not have to keep the eight disciplines) and vice versa, monks blamed the Buddha of having a bias in favor of nuns (because they can keep the Eight Disciplines). Your behavior as mundane people who always complain brings suffering forever for yourselves. I narrated this story to show the nuns what the monks think positively about the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs. It helps monks and nuns to understand each other; monks never look down on or avoid responsibility to nuns. Since

everyone is the Buddha's disciple, no one dares disobey his teachings. We are all practicing Dharma together.

The "Never Disdain Bodhisattva" in the Mahāyāna Dharma Lotus Sūtra did not study much at all. He devoted his entire life to pay homage to anyone he saw. He often said, "I do not dare to disdain everyone because all of you will become Buddhas, so let me prostrate to you." No matter how much the Bodhisattva was cursed or beaten, he resolutely persevered in not giving up his practice. This is well-illustrated in the Dharma Lotus Sūtra when he declared, "Enter the Tathāgata's house, wear the Tathāgata's coat, and sit on the Tathāgata throne." The great compassion is to build a house (the Tathāgata's house); reflect that all phenomena are empty wear the Tathāgata's coat), and abandon attachments or unabiding (sit on the Tathāgata's throne). This is called a religious way to practice.

The Tathāgata gave the nuns the eight wonderful rules that are also known as the Tathāgata's liberated coat. Let's ask what coat in this world is more valuable than the Tathāgata's coat? Why is it precious? The Tathāgata wears a formless coat, so if we can wear this coat, then we can reach the formless liberation. For a long time, the mundane people have attached to form, high positions, fame, so they need the formless coat to wipe away the dust of fame and fortune and advance to the emancipation. The nuns who wear the eight-rule coat of Tathāgata can pass through the three realms, out of the six paths and reach the unselfish land of Nirvāna. These nuns are worthy as the Tathāgata's daughters, as well as the heavenly and human masters.

Since ancient times, no sociologists, philosophers or psychologists and even Confucius have shown the parallel between practice-theory to ultimate liberation for women as the Buddha did. Moreover, he elevated the level of female attainment to the same as the Buddhas. He often taught two famous equality logos, "All tears have the same salt" and "All blood is the same color" and "I became Buddha and human beings will become the Buddha."

Although liberation is equal for everyone, the karma of the mind is not the same, so the path will be either long or short. The achievement comes either sooner or later. But recently, there were a number of articles, as well as a few presentations, that have been transmitted on the internet with the content "struggling for the equal rights for nuns, etc." I read and found that the speakers, as well as the authors of the theoretical articles, cited methodology strongly. The theory was used to persuade the audience think that the female victims have been persecuted for more than a thousand centuries and now the modern authors are even better than the Blessed One. They are totally wrong. Reflecting on this, we feel pity for the status of Blessed One and Dharma.

The Buddha spent countless lifetimes of spiritual practice to gain those valuable teachings to dedicate to life, to those whose only wish is that sentient beings follow that guiding map and come out of the world prison of defilement. However, some ignorant sentient beings misunderstood the Buddha's mind (as they thought that the Buddha was biased towards women with the eight strict rules). Just like a precious medicine, if you don't want to use it, at least let it be used by other people for treatment. You should not yell and consider it as poison. That makes thousands of the next nun generations dare not to take that medicine because it is rumored to be a bad medicine. Such behavior is a great sin. The Buddhist learners must know that it is better to break the precepts than destroy the truth, because breaking the precepts only harms oneself but destroying the truth is harmful to future generations; sin cannot be measured.

For example, Confucius taught women the three *followings*:

1. At home, daughters follow their father.
2. After marriage, daughters follow their husbands.

3. If the husband dies, they follow their children and the four virtues (action, speech, appearance, behaviour). The four virtues are nothing to be mentioned here because those are the noble elements that make women become elegant noble ladies.

The three followings are a debate for public matter. Confucius was kind. He was concerned for women because their physical bodies are weaker. If women live alone, they feel miserable when the adversities of life come, so he kindly taught that a father, husband or son must have the responsibility to protect women. It is clear to me that women are protected by their father, husband, son for a lifetime. Yet, some people condemned and criticized Confucius for teaching how to have a protected happy life that they do not want to have. They just wanted to find suffering in argument, but then there is no time for a solid meditation as in the Buddha's time. Instead, there is a solid period of struggle. If people are interested in practicing, there is no debate of the virtues of the patriarch. Otherwise, if you die and return to life thousands of times, you will have to struggle forever; you don't know what spiritual practice is.

In short, speaking of the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunis, it is impossible not to repeat the statement of Venerable Thích Tuệ Sỹ: "In today's society, with the system of discourse and especially the system of Vinaya, what you can keep, please keep. You should avoid declaring that it is no longer suitable for the era, so do whatever you want. If you have enough power to amend the rules for the monastic sangha to practice in accordance with the scientific age, and you can make sure that it will lead to the liberated goal of the saints, then please do it."

Although the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunis are called a teaching, actually it is a classic statement, the golden rule for those who are really seeking enlightenment and liberation. It is very difficult to have the human body, but it is more difficult to meet Dharma. When we have luckily met the Dharma, but do not practice Dharma owing to doubting everything, then it is so pitiful.

Namo Sakyamuni Buddha!

California, December 27, 2017

Bhikkhu Thích Quảng Thuận

thayquangthuan@gmail.com

1.6. ROLE OF THE BUDDHA’S FEMALE DISCIPLES IN THE UNITED STATES

The disciples of the Buddha consist of four groups of renunciates and laypeople: Bhikkhu, Bhikkhunī, Upāsaka (masculine) and Upāsikā (feminine). Each of them has a certain important role in maintaining and developing the Dharma house of the human world.

The missionaries migrating to foreign lands are mostly monks, however, many nuns and lay women have also contributed greatly. Bhikkhunī Sanghamitta in the third century B.C. brought Buddhism from India to Sri Lanka.⁸ Two laywomen, Bhrikuti Devi Princess (Nepal) and Wencheng Princess (China) in the seventh century brought Buddhism from Nepal and China to Tibet.⁹

Nowadays, there are many venerable nuns following the wishes of Bhikkhunī Sanghamitta to go overseas for the transmission, such as the late Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Đàm Lữ, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh and Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương. Many other respectful nuns are following this conduct, bringing Buddhism from Vietnam to the United States. However, there are many opportunities and challenges for Buddhist nuns in the United States to face.

OPPORTUNITIES

Learn many new and interesting things:

The United States is a multicultural country. People living in this country have the opportunity to learn many new and interesting things. A researcher on the United States shared that “American culture is known as a colorful picture.”¹⁰

Gender equality:

The policy of gender equality in a civilized country like the United States has caught up with the “equality” philosophy of Buddhism. The women here in the US are not disregarded as in Asian countries. Nuns and women alike have the opportunity to promote and develop their abilities, contributing to the common good of Buddhism, society and humanity.

Inheriting the predecessor’s experiences:

Vietnamese Buddhism spread to the United States in the middle and late twentieth century, thanks to the monks and nuns from Vietnam. They used many means, including studying abroad and seeking asylum. These monks and nuns include:

Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân

Most Venerable Thích Tâm Châu

Most Venerable Thích Hộ Giác

Most Venerable Thích Giác Đức

⁸ Sanghamittā (Sanghamitrā in Sanskrit), the eldest daughter of Emperor Ashoka, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanghamitta>

<https://dhammawiki.com/index.php?title=Sanghamitta>

⁹ Xích Tôn Princess (Bhrikuti Devi) and Wencheng Princess
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Wencheng

¹⁰ Những điều chưa biết về văn hóa Mỹ (“Unknown Things About American Culture”)
<https://dautuquocte.org/van-hoa-my.html>

Most Venerable Thích Chánh Lạc
Most Venerable Thích Chơn Trí
Most Venerable Thích Viên Lý
Most Venerable Thích Chơn Thành
Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Đàm Lưu
Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Nguyễn Thanh,
Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương
Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Diệu Từ and others.¹¹

They brought Buddhism to the United States and were the founders of Vietnamese Buddhism here. In addition to difficulties in the early days of evangelization, they have overcome many challenges to create temples and monasteries, so the next generation of Buddhist followers, nuns and monks will have a place to reside and study.

Thanks to the virtues of the predecessors who have gone before and paved the way, the younger generation of monks and nuns now have a foundation and accommodations, so it is more convenient to study and develop Dharma in the United States of America.

THE CHALLENGES

Cultural and linguistic differences:

The United States is a multiethnic country. Cultural and linguistic differences are major obstacles for Buddhism and the nuns in particular to share Dharma there.

Shortage of nun residences:

The number of nuns is increasing every day but the accommodations are limited. Currently, throughout the United States, there are official nun temples, such as Phổ Hiền Pagoda and Huệ Lâm Temple (*Massachusetts*), Viên Thông Pagoda (*Texas*), Vạn Hạnh Pagoda (*Seattle, Washington*), Đức Viên Pagoda, An Lạc Pagoda and Huyền Không (northern California), Dược Sư Pagoda, Diệu Quang Pagoda, Hương Sen Temple (southern California) and a few other nunneries.¹² Nuns have a shortage of accommodations and many nuns have to create their own places or rent rooms. Their lives are always busy as they earn to pay monthly bills, debts and mortgages. Because nuns have to struggle for a life, they do not have time to practice, study or learn the language. This makes it difficult to share Dharma with others.

Lack of unity in the Sangha:

Nuns in the United States are very crowded, but usually each person has their own private, small retreat place as a separate “shelter.” As a result of lack of support and unity in the Sangha, they feel helpless and this gradually erodes the internal strength and aspiration.

Nuns in the next generation:

Currently, nuns are very crowded in their living situations. Most of them come from Vietnam or abroad to study so they try to harmonize. It is difficult to integrate naturally into the life of indigenous people to inspire and evangelize them. Meanwhile, the young generation born in the US is very superficial in Buddhism or going to the temple. As a result, renunciation in the young generation in US is rare.

¹¹ Năm Mươi Năm Phật Giáo Việt Nam Tại Mỹ (Vietnamese Buddhism has been in the America for fifty years).
Huỳnh Kim Quang

<https://thuvienhoasen.org/a24612/nam-muoi-nam-phat-giao-viet-nam-tai-my>

¹² Chùa Việt Hải Ngoại (Vietnamese Temples Overseas).

<https://quangduc.com/a26462/chua-viet-hai-ngoai>

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Need to prepare internal resources and knowledge:

The nuns currently living in the United States need to cultivate their inner strength, update the culture and language of the indigenous people to maintain and develop Buddhism in this country.

More nunneries are needed:

Buddhism in the US needs more nunneries to help nuns who are still short of accommodation. The nunneries should also receive with tolerance foreign nuns from other countries like Sri Lanka, Tibet and the United States - without discrimination. Thus, the nun community can gain great strength, have Sangha support with a good environment to study, cultivate internal resources and knowledge. With this kind of support, the nuns will be able to support the common Buddhist activities of sharing Dharma.

Nunneries need to open their hearts:

The temples are established with the purpose of supporting nuns. The nuns in every temple should have a basic knowledge of psychology, be open-minded, and with loving care receive the next generation of nuns. The nuns study together, share the Buddha's works and live in harmony. This will bring peace to the nunnery and contribute to the prosperity of the Dharma and benefit of sentient beings.

Lay women should guide their descendants to the temple:

◆ Lay women should encourage their descendants to go to the temple, take refuge in the Triple Gem, and study Buddhism to maintain the good tradition from their ancestors. Moreover, when they grow up, they do not easily turn to pagan rituals. And in the future, these descendants may be among the renunciates who are monks and nuns, continuing the Buddhist circuit in this country.

◆ As the Buddha taught, "Life is full of suffering." In life, there are thousands of miseries. The most disadvantaged and the most miserable are women. The Nun Sangha plays the role of a simple friendly boat to help beings. To accomplish this, every nun practitioner needs to be virtuous, to cultivate internal energy and add more knowledge. Nuns who are living in the United States of America need to update their understanding of culture and language, have a collective spirit, connect the sentiments of the Sangha, embark on life, and bring the Dharma light to Vietnamese fellowships, as well as to the indigenous people. The most important thing is to focus on the "young of the future" to transmit the Dharma torch to them for the sake of society, human life and all species. That is the will of the renunciates. It is also the role and mission of Buddhist practitioners who have had the wish to evangelize in other countries, particularly in this United States.

Diệu Pháp Temple, April 16, 2020

Yours sincerely,

Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Minh Huệ (Quảng Diệu)

thichnuminhhue@gmail.com

1.7. PROFILE OF A PRISON CHAPLAIN

We live in the United States, a multicultural country with Vietnamese-Americans, Thai-Americans, Korea-Americans and many others. The United States is almost 50 percent Protestant and 23 percent Catholic. The communities of the Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Japanese, Tibetan and Chinese came to the United States and brought Buddhism and their culture here.

The mission of the nuns serves Buddhism and the masses here, not only the Vietnamese but also various races in the United States who have embraced the Dharma. The environment we live in has been a community of nuns who mixed with many cultures (cultural-hybridity) of various countries - like a coat with many colors. Nuns have faced many opportunities, as well as challenges in their mission, **“To serve sentient beings is to make offerings to the Buddhas.”**

Bodhisattvas have 84 thousand conducts and methods. Among these, nuns can fulfill the chaplain’s role in prisons in this multinational context. A Buddhist chaplain can bring the Dharma light to the prison, where there are countless inmates of Asian-American and European-American heritage.

Chaplain who is the title of monks, nuns, and laymen of Buddhism, Christians, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, etc, learned, experienced and able to share the spiritual methods of their religion to the prisoners in hospitals, patients of hospitals, the army, police, firefighters, universities, camps for human dignity recovery, etc... make the victims who can balance their body and mind to live and serve good.

The 14th Dalai Lama taught, “Each of us is capable of sin. Offenders are imprisoned, but really, *not worse than any of us*. They suffer from the same ignorance, lust and anger that we are susceptible to. The degree to which one is susceptible depends on the karma. Our duty is to try to help those prisoners.”

Watching television and reading news in American newspapers on Google, YouTube, Facebook and the internet, one sees the reality as offenders share their stories. Hearing the words of a late repentance, the terrible consequences of an unwholesome mind with greed, hatred and delusion. We are shocked to see the current samsara and realize what the Buddha taught about the transformation of the mind is absolutely right. The gap between right and wrong or both of them are only separated from each other with a moment of mind and the results can be life-changing.

Going into the perspective of a chaplain in prison will be a new thing for Vietnamese women. Many American Buddhist nuns and women have been doing this for a long time. There are many chaplains who belong to other religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism). The work of the nuns is weekly and monthly to conduct meditation, chanting, reciting the Buddha’s name or teaching through correspondence, sending Buddhist scriptures to prison for inmates to study.

There are some conditions for fulfilling this mission:

1. Philanthropy: Take a chaplaincy class and get a certificate. The chaplain of the prison and the prison executive committee will accept us if we have a chaplain’s degree. It takes one to three months of practice to begin to hear feedback from the offenders.

If we hold Buddhist degrees as a Dharma preacher, this will help hospital administrators to accept us.

2. Four skills: Speaking, listening, writing and reading English fluently (without the need for specialized knowledge) and having other languages when possible, so as not to bring an interpreter.

3. Generating compassion for the prisoners and their circumstances, we can broaden our shoulders to bear difficulties, We must be persistent and enduring to reach out and transform those prisoners with bad habits.

4. The Bhikkhunī chaplain must master the basic suttās of the Buddha such as Vipassana meditation, contemplation of the Four Brahmavihāras (loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity), the five precepts, the White Garment People Suttā, the Compassion Suttā, and so on. These suttās are practical and beneficial in everyday life, so that prisoners of all ages, all religions, all skins, can access and experience the wisdom.

5. Nuns must be the Tathāgata’s messengers who gently comfort the inmates. They must have the ability to inspire the inmates to return to their good heart, towards philanthropy and vow to begin a spiritual practice.

6. What wishes did Buddha and Bodhisattva have? When practicing the conduct of a bodhisattva , the Buddha and Bodhisattva would go to the worst and most painful places to convert sentient beings, causing them to give up their delusion for awakening and liberation.

A disciple asked Master Zhaozhou: “Where will the master go after he dies?”

The master answered, ” “I go to hell.”

The disciple was surprised: “Why?”

The master answered, ” “Because that place needs me the most.”

And so, the Bodhisattva’s vow: “If there is a being in hell and he has not become Buddha; when beings are liberated, they will attain enlightenment.”

What an eternal example for our nuns to study respectfully to enter the prison dungeons.

A Summer Afternoon at Điều Ngự Pagoda, June 2, 2019

With metta,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

1.8. YOUNG NUNS WITH THE DYNAMIC PREACHING MODEL



In today's society, material life is increasingly advanced and scientific and technological development is booming. Besides advantages, material wealth can also bring many negative consequences. The majority of young people tend to live a virtual, tedious life with less people around, less social contact. This is a huge danger to society because the rate of adolescents with depression, loneliness and low self-esteem is increasing.

Mrs. Nguyễn Tuyết Hạnh, Vice President of the Vietnam Autism Network (VAN), shared her ideas at the Scientific Conference, "Communication on Autism." "Currently among every 166 children, there is one child with autism. This is a large number and is in great need of attention and early intervention." In the Lao Động Newspaper, Dr. Lê Quốc Nam, Head of the Committee at Ho Chi Minh City's Mental Health Hospital, also expressed concern about the "psychological disorder that can lead to depression." This affects a number of high school students in Ho Chi Minh City, over 20 percent which is a significant rate.

In the face of this negative situation, monks and nuns need to contribute to building a moral foundation through retreats so that young people can feel the value of life, raise the sense of responsibility, love others and practice filial piety with parents and grandparents. Young Buddhists can be oriented to rise up in society, bringing the spirit of integration into modern life without forgetting the tradition of the ancestors.

Therefore, building a dynamic retreat model and training young nuns to serve as instructors is essential for Buddhism's long-term strategy, and also makes a practical contribution to the cause of the human educational resources for the future.

ACTIVE PREACHING METHOD FOR THE SPIRIT OF ENGAGED BUDDHISM

Necessary and sufficient conditions for the retreat leader: The value of life is not merely in the world of matter, but also in the spiritual. In addition to the family moral tradition, the social ideology, the spiritual life greatly influences the maturity of the moral character of young people. Therefore, young nuns have a very important role in guiding adolescents at the retreats, promoting the dynamic spirit of sharing the Dharma as the Buddha taught:

“Ananda, out of compassion, the Dharma Master taught his disciples, ‘This is happiness for you, this is peaceful for you.’ His disciples listened to him, listened with their hearts. They did not pay attention to the other direction, and did not turn away from the teachings of the Dharma Master. As such, Ananda, the disciples treated the Dharma Master with a friendly mind, not with a hostile mind. Therefore, Ananda, treat me with the mind of a friend and not with hostility and such will be happiness and long-term peace for you.”¹³

The young nun instructor with the “friendly heart” combines the gentle love of a mother, the serious discipline of a father, the devoted instruction of a teacher, and the presence of a close friend, which help to manipulate the positive results during and after the retreat.

Whether the retreats are successful or fail largely depends on the capacity, the force and the spirit of the staff. According to Venerable Dr. Thích Viên Trí: “There are two important factors when sharing information: the content of the lecture and the preacher. In regard to the lecturer, the virtue of the teacher in the field of Dharma teaching plays an extremely important role. Because the influence of Buddhism is positive or negative, strong or weak, large or limited, always depends on morality, level of knowledge, and especially the inner strength of the teaching staff.” Therefore, the preachers should have the educational vision, ability to apply and internal practice.

The Most Venerable Thích Giác Toàn has generalized, “the Quality of the Preacher.” In addition to good health, gentle attitude, dignified appearance, the basic qualities needed are the preachers who must believe in the Three Jewels, compassion, patience and fearlessness. They must have pedagogical knowledge, lecture skills, educational level, and secular knowledge. They must know how to use some modern means to serve the teaching: books, newspapers, radio, television, tapes, movies, and so on. Thus, for the preacher to share Dharma, it is necessary to have virtue, be professionally trained and practice the above skills.

As a guide to the retreat, both as a teacher and a moderator of the activity, we reorganized the above criteria and added a number of skills, including the following:

Conditions for the retreat instructors:

1. Good manners and standards
2. Good health
3. Flexible language and expressive voice
4. Compassion, patience and confidence
5. Understand basic knowledge about Buddhism and worldly knowledge
6. Master the psychological knowledge of teenagers

The skills of the retreat instructor should include:

1. Improvisation of the situation
2. Individual and group activities
3. Managing the assemblies
4. Using digital media
5. Observing and listening
6. Organization, design, MC

A young nun who leads the retreat, meets all of the above conditions and skills, can attract young people, and at the same time, use the physical teaching to help young people learn through the nun’s appearance of simplicity, enthusiasm and intimacy: “Preaching is definitely not

¹³ Majjhima Nikāya (The Middle-length Discourses). Vol 3, p. 314, translated into English by Bhikkhuni Giới Hương.

about imposing some teachings on the listeners, but giving them what they need.” Teachers can understand what young people think, like, need and want in order to meet their needs effectively.



DEVELOP AN ADAPTIVE RETREAT MODEL IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Building a dynamic retreat not only provides positive social support, it also has the advantage of teaching ethics to the youth. The Buddha gave different sermons, according to the level of his listeners: “The Worldly Honored One with the divine vision looked around the world and saw there are beings less infected with the polluted life; there are beings more infected with polluted life; there are intelligent ones; there are stupid ones; there are people who are easy to teach, difficult to teach. Some beings see the danger of having rebirth in another world, and the danger of wrong actions.”¹⁴ Therefore, Buddhism came into life in many different manifestations, using the right means to convert, depending on the capacities of sentient beings to transform for the sake of many.

The Organizational aspect: Through the practice of organizing retreats for more than ten years in many localities, we think the retreat model needs to meet the following factors:

a) *The administration:* The retreat will take place from four to seven days. First of all, the abbot should propose the organization of the retreat and get the permission of the Buddhist Executive Board and the local government. At the same time, it is also necessary to inform the departments and branches about location, time, quantity, age of participants, programs, the content of retreats, and the forms of security and order during the course.

b) *The personnel:* The organizers are responsible for the overall course of the retreat, administration and observation. The subcommittees consist of active members who are directly responsible for the work and each part of the retreat.

¹⁴ Samyutta Nikāya (Kinh Tương Ưng), Venerable Anuruddha, Vol 1. Chapter II, edited by M. L. Feen & Mrs. Rhys Davids, 5 vols., London: PTS: 1884-1898; ed. Mrs. Rhys Davids, tr. by F.L. Woodward, The Book of the Kindred Sayings, London: PTS, rpt. 1950-1956.

The content aspect: The content of the curriculum and activities is organized by the monastery, with the agreement of the Executive Board of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in the district. Because “the propagating department has not yet shaped the ‘curriculum’ clearly for each object, each age, the activities of the Dharma propaganda committee in the provinces now seem to be providing for movement and seasonality, but not for a long-term strategy. Especially, there is no specific curriculum and guidance for teenagers.”

The program: Each monastery to organize a separate program of activities for the retreat. Currently, there is no specific curriculum, so we rely on a number of programs that have been successfully organized in some monasteries to propose a dynamic retreat model with three criteria: “Study - Listen to Dharma - Play” to adapt to the young age.

The practice: The main courses of the day should use short sutrās, easy to read, easy to remember, easy to understand, with gentle texts such as the Morning Prayer, the Merit Sutrā, the Happiness Sutrā, the Vu Lan Sūtra, the BáoHiếuSūtra and so on. The ritual is simple but solemn, with the duration of each course about 30-45 minutes. The young people sit and contemplate the breathing (meditation) and they perform mindful walking. The instructors explain retreat manners for adolescents, with such practices as bowing, prostrating, kneeling, walking, standing, lying down and sitting. They further explain how to eat with mindfulness and offer concentration instructions, waking up, sleeping, resting so that young practitioners can get acquainted with the routine of monastic life. The purpose of the retreat is to guide young people to have the spirit of self-awareness, listening, studying and practicing to feel the peaceful value in Buddhism.

Listening to Dharma: Parallel with the practice, the Dharma listening sessions are held by the teachers. Selecting the appropriate lecturer for the age of the retreat is extremely necessary. There are two conditions for the lecture: the prescribed duration (sixty minutes) and a friendly content which is not only easy to understand and vivid, but also must convey the meaning of the retreat topic proposed by the organizers. Instructors should be able to talk in the forum of exchanges with students or modernize lectures by showing it on the screen (slideshow, PPT or YouTube).

Teachers should find information about their assemblies so that candidates can behave appropriately, using public speaking, common knowledge, age-appropriate, easy to understand, accurate, and do not talk too long. Instructors must tell stories with vivid examples in modern language with playful content. Teachers should have a broad vision, create favorable conditions for assemblies to actively participate in the lecture content, create a joyful, gentle atmosphere and open up the positive emotions. It helps attract young people to listen to the useful things, recall good qualities and exchange the problems still in their hearts to guide them to a new positive life.

Collective activities: In the retreats, group activities are very important. The unity of the community will show whether the organization is methodical or not. The instructor will apply to the group the living skills to guide individuals to work together, promote the organization, respect each other with sensitivity, confidence, listening and expressing. Through collective activities, practitioners can eliminate personal distance so that the fellow practitioners can learn, play and cooperate consistently in a spirit of solidarity.

Personal activities: With the daily routines, students enter a new environment. The way of personal activities also becomes different: sleeping, waking up, and washing clothes. Personal belongings must be kept orderly to comply with the program. The organizers need to pay attention and guide the students to get used to the positive independent lifestyle.

Play: The summer retreat is considered to be one of the vivid activities in the trend of Buddhism. Engaging in life by effectively attracting young people to the dynamism of the model, “If we have appropriate Buddhist activities for young people in society, they can come to us because they find that what we teach is not different from life, but is a remarkable practice to help them be calmer, more lucid and more energetic to survive well in the hustle and bustle of urban life.”¹⁵ In the spirit of active teaching, the retreats have built a useful playground, helping young people develop their abilities, stimulate creativity, teamwork skills, and presentation skills for young people to be more confident in life.

Designing the game groups need to be full of diverse and dynamic features, and at the same time suitable to the Buddhist living environment. The games can be renamed to increase attractiveness and bring more meaning in the education fields as follows:

The intellectual and knowledge game group: It supports the participants to review basic knowledge; forming the intelligent improvisation, reasoning and judgment. The game should be designed like the actual game show to create appeal and arouse interest in learning. For example, the game shows “Dharma Drum,” “S-Buddhists,” “Ring the temple bell” and so forth.

The artistic and gifted game group: Through the game, we can encourage potential talents such as design, painting, assembly, art, fashion with positive artistic content, showing the innocent beauty of youth as well as helping them be confident in public and have the opportunity to show their talents.

The mobilized game group: It helps the candidates in their mental and physical training, practicing patience and flexibility in their work. The group of active mobilized games includes firstly, the light mobilized games (participants must have dexterity, sensitivity, patience). For example, the game “Bean Selection” was renamed to “The Zen Door of Ms. Tâm.” The game “Blowing Glass” was renamed to “Blow the Karma Away.” The vigorously mobilized games (using a lot of speed and techniques as stretching to balance the energy), “Jump in the Bag” was renamed “Towards the Enlightened Banker.”

The skill-training game group: The group is divided into areas to collect waste to clean the surrounding environment, The group is further divided into sections with some members focusing on self-protection and learning some basic martial arts for protection. They also learn how to do first aid and fire prevention. Some students focus on thinking and expression, using a diary and the collected writings in the retreat. There is program design (candle-lighting ceremony, the alms bowls, village fairs, and festivals). Each year, the content of the retreat must be renewed, the Organizing Committee must always mobilize and update the program to meet the unique criteria of content, impression of forum, variety of genres and to bring the most practical effect for candidates, the happy feeling to enjoy fully the meaning of the program.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the years, we have had opportunities to guide a number of retreats organized by the monastery or organized by the Buddhist Administration Board in District. We realize that young people need our enthusiasm, care, closeness and sharing. The retreat organizers provide the right place at the right time to connect the candidates, volunteers and organizers. Those connections depend on the person who leads the retreat, especially the young nuns. Therefore, it is difficult to organize the retreats, maintaining such retreats is even more difficult. The organizer must consider and make efforts for the retreat to provide unforgettable impressions that will be the premise for the next time.

¹⁵ Material for Propagating in Buddhist Youth Association, Propagating Department. Publishing HCM City 2018.

Not all young people are voluntarily participating in the retreats. Some of them are forced by their families, some have participated in many retreats, and some are attending a temple retreat for the first time. Each young person is an individual, a separate world, accustomed to everyday life instincts, entering a whole new environment. The side effects for the students are sadness, loneliness and crying. They often are homesick and keep to themselves with few exchanges. They hesitate to participate in collective activities.

This is the most important time for young people and the Organizing Committee. The trainees' management committee, the control committee, the activity-inspector subcommittee and others must promptly grasp the signal to create a bridge for young people to step into the new living environment. The shy boundary between the candidates is gradually opened, shared through the collective activities, linked together in moments of the tearful farewell. Thus, when the retreat closed, young people realized the value of gathering together for Dharma. They were grateful for the retreat's profound teachings.

Currently, the nuns of all three Buddhist sects: the North, the Mendicant and Theravāda have dynamic, creative and enthusiastic young human resources. Dr. Bhikkhunī TN Huệ Liên expressed "That is called the nuns' potential, We mean the resources, methods, effectiveness and contributions of nuns can reach the highest level. Yes, it is still in the form of 'waiting for the predestined.' The social and community conditions of the Sangha have not allowed the set-up of any specific methods or plans that can open doors of opportunities for nuns dedicating their contributions to the propagation of Buddhism."

In the era of integration, young and active nuns need to use the available potentials as the Buddha taught: "Bhikkhus, be ye lamps unto yourselves, rely on yourselves and, do not depend on anyone else, taking the Dharma as a lamp, taking the Dharma as a refuge, not relying on anything else!"¹⁶

In the spirit of "relying on yourself," a number of Buddhist nunneries have been organizing annual summer retreats for young people. In the north, there is Vê - Hoa Linh Pagoda with over 700 students per class. In the south, the number of organizations is quite large, such as Quán Âm Monastery (HCM City), Long Hoa Nunnery (Long An Province), Long Quang Pagoda (Cần Thơ City), Tam Bảo Pagoda (Tiền Giang Province), Ngọc Lâm Vihara (Long Hải - Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu), Ngọc Trước Vihara (Bến Tre Province), Viên Quang Vihara (Lâm Đồng Province), Vạn Phước Pagoda (Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu). In particular, Viên Không Nunnery, chaired by Ven. Bhikkhunī Liễu Pháp is the first nunnery of the Theravāda Sect to organize the third seven-day summer retreat in 2017 for young students on a spacious campus. The candidates have a space to practice meditation, live in harmony with nature, listen to Dharma, learn English and participate in skill-training games and so on. This is a step forward for the nuns in Theravāda Buddhism, which has been gradually accompanying the Mahāyāna and mendicant nuns to develop the Vietnamese Nun Sangha's Tathāgata mission.

After the retreat, the Organizing Committee realized the great effect the young candidates had achieved. They changed themselves, mastered their verbal actions and expanded their love to the surrounding species. To the community, they are skilled in proper behavior and they unite and support one another. To the family, they promise to be filial children. To the school, they will be good students. Although still modest, it is still a very positive signal about an educational process between the subject (the candidates) and the condition of the living environment (the retreat program), and vice versa.

¹⁶ Dīgha Nikāya (Collection of Long Discourses), ed. T.W. Rhys Davids & J.E. Carpenter, London: PTS, 1890-1911; Tr. T.W. & C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *The Dialogue of the Buddha*, Motilal, 2000. Vol II.

In order to maintain and promote the dynamic propaganda model, young nuns need support from the Central Nun Sangha, the nun sub-departments in the provinces, cities, districts and towns to organize professional skills training courses for young women who can learn, cultivate and promote a leading role with a dynamic teaching model. Today, with the development of society, the Buddhist spirit engaging in life is re-opened at the diverse Dharma paths for young women to have the opportunity to be devoted. In addition to practicing on their own, young nuns, if they are trained professionally, learn more about the qualities of bravery, self-confidence and dynamic flexible skills, they will be the extended arms that succeed the famous nun patriarch ranks in the role of modern preaching. 🌸

Thích Nữ Viên Giác

1.9. WOMEN IN THE TRUE DHAMMA

To an enlightened person, there will be no more gender, no more femininity or masculinity. Some candidates often contemplate the white skeleton. They see themselves and other people as just a group of dry bones walking, standing, sitting and lying.

That the notion of femininity and masculinity disappears is stated in the Soma Female Arahant Suttā (Samyutta Nikāya), when the female arahant Soma answers Lord Mara with a verse:

“Femininity does not make any difference, when the mind is calm and the knowledge is constantly revealing the righteous view of the Dharma. To someone who can start with ‘I’m a female’ or ‘I’m a male’ or ‘I’m whatever gender’ - it’s only fitting for Mara to speak.”¹⁷

At this point, we repeat the question from ancient times: **Can a woman become a Buddha?**

Mahāyāna commentators declared that a woman can become a Buddha. However, the Pali Suttā Pitaka states that a woman cannot become a Buddha, namely in the Majjhima Nikāya, the Bahudhātuka Sutta, No. 115. The Vietnamese version is the Multidisciplinary Suttā translated by Venerable Thich Minh Châu.¹⁸

Master Anālayo discussed that question in the article, “The Bahudhātuka Suttā and its Parallels.” On Women’s Inabilities”¹⁹ by comparing the Majjhima Nikāy, No. 115 (Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha) of Pali Sutta Tripiṭaka with the Chinese equivalent of the Āgama (Mādhyamāgama), No. 181. In the Chinese version, we can read the Vietnamese translation of the Multidisciplinary Suttā²⁰ which belongs to the Mādhyamāgama by the Venerable Tuệ Sỹ and we are surprised that Buddha have never said anything about women or men in the Mādhyamāgama, No. 181.

Master Anālayo also compared some other sutrās in both terms and meanings, then realized that the Mādhyamāgama, No. 181 was closer to the Buddha’s words, and he believed that the Majjhima Nikāya, No. 115 in the Pali Suttās was inserted by later monks as a result of discrimination. That is, the woman still has the ability to become a Buddha.

Also in Anālayo’s analysis, in the commentary (pages 184 and 185) cited a number of other scholars who questioned that discrimination against men and women was later inserted into the Suttā of the Majjhima Nikāya, No. 115.

In it, scholar Joaquín Pérez Remón analyzes the literature and circuitry. In particular, Professor Yuichi Kajiyama made the remark that the addition of discrimination against men and women (only men can become Buddhas) appeared after the Sangha split up into many sects, and “the affirmation that a woman does not the capacity to be a Buddha appeared in the first century B.C.” and some time later, this thought was inserted into Suttā 115 of the Majjhima Nikāya.

Many scholars have raised a debate about the puppet script, which later monks introduced into the Pali Suttā Tripiṭaka. For example, the Vietnamese-language version translated by the Most Venerable Thích Minh Châu is the Black Snake Suttā²¹ which compared black snakes to women as below:

¹⁷ Soma Female Arahant Suttā, No. 5.2. Samyutta Nikāya (The Book of the Kindred Sayings), translated into English by Bodhi, <https://Suttacentral.net/sn5.2/en/bodhi>.

¹⁸ Majjhima Nikāya (Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha). No.115. Translated in English by HT Minh Châu: https://Suttacentral.net/mn115/vi/minh_chau

¹⁹ “The Bahudhātuka-Suttā and its Parallels on Women’s Inabilities” by Bhikkhu Anālayo, based on the Majjhima Nikāya (Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha), No.115, <https://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/pdf/5-personen/analayo/bahudhatuka.pdf>

²⁰ Multidisciplinary Suttā. MA 181, translated into English by Thầy Tuệ Sỹ, https://Suttacentral.net/ma181/vi/tue_sy

²¹ The Black Snake Suttā, Aṅguttara Nikāya, The Book of the Gradual Sayings, No. 5, p. 230.

Translated into Vietnamese by the Most Venerable Minh Châu, https://Suttacentral.net/an5.230/vi/minh_chau.
Translated into English by Bhikkhunī Giới Hương.

“Bhikkhus, there are five dangers in the black snake. What are five? Wrath, hate, venom, tongue splits, and harming you. Bhikkhus, there are five dangers in the black snake.

“Also, Bhikkhus, there are five dangers in women. What are five? Wrath, hate, venom, tongue splits, and harming you. Here, the female’s venom is as follows: Hey female celebrities or greed. Here, Bhikkhus, the poisons of women are as follows: almost of them are craving. Here, Bhikkhus, the tongue splits as follows: most females often speak two tongues. Here, Bhikkhus, women harm you as follows: most female adultery!”

The scholar Bhikkhu Sujato, chief editor of the Sutta Central website, said that he did not believe this suttā was given by the Buddha.

Ajahn Sujato provided statistics showing that men are more violent than women, men are more adulterous than women, men are more lustful than women and so on. Mr. Sujato’s analysis is in the link to the Black Snake Suttā.²²

At this point, we are talking about a Zen project involving a Japanese female Zen master.

Her name is Kakuzan Shido (1252-1306). She was the founder of Tokeiji Temple where she was willing to welcome and take care of women who have experienced violence. It was called the first shelter for abused women in the world.

The Zen history narrated that in 1304, Zen Master Tōkei (whose name was Peach Tree Valley) gave the “inka” seal of the Linji lineage to Venerable Bhikkhunī Shido, the founder of Tōkeiji Temple. The chief monk disapproved of granting the seal to her, and wanted to test her with a question. He explained that according to the tradition, the person receiving the seal must give a lecture, so could Venerable Bhikkhunī Shido deliver a Dharma talk?

Venerable Bhikkhunī Shido walked in front of the monk, took from her pocket a 10-inch dagger - the kind of dagger that the Japanese samurai class often have with them. She raised her dagger high, “It is certain that a Zen master in the patriarchal tradition should start from a high chair and talk about books. But I’m a warrior woman and so I should lecture when I face the sword. What more books do I need?”

The chief monk asked, “Before your parents were born, how could you speak the Dharma?”

She closed her eyes for a moment. Then she said, “Do you understand?”

The monk praised her with a nice verse, “A gourd of wine is erected in the Valley of Peach Trees - the intoxicating eyes can see the flowers from thousands of miles.”

The question is asked by the chief monk based on a common story in Zen Buddhism in China.

Huong Nghiễm Trí Nhàn (C: Xiāng yán Zhì xián; J: Kyōgen Chi-kan) attended class under Zen Master Bách Trượng Hoài Hải (Bǎi zhàng Huái Hải, 百丈懷海, ja. Hyakujō Ekai). Huong Nghiễm Trí Nhàn was talented, with a broad understanding of many classics. He could debate without limit but he was not enlightened. After Patriarch Bách Trượng passed away, he came to Zen Master Guishan Lingyou as his Dharma brother. Guishan Lingyou asked him, “Please say a word before the parents are born.”

He asked Quy Sơn to tell him but Quy Sơn refused. Huong Nghiễm complained and then burned all the books and said goodbye to Quy Sơn. He went to Nanyang Mountain, focused on farming and spiritual practice. One day, he was hoeing the soil, picked up a stone and threw it towards a big bamboo tree. Suddenly, Huong Nghiễm woke up laughing. Huong Nghiễm returned to burn the incense aiming for Quy Sơn to pay homage and thank him for the teaching.

²² The Back Snake Suttā (Simile of the Snake), tTranslated into English by Ajahn Sujato, <https://suttacentral.net/mn22/en/sujato>

“What happened before your parents were born?” That question should be put in a simpler way, “Please say a word before the world formed?”

In the Pali Tripitaka, there is the Samyutta Nikāya which contains Suttā 35.23 (also known as The All Suttā), the Buddha teaches that all this world consists of the **six** internal **sense** bases²³ and the **six** external **sense** bases.²⁴ This world manifests itself like that, besides Buddha rejects it all.

In this suttā, the Buddha taught, “What is everything? It is only the eyes and the seen, the ears and the hearing, the nose and the smell, the tongue and the taste, the body and the touch, the mind and the measured. That is called everything. Monks, if anyone says, ‘I will reject all this and will describe all else.’ They will have no basis for such a thing, because it is a discourse, not a proof. Why? Because that is beyond their realm.”²⁵

This suttā is important because it can help us guess and understand the Quy Son’s koan (Dharma awaken) as well as the reason why Hương Nghiễm got an instant realization after he heard the sound of pebbles hitting the bamboo tree. How can we fully understand the meaning of Zen Buddhism by just hearing a sound?

Venerable Bhikkhunī Shido answered in silence. That means, she pointed to the chief monk on the hearing of silence. And that is when the world has not yet formed and when the hearing has not yet manifested.

We can all cultivate by the koan method. The monks often say, if you do not understand then keep suspecting. But there is a need to state that the word “suspicion” can be confusing, because it implies “what is it.” If we replace the word “suspect” with the words “mind does not know,” then we can look into the unknown mind. We will all approach liberation, because awareness has left the ignorance and is awakening in the unknown mind which has left greed and hatred.

In other words, looking at the “unknown mind” is looking very closely at the source when the world has not arisen and the awakening state in the unknown mind has left the five aggregates²⁶ three times,²⁷ having nothing to do with the five aggregates in the past, future or present. It is also listening to the source when what is heard has not yet manifested.

Nun Shido answered in silence. That means, the nun pointed to the chief monk on silent hearing. And that is when the world has not formed, when the hearing has not yet manifested.

You can try hearing that. Try listening to the source when the “all” has not yet arisen. There is no need to meditate, just listen to the source and do not get involved in anything. When you practice like that, it’s the most natural thing. Because in hearing is equal, as it is. You cannot force hearing to listen to this or only to hear that. When what is heard is only what is heard, and merely what is heard without any choice, you will find yourself no longer involved in greed, hate and ignorance.

California, November 20, 2019

Nguyễn Giác

nguyengiac@yahoo.com

²³ The six internal sense bases are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body & mind.

²⁴ The six external sense bases are visible forms, sound, odor, flavors, touch & mental objects.

²⁵ The All Suttā is from the Samyutta Nikāya (The Book of the Kindred Sayings), No. 35, 23.

Translated into English by the Most Venerable Minh Châu, https://Suttacentral.net/sn35.23/vi/minh_chau

Translated into English by Venerable Bodhi, <https://Suttacentral.net/sn35.23/en/bodhi>

Translated into English by Ajahn Sujato: <https://Suttacentral.net/sn35.23/en/sujato>

²⁶ The five aggregates or heaps are: form (or material image, impression; rupa), sensations (or feelings, received from form) (vedana), perceptions (samjna), mental activity or formations (sankhara), and consciousness (vijnana).

²⁷ Three times: the past, future or present.

1.10. THE FIGURE OF NUNS

To learn about the way of living and working of Vietnamese nuns, “disciples of the Tathāgata,” in the United States and Canada, Australia, France and Germany, we will examine how they deal with the momentum of developments in science and technology, especially in the diverse culture, as well as through the overly civilized and progressive lifestyle of the current European and American countries. We see how nuns can be integrated into the new life abroad in accordance with the age of the society, the traditions of Buddhism and the position of the nuns in the heart of the sangha. We would like to present what we already know according to our own understanding and information we have collected on the internet written by monks, nuns and lay people.

As a leading elder of the Buddhist Young Association (BYA), I am over seventy years old and I have worn a blue traditional costume for the BYA nearly all my life, I sincerely offer these simple thoughts and understanding of the nun sangha in the United States with the title “The Figure of Nuns.”

Paying homage to all nuns.

Namo Amitābha Buddha

Tâm Tường - Lê Đình Cát

* * *

Nuns From the Buddha’s Time

As we know, after the Blessed One attained supreme enlightenment, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī appealed to the Buddha who mercifully allowed woman to be ordained. From there, the image of nuns began to appear and became one among the seven groups. Following the development of society, Buddhism spread north and south through two main sects. In northern Buddhist countries, the bhikkhunī congregation was formed and developed, existing parallel with the development of the bhikkhu sangha. In Theravāda Buddhist countries, the bhikkhunī image has been eroded and lost by many internal and external factors. For Vietnam, nuns appeared quite early, but officially formed around ten centuries ago and coexisted with the development of Vietnamese Buddhism.

At any stage of society, people receive their education from many different fields, from families to society. Therefore, nuns are an inseparable part of society and even more, inseparable from the sangha. In the process of formation and development of the Vietnamese Buddhist Church, nuns are concerned with all levels of the Church and facilitated the development with many positive contributions in the cause of propagation and converting. The common aspiration of nuns is to seek support for the development of the Dharma and continue to make practical contributions to the Church. Thus, the issue of education cannot be ignored in the current development trend of the Church.

Nuns in the Newly Established Period

The Buddha accepted females to be ordained as members of the congregation, with the observance of the eight conditions (The Eight Respectful Disciplines). Through the process of diligent practice, bhikkhunīs eventually attained enlightenment. The Blessed One praised

Venerable Bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and named her foremost in wisdom. There were accomplishments of other excellent nuns under her leadership, such as Bhikkhunī Thúc Ma - the most supernatural power; Ưu Bát Hoa Sắc - the most ascetic one; Cơ Lợi Xá Kiêu Đàm Di - the one with divine vision, Ba Đầu Lan Xà Na - the most disciplined one, and so on... 500 nuns all attained arahantship.

The realizations of the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and 500 other bhikkhunīs and nuns are the result of the internal awakening process and the great teacher Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. She directly instructed her disciples to transform all sufferings and afflictions and achieve nirvāna in the present life. That liberated path is so great and magnificent, the image of the nun patriarch has impressed every generation.

According to narrative in the Sūtras and the Vinaya, the nun sangha was established under the leadership of Venerable Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, following the advice of the Blessed One, along with support of the monks. The first bhikkhuni/nun congregation was founded, which created glorious holiness during the time of the Buddha's life.

The bhikkhunīs were mostly from the royal lineage, and once they had made the determination to become renunciates they were truly sincere and devoted to liberation and the teachings of the Blessed One, the wise teacher. In the process of transforming delusion into enlightenment, transforming the secular into super-secular, almost all of the 500 nuns of the Most Venerable Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī who depended on their various practices-each achieved a different result. This process of transforming the mind, in today's parlance, is called *the spiritual education*.

The royal ladies became bhikkhunīs who practiced the Dharma to overcome the faults of the three karmas (body, speech, and mind) and head towards the ultimate goal, to attain enlightenment in real life. This was also the career of our predecessor, and the nun successor inherited an example to follow. The daily life of the nuns at that time consisted of the practice of chanting, meditation, alms, eating, and listening to the Dharma.

Nuns Overseas

We do not know exactly when Vietnamese Buddhism spread overseas. But in the early 1980s and 2000s, Buddhism in foreign countries and in the United States began to develop strongly and quickly.

According to the thinking of the writer of this essay, Buddhism spread abroad in two ways:

- o In the 1980s monks and nuns traveled abroad. They lived in a refugee camp with a number of lay Buddhist people. They combined to establish temples together.

- o Around the year 2000 and later, many monasteries in USA completed immigration papers for young monks and nuns from Vietnam.

In the United States, it seems initially most of the nuns gathered in California. Settling and living in the United States is a dream for many people, because it is a golden opportunity for those who want to move forward to change their lives for the better. Because the United States is a prosperous free country with advanced technology and modern education (through various colleges and universities), where government and institutes are willing to provide scholarships, it is a good opportunity for people to learn and hope for a good future. It is also a good opportunity if nuns are willing to learn, apply and adapt. It will be an effective tool in the mission.

Like Vietnam, in the United States the number of nuns following traditional northern Buddhism (Mahāyāna) is large; next are the mendicants (while Theravāda is nearly rare). The congregation of Theravāda bhikkhunīs is gradually being established and constantly growing to this day.

In the Beginning Period

After Buddhism officially spread abroad and especially in the United States, the silhouette of monks and nuns gradually merged with the life of the new society. But at the beginning, the number of monks and nuns, especially nuns, were not many. Later, the pagodas and monasteries completed immigration documents for renunciates to come to the USA from Vietnam. Adding to that, thanks to the belief in religion, temples and monasteries have trained some monks and nuns in order to propagate the Dharma, however the images of the nuns at that time were very few.

As we all know, on the development momentum, Vietnamese Buddhism has always maintained the Vietnamese culture, traditions, and history of our nation, and always grows regardless of other countries and environments. However, due to different customs, cultures and especially the language, Buddhism in the early stages overseas had many difficulties. For example, when contacting the local people, as well as young children in the second or third generations who have been born and raised in the places we live, such as the United States, Britain, France Canada, Australia, and Germany we saw that because most of them are influenced by the culture and language of Europe and America, the children do not speak Vietnamese, while most of monks and nuns were not fluent in foreign languages. That is a huge obstacle to sharing Buddhism.

What Should Young Nuns Abroad Do to Prepare for the Future?

Have you ever wondered, “What is the handbook for young monks and nuns abroad to enter the path of propagation to bring benefits for beings?” Education degrees in the secular world? No, it is not. It is not the ultimate aim of renunciation. Young renunciates in this era must equip themselves with the virtue of solemnity. Yes, solemnity is an undeniable virtue, any place, any time. The virtue of nun is a very worthy thing to be cherished. To have virtue, the precepts must be kept. Once the precepts are solemn, the virtue is bright. Only the precepts can create the virtue of a honorable renunciate, the heavenly and human teacher, a young monastic but active, dynamic and comprehensive.

In this progressive society, young monks and nuns, especially the nuns, have a solid moral and a profound standard of Buddhist studies. At the same time, it is also necessary to cultivate knowledge of the secular world (a solid educational level and especially fluency in a foreign language). Although it is not the destination, it is the necessary means in order that nuns have enough qualifications to serve the path of propagating the Dharma and to meet satisfactorily with all levels of beings. Especially in this period abroad, many young Vietnamese, foreign people and intellectuals would like to search and study Buddhism more and more. But we must always keep in mind that “Knowledge of the world is because not enough, but it does not help us release suffering.” Only when we practice the Tathāgata’s teaching, will we open the eyes to re-evaluate which worldly knowledge can be used.

Ethics of Young Nuns in Modern Times

In the present age, monks and nuns equipped with scholarly degrees do not mean to only gather knowledge of Buddhism through scriptures, laws, and treatises (sūtras, ninayas and sāstra), but also to learn many fields of knowledge in the world from professional to basic knowledge. The way of studying is a way of life in which every moment is a valuable time for monks and nuns who can become knowledgeable about the meaning of life. The image of continuous effort and working hard to find a way to learn and serve beings is well expressed in the example of Sudhanakumara in the chapter, “Enter the Dharma World” of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra.

But for monks and nuns, especially the nuns overseas, apart from the traditional practice, they have encountered many obstacles, challenges and thorns in the complex society to survive and rise up as they are now.

In addition to the responsibility of actualizing the Tathāgata’s mission and engaging in the Tathāgata’s activities, every nun, especially our young nuns, has a shared responsibility for the development of Buddhism abroad.

There are many opportunities and a bright future ahead for nuns who take pains to learn (outside school life) and engage, cultivate and harmonize (in the religion) to find ways to survive, as well as developing their own ability to affirm the spirit of “Dharma does not leave the world.” Young nuns must find ways to try and rise up in the new society in which they live by going to work or taking extra classes (that is, the nuns who venture into life) and blend with the real world. One thing that had always surprised people-nowadays, the images of young nuns in a university or involved in social activities have often appeared. Among them, some are excellent students.

This is praiseworthy because the young nuns know how to actively integrate into society, to be concerned about social issues, to create fresh sources of life and a new perspective in the Buddhist educational environment. However, what makes the Most Venerable Bhikkhunis worry are concerns about the lack of morality and the negative influences nuns may face while involved in the secular world. The virtue of nuns is a result of the traditional values that the Buddhas and the Patriarchs have handed down. So “virtue” is the indispensable thing that nuns have to always uphold so they will have enough conditions to live in a spirit of engaging life, to socialize with the secular world, but still be able to keep the core values of Buddhist conduct. Once life and religion are merged, it will enhance the high value of Shakyamuni’s female disciple.

Some Suggestions

To accomplish the propaganda path, please consider a few recommendations:

o Firstly, skillfully apply the era of the scientific technological development to the teachings of the Buddha so that the events of organizing and promoting the Dharma are harmonized and progressed according to the times.

o Secondly, pay attention to the needs of laypeople to provide for them properly.

o Thirdly, young nuns, when practicing, should rely on examples of venerable nun predecessors to promote their body and mind and cultivate morality so the propagation of Buddhism can bring high value.

o Fourthly, despite any situation, young nuns should strive for themselves, draw the right path of practice and propagation, a method of applying modern science. If nuns need to search for documents on the internet it should be used for the right purpose. It’s important to avoid “abuse,” discussing idle things with a lack of usefulness, or shared images that are not suitable for the virtues of Buddhist nuns, creating an offensive. Take time to practice and avoid negatively affecting the reputation of Buddhism.

Conclusion

Being in a civilized social environment on the rise in technology, as well as modernization in all aspects, sometimes makes us dizzy, with a feeling of not being able to “catch up.” Saying that does not mean that Vietnamese Buddhist nuns sit there to satisfy and improve themselves, regardless of the fluctuations of the surrounding society. The content of enlightenment and liberation is immeasurably high. However, the work of displaying such profound content to transform the roots of each age is the responsibility of the Buddha’s disciples, typically Buddhist monks and nuns. To fulfill this great mission, the Vietnamese Buddhist nuns must improve themselves to at least stand at the same level of the era, if not a level ahead. How to improve their ability? It is the knowledge and morality, or wisdom and virtue as mentioned the previous sections.

Liên Hoa Temple, Early Spring of the Rat Year

February 2020

Bowing three times,

Tâm Tường - Lê Đình Cát

catchile@yahoo.com

1.11. THE CAPACITY OF NUNS

On Vesak in the heart of New York in 2019, the United Nations General Assembly celebrated the Vesak ceremony, attended by many senior representatives of world religions. There was a discussion section, in which particular questions related to women were asked:

Ms. Rebecca Ray,²⁸ a Brazilian Portuguese, representing the feminist right movement of the world raised the question: *The Blessed One is infinite compassion, his teachings of the common beings. Why did the Blessed One did not allow female renunciates at first? Venerable Ananda and Auntie Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī earnestly requested many times, until finally the Buddha relented, but with the condition that the nuns must observe the Eight Respectful Disciplines.*²⁹ *Did the Blessed One discriminate against women?*

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Liên, a representative of the Vietnamese Buddhist delegation, replied:

“The original reason the Buddha was hesitant about women renunciates was for the following reasons: The female body has a different biological structure than the male (menstruation; a smaller body structure that makes performing heavy labor difficult) and female psychology is also more problematic than the male. If the female renunciate has instability in the Sangha, then there is a deeper problem resulting from bad influences. When the predestined situation arose, the Buddha accepted the woman to be ordained but they had to obey the Eight Respectful Disciplines.

“The Eight Respectful Disciplines are the barriers that protect women, prevents disadvantages for women and the Sangha. In the first view, it looks superficial, but it seems to be extremely beneficial for women. The Buddha, because of compassion for sentient beings, because of the renunciates, created the precepts to help them keep their body and mind pure and promote them on the path of cultivation. The Eight Respectful Disciplines is not outside that purpose.

²⁸ Trích trong Tuyển Tập Phật Đản: Lễ Phật Đản Giữa Lòng Newyork, Tiểu Lục Thần Phong, Ất Lăng thành, 04/2020. <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a33873/le-phat-dan-giua-long-newyork>

²⁹ The Eight Respectful Books of the Discipline (S. Guradharmā; P. Aṭṭha Garudhammā), Vol V, An English translation of Disciplines. Cullavagga, Chapter X; Sacred Books of the East, XX, pp. 354-355.

(1) A nun who has been ordained even for a hundred years must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.

(2) A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there are no monks.

(3) Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of Monks: the asking as to the date of the Observance (Uposatha) day, and the coming for the exhortation (bhikkhunovada).

(4) After the Rains (three-month rainy season retreat) a nun must “invite” (pavarana) before both orders in respect of three matters, namely what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected.

A revised version allows bhikkhunis to perform pavarana by themselves.

(5) A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo manatta discipline for half a month before both orders.

(6) When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules (cha dhamma) for two years, she should seek higher ordination from both orders.

(7) A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.

(8) From today, admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden.

https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Eight_Garudhammas

“You know, the caste system³⁰ in India is extremely harsh, yet the Buddha once declared, “There is no class when tears are salty, blood is red.” He was merciful to everyone, from the royal princes to the common people, beggars, killers, prostitutes, the homeless, and so on whom he treated equally compassionate. The Buddha’s kindness also inspired the gods, even the sun and moon, even the cocoon worm he did not harm, so how could we say he discriminated against and hated women?”

Rebecca Ray asked again: *There are still places where women are not ordained and cannot receive the full Bhikkhunī precepts. What is the problem, would you please explain?*

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Liên replied: “It is true that maybe those places are still attached to the past and the original traditions; there is no flexibility accordingly. However, in this day and age, this problem is not difficult. Women who want to become a nun or want to take full ordination are very welcome. There are many nunneries, pagodas and monastic centers in the world ready to accept any woman who wants to become a nun, as long as they have the heart to practice and are determined to let go.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Liên continued: “The Buddha was equally compassionate to all his disciples, whether monks or nuns, because, “Everyone’s blood is red and their tears are salty” and “All sentient beings [of any gender] have the inherent seed of Buddha and the ability to become a Buddha.” So both monks and nuns can become ordained, receive full ordination, be promoted to abbot or abbess, receive new disciples, practice, attend the Observance [Uposatha] Day, go on reclusive retreats, study the Tripitaka, cultivate precept-meditation-wisdom, and attain the Holy Fruits, regardless of gender, skin color, age, position or ability.

“However, depending on the opinion and structure of each society, there are slight differences between status, but basically, especially in modern countries of the twenty-first century, the role of women has advanced.

“South African Zozibini Tunz, who won the 2019 Miss Universe contest, received a question in the competition: *What is the most important thing we should teach young girls?*

Ms. Zozibini Tunz answered: “Leadership. That’s what women have lost for a long time, not by their will but by society. I think women are the most powerful individuals in the world and should be given every opportunity. We should guide young girls how to achieve their leading place.”

Huong Sen Temple, July 20, 2020

A lotus and a smile,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

³⁰ The Indian caste system divides people into four main categories: Brahmins (priestly people), the Kshatriyas (also called Rajanyas, who were rulers, administrators and warriors), the Vaishyas (artisans, merchants, tradesmen and farmers), and Shudras (laboring classes).

1.12. VIETNAMESE NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States is a young country, only 300 years old, but it is a land full of life with enough conditions to nurture seeds of energy. It is a land of opportunities for youth to advance, and a springboard for progressive wills to learn. It is an easy-to-develop society and it is also easy for individuals to take risks by relying on loans from banks. It must be said that the United States is “non-communist socialist” because all are equal before the law, do according to their ability and enjoy according to their needs.

In terms of form, all citizens enjoy the same material things, but due to merit, labor, talent and social level, the quality of material enjoyment is varied.

UNITED STATES

Being a multi-racial and multi-cultural country, it introduces many fields of science and progress, including religion. Protestantism accounts for 52 percent of the population, with 24 percent Roman Catholics (American Religion, Wikipedia).

Buddhism introduced to America:

Buddhism was introduced to the United States in the 19th century with immigrants from East Asia. The first temple in the United States was founded and built in San Francisco in 1853 by Chinese Americans.

At the end of the nineteenth century, many missionaries came from Japan to the United States, and at this time, American intellectuals began to pay attention to Buddhism.

The first famous American taking refuge in Buddhism was Henry Steel Olcott. Olcott also created the Buddhist flag pattern, which in 1950 was recognized by many international Buddhist leaders as a symbol of Buddhism. The world faith conference took place in 1893, with many famous Buddhists from India, China, Japan, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Estimates of the number of Buddhists in the United States range from 0.5 percent to 0.9 percent. The 0.7 percent was announced by the CIA and PEW. According to the Association of Statisticians of the American Religious Journal, published in March 2017, based on data from 2010, Buddhism is the largest minority religion among 186 counties out of 3,143 counties in the nation of America.

Typically, American poet Allen Ginsberg, artist Steven Seagal, action actor Richard Gere, poet Allen Ginsberg, the film director and screenwriter Oliver Stone, singer, songwriter, artist cum actress Courtney Love, comedian Martin Starr, and billionaire filmmaker George Lucas, famous movie actor Robert Downey Jr., famous movie star Goldie Hawn, and film producers, the Coen Brothers, approached Buddhism and became Buddhist.

Buddhists who are Jewish natives:

Zoketsu Norman is a Jewish Buddhist Zen Master whose parents are not Buddhists. Jews have appeared and presented in America as Jewish-American Buddhists frequently

Buddhism came to the United States on September 8, 1893, when the World Religious Communities opened in Chicago, attended by delegations from more than ten world religious traditions. In addition to Christian and Jewish traditions, Asian religions such as Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism were also presented.

As for Asian Buddhism, Theravāda Buddhist delegates came from Sri Lanka and Thailand, while Mahāyāna Buddhism came from Japan and China to actively contribute to “the noblest

and most honorable achievement of the century.” Before the assembly, Buddhism was officially introduced to the American people and in return was also warmly welcomed by the American people.

After the World Conference, many Buddhist leaders often came to the United States, establishing monasteries and temples belonging to different sects. They transformed many Buddhists, trained many leaders and established American Buddhism in the United States with very specific characteristics and promising perspectives.

Paul Carus, one of the organizers, wanted to invite Zen Master Soyen Shaku to translate some Asian religious texts into English, but the Zen Master refused and assigned Dr. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki to work on the translation with Carus. Dr. D. T. Suzuki is not a stranger to Buddhists in the world. He has authored thirty Japanese Zen books, which are very well known and have been translated into many languages. Among the lay people credited with spreading Buddhism in the United States, Dr. Suzuki must be one of the top leaders.

The interreligious Japan was first introduced to the United States in the early 1930s in the Japanese immigrant community. This religion has a lay organization, called Soka Gakkai, (the Value-Creation Society), which is very effective in spreading the Japanese Nichiren (Pure Land Sect) in Japan, as well as abroad, especially in the United States.

Japanese Pure Land came to the United States the earliest, but in fact, Japanese Zen Buddhism has widely spread among all US circles.

Tibetan Buddhism introduced in the USA:

In 1950, Tibetan politics changed. By 1959, the Dalai Lama, the country’s religious and political leader, along with many others, left Tibet for India. From there the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism were transmitted to the land of the Indians. The four Tibetan sects are Nyingma, Kagyu, Geluk and Sakya.

According to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, many Tantric Meditation centers were founded in Colorado, Vermont, New York, Boston, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Naropa University in the Rocky Mountains. Naropa University has now become a humanities university in the United States. In 1974, the highest monk of the Kagyu lineage was Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, the 16th Karmapa to the United States, and then there was His Holiness Kalu Rinpoche.³¹

Chinese Buddhism introduced in the USA:

It is likely that Venerable Hui Shan (Huê Son) and some Chinese monks were the first Buddhists to enter the United States in the fourth century, long before Columbus.

The Chinese Buddhist monks brought Chinese Chan (Dhyāna) and Pure Land sects into the United States, which became the thriving Chinese Buddhist traditions in the USA, with master teachers such as the Most Venerable Tuyền Hóa and the Most Venerable Tịnh Không.

South Korean Buddhism introduced in the USA:

Korean Buddhist Zen Master Soen-sa-nim often taught Buddhism in Japan and Hong Kong after World War II. By 1972, with little money, without knowledge of the English language, he went to the United States, settled down Los Angeles, where there was already a fairly large Korean community. Then, he started to share Buddhism.

Vietnamese Buddhism introduced in the USA:

In regard to Vietnamese Buddhism, only in the 1950s did Vietnamese monks come to the USA, including Venerable Thích Quảng Liên, who was studying economics at Yale University.

³¹ According to FPMT (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, Tổ Chức Bảo Tồn Truyền Thống Đại Thừa), <https://fpmt.org/>

In 1962, the Most Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh was enrolled at Princeton University studying comparative religions. In 1966, he was a lecturer at Cornell University. The Most Venerable Thích Trí Siêu and the Most Venerable Thích Thuyền Ân studied philosophy at the University of Wisconsin. Both later returned to Vietnam to compose many research books on Buddhism. At the same time, the Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân received his doctorate in literature from Waseda University, Japan, and in 1966 he was invited to be a lecturer at the University of California at Los Angeles. In 1967, he decided to stay in the United States and teach Zen for Americans.

Regarding the import of Buddhism from Vietnam to the United States, we must mention the Most Venerable Thích Thiên Ân and Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh. After graduating in 1966 with a PhD in eastern literature from Waseda University Japan in 1966, the Most Venerable Thiên Ân came to the United States as a professor of eastern philosophy at the University of California, Los Angeles. He also taught Buddhism and Zen at some small groups in their home in the Hollywood area. Later, he founded the International Buddhist Meditation Center, a center for Americans who want to learn meditation. In 1973, he founded the College of Oriental Studies (later became the University of Oriental Studies) to teach Buddhism, with many famous Zen masters and Buddhist scholars from Japanese, Thai, Korean and Tibetan Temples. In 1970, Venerable Thích Thiện Ân set up the International Buddhist Meditation Center and then in 1974, held an ordination ceremony for American disciples, officially sharing the meditation and spiritual practice of the Vietnamese with the US.

After April 30, 1975, with the influx of Vietnamese refugees to the United States, the need for Buddhism led the Venerable Thiên Ân establish the Vietnam Temple in Los Angeles. This is the first Vietnamese Temple in the United States. The second one is A Di Đà Temple.³²

After 1975, a number of Vietnamese people came to the United States. The Venerable Thiên Ân led a US Buddhist movement to assist refugees in various aspects of religion, as well as life. Vietnam Buddhist Churches in America was established at the headquarters of the Việt Nam Temple in Los Angeles. In October 1980, Venerable Thiên Ân passed away. The meditation center was assigned to his American disciple, Bhikkhunī Karuna Dharma to be abbess. The late Venerable Thích Mãn Giác was sent to take charge of the Vietnamese Buddhist Church in the United States and was appointed abbot of Việt Nam Temple.

Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh left Vietnam for the United States in 1961, but he has only really brought Vietnamese Buddhism into American society since 1983 at Berkeley, California when he founded a Contemplation Order, which he began while he was still in Vietnam. In addition to the above two individuals, many Vietnamese Buddhist monks have followed the wave of emigrating to the United States. They have set up temples in crowded places with many Vietnamese immigrants such as Orange County, San Jose (California), Houston (Texas) and so on with the purpose of providing the Pure Land tradition to Vietnamese immigrants. These are not actual centers of Buddhism to serve foreigners, so they do not attract as many US Buddhists as the Japanese, Korean, or Tibetan Buddhist centers. *The influence of these Vietnamese Temples around a small community does not significantly help the development of Buddhism in this country.*

Since 1998, Trúc Lâm Zen Buddhism in Vietnam, under the guidance of Zen Master Thích Thanh Từ, has also come to the United States and is admired by Vietnamese Buddhists. The Most Venerable Thanh Từ has established Zen retreats in Orange County, San Jose and Houston, for those who want to learn Zen or practice, whether ordained or lay people. At present, Trúc Lâm Zen is still incipient, but with a proper principle, a large-scale organization,

³² Huỳnh Kim Quang, "Năm mươi năm Phật giáo Việt Nam tại Mỹ" (Fifty Years of Vietnamese Buddhism in America). Việt Báo Tết Bính thân (Viet Newspaper: Bính Thân New Year), pp. 35-39.

training many good monks and nuns who have high morals, great virtues who receive support of the masses in the community. This Zen method has a good future prospect in the US.

* * *

The same as many countries in Asia, Buddhist women are very crowded, equal to or more than men. Therefore, like in many other mechanisms of American society, American Buddhism is “feminized,” that is, the voice and interests of women are respected and promoted. The contribution of women to the work of promoting Buddhist development is significant. Many nuns, female Zen masters and chief nuns who are trained in Japan, China, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India, or even in the United States, have appeared sharing Dharma talks, lectures, composing books and writing for newspapers to propagate Buddhism.³³

THE PRESENCE OF VIETNAMESE NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES

Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải (1938-2003) was a Vietnamese nun celebrity. In 1960, she went to the United States to study and graduated from the Master of Library Studies program at Princeton University. She is one of the first lecturers to teach at Vạn Hạnh Institute and the Vietnam Buddhist Advanced Institute. She kept the post of Deputy Director of the Vietnam Buddhist Studies Institute and is a famous Buddhist author and translator.

In 1979, Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lưu was sponsored to settle down in the United States by the Most Venerable Thanh Cát (the abbot of Giác Minh Pagoda, Palo Alto, California). In 1980, the Venerable Master nominated Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lưu of San Jose to practice and found Đức Viên Pagoda.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Chánh studied in Japan, then came to the United States and passed away here.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ took asylum to Japan and then emigrated to the United States, staying in Sacramento and southern California. The Most Venerable Giác Hương, the Most Venerable Như Hòa, the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương, Venerable Bhikkhunī Lê Thanh, Venerable Bhikkhunī Pháp Đăng, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Đáo, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Liên, Venerable Bhikkhunī Liên Chi, and many more nuns have come to the United States before and after 1975, and continue to stay in America to share Buddhism.

* * *

In the beginning, monks and nuns in the country felt strange with the language and customs, especially the tradition of beliefs. Their way of living has been in the religious tradition of the homeland, surrounded by a group of elder followers, providing the funeral ritual as a basic earning to sustain life. There have been no plans to share the Buddha Dharma to local foreigners. Language is a major obstacle to socializing. Every week, the elderly come to the temple with their descendants, but after some time, the older generation is gone, the young people are no longer interested in the temple with language and rituals no longer suitable for a pragmatic life. To have an heir, it is difficult for a young person in the US to become a novice. Like most Chinese communities, Vietnamese monks stay and gather at the Vietnamese refugee community, making it difficult to develop in contemporary Western American society.

Young people in Europe and America do not need to believe in religion, that is, they do not live with the heart like their ancestors. They need brains, judgment, rational analysis at the modern scientific level. Because of the traditional conservative belief that “bless those who do not see but believe,” Christianity increasingly falls into a stalemate; some churches must be closed, transferred to temples, schools and hospitals.

³³ International Buddhist Meditation Center (IBMC), Our History.

Christian sisters in the closed churches in the United States are preparing a joint “fulfilling mission” in peace because of no more vocation.

On October 20, 2018, the US Catholic News Agency said a seminar on the future of American women was held in Oakbrook, a suburb of Chicago, Illinois, on September 25 and 26 on the topic “Loyalty to Journey: Together in Communion.”

In the seminar, there were around fifty people including priests, nuns, canon experts and others. Among the participants were the cardinal priest Joseph Tobin, former superior general of the Redemptorist congregation, and currently archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, cum president of the US Church Commission on clergy, religion and vocation.

The seminar took place amid a dramatic decrease in the number of nuns in the United States. This meant the Church needed help preparing the future. According to data provided by the United States National Office on Retiring Nuns under the United States Episcopal Concessions, in the next few decades, the 300 female lineages in the United States may disappear.

The number of nuns in the United States decreased by 75 percent. Over the past fifty-three years, since 1965, the number of Christian nuns in the United States has declined by 75 percent and there is no hope of a change in this trend. In 1965, there were 181,421 nuns in the United States, but in 2016 there were only 47,160 nuns of whom 77 percent were over seventy years old. Among the 420 female lineages in the United States today, 300 female lines are preparing to end in the next few decades because there is no vocation and the number of remaining sisters is getting older.

Sister Carol Zinn of St. Joseph’s in Philadelphia, the executive director of the Union of Sisters of the American Sisters, said the current issue is not to prepare to sell the churches, but go even further.

Keeping peace at the prospect of grief: Reverent Joseph Kutz, the archbishop of Louisville Diocese of Kentucky, commented that grief and loss are the reality that the participants felt, but many female lineages also felt a calm because they were in the process of completing the mission - destiny and itinerary. The archbishop said, “It is a healthy exchange, a real dialogue, based on our deep esteem for the priests and nuns and their contribution. I left the conference in a spirit of encouragement and excitement.”

Cardinal Joseph Tobin: Cardinal Tobin also told the newspaper *Global Sisters Report* that “I was moved by the peace the nuns found in preparing to end their mission.” There is a sadness at the sight of the end of a religious community which often means the disappearance of a specific charism in the church, but also a great serenity for the nuns.”

Cardinal Tobin revealed that he recalled the elderly Simeon’s words on the day when the Child Jesus was sacrificed at the church, “Lord, let your servant go peacefully, for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Sister Carol Zinn also said that “Peace comes when the nuns are aware of the end being part of the sacred paschal, dying and rising again, which is at the heart point of the Christian faith.”³⁴

Buddhism: Some Chinese Buddhist establishments were present relatively early in the United States but were later difficult to maintain. However, 164 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries around the world have been maintained and developed, while there were only fifty-seven masters alternately teaching and guiding Zen, although Zen is not the basic practice of Tibetan uddhism.³⁵

³⁴ Trần Đức Anh OP - Vatican.

³⁵ Đào Viên tạp chí nghiên cứu phật giáo: Sự phát triển của Phật giáo ở Hoa Kỳ (Research: The Development of Buddhism in America).

Zen Master Thiên Ân, Zen Master Thanh Từ, although not as thriving as Zen Master Nhất Hạnh, are still attracting interest from indigenous people, especially intellectuals and young people. They come to this Buddhist sect not to make offerings or rituals with faith, but to learn, share and practice practical benefits in a stressful industrial social.

Buddhism came to the United States with many paths and sects from many countries. Each sect has a unique way of living, but in the new land, apart from preserving the tradition, it is necessary to integrate specific elements of indigenous people.

* * *

In the beginning, nuns did not officiate at funerals like some professional monks. As some nuns were not fluent in the native language, maintaining daily activities for the pagodas was difficult. How to integrate into the academic education environment was a challenge, although the government is willing to grant scholarships and financial aids to support students. The nuns had to make cakes, incense, vegetarian food, even scrap collection like Venerable Bhikkhuni Đàm Lưu and her disciples when they first came to the United States, so that life would not rely on the donation of others as in Vietnam. US citizens, despite their high salaries, must pay taxes, utility bills, house insurance, vehicles and so on. Almost everything is owed to the bank; it is rare to have cash at home. Elderly people receive government subsidies that are just enough, if one is very frugal. Only a few dozen dollars were put into donation boxes, but it was a generous offering, as generous as it is in Vietnam.

* * *

Over forty-three years, life has gradually stabilized and some nuns have participated in the education of the country. A large number of young nuns have gone to study abroad in countries such as India, China, Taiwan, Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal, United Kingdom, US, Japan, Singapore, and so forth. Particularly in the US, the number of nuns with degrees compared to other countries is not many, but the quality of knowledge and learning is sufficient to ensure that the nuns' community training is compatible with Sakyadhita's (female disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha) guidelines, and requires the current development of Vietnamese Buddhism in the United States.

The general situation of Vietnamese people, preferring to be more individual than integrating, *has not seen any organization, whether in business or in religion, that has complete unity*. After 1963, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam was born and soon divided into two systems. After 1975, the United Vietnamese Buddhist Church in foreign countries also transformed many sanghas and associations, such as Về Nguồn (Return Source), Sangha Vows, the Sangha, Linh Sơn Church and the Worldly Sangha. Ever since, Vietnamese nuns, if they have enough capacity to communicate with nuns in the indigenous community, to agree on twelve criterias³⁶ as mentioned by Venerable Bhikkhuni Giới Hương:

1. Preserve the manner and posture.
2. Recite precepts of the bhikkhuni, sikkhamaṇa, or samana.
3. Demonstrate the spirit of respect to the Buddha and sangha.
4. Keep the eight rules of the bhikkhuni.
5. Chant, lead retreats, meditation, Vu Lan ceremonies, Buddha's birthday, one-day retreat, reciting the Buddha's name, teaching at the temple, other temples and in the community.

³⁶ The Speech of Nuns in America, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, The Summer Retreat at Điều Ngự Temple on June 26, 2018. Please visit website: <http://www.huongsentemple.com/index.php/ung-dung/ni-gioi>

6. The sangha and the patriarchs need to take prompt actions in the proper use of talent so that all the nuns can see their responsibility for Buddhism. The nuns should fulfill their aspirations, promote their roles and duties in areas where the United States or the Vietnamese-American community wants the nuns to contribute.

7. There are many opportunities to develop the ability because many websites (such as www.huongsentemple.com of Huong Sen Pagoda, Perris, California) are ready to post and wait for the works of nuns. The general department of the nun sangha should create a website for Vietnamese nuns in foreign countries to create special activities for them.

8. Create a social network to connect nuns, especially young nuns with enthusiasm... visiting, supporting, respecting each other and sharing Buddhist activities between the temples (dare not to speak of global, only nuns of the same sangha, ideals and ideologies). Enhancing the online propaganda between nuns and Buddhists. This will help improve the level of Dharma and its application in society.

9. There should be English-language chanting courses, creation of an online scripture library, and online tutorials and information transfer - constantly innovating and modernizing the way of preaching to suit the United States.

10. Participate in classes on the society's knowledge, such as culture, technology, computers, health care, society and law to improve internal and external learning.

11. Train nuns with a rich energy of experience and practice, with teaching domestically and abroad, inside and outside the temple, giving lectures coherently and deeply to become the dignitaries, the bright leaders of Buddhism.

12. For the growth and values of the nun sangha, nuns will be a positive contribution to the success of Vietnamese Buddhism abroad. Bhikkhunīs play an important role, together with monks, in building a good American-Vietnamese Buddhist society. In this way, nuns have established their foothold in Vietnamese-American society and will be a positive connection at the global level to nurture spirituality for the benefit of many around the world.

Perhaps the above first five things, most of the nuns adhere to seriously, but organizing training Vinaya courses for nuns requires a professional lawyer to guide, and currently, no one in the United States meets the required standards. In regard to *The Eight Respectful Books of the Discipline*, in the future when some nuns' qualifications develop, will they follow the footsteps of some Taiwanese nuns, demanding to abolish the eight rules of the bhikkhunī?

Bhikkhunī Gióí Hưong's ideas or ideals for the future of nuns in the United States are really true. For a long time, nuns used to get familiar with the work of the kitchen to the main hall, to the back of the garden. How can they remove the ordinary habit to nurture the "salvation and noble spirit" which is the most important thing. Women are seriously infected with the idea that "one son is yes, but ten girls are still no," which is no longer suitable in the country of an advanced civilization. In this day and age, in the world and religion, the position of women is relatively high compared to what it used to be.

For example, Venerable Bhikkhunī Wuyin, founder and abbess of the Luminary International Buddhist Institute (LIBS) in Taiwan. In addition to Venerable Wuyin, Taiwan has many other outstanding nuns in terms of leadership, charity and educational institutions. Running the hospital is Venerable Bhikkhunī Lekshe Tsomo, an American nun in San Diego, who is the leader of the International Sakyadhita Organization with many nuns who are active, creative, and contributing much to the development of Buddhism.

Vietnam used to have bright faces in the nun sangha. During the time of the country's separation, cultural exchange and study abroad was harder than it is today. There were not

many nuns to pave the way for Vietnamese Buddhism in American country. Nowadays, many young nuns are in US. If they want to enter the social, cultural, educational and translation paths like their predecessors in this fertile and diverse land, there might be a nun scholar is a pragmatic scientist associated with the spiritual sciences for a uniformly developed Buddhism when indigenous religions no longer meet the intellectual needs parallel with faith.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương is right when she stated that “the necessary point of a Buddhist lecturer is the energy of experience, the energy of practice and communication... and the public language to communicate.” Venerable Bhikkhunī Chodron believes that “the nuns who are educated and know how to practice will be able to teach the doctrines coherently and deeply, helping many believers transform their minds and make life more elegant. The grace of Dharma only exists in places where Buddhism has been practiced for a long time.”

* * *

With an open space like the United States, religion no longer has to be passive and closed. It must be committed, must integrate and contribute to the common good in society. The pragmatic view of America is that no one can sit idly, cling or wait for the right time. Experiences, learning and empowerment are a solid way of surviving to convey the religious or spiritual ideology of an alien culture from the East. Avoid training nuns to be the abbess or care for the teacher as she gets older as the Buddha ever taught his disciples “Be the heir to the Dharma, not a material legacy.” We should think about how the future of Buddhism will develop in a practical country, with no ambiguity, not much faith in the world after death. Replace it, as Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh’s way, “Dwell mindful in the present” has been popular and rooted in the US. Thanks to his current practicality, there is no need to promise anything in the future, but it resolves the pressing issues in life here and now. It is the practice method, which seems pragmatic but is imbued with the nature of spirituality that industrial society needs.

Today’s Western European tendency is to specialize in meditation to discover the spiritual interior, the practice way that places less emphasis on religious ritual.

* * *

Of course, the road cannot be smooth; the future has many challenges for all with a fairly big challenge for nuns, who are not familiar with abnegation. Our proud female master, Giới Hương, proudly carries the vanguard flag for the Vietnamese daughters of the Buddha in the United States.

Sunlight, April 29, 2020
Buddhas to be,
Cư Sĩ Minh Mẫn
cusiminhman@gmail.com

1.13. THE PREACHING FOR OVERSEAS NUNS

In our opinion, it is true that for monks or nuns, whether talented or virtuous, whether preaching in Vietnam or in the United States, *there is nothing worth calling an obstacle* if we have all the qualifications to enter life and religion:

Nuns overseas or in Vietnam:

- The precepts must be kept first.
- Have some advanced or basic degree with subjects such as literature, art, economics, society and be knowledgeable as to how they relate to life. This will provide support for the nuns' lectures.
- The appearance, voice, gestures and demeanor must be dignified and calm.
- The face must be bright; the appearance must be majestic; the appearance must be neat; voice and pronunciation must be clear and gentle. Gestures are serene without shyness or fear. Have a good knowledge of Dharma and be able to explain the truth of the Buddha.
- The practice should be without superstition, without turning Buddhas and Guan Yin Bodhisattvas into deities to bless all wishes. Avoid chasing after fame, benefits and avoid kneeling before authority and money.

The Truth of the Buddha is wisdom, not ignorance! We all have a Buddha-mind full of blessings, wisdom, conduct and virtue. Therefore, the nuns are without greed, anger, ignorance, doubt, revenge, craving and hate! The behavior of nuns must be exemplary, kind and compassionate with humility, tolerance, equality and in harmony with all. Especially, nuns should study diligently to enter the profound Dharma. Study secular and Dharma books, learn to attain the fullness of life and religion. Because Buddhism and life are never separate, we should not just attain a little, then hurriedly announce, "A little bit is enough for me" and then claim to be talented, good and transcendent. What arrogance! Unknowingly, we can lead ourselves and all Buddhists onto the six paths of reincarnation.

These above qualifications are the minimum elements of a bhikkhuni teacher. There are real obstacles if we do not stay aware of every progress of modern science. The study of life and religion in the present time is extremely necessary for all people, of course, more so if we are spiritual female leaders. We must be the enlightened role models. We must avoid straying from the Dharma. It is the responsibility of our present work to shoulder the Tathāgata's mission.

The intention of the Buddha is for us to understand deeply and ultimately the Buddha Dharma, then to practice every moment and treat all sentient beings as ourselves. We treat all beings equally as all have the same inherent abundant Buddha-mind, the goal of self-salvation and other salvation.

We are ordinary women before leaving home for the monastic life. We have a thorough understanding of women's characteristics. Along with courage, intelligence and compassion, there can be less desirable qualities, such as being temperamental or jealous.

If we are knowledgeable nuns, we have to respect the Eight rules of the Bhikkhunī³⁷ and have to observe them absolutely to lower the selfness! If there are monks who do not keep their precepts, the nuns are not required to respect them.

³⁷ The Eight Respectful Books of the Discipline (Skt. Guradharmā ; P. AṭṭhaGarudhammā), Vol. V, an English translation of the Disciplines, Cullavagga, Chapter 10, Sacred Book of the East, XX. pp. 354-355.

In short, in the very near days, our existing first generation will gradually fade away and then our offspring, especially those who were born overseas, will not follow idolatry, such as expectations, superstition, praying to the stars, resolutions, releasing ghosts, and identifying auspicious days. They will most likely enter the meditative path currently blooming. To adapt to the times, we should study the Zen way taught by the Buddha. This makes a lot of sense.

The Supreme Way of “Meditation, Direct to the Root of Mind” to free us from the sufferings of samsara is shown clearly in the Ultimate Vehicle Scriptures (Sūtras).³⁸ We need to consult this sūtra carefully to learn and teach the next generation.

Bhikkhunīs are disciples of the Blessed One practicing to overcome the patterns of self. They keep the precepts first, and absolutely let go of all defilements and bad habits. Thus, the 348 Bhikkhunī precepts and the Eight Respectful Rules that the Buddha passed on to us are torches that light the way to overcome ignorance and reach enlightenment.

It is true. If nuns practice without the precepts, without the rules, no matter how many years of practice, they will not achieve anything; it’s just a waste of effort.

In this life, we should know:

- In a moral family, of course, there are many forms of discipline to train in virtuous and compassionate behavior. Many families have a “Family Council.”
- Each village has its own rules, hence the phrase, “the king’s order still fails before the village’s rules.”
- Every country and society has its own discipline to train the good citizens, to preserve pure morality, customs, security, peace and happiness.

Regarding the secular life, there must be laws, but how much more for monastic communities? How can there be training for monks and nuns without precepts to carry on the Tathāgata’s mission? How can we guide the way to liberation for the sake of many?

The Buddha laid down many precepts to help us practice effectively. I would like to emphasize once again, especially for nuns, that he added even tougher rules, “the Eight rules” for the nuns to cultivate. Because the purpose of the practice is to eliminate attaching to ego, of course, we must let go of all bad habits from gross to subtle, from relative to absolute, and also from form to formlessness in order to display the truthful prajñā! To really show the absolute appearance, nothing is more effective than keeping all of the precepts.

³⁸ The Seven Ultimate Vehicle Scriptures: MahaPrajñāPāramitā, Vajracchedikā, Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, Laṅkāvatāra, Perfect Enlightenment, Śūraṅgama, Platform and Vimalakīrti.

The Eight Respectful Disciplines for the Nuns

The great enlightened Sakyamuni
Just great wisdom and compassion
He understood the nuns' situation
Harm yourself, because of delusion!

Ambitious between high and low
In the binary, they do not know the way out
The relative realm is samsara
Extreme attaching leads to the Saha world!

The Buddha is compassionate
For the female engaged in ignorance
He prescribed "The wonderful spiritual medicine"
Three Hundred and Forty-Eight Precepts,
and here are the Eight Respectful Disciplines.

Only one Eight Rules, even upto Ten Rules
Too gentle, too light to treat
The terminally ill, how come out of shock
Do not use "The wonderful spiritual medicine," how to get sick!

Lean on the Eight Respectful Disciplines to transform
Self-correcting "the egoness"
That "I" is the illusion figure
Lower the "I" to go beyond the realm of samsara.

Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery, February 6, 2020

With metta,

Thanh Tịnh Liên - Bhikkhuni TN Chân Thiền

Thanh Diệu Đức - Bhikkhuni TN Chân Diệu

sungnghiem@hotmail.com



Bhikkhunī TN Chân Diệu and Bhikkhunī TN Chân Thiên
(left fourth and fifth)



Bhikkhunī TN Chân Diệu and Bhikkhunī TN Chân Thiên
(center with woolen hat)

1.14. A HEART LETTER TOPATRIARCH MAHĀPAJĀPATĪ GOTAMĪ

Dear Master Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī,

First, I would like to send to you a thousand thoughts of gratitude. Thanks to your grace and all the relationships in this life, I have been a part of the renunciate disciples dwelling in the Dharma of the Tathagata. Since I entered the Dharma house, I have somehow felt peace in my soul. However, sometimes I feel lost on the way ahead.

When I accepted the invitation of Venerable Bhikkhunī Giói Hương, I was very much concerned about what to write on the activities of the Nun Sangha in the United States. I am a new learner with limited knowledge of the Dharma, so I don't dare to comment. However, here are some lines of gratitude to our respected Nun Patriarch who paved the liberated way for us.

Samsara is a temporary realm which is full of love, anger and jealousy. Each person's karma is different, resulting in the karma from countless lifetimes. Since joining the ranks of the Sangha in the monastery, I have pondered a lot about my responsibilities and mission towards Buddhism, but so many ambitions have stopped before they were carried out. I had to review what our nun predecessors went through to motivate me to move forward. Today, turning each page of history about Patriarch Gotamī, a noble senior nun, I am very impressed and have a deep admiration for her. Thanks to her spiritual, non-regressive spirit, women became the Buddha's disciples. As a result of her actions, the congregation of nuns was established.

According to scholar E. J. Thomas, in the fifth year after his enlightenment, the Buddha returned to the palace of Kapilavatthu to visit his ill father, King Suddhodana. His sermon helped the king to attain arahantship before death. On that occasion, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī came to Nirodha Park where the Buddha was staying, begging him to allow women to join the Sangha to live a homeless life.

After three times refusing the petition, the Buddha returned to Vesāli. Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, along with many royal Sākyan women, shaved their heads, put on yellow robes and walked to Vesāli to meet the Buddha. Moved by the steadfastness and earnest practice of these Sākyan women, Venerable Ānanda agreed to pass on their request to the Blessed One. Three times, Venerable Ānanda on behalf of them asked the Buddha to allow women to leave home. Venerable Ānanda asked, "Dear Lord, if a woman ordained, living a life without a family, living in the Dharma and being taught by the Tathagata, could she attain the four stages of enlightenment?" The Buddha answered, "Ānanda, a woman has the ability to witness the four levels of enlightenment." "Then," Venerable Ānanda said, "as your stepmother is the person who nurtured and held the Tathagata in childhood... she deserves to be ordained and join the Sangha." Finally, the Buddha agreed to allow women to become nuns and gave the "Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunis," which are the eight rules the nuns must obey for life. Stepmother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the Sākyan women were happy to abide. The Bhikkhunī Congregation was born from that moment.

Reviewing the history of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the founding of the Nun Sangha from the very beginning, I was truly thrilled and impressed by your determination and the entourage of the Sākyan royal ladies at that time. It can be said that the event of women's ordination in the Sangha of the Buddha is the prelude to the issue on the earliest gender equality. Although, we cannot determine in which period of human history the liberation movement for women and gender equality was formed, most of the sources related to India shed light that Indian religions have never mentioned the fact that women ordained. When Gotama Sakyamuni Buddha accepted the ordained women and allowed the founding of the Nun Sangha, it is said

that the Buddhist Sangha **was the first organization to lay the groundwork for the idea of gender equality in ancient India**, although there was still some disagreement about the event.

In fact, the Buddha did not struggle to claim one right or another right for women. He recognized women's real role as human beings without discrimination in regard to gender, paving the way for them to lead a happy life. Gender or racial discrimination will end as people reach a spiritual level where there is no more conflict. Only in the realm of spirituality does human joy find true expression. Only in the realm of spirituality can each person achieve absolute freedom without harming others, and only in the spiritual realm can love never turn into jealousy and hatred. It is only the great masters who do not have any prejudice or discrimination against women. The Buddha is the great teacher who opened the door for women, not only from the darkness of gender discrimination, but also from the narrow prison of egoness to reach true enlightenment.

Indeed, in the Buddhist Sangha, the bhikkhunīs' role is as prominent as that of monks. If the bhikkhus have great disciples such as Sāriputta, Moggalāna, the bhikkhunīs have bright disciples like Dhammadinna, Khemā and many others. This shows that every member of the Sangha who is trying to practice precepts, concentration and wisdom has the same ability to realize the same enlightenment. Everyone has the right to express his or her own views to the public. We can find the impressive atmosphere of the Sangha at the beginning, through the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā. The enthusiasm for the practice that the Buddha aroused in the hearts of his disciples, the optimism about the Theravāda Sangha on the path of salvation, the joy of spiritual realization and liberation - all of these are stated vividly these two books.

Turning to historical accounts of the virtuous life of early Buddhist disciples, I reflected more on the current lifestyle of the Nun Sangha in the United States. Living in a place known as the paradise of freedom, human rights are protected, and the role of women is always respected, but sometimes it is also a factor that makes the spiritual life weaken. The bigger the selfness is nourished, the more it is not honed and removed. This is the weak point that makes us lose the opportunity to sit together, to share our experiences of studying and teaching each other.

In the rough opinion of the later learners, I think the Nun Sangha is prosperous. Each of them must reform herself first. Reform and perfect the five aggregates that have a lot of greed, anger and envy in each person, then everything will gradually stabilize. So, no matter how developed the technological society, the basics for the monastic lifestyle remain the same, the foundation of precept-concentration-wisdom.

Thinking we do not need to worry too much about reforming or introducing new methods to build the virtuous Nun Congregation that is suitable for contemporary society, let's return to the source of the origin of Dharma to practice and experience the spiritual life in the most practical way. Moreover, according to the Buddhist dependent-origination spirit, the individual and the society are as one body. Therefore, if each member improves, the collective will be completed naturally. In other words, every social organization is man-made and its destiny depends on humans. Of course, there are many factors that play an important role in determining the prosperity of an organization, but human beings are still the key factors.

As I confided at the beginning, all this is just openness and thoughts from a small nun who lives in the present time, thousands of years away from Patriarch Mahāpajāpati Gotamī. But anyway, I still hope this heart letter goes back in time and you receive the love we are sending.

Minh Đăng Quang Vihara, California, June 26, 2020

Bow three times,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Ngọc Liên

bichliendoctorate@yahoo.com

1.15. WOMEN AND VINAYA

In Eastern patriarchal societies, the role of women is considered inferior to men, but such prejudice is unacceptable in a civilized society. The Buddha was the first master to realize the potential of women and create many opportunities for them to develop their spiritual and social abilities.

We know that after enlightenment, at first the Buddha was reluctant to convert beings, which was called his “silent” period. Women too, were not initially allowed to join the sangha, and Venerable Ananda and Nun Patriarch MahāpajāpatīGotamī earnestly begged the Buddha to allow them to join. With the assurance of Venerable Ananda, Nun Patriarch MahāpajāpatīGotamī accepted to abide by eight rules of the bhikkhunīs. The Buddha accepted her, along with 500 concubines, to join the sangha. The eight rules (S. *Guradharmā*; P. *AṭṭhaGarudhammā*) are as follows:

1. A nun who has been ordained even for a hundred years must greet respectfully, rise up from her seat, salute with joined palms, do proper homage to a monk ordained but that day.
2. A nun must not spend the rains in a residence where there are no monks.
3. Every half month a nun should desire two things from the Order of Monks: the asking as to the date of the Observance (Uposatha) day, and the coming of the exhortation (bhikkhunovada).
4. After the rains (three months rainy season retreat) a nun must “invite”(pavarana) before both orders in respect of three matters, namely what was seen, what was heard, what was suspected. (A revised version allows bhikkhunīs to perform pavarana by themselves.)
5. A nun, offending against an important rule, must undergo manatta discipline for half a month before both orders.
6. When, as a probationer, she has trained in the six rules (cha dhamma) for two years, she should seek higher ordination from both orders.
7. A monk must not be abused or reviled in any way by a nun.
8. From today, admonition of monks by nuns is forbidden.

In the discipline of the nuns, these eight rules are strictly observed. Dharmagupta law (Chinese version) compares these eight rules to a bridge to cross a big river so that one can go to the other side to be liberated. Many sūtras say that all of these 500 bhikkhunīs attained bliss salvation. The Buddha also invented the bhikkhunī precepts and the ritual for transmitting bhikkhunī precepts to them. This clearly shows that they are ordained and take two important stages: first ordained in the nun sangha, then later in the monk sangha.

Nun sanghas have more responsibilities and duties when they take the vows of bhikkhunī precepts. They were allowed to recite the BhikkhunīPatimokkha, which included the precepts and abhisamācārika of nuns. In the Pāli Vinaya, there are 227 precepts for monks, while there are 348 for nuns in seven sections. The bhikkhunī precepts were formed in Sravasti, India.

In the Pāli Vinaya, there are 305 cases of monks and fifty-nine cases of nuns. Thus, the percentage of women mentioned is 16.2% of the total population. This means that the Buddha opened the door to welcome women who can joyfully join the life of sangha, but at that time the attitude of society towards women seemed to change too slowly and the position of women was still considered low and limited. Despite this, a large number of nuns during the Buddha’s time excelled in various fields.

There are three main sources of stories about women's legends and stories: the Apadana, (thirteenth volume of the Sutta Pitaka), the Anguttara Nikaya and the Therigatha. In them, the elder nuns recount very clearly the various deeds of women who made efforts to practice and attain Nirvāṇa. The Manorathapurani Sutta (Anguttara Nikaya) refers to the list of elder nuns, samaneri and to Suppiyā, who are pure and virtuous.

With the permission of the Buddha to establish the nuns' congregation, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī created many conditions for nuns to practice and many unhappy and suffering women were happily liberated from the bondage. For example, in a number of sutras in the Anguttara and Samyutta, the Buddha declared:

“Dear ladies, if you can leave home, live a homeless life, you can become a mendicant like Bhikkhunī Khema and Uppalavanna.”

“Khema” means “peacefulness” or “Nirvāṇa.” She was a well-trained upāsikā and supporter of the Buddha Dharma in the Buddha Padmottara's time. During the time of Buddha Kassapa, she was the daughter of King Kiki of Varanasi, named Samani, who lived a pure life and built a monastery to make offerings to Buddha. Next in the Buddha Vipassī's time, she preached the Dharma. During the time of Buddha Kakusandha and Konagarnana, she built many monasteries to make offerings to the Buddha and the sangha. During Shakyamuni Buddha's time, she was born in the Sagala royal family of Madradesa and became queen of the Bimbisara king, Magadha.

The sutta recounts that she never appeared before the Buddha because she thought that the Tathagata never cared about the beauty of women. But one day, King Bimbisara set up an offering to the Buddha and the sangha and invited the dancers and singers to Venuvana Bamboo Grove Garden. At that time, Khema appeared to the Buddha. In order to educate her arrogance, the Buddha manifested magical power and turned out to be a beautiful fairy standing by to fan the Buddha. The nymph suddenly appeared, first a middle-aged woman, and then became an old woman with wrinkled skin, fallen teeth, and gray hair that surprised Khema. Her arrogance about her beauty disappeared when she heard the following verse:

“Whoever is a slave to desire and lust,
Like a spider that doesn't leave its own silken web.

The wise eliminate ambition, leave the mundane world, escape anxiety and leave behind all sorrow.”

The commentary in the Therigatha adds that when the Buddha finished his lecture, Khema immediately attained arahantship. She became one of the great intellectual disciples.

The Therigatha also describes the enlightened attainments of many elder nuns. In the Therigatha, these elder nuns recount their experience of living, practicing and revealing their blissful state with faith in the Blessed One's liberation path. For example, Uppalavanna, for many generations, was a wise, virtuous nun who often offered food to the Buddha. She gained magical power due to her efforts to practice. At the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, Uppalavanna was born the daughter of a bourgeois in Sravasti. She had a beautiful appearance like a pure blue lotus. At the age of maturity, many princes and kings came to propose, but because of the righteous faith, she wanted to become a nun living in a monastery. The Buddha's cousin Ananda encouraged her to practice and because of this, she shunned her home and lived a quiet life of a recluse. The nun diligently meditated using the lamp as her object. The nun achieved four meditation states (jhanas) and the Unsurpassed Enlightenment (patisambhida), finally attaining arahantship and wisdom (abhijana).

BhikkhunīSanghamitra was the daughter of the Ashoka emperor. Along with her brother Mahendra, the monk who instructed King Tissa of Sinhala (now Sri Lanka) she formed the nun sangha through the ordination ceremony for Queen Anula and 500 concubines. In the fourth century, Princess Hemamala (daughter of King Kalinga) and prince consort Dantakumara, brought the Buddha's relics (danta-dhatu) to this island nation. Queen Kumaradevi of King Govindachandra at Kanyakujia and Varanasi restored the Buddha statue (dharmacakrajina) and built a very solemn great monastery for the nuns at Sarnath. This proves that Buddhism was prevalent in the eleventh century.

The nuns' congregation persisted for a thousand years in Sri Lanka. This tradition has continued to grow because it has been passed down to China, so that today we can revive the nun sangha in South and Southeast Asia. and finally restore the nuns' congregation as a dynamic organization in countries like Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Tibet, Korea, China, Japan and Vietnam.

From ancient times until the eleventh century, the nuns continued to practice almsgiving, make offerings, statues and building temples. There are many biographies of the nuns and upāsikā living the pure life, shining the world with their noble virtue.

It was during the time of Shakyamuni Buddha that we had many attainments of nuns, such as MahāpajāpatīGotamī, Yasodhara, Khema, Uppalavanna, Kundalakesi, Kapilani, Soma, Ubbiri, Rohini, Patachara, Anupama, Nandi and many others. We also know in the *Annals on Vamsa* of Sri Lanka there are records of the outstanding nuns of the later period, such as Sanghamitra, Dhammapala, Sudhamma, Malla, Aggomitta, Uttara, Hema and many others. Lay women also play an important role in society and religious development today. For example, in Sri Lanka, Bandaranayike became prime minister and her daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga was the president.

In 280, a congregation of nuns was established in China with Venerable Chen Chien as the first bhikkhunī. In 429, BhikkhunīDevasara with seven other nuns was sent to China by King Meghavanna and the congregation of nuns gradually increased in number. Over the centuries, Chinese nuns have actively contributed to peace and social security.

In the history of Vietnam, bhikkhunīs such as the Most Venerable ðàm-soạn, the Most Venerable Diệu-không, the Most Venerable Hải-triều-Âm, the Most Venerable Như - Thanh, the Most Venerable Huỳnh-liên are talented nuns playing an active role in many fields, such as propaganda, education, culture and social charity. In our time, there are many female Buddhist leaders in Tibet, Nepal, China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. They are in the process of building many nunneries and Buddhist Research Centers. There is great encouragement that many women in organizations in Europe and America have begun to establish nunneries. These people play an important role in balancing a society that is on a moral decline and goes against the interests of women.

The fundamental question today is how men and women adapt to the development in the new social order that is dominated by indifference, violence and insecurity. Modern civilized scientific ideas have encouraged analytical thinking, but the risk that the liberal freedom of a new society may also result in a decline in moral values. Consequently, there is an urgent need to create a social structure to support spiritual life, combat poverty, protect human rights, uphold moral values and restore cultural traditions. These things are only temporarily balanced.

The biggest problem today is how to transfer positive values to future generations. To accomplish this work, the most appropriate thing is to realize the concept of equality in gender. All mankind, men and woman, have in themselves the essence of both men and women. The Buddha did not distinguish the intellectual and spiritual powers between men and women.

Although Buddhist attitudes towards women sometimes seem contradictory or even negative, this attitude has changed and it's easy to see that the positive influence of women is present in today's Buddhist world, in particular, the capacity of women from all over the thirty countries around the world gathered here to present at the Eighth Sakyadhita World Buddhist Women Conference in Korea as a testimony forward.

Kam-sa-ham-nida (in Korean language means "thank you")

Song-bul-ha-ship-si-o (May all beings become Buddhas)

Seoul, South Korea, July 2, 2004

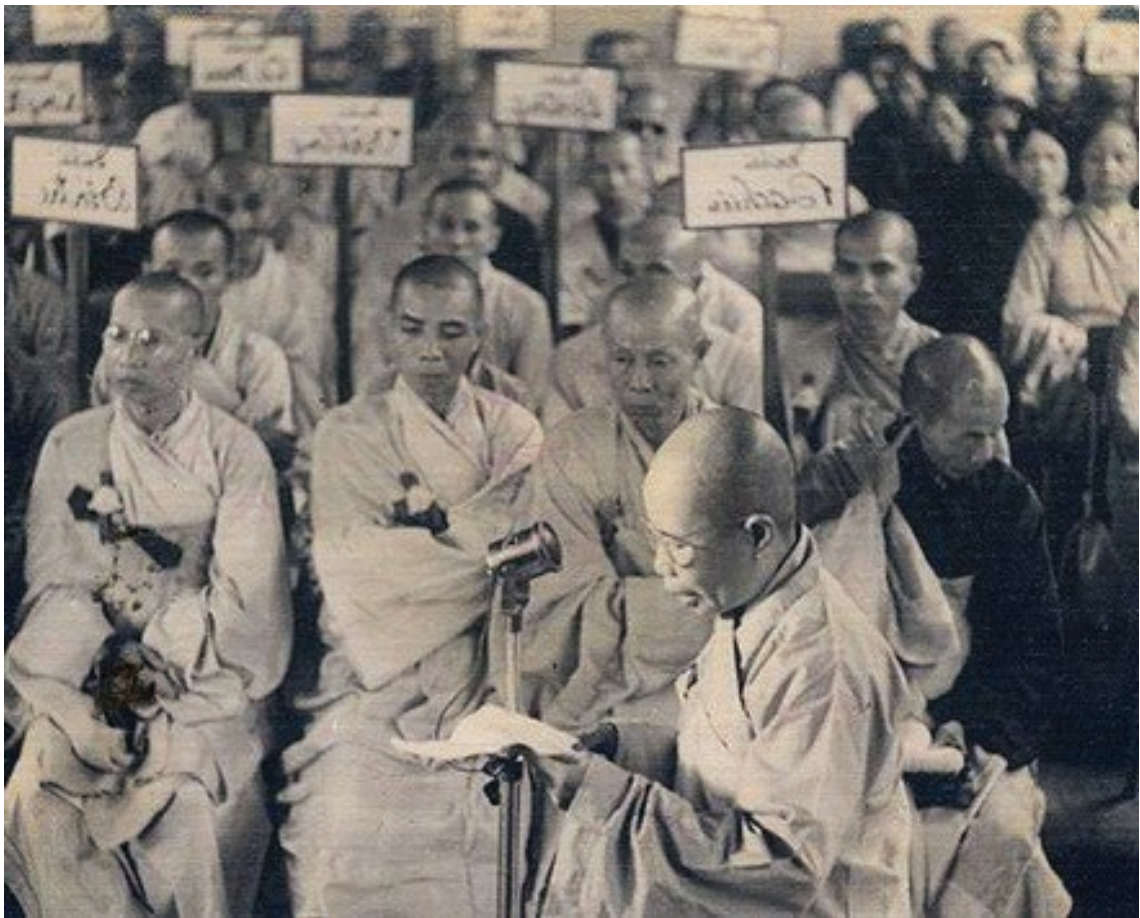
Respectfully,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

1.16. VIRTUOUS EXAMPLES OF SENIOR NUNS THE SPIRIT OF THE EIGHT RULES OF BHIKKHUNĪS

That image of nuns spreading through Asian countries spans thousands of years of Eastern history. The nuns today pay homage to the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. They prostrate to this revered great teacher who publicly declared the nun congregation. She is a spiritual mother who has lived forever in the cause of liberation. She honored the value of virtue in women, and she expressed her will with dignity with eloquence inferior to no one. Today, nuns can pursue an intellectual career. They are shining like stars in the dark night, and that is thanks to the merits of Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. She represented the nuns and accepted the Buddha's request to receive the Eight Rules as an oath before becoming the first patriarch of the nuns. This oath bears a spiritual mark enlightening the way to Buddhahood for all nuns.



Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thủy - Pháp Võ Pagoda

Before accepting Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the princess and the royal ladies to be ordained, the Buddha pointed out five things that women cannot achieve:

1. Not to be a heaven Bramah
2. Not to be a Tavatimsa
3. Not to be Maya
4. Not to be the Heavenly Wheel-Turning King
5. Not to be a Buddha

Finally, at the request of Ananda and the martyr's heart of the royal ladies, the Buddha accepted the women as a members of the congregation but they had to abide by the Eight Rules.³⁹ The Eight rules are like a flow overcoming the five limitations of the female, then the flow goes downstream to the sea of mind, giving birth to the excellent senior nuns as Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.

Through the process of diligent practice, bhikkhunīs eventually attained enlightenment, so the Blessed One praised Venerable Bhikkhunī Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī as the one with the most wisdom. There were accomplishments of other excellent nuns under her leadership, such as Bhikkhunī Thúc Ma - the most supernatural power; Ưu Bát Hoa Sắc - the most ascetic one; Cơ Lợi Xá Kiêu Đàm Di - the one with divine vision, Ba Đầu Lan Xà Na - the most disciplined one, and so on... all 500 nuns attained arahantship. Thus, the Eight Rules cannot be unfair and do not mean gender prejudice. They are a bridge connecting spirituality to direct enlightenment. If you ignore the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs, you will not be able to overcome the five limits mentioned by the Buddha. We deny that the entire system of nuns has existed for centuries because the first congregation of nuns was founded on the basis of the Eight Rules of the Bhikkhunīs.

In other areas, the Eight Rules do not impair the status or talent of the nuns; they honor the virtues of the elder nuns who have practiced hard. We try objectively to see the nuns who hold their hands respectfully to the monks; the image is like a magnificent picture, leaving people with an unforgettable impression - the impression of humble virtue. This reverent action creates a fragrance of liberation, which not only flies with the wind but spreads in all four directions. It is like a breath of life permeating into life, shining through each generation. To this day, it still plays an important role for the nuns, which we cannot arbitrarily overlook.

The Eight Rules also help our nuns eliminate pride, which is a miracle of reincarnation into life. The Eight Rules purify the mind and solemn practice. Pride is like an invisible wall blocking the way, and the Eight Rules help us break through this wall, leaving us free to return home. If we abandon the Eight Rules to satisfy our arrogance, to go against the Buddha's expectation, to break the vow of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, we do not recognize the formation of nuns reluctant to build individualism and sink deep into the muddy path of egoism.

Since the Buddha's time, saintly nuns have attained enlightenment thanks to the Eight Rules. To this day, we look back at the elder venerable nuns of Vietnam who have made glorious careers, built a Buddhist moral source, became a pillar for the future, and all of them have always observed the Eight Rules. They include the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm (Đại Ninh), the late Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Hoa (the Abbess of Từ Nghiêm Monastery), and especially the Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh (the late Abbess of Từ Nghiêm monastery, Huê Lâm Temple and many other monasteries; she is also our beloved master). Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh opened the Buddhist Institute at Huê Lâm to teach Vinaya. She took care of the nuns' education and training, then initiated the establishment of the the Vietnamese Nun Sangha where she is highly revered. They appointed her Head of the Nuns' Administration. In 1972, the monk Sangha assigned her as the Head of the Mahāyāna Sangha, at the same time she called a nationwide Nun Conference.

Despite being revered, the Venenerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh obeyed the Buddha's teaching and learned the virtue of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī preserving the Eight rules. She said that the Eight Rules were the lifeline of nuns today and tomorrow. It is impossible to hold onto any reason to eliminate them because they are the shadow, *the soul of the nuns*.

³⁹ Bát Kính pháp, Tứ Phần Luật - Tỳ Kheo Ni Giới Bổn Lược Ký Tập Yếu. Dịch giả Tỳ Kheo Ni Huyền Huệ. Thành Hội TPHCM. Phật lịch 2541-1997, tran, 11-12.

Once, the Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh came to Ân Quang Pagoda to visit the most Venerable Thiện Hoa, who was sick and in a wheelchair. With humble conduct, with a respectful pure mind, throughout the conversation, she always clasped her hands sincerely. When preparing to return, she gently asked: “Venerable Master, what else do you teach me?” This is a normal gesture, a simple word, but no one could do it. For a senior monk who led the church, such a revered nun was fine, but what about the young monk? During the restoration of the main hall at Huệ Lâm monastery, she invited Venerable Thich Tâm Mẫn of Long Bửu pagoda, the fourth district, to write a pair of calligraphies to display in the main hall. She always wore the long traditional dress to greet and talk with him respectfully. A virtuous example does not tarnish the dust, because its transparency transcends the boundary of selfness and personality.

The image of the great nuns has always lived in the hearts of the nuns; it is thanks to the spirit of the Eight Rules. The self is eroded, thereby lighting the torch of wisdom. Time has not made them tired or falter on the path of propagating the Dharma. Regardless of the era, their virtue has not been lost, still not forgotten, but always shined in the sky of selfless and altruistic nature.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích nữ Như Thủy

1.17. JOIN HANDS TOGETHER

NamoSakyamuni Buddha

Dear Venerable Monks, Nuns and Fellow Buddhists,

We would like to bow down and show gratitude to the Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and the elder Venerable Monks and Nuns, respected people and our spiritual masters from past to present.

Here, we thank the Senior Venerable Bhikkhunīs, the young nuns, whom we often call our respected predecessors who kindly guide us on the path of cultivation.

One of the blessings on the path of nun propagation is Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, the Abbess of Hương Sen Temple and a teacher of our young nuns. We also know that there are many famous senior nuns joining hands in maintaining and developing the nuns' community in various US states:

- ◆ The Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh - Abbess of An Lạc Temple, San Jose, California
- ◆ The Most Venerable Như Hòa - Abbess of Dược Sư Temple, Westminster, California
- ◆ The Most Venerable Giác Hương - Abbess of Vạn Hạnh Temple, Seattle, Washington
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu - Abbess of Quang Minh Temple. Northglenn, Colorado
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương - Abbess of Hương Sen Temple, Perris, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Bôn - Abbess of Kiều Đàm Di Temple, Santa Ana, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện - Abbess of Huyền Không Pagoda. San Jose, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên - Abbess of Ngọc Hòa Pagoda, San Jose, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Phước - Abbess of Đức Viên Pagoda, San Jose, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nghiêm, Venerable Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên - Abbess of Ngọc Minh Pagoda, San Diego, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Quang - Abbess of Phước Quang Temple, Santa Ana, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nghiêm - Abbess of Phước Hải Pagoda, Charlotte, North Carolina
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Bảo, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Chánh - Abbess of Huệ Lâm Temple, Boston, Massachusetts
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương và Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên - Abbess of Viên Thông Nunnery, Houston, Texas
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang - Abbess of Quan Âm Temple, Redlands, California
- ◆ Venerable Bhikkhunī Tâm Vân - Abbess of Như Ý Nunnery, Las Vegas, California

In the ceremonies, retreats or activities, Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương often offers help. She creates conditions for nuns to have gatherings, teas and seminars to have the opportunities to contribute our ideas, present opinions, participate in the composing, lecturing and cultural program in some places like Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Monastery, Bảo Quang Temple, Điều Ngự Temple, Huệ Quang Pagoda, Việt Nam Temple and especially at the Commemoration of the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī held for the first time on August 30-31, 2018 at An Lạc Pagoda in San Jose, California. Although Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương is busy with many Buddhist works, she continues to join the summer retreats to cultivate and share Buddhism with the nuns for many years.

In the United States, many nunneries have tried to open two-week summer retreats for nuns, such as Đức Viên Temple in San Jose, California, Huệ Lâm Temple in Boston, Viên Thông Temple in Houston, Texas) and An Lạc Pagoda in San Jose, California.

In regard to the active nuns, we have another young nun teacher, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Bảo, a member of Huệ Lâm Pagoda, who is compassionate and capable in organizing the nuns' meetings. She follows the Buddha's teaching, "Know the place of water to wade through," that is, know how to ask the monks or nuns who are knowledgeable about the Tripitaka (the Sūtras, Vinaya and Abhidhamma) to teach Dharma. She and other venerables invited the elder nuns from Huệ Lâm Temple, such as Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Nguyên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Thủy, Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Hạnh, Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc, Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Nguyệt and others. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Bảo also invited the elder nuns at Viên Chiếu Monastery, such as Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Đức, and Ven. Bhikkhunī Hạnh Huệ.

Although there were many difficulties, Ven Như Bảo did not hesitate when she proposed to Ven. Bhikkhunī Minh Liên and Ven. Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương, the Abbess of the Viên Thông Pagoda (Houston, Texas) to organize the two-week autumn retreat course from October 3rd -17, October 2019. In this retreat, the Huệ Lâm Organizing Committee cleverly combined with the nuns of Viên Thông Pagoda to give us a complete successful retreat, from meals to resting places. We learned and practiced in the solemn, peaceful and happy scene under the immense love of the senior nuns.

Thanks to the activities, the study of the Vinaya and the Dharma quizzes and discussions, we have the opportunity to develop talents such as understanding and reviewing knowledge about the Dharma. And during the retreats, we reviewed the memories, aspirations and practices of our nun predecessors and teachers, who took the vow to come to this samsaric realm to help people with the spirit of self-discipline and enlightenment. The predecessors not only helped themselves liberate, but also left books, literature and poems to help us reach the high level of Buddhism and to know how to practice applications in everyday life.

These great nuns kindly direct our body, speech, and mind must to be pure for the sake of many. Thanks to their energy and guidance, we overcome the obstacles. Nowadays, communities of nuns have contributed in the following ways:

- o Nuns have the conditions and have found places to display and actualize their talents and abilities.

- o The nuns in the organizing committee faced many financial difficulties but still maintained the establishment of a retreat in order to gather many nuns, although the number in each retreat is still limited.

- o According to each circumstance, nuns are still scattered in many corners, but if there is an opportunity, we will gather to meet together each year.

In general, the nuns in the USA and overseas are progressing well with a stronger path than in past decades. We are so happy that we can enjoy the "nunhood," the Dharma lessons, conversations and meditation.

Even during the coronavirus season, when we can't meet physically, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Bảo organized meetings online to teach the Majjhima Nikāya. She also invited the venerable learned monks and nuns to help us answer questions and discuss so that we can better understand. We have had meaningful and happy sessions that help dispel the fears of this worldwide coronavirus epidemic.

We have been cultivating and practicing right in our own places. In the monasteries and pagodas, with mindfulness we have learned the teachings the Blessed One transmitted 2,600

ago. Although the environment right now is agitated, we are tranquil as we reflect on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and the blessings of Dharma water from the Majjhima Nikāya.

Such practices have planted the seeds of compassion, wisdom and purity, so our bodhicitta becomes stronger in helping human beings out of suffering and the cycle of birth and death. Moreover, we have more solid powers for self-enlightenment and other-enlightenment.

Today, nuns have made important contribution in helping the disadvantaged, those who are still suffering on the path of cultivation. They skillfully teach and help the younger generation to know the direction of Dharma.

We respectfully send this simple poem to our great nuns to express our deep thanks in this retreat season: Old roots are the elder nuns,

NUNS TODAY

Nuns today are brilliant,
Living in a foreign land is bright,
Radiant with the Sakyamuni lineage,
Propagating the Dharma, east-west everywhere.

Đức Viên, Diệu Quang, and A Di Đà,
An Lạc, Dược Sư, and Vạn Hạnh,
Lead us to a peaceful life.
In Texas there are nun communities,
Majesty Hương Nghiêm, Viên Thông Temples,
Recently, there was a nun retreat,
At Viên Thông Pagoda.
Two-week short-term retreat,
But it nourishes our body and mind,
So happy with the Eightfold Path,
In the effort of spiritual peace.
In Boston, there is the Huê Lâm nun group,
Helps us grow the Bodhi mind,
The fall retreat is full of grace,
Repaying the debt to masters and parents.
Venerable Như Chánh is the Abbess,
Venerable Như Bảo is compassionate,
Helping the nuns for many years,
Everywhere in the United States,
We offer gratitude to the Buddha.
Recently there are online classes,
Nuns would like to contribute tomorrow,
Efforts to diligently learn the Majjhima Nikāya,
Apply Dharma with gratitude to the Buddha.

Especially, we have Venerable Giới Hương,
Assists everyone in nurturing compassion,
To save the fragments of life, full of suffering
She still helps fellow countrymen.

She studied well and has talent,
Buddhist studies she achieved many degrees:
Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate
Eagerly shares experiences with young nuns.

She is still young and happy,
Dharma propagation is not regressive
Not only the work at Hương Sen, Perris City
Her hands still reach everywhere.

Pháp Nhãn Temple, Texas, April 15 2020
With metta,
Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Hạnh Minh
hanhminh122@gmail.com

1.18. THE HOSPITAL EXPERIENCE OF A NUN CHAPLAIN

A hospital chaplain usually trains in the Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at a hospital. This is training for the spiritual caregiver -religious ministry -of all faiths support staff members and patients regarding spiritual aspects of life. Hospital chaplains are trained to support faith systems across beliefs and traditions.

In the past, religious ritual was only performed in a church or temple. But now, services of religion are bringing to hospitals social and spiritual support. The Hospital Chapel is designed for doctors, nurses, staff members, patients, and their family so they can practice their faith inside the hospital.

We had chances to visit and volunteer for some hospitals in California, such as the Methodist Hospital(Arcadia)⁴⁰, Children's Hospital(Los Angeles)⁴¹, St. Joseph's Hospital (Orange Center)⁴², PIH Health Whittier Hospital (Whittier)⁴³, and West Covina Medical Center(West Covina)⁴⁴, and so forth.

In these hospitals, the chaplaincy office is specially designed for chaplains. We met and worked with these hospital chaplains. Some of them shared their experiences while working in these hospitals. These chaplains come from different faiths, such as Buddhism, Christianity and Catholicism. They sometimes work as individuals and sometimes as teams with no distinction or conflict with each other. The chaplain will talk with patients if these patients need them to counsel or perform blessing services.

Since chaplains and patients have different faiths, in the chapels different faith symbols are used while praying and meditating. The chaplain may go to the emergency room, recovery room, or praying room to perform religious services for patients. Chaplains may be invited to the praying room if the patient passes away. They will come with family members of the deceased patient to perform religious rituals. At the same time, chaplains also counsel family members. The chaplain is an image of a spiritual caregiver in hospital, a reification ritual of religious response to the demands of patients.

The hospital chaplain, a spiritual caregiver, performs a ritual reification to respond to social needs, especially in the human healthcare aspect. Many people do not go to church or temple to perform the ritual, but that doesn't mean they don't like the church, temple or ritual. This is one of the reasons for the demand for chaplains. The importance is how ritual and ritual reification can benefit people. The place or location is not too important. Wherever ritual performance brings out the meaningful and is a helpful service for people, it is church or temple. This is also the main goal of ritual.

One time, I had a call for a volunteer. I got in an ambulance to transfer a female patient to a different hospital because of her incision. She was in a lot of pain and writhing. When she saw me in the form of a Vietnamese Buddhist nun, she expressed the need to not be alone. I moved closer to take her hand and told her that she would be transferred to the other hospital, where there are better conditions and skillful doctors. She would be treated there and recover sooner.

⁴⁰ <https://www.methodisthospital.org/>

⁴¹ <https://www.chla.org/>

⁴² <https://www.providence.org/locations/st-joseph-hospital-orange/wound-care-center#laid=2267>

⁴³ <https://www.pihhealth.org/patients-visitors/spiritual-care/-clinical-pastoral-education/>

⁴⁴ <https://www.hasc.org/member-hospital/west-covina-medical-center>

She nodded and continued moaning softly. I stood aside to let the medical staff doing their duty. Then, I and the medical staff sat at the back seat of the ambulance with the patient. The patient felt a sharp pain in her stomach and said she was hurting so badly. I took her hand and said softly that she could try to recite the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva and this Bodhisattva will bless her well. I recited Namó Quan Yin Bodhisattva together with her during the trip.

When we arrived hospital, I did not forget to remind her to recite the name of the Bodhisattva for blessings. After that, I wished for her to get well soon and then we left. When this patient recovered, she visited my temple (LiênHương Temple, La Puente, California) and thanked me for helping her. She shared with me that she seemed to receive magical powers from the Guan Yin Bodhisattva, who had blessed her for when she was in surgery. Even the doctors said that she was very fortunate to have transferred at the right time and to have had a very successful surgery. From that day onward, she always recites the name of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Her belief and gratitude to the Bodhisattva is now firm. I am very happy about that. I think that, in addition to my daily practices in the temple, I need to engage more in social aspects, especially in the field of hospital chaplaincy. To me, when in this position, I can help those who need a strong faith and spirituality to overcome their physical pain.

Through the volunteer experience above, I think that when seriously ill, sick people cannot go to the temple to pray. These patients really need spiritual care. Buddhist caregiving is still lacking, so it is important to have Buddhist figures or Buddhist monastics who are willing to care for the spiritual needs of patients so that they can quickly recover from their suffering.

Besides attending to patients, we need to research our Buddhist doctrine so that we can share with patients in the field of interfaith chaplaincy and harmonize with other chaplains. As interfaith chaplains working with different faiths, we are trained to respect other's beliefs. We learn and share the best of religions and support each other to help people in need.

In a conversation with another chaplain, a Christian chaplain points out that in his belief, the "sheep metaphor" or "shepherd" in the pasture, the chaplain, is used to depict the image of chaplaincy care. The evidence is shown in the Bible, such as "Jesus is shepherd" who takes care of the sheep, or statements such as "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep."⁴⁵ This myth reflects the image of the chaplaincy care of Jesus who had much love for the people. The Christian chaplain asked me whether there is a similar image in Buddhism? In this situation, we need to find out which scriptures describes the Buddha as a chaplain and how the Buddha cared for people and community.

There are many people, including Buddhists, who also trust the "myth buster." Thus, "sheep" is just the metaphor to describe the chaplaincy care in the Christian tradition. So, is there any chaplaincy authority in Buddhism? The answer can be found in the section, "Buddha as a Pastoral Caregiver" in *A Handbook on Buddhist Pastoral Care Part I*,⁴⁶ which is written by Dr. Pamela Ayo Yetunde.

In this handbook, Dr. Yetunde points out that in the Pāli Canon there are many sutras that instruct one to work as a pastoral caregiver. During the Buddha's time, cows lived in pastures and the people who took care of cows were called cowherds. The Buddha and his disciples are also called cowherds. However, the cowherd is just a metaphor. The Buddha and his disciples are indeed not cowherds. They are the spiritual guides, counselors and teachers. This metaphor is described fully in the Shorter Discourse on the Cowherd Sutra of the Middle Length Discourses

⁴⁵ KJV/NIV Parallel: New Testament in Greek and English (Zondervan, 1990). John 10: 14-15 (NIV). P. 302.

⁴⁶ Dharma Care "A handbook on Buddhist pastoral Care part one" by Pamela Ayo Yetunde, M.A. Chaplain and Pastoral Counselor, [trans9.https://dharma-care.com/dharma-care-handbook](https://dharma-care.com/dharma-care-handbook).

of the Buddha (MN 34 Cula Gopalaka Sutta). In this sutra, the Buddha makes known to us eleven techniques to take care of the cow. Through these eleven techniques, the Buddha wants to advise monastics to take care of other people and the community.

Furthermore, the practice of pastoral care reminds me of the teaching of the Four Sublime States, the Brahmavihāras. We can apply this teaching to our chaplain career. The Brahmavihāras consists of:

1. Mettā: loving-kindness or benevolence
2. Karuṇā: compassion
3. Muditā: empathetic joy
4. Upekkha: equanimity

Personally, I think that if pastoral caregivers want to succeed when serving patients, they should widely practice these Brahmavihāra factors.

There are many fields in society that need both a chaplain and Buddhist engagement. That is why I, along with many friends, who practice with the teachings of the Brahmavihāras, engage in working outside the temple to serve people and society, such as in the army, hospitals, prisons, and schools. As monastics, learning and working in a hospital as a chaplain is a challenge, because we need to skillfully apply the teaching of the Buddha to care for people so that they don't think that we are proselytizing. This is a process of bringing the benefit of the Buddha's teaching and the image of Buddhists to engage in resolving the suffering of people, especially in the hospital.

Liên Hương Temple, California, April 21, 2020

Respectfully,

Bhikkhunī Phước Nhãn

vyle6868@gmail.com

1.19. NUNS IN THE MODERN TIME

A few points about nuns in society today, according to the suggested topic of Venerable Bhikkhunī Giói Hương, is beyond the reach of thinking because we know that no one understands us as well as ourselves. The nun sangha has different visions, perceptions and living environments. Only the ideals of renunciation, preaching and enlightenment are still common to the Buddha's disciples. From the time of the Buddha, we know that many bhikkhunīs attained liberation which sets a good example that proves enlightenment is possible for everyone regardless of fate, gender, class and skin color.

Buddhist history tells us that with repeated requests by Venerable Ananda, the Buddha's devoted attendant, and the devoted aspiration of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the Buddha finally accepted his aunt and the royal ladies to be ordained. The nuns' community was established and the sangha consisted of the seven disciples group.⁴⁷ However later, according to the knowledge and tradition of practicing the Vinaya, the nuns in each tradition are different. In Theravāda Buddhism today, some congregations have not accepted the establishment of bhikkhunīs who can stand in the ranks of monks.

The present society is no longer a slow-moving flat. The operation of life is transforming in many different directions very quickly. People are not outside that whirlwind, and Buddhist monks and nuns are no exception. To conform and develop together in an ongoing reality process. We cannot fall back into a state of being abandoned; it is the necessary thought of all people living, especially those who do social work and leadership, often in a small organization, typically like a family or monastery. However, the idea to integrate without dissolving is something to keep in mind. Dissolution is no longer yourself; if you do not integrate, it is not clear where you are. Here, we want to ask, how can nuns go from traditional to developing in the most appropriate way?

In Vietnamese Buddhist society, it can be said that the harmony of life between monks and nuns together in a temple is a model to be learned from Buddhist countries. Fifty years ago, the nun congregation had many excellent nuns, achievements in education, social organization, and enlightenment, which were recorded in the history books. But this is rare now, and no nun has any idea that goes against the tradition of Buddhism, the spirit of the common life of the sangha. Many senior bhikkhunīs have trained quite a number of postulants who gained professional accomplishments and have been active participants in the overall development of the sangha and Buddhism. This is the point that nuns need to pay attention to and apply in the current living situation.

It can be said that within the past twenty years, from the beginning of the twenty-first century, many ideological ideas appeared, such as existential theories and social equality between men and women. Beginners heard it, thought it was new and in line with the modern times. There are many opinions, pros and cons and tacit support, but in retrospect, they have gone too far with the tradition and the Buddha's teachings. Here are a few theses:

- The thought of canceling the Eight Rules⁴⁸ of the Bhikkhunī
- Thought not dependent on the Sangha
- Thought to establish separate assemblies.

⁴⁷ The seven disciples group: bhikkhu, bhikkhunī, sikkhamānā, śikṣamāṇā samanera, samaneri, upāsaka or upāsikā.

⁴⁸ The Eight Respectful Books of the Discipline (S. Guradharmā ; P. Aṭṭha Garudhammā), Vol V, An English Translation of Disciplines. Cullavagga, Chapter X; Sacred Books of East, XX, pp.354-355.

Thankfully, Vietnamese nuns have recognized that this reform is mismatched with the ideology of Vietnamese Buddhist society. And there are also many opinions of the Venerable Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis showing that these ideas will destroy the essence of Buddhism and the original teachings. These teachings have shed light on the minds of the ordained for many generations.

Precepts and disciplines are only devised by the Buddha. Precepts can be changed if they are no longer relevant to the actual situation, but to this day, no one has yet shown which precepts are not significantly suitable. In today's world, there are words and terms that do not fit the modern style. The Buddha is the great enlightened master who contemplated the various capacities of all sentient beings, depending on their conditions and karma to create the precepts. He encouraged his disciples to have an enhanced ethical basis for developing qualities. The Vinaya is the bond, the harmony of the Sangha, and the measure of the moral values of liberation.

There are many things nuns cannot do alone, and the support of the Sangha is required. The thought of forming one's own congregation, an individual who develops independently or an individual who has to develop himself or herself is a good idea. But, if there is a combination, a synergy can develop that is stronger and can achieve greater goals. Very few individuals achieve great things on their own; all must have assistance and support from others. An example is Maudgalyāyana, who had supernatural powers but could not save his mother from hell by himself. It is a lesson for us to see the strength of the collective, especially the Sangha, which has successfully existed since the Buddha's time.

From the above ideas, we see that the nuns in this present life are faced with many difficult problems. Let the mind preserve the good qualities, which the Blessed One invented; let's take it as a basic foundation for the realization of the path of liberation and service to sentient beings. It is better than focusing on unwarranted useless thoughts which take up our valuable time.

What we bring to society is our dedication, investment and commitment - not just words, theory or debate which can sometimes create invisible barriers or obstacles.

Since ancient times, nuns accomplished everything on the path of teaching. Today, they are still making important achievements. They follow the teachings of the Buddha rather than follow a transient trend that goes against the enhanced value deep in the teachings of the Buddha.

This world is respectable and offers praise for the senior nuns who have contributed to civilization and the happiness of people everywhere; those beautiful values have not been lost. These are the things we need to think about promoting the Dharma in the modern world.

Bảo Sơn Temple, April 26, 2020

Warm Regard,

Thích Huệ Giáo

chuabaoson@gmail.com

1.20. RESPECTFULLY BOWING DOWN TO THE NUN PATRIARCH MAHĀPAJĀPATĪ GOTAMĪ

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī is beautiful,
Her temperament endearing, gentleness, decency,
Everyone regards her highly,
The holy virtue, immense with dignity.

After Prince Siddhartha was born
Awakening all species and the royal palace,
Maya Queen so excited,
But after seven days, she renounced the world.

Stepmother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī raised the Prince
Nurtured and cherished since childhood days.
Although there are many people
Taking care of the Prince happily and peacefully.

Stepmother still felt insecure
She took care of him by herself,
So, everyone in the palace
Respected Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.

Although place the role of
Majesty Queen Empress
King Suddhodhana is very loving to Gotamī
Thanks to her, the prince Siddhartha matured with care.

After the queen died,
The King chose one
It was Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī,
Newly revered, miraculous alternative.

Taking care of Siddhartha
Nurturing to grow up,
After the Crown Prince married,
Realizing impermanent suffering.

He was tired of worldly desires,
He wanted to find a way to save all beings,
Escape from samsara.
The Gautama went beyond the palace wall
Six years an ascetic in the jungle.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī earnestly remembers Him,
Merciful Prince begging alms everywhere,
Even if she loves Him in her heart,
Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī prayed for him with all her heart.

After the Prince became the Shakyamuni Buddha,
Visit back to Kapilavastu palace,
His former homeland,
Delivers lectures to transform many princes
Ananda, Anuradha, Rāhula,
All renounces under him.

Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī sees it
Immediately arising her positive awakening roots in the heart,
She knelt at front of the Buddha,
Begging to join the Sangha,
The first time, then the third time,
The request is not accepted by Sakyamuni.

Although five hundred noblewomen,
Having shaved hair to ready ordination,
Venerable Ananda mercy,
Beg the Buddha to help the nuns.

Finally the Buddha agreed,
Recommended keeping the Eight Rules of Bhikkhunī,
Even with Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī,
Also very reverently maintained.

Pháp Nhãn Pagoda, July 21, 2020

With metta,

Thích Nữ Hạnh Minh

hanhminh122@gmail.com

1.21. PRACTICING DHARMA IS A GOOD METHOD TO RECHARGE SPIRITUAL ENERGY

With admiration for the virtues and aspirations of the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī and the elder nuns - the generations who have worked hard to cultivate and dedicate to the Dharma, Buddhists and the nation, to enlighten and raise the status of nuns. “The nuns are grateful to all of the nun predecessors. They always cultivate together to improve their morality, especially in their efforts to train the younger nuns to succeed and continue the mission of propagating the Dharma. Serving beings is making offerings to Buddhas and “Nourishing the mind to honor the pagoda.”

Particularly for my part, as a bhikkhunī who is still studying in California, USA, I have the opportunity to guide some Buddhist followers at Huong Sen Pagoda and others in many regions. Today, I respectfully offer you a little bit of my cultivation experience that benefits both body and mind; especially, as we live in a modern scientific society, where we face natural disasters, pandemics and much pressure and stress.

My topic: “Practicing Dharma Is a Good Way to Recharge Spiritual Energy”

How to Recharge:

Dear Venerable Bhikkhunīs, Reverends and Nuns: Please follow the guidebook, *The Methods to Balance Body & Practice* (Pháp thông thân, Bảo bình khí, and Phương pháp xả thiền). Yoga movements, falun kungfu or appropriate exercises build a healthy light body and mind.

For best results, please energize by focusing on the best, things such as positive energy of the universe, heaven, earth, wisdom of the Buddhas, the bright halo of the Buddhas, the mind force of the Buddhas, the indestructible body of the Buddhas, the conducts, the virtues of the Buddhas, the essence of the Buddhas, the essence of the universe, the essence of heaven and the earth - whatever is the best, load into it. For example: “I am loading the compassionate wisdom of the Buddhas here.” “Here” means *the seven chakras, or from the top of the head (acupuncture point) down through the whole body.*” Body and mind will be created from what you load. When we experience it, we will feel and touch wonderful things.

This method is very effective for *cultivation*, especially clearing anything negative from our body and mind. The positive energy from Dharma practice cleans out the bad virus and body and mind are perfectly renovated. Positive energy spreads throughout the body, out to the surroundings and the universe. If we all charge the positive energy, this universe will be full of fresh source.

The law of gravity - the energy field - the electromagnetic field in the universe is real. We live in harmony with the universe every day. For example, telephone, messages, radio, internet - all take action thanks to the law of attraction and electromagnetism. These laws are scientific, with the cosmic magnetic field and the human being being like cycles, interactions.

So, whatever we load, that lives inside us.

Cultivate three words: *truth - goodness - patience*

Practicing and recharging well will give us good health and a peaceful mind. This method is well suited for a progressive and scientific society like the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Remember the grace from master,
Quickly cultivate the mind to fix ourselves,
Turn to reflect to be clear,
Meditate, reciting Buddha's names, teaching sutras for people,

Be diligent, strong and not lazy,
Three robes, a bowl without leaving,
Heaven and earth roar around us,
I am determined to overcome the return.

I wish all of the Most Venerable Reverend Bhikkhunīs and Nuns to have a peaceful mind and body where wisdom often shines full of good energy, and spreads the energy of loving-compassion to all sentient beings in this universe.

Huong Sen Temple, April 26, 2020
Yours respectfully,
Practitioner: **Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Diệu An**

Please read the book:

Methods to Balance Body & Practice Meditation (Pháp thông thân, Bảo bình khí, and Phương pháp xả thiền), Thích Nữ Diệu An, Hồng Đức Publishing House 2018.

Books on the website: <http://www.huongsentemple.com/index.php/kinh-sach/kinh-sach-phat-cu/5060-sach-thong-than>

www.tuviennhulai.net

Telephone: +16692352456; +84869967819 (Viber-Zalo)

dieuan2009@gmail.com

1.22. DHARMA LINEAGE IN THE HISTORY OF THE NUN SANGHA

On Friday, June 20, 2014 at the International Buddhist Institute in Los Angeles, at the request of the Sangha, Bhikkhunī Giói Hương, Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Ý and Bhikkhunī Đức Huy presented to the retreat the topic: “Dhamma Lineage in the History of the Nun Sangha from the Buddha’s Time to the Present.”

Dharma attainment bears various meanings, such as the enlightenment of pure vision, awakening, being free from views and precept attachments and no doubts as to the Three Jewels. No longer do we have subtle ignorance or defilements; we immediately become Buddhas and Patriarchs and receive the inheritance Dharma robe. However, within the scope of this article, Dharma also means the religious levels of the venerable nuns who have awareness and understanding of the Dharma. The awakened nuns wholeheartedly with the monk sangha share Dharma for the benefit of many. Without awakening, the service would be limited and entangled. Therefore, the image of the religious nuns in this article may be the nun saints who have attained arahantship, the female Bodhisattvas who have obtained Dharma visions or the Venerable Bhikkhunīs who have been enlightened and wholeheartedly with devotion serve Buddhism.



Lecture on Nuns at the Summer Retreat,
International Buddhist Institute in 2014, North Hills, California

From these events, the Nun Patriarch Mahāpājāpati Gotamī is considered to be the first nun to have attained arahantship. The five hundred bhikkhunīs also transformed their defilements to be pure, overcame samsara and finally attained arahantship. In fact, the first Nun Patriarch

Mahāpajāpati Gotamī obtained the first saintly position of sotāpatti when she just listened to the Buddha preaching the Dhamma-Pāla-Jātaka in Kapilavastu. After being ordained, she attained arahantship and uttered her awakening verse:

*Realized the sufferings
To let go of the deep craving
The Eightfold Noble Path
The extinction - the enlightenment
To end a birth-death cycle
No more the incarnation.*

After the initiation of the nuns' community, they escaped the slavery of the ordinary female under Indian society's logo, "respect men more than women. Ever since, the glorious Buddhist history of nuns continues to this day.

The image of nuns attaining enlightenment under the Buddha's tutelage: Bhikkhunī Giói Hương expressed that in the Buddha's time, at first only the Buddha and monks practiced and shared the Dharma. Then, thanks to the request of Venerable Ananda, the Buddha agreed for his aunt, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī (who took care of him when he was born after Queen Maya died), the Yaśodharā princess and 500 Sakya noble ladies to be nuns who could join his Sangha with the condition that they keep the Eight Respectful Disciplines (S. *guradharmā*; P. *aṭṭha garudhammā*) and the nun sangha was established and continues to this day.

The Gotamī Suttā (Anguttara Nikāya) and Mahāpajāpati Gotamī Suttā (Dīgha Nikāya) depicted that Mahāpajāpati Gotamī and 500 Sakya royal ladies sacrificed all the richness and glory of the noble ones to put on the simple yellow robes. They endured many obstacles, including walking barefoot for 200 kilometers from the capital of Kapilavastu to Vaishali to sincerely beg the Buddha to allow them to abandon the family life, live a homeless life according to Dhamma and the law of the Tathāgata.

The Buddha recognized the ability of women to attain enlightenment. He agreed with with the condition that they must uphold the Eight Respectful Disciplines (S. *Guradharmā*; P. *Aṭṭha Garudhammā*). After that, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī and 500 female Sakya lineages were ordained as bhikkhunīs. They established the nun sangha, lived virtuous lives and were as liberated. Princess Yasodharā also joined the nun sangha and attained arahantship with many supernatural powers.

From these events, the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpati Gotamī is considered to be the first nun to have attained arahantship. The five hundred bhikkhunīs who accompanied her also transformed all of their defilements, stepped out of samsara and finally attained arahantship. In fact, the first Nun Patriarch, Mahāpajāpati Gotamī, obtained the first saintly position of sotāpatti when she listened to the Buddha preaching the Dhamma-Pāla-Jātaka in Kapilavastu. After being ordained, the first Nun Patriarch attained arahantship and spoke this awakening verse:

REALIZED THE SUFFERINGS

*Let go of deep craving
The Eightfold Noble Path
Extinction - Enlightenment
To end a birth - death cycle
No more incarnation.*

After the initiation of the nun's community, they escaped the slavery of the ordinary female under Indian society's logo: "Respect men more than women," Ever since, the glorious Buddhist history of nuns has continued to this day.

Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Ý presented the image of nuns attaining enlightenment in the Theravāda tradition: According to the Therīgāthā, there are seventy-five nun arahants among which, there are typically three famous figures:

Venerable Bhikkhunī Sukha: During the Buddha's lifetime, Sukha (the wise) was born into a noble family in Rajagada. When she reached the age of majority, she developed her bodhi mind and became a devout practitioner. Later, upon hearing Venerable Bhikkhunī Dharmadīna's sermon, she became her disciple and practiced meditation to attain the knowledge of Dhamma (*dhammaveda*) and knowledge of the goal (*atthaveda*) and become a good teacher. Bhikkhunī Sukha preached to all the nuns. All listeners sat completely silent, with fervent devotion, deepening their faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. At that time, a tree deity standing at the back of the yard came to hear the Dharma and praised Bhikkhunī Sukha's wonderful sermon with the following verse:

*We are thinking of the wise
Drinking of sweet water
Water source is pure
No obstacle in the way
As a passenger on the road
Receives the blessing rain.*

When listening to the verse of the tree deity, people were excited and often came to listen to Sukha's sermons. Sometime later, before entering Nirvāna, Venerable Bhikkhunī Sukha left the following verse:

*To respectful Sukha
A child of the light
No more greed but concentration
Thanks to the Dharma light
This is the final life
After seeing the defilement ghosts.*

Thus, we see Venerable Bhikkhunī Sukha, thanks to the practice of the knowledge of dharma and knowledge of the goal, she attained arahantship. Owing to the wisdom light emanating from the practice of meditation, she used the sword of wisdom to break all afflictions, exclude all ignorances and became arahant and a distinguished preacher (*shaman*). As such, a female can achieve and become an emissary of the Tathāgata.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Abhirupa Nanda: In the Buddha's time, Abhirupa Nanda was born in Kapilavatthu, the daughter of King Khemala, the Sakyamuni family. Because she was so beautiful, the name Abhirupa Nanda (beautiful Nanda) was given to her. After being ordained, Abhirupa Nanda was still proud of her beauty and feared the Blessed One's rebuke, hence she often avoided him. The Blessed One knew that Nanda was skilled in practice, but not yet fruitful because she was still proud and attached to her beauty. Thus, the Blessed One told the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī to gather all of the bhikkhunīs to listen to his lecture. Bhikkhunī Nanda asked another nun who to take her place, but the Blessed One did not accept and forced her to attend. At that time, the Buddha used the superpower to appear as a beautiful woman, more beautiful than Bhikkhunī Abhirupa Nanda. Bhikkhunī Abhirupa Nanda was very touched, awakened and emitted an awakening light to eradicate the craving of beauty. The Buddha immediately recited the following verse:

*Bhikkhunī Nanda looks there
 The body is aggregated
 Lots of sickness and dirt
 The smell is bad
 Reflect your mind
 Awakening the impure nature
 Attained the pointedness
 Skill at meditation
 Practicing the formless
 Let go the arrogance
 With this awakening
 You live in peace.*

After listening to the Blessed One's verse, Bhikkhunī Abhirupa Nanda realized the impermanent Dharma that this body only contains impure and sickening things. Yet for a long time, she kept greedily grasping her body and generated pride and complacency. Because of that passion, she could not attain full enlightenment. Now, thanks to the teaching of the Blessed One, she had knowledge arise and used that sword of wisdom to dissolve the craving for beauty so that she attained arahantship.

Bhikkhunī Sumana: In the Buddha's time, Princess Sumana, the sister of King Kosala, was born in Savatthi. After listening to the Buddha's sermon, she attained the level of anāgāmi and asked to become a nun, despite her old age. She practiced sincerely and the Buddha saw her maturity in wisdom. He composed the following verse:

*Oh! An old Bhikkhunī!
 Please rest in peace
 Do it by yourself
 Greed is down
 The cold eye is extinct.*

After listening to it, she thoroughly understood the meaning and attained arahantship. Thus, we see that since the Buddha allowed women to join the Sakyamuni lineage, the nuns also made efforts to practice diligently and transform disturbing negative emotions to attain sainthood, just as the monks.

The image of nuns attaining enlightenment in the Mahāyāna tradition: **Bhikkhunī Đúc Huy** expressed that in the Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra, there is a female bodhisattva who attained enlightenment. She is the reincarnation of the Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, originally an ancient Buddha. Because of being less blessed and with thick karma, human beings fall into saṃsāra. The bodhisattva took a vow to return as a female bodhisattva abiding in saṃsāra for the sake of many, especially the stubborn ones. The bodhisattva was diligent, subdued the disturbing emotions and tirelessly educated sentient beings.

In the Avataṃsaka Sūtra (Mahāvaiṇavya Buddhāvataṃsaka Sūtra), the Buddha praised: "Owing to human beings, bodhisattvas have generated great compassion. Due to great compassion, bodhisattvas developed the bodhi mind (*bodhicitta*). Because of the bodhi mind, bodhisattvas became the enlightenment." The image of the **Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva** is a laywoman, wearing a gem bead string, holding a blue lotus flower; her mind is like a shining mirror, is pure as still water. Her vow is for diligence in cultivating bodhisattva conduct. She is a shining example of a female bodhisattva for the nuns to emulate.

Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is an ancient Buddha whose title is the "Right Dharma Tathāgata." Out of compassion for sentient beings, he made his vow to practice compassion to

save sentient beings. According to the Lotus Sūtra, in the “Popular Door Chapter,” Shakyamuni Buddha clearly explained that Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva cultivated the hearing nature method, listening to the cries for help. He responded to save them, thus the Buddha gave him the title of Guan Yin Bodhisattva. Because beings also create karma and still drift in many realms of birth and death, he manifested thirty-two figures to save sentient beings from danger. He is called Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Because he incarnates as a female Bodhisattva with compassion for sentient beings like a mother loves her son, she is called the **Goddess of Mercy**.

The image of the two female bodhisattvas of Mahāsthāmaprāpta and Avalokiteśvara and their great vows for beings proved that the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha can erase the bias of “respect men more than women” in the long traditional Indian history. Through their vows, they have shown us that both compassion and wisdom are wings needed for Buddhists to come to liberation, and an example for nuns to study and practice. Nuns attaining enlightenment in the Mahāyāna tradition are those fully willing to grant happiness and release suffering for beings.

The image of nuns in the eleventh century to the present: Bhikkhunī Giói Hương presented that the Most Venerable Thanh Từ in his book, *History of Vietnamese Zen Masters*, wrote that Venerable **Bhikkhunī Diệu Nhân** belonged to the eleventh-twelfth century. She was Princess Ngọc Kiều in the Lê dynasty. After the death of her husband, she ordained as a Buddhist nun. Due to a strong belief in the precepts, meditation, samādhi and a thorough comprehension of the Mahāyāna teachings, she became a famous teacher and an outstanding religious nun among the Vietnamese Nun Sangha. She left many Zen verses.

For example, someone asked her: “What do you call sitting still?”

She replied: “In the past, I didn’t go. In the present, I don’t go.

Question: “Why is it called non-verbal?”

Answer: “Buddhism is inherently wordless.”

These verses were composed by Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Nhân who handed them down as she passed away. It proved that she had attained enlightenment at the ultimate destination state:

*Birth, old age, sickness and death
Long ago it has been a rule
Want to get rid of it
More open more ties
In the dark, the Buddha is found
Under ignorance, meditation is sought
No need to find the Buddha or meditation
Close mouth no talk.*

Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Nhân passed away at the age of seventy-one She belonged to the seventeenth generation of the Zen Bhikkhuni Lineage. She is the only nun who achieved instant patriarch Zen enlightenment. In 1299, King Trần Nhân Tông renamed Hương Vân Đại Đầu Đà, founded Trúc Lâm Yên Tử Zen Lineage and at that time Queen Khâm Từ, wife of King Trần Nhân Tông, also became a nun.

In the book, *Am Mây Ngủ (Sleeping Clouds on the Hut Peak)* of Zen master Thích Nhất Hạnh, he narrated that in the fourteenth century to maintain the political relationship between Champa (Chiêm) and Vietnam, King Trần Nhân Tông ordered his daughter, Princess Huyền Trân to marry Chiêm King so both countries to combine to protect themselves against the foreign invaders from Nguyên Army. One year after King Chiêm’s death, the princess returned to Vietnam. and became **Bhikkhunī Hương Đàm**. She often meditated on Yên Tử mountain where there are beautiful clouds, hence the title, *Sleeping Clouds on the Hut Peak (Am Mây Ngủ)*. The hermitage at the top of the mountain is windy and covered in clouds.

Bhikkhunī Từ Quán: In the fourteenth century, under the Trần dynasty, Bhikkhunī Từ Quán lived in Thanh Lương Hut, the only nun who could receive the grant title of “Tuệ Thông Great Female Master” by King Trần Nghệ Tông. She donated her body to feed the hungry tigers, but her compassion was so affecting that the tigers kneeled around her without eating her flesh. Sometime later, she passed away and left a will: “After I die, you should divide my bones for grinding as a medicine to cure patients. Because life is miserable, I vow to save beings from suffering.” It is clear that her bones saved many patients’ lives.

In the following centuries, there has been no historical document about nuns attaining enlightenment. Particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we have many high-ranking nuns:

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh: She became a nun at the beautiful youthful age of twenty-two. She strictly observed the precepts and often taught Vinaya for nuns in the west, central and southern regions of Vietnam. She is an exemplary nun. She receives hundreds of nun disciples, and often opened the summer retreat for nuns from any corner. She appealed to all nuns in the western, central and southern regions to be a unified Nun Sangha. She often played the leading Venerable Bhikkhunī role in sixteen ordination ceremonies, established over ten monasteries, opened nonprofit organizations, charity activities, a Bodhi school and medicine stores. She also has a great contribution in terms of culture, translation and authorship, such as twelve works, seven translations, nine poems. She is eighty-nine years old in the world and sixty-seven years old in Buddhism. A very meditative poem written by the most Venerable Như Thanh:

*The former predestined up to now,
Nun Sangha has the deep root to develop
Admire the pleasure at meditation
Illuminate the holy mind by transmission
Without hard walk from East to West,
The awakening destination at the ignorance river
Five colors of good clouds follow the vow,
Pure Nirvāna at the heart of meditation.*

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Không: She ordained at age twenty-seven and established the nunneries of Diệu Đức and Hồng Ân to help the ordained nuns have the proper places to practice. Ven. Diệu Không also restored many different temples, such as Kiều Đàm in Sài Gòn, along with building many orphanages and engaging in social charity. Ven. Diệu Không belongs to the noble lineage, possesses the talent and has profound knowledge in Buddhism. She is dedicated in the fields of culture, education, translation, authorship, poetry and has collaborated with many Buddhist magazines. Many of her translated works are quite valuable, such as, the Mahā-Prajñā-Paramitā Sāstra, the Maitreya Buddha-to-be Sūtra, Vijñaptimātratāsīdhi-Sāstra, Āṅkāvatāra Sūtra, Yogācāra-Bhūmi Sāstra, Present the Truth Sāstra, and the Mūla Madhyamakakārikā.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Không represents the great spirit of the nun community in Huế. In 1997, she passed away at the age of ninety-three with fifty-three-years in Buddhism. There are two verses in her memory book that spoke of her virtues:

*Admired the predecessor’s conduct and compassion for life and religion at the graceful days at Hồng Ân Temple.
Contemplated the mind of sentient beings, to release suffering, transform defilement, early or later for the sake of many.*

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu: She ordained at age sixteen and worked as the director of an orphanage in Saigon. In 1984, after settling in the United States, she founded Đức Viên Pagoda, as well as a school to teach the Vietnamese language in San Jose, California. She organized projects to sell vegetarian meals weekly and collected cans, bottles and paper to earn the funds to build the temple. She always showed her manners of humility, peace, patience, and dedication as a kind mother caring for children in the mission of serving sentient beings. She accomplished many Buddhist works, always reciting the Buddha's name while walking, standing and sitting. In 1999, she passed away, living for sixty-seven years in life and forty-eight years in Buddhism. According to the yearbook of the Đức Viên Pagoda, she attained the inconceivable liberation powers and the dharma-kaya just as it is described the Pāramitā Reciting the Buddha's Name Sūtra. Because of her compassionate and virtuous practice while she was alive, now after death her relics are like beautiful pearl chains.

*Who says that women cannot bring the light of Three Gems
And the wonderful Dharma to human beings?*

She is a good example for every nun in the United States continuing their career to lead the future of Buddhism.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm: At age twenty-nine, she ordained under the Master Venerable Thích Đức Nhuận. She often wrote newspapers with her pen name Cát Tường Lan. Due to karma and the profound Dharma she was very strict about keeping the precepts-meditative-wisdom as the Buddha taught. As a result, many disciple nuns (up to 800 women) gather to learn under her guidance. There were also thousands of lay Buddhist followers who also gathered to take refuge with her. She established more than ten Buddhist temples in Đại Ninh, Lâm Đồng and Sài Gòn for nuns to stay. She follows the method of Samādhi Pure Land, making the vow of rebirth in the blissful West. Every year in the spring, she taught the Śūraṅgama Sūtra to introduce Mahāyāna meaning that enlightens the nuns' minds. In the summer, she taught the Vinaya to help her nun disciples know how to keep the precepts. In the autumn, she explained the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), that body (*kāyā*), sensations (*vedanā*), consciousness (*cittā*) and elements (Dhamma) are so changeable that we must detach from worldly objects to reach final liberation.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Hải Triều Âm recapitulated many sutras, such as the Śūraṅgama, Saddharma Puṇḍarīka, Avataṃsaka, Maha Prajñā Pāramitā Hridaya Sūtra, the rules of the Bhikkhunīs, Satipaṭṭhāna (the Four Foundations of Mindfulness) and so on. With the easy-to-understand simple style of writing, authentic examples in daily life, the nun community with the average educational level can grasp the quintessence of the Buddha's teachings and practice them. She has written nearly 100 works, but none of them has her name, just the names of her disciples as authors or writers. Her whole life she has raised the role model of selflessness, egolessness and no-dharma attachment. She devoted herself to protecting, nurturing and training hundreds of nuns to be saints. In 2013, she passed away, ninety-four years old; sixty years old in Buddhism.

*The mountain river will move
The heavy gratitude from masters cannot fade
We voluntarily inscribed her teachings
As the spiritual luggage package throughout life.*

Besides, the four above Venerable Bhikkhunīs of Như Thanh, Diệu Không, Đàm Lựu, and Master Hải Triều Âm, there are many other Dharma nuns such as Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải, Venerable Bhikkhunī Bảo Nguyệt, and others who have shown the noble beauty of the Nun Sangha in the present age.

The Virtues Needed by Nuns to Practice

Gender does not interfere with self-effort and other-effort. In her memorial yearbook, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Không vowed that she will be born in the saha world (not the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha) in the female form to approach females to convert them. “May the Buddha prove that in the next thousands of lives, I will stay in any corner of the saha realm.” Perhaps because of that great wish, many nuns and lay Buddhists came to learn under her guidance. Gender does not hinder our self-practice and other-practice; females are able to go along with the great monks to spread Buddhism.

o The advantage of women is softness, gentleness, tenderness, endurance, strength and perseverance, which can help nuns have easy access to Dharma, enlightenment and teaching.

o With strong will, confidence and determination, nuns can share the burden with the Sangha of supporting, guiding the nuns, and training the nuns to maintain the spiritual fortune of the Lord Buddha.

o Venerable Bhikkhunīs of Như Thanh, Diệu Không, Đàm Lựu, and Master Hải Triều Âm and others bravely stood up as the eminent great beings shared the Buddhist burdens with the monk sangha in the mission, “Tathāgata’s Messenger.”

o Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Thanh, as well as Master Hải Triều Âm, advise nuns who often take the retreat to strengthen their morality, virtue and merit, before engaging in society to serve sentient beings. It helps nuns to be reflective and avoid mistakes. Our job will become the Buddha’s job.

In summary, in the Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī Sūtra, the Buddha taught “Ananda, after renunciation of your family, you became homeless, lived in Dharma and Vinaya taught by the Tathāgata. A female can become a stream-enterer (*sotāpatti*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*) and without rebirth (*arahanta*).”

In the Mahāyāna sūtra, the Buddha also emphasized, “Everyone has the inherent Buddha nature, possesses the ability to become a Buddha, and attains the Dharma.” The Dharma lineage in the history of the nun sangha from the Buddha’s time to the present twenty-first century is an awakening bell that tells us that Buddhism teaches equality between men and women, between monks and nuns, without discrimination. Whoever practices the Dharma with effort, he or she can attain sainthood. Therefore, the nuns should strive to develop virtuous abilities as our predecessor nuns.

The images of the Venerable Bhikkhunīs are always exemplary for the nuns to follow and study. The dharma attainment is like sandalwood whose glorious scent, wisdom and compassion spreads

Questions and answers: The understanding of presenters are limited, thus with the desire to have full pictures of the nun patriarchs in Buddhist history to contribute to a book, the writer (Bhikkhunī Giới Hương) and other presenters paid sincere homage to the sangha who kindly provide and add more images as well as material.

Many monks and nuns in the conference contributed that there are other famous nuns such as Bhikkhunī Uppalavaṇṇā, Śrīmālādevī, and so on (the presenter welcomes more information from the monks, nuns and Buddhists from far and near to kindly provide more information on this topic to: huongsentemple@gmail.com).

Question: Why did the Dragon Girl naturally turned into a boy and then became a Buddha without coming directly from a female body?

Answer: (Venerable Master Thích Minh Chí answered) In the Nirvāna Sūtra, there are two pages that mention the craving of women as being very heavy, so the Dragon Girl must be turned into a male figure before becoming a Buddha. Venerable Nhật Trí MC said that, in fact, the sex of men is heavy because all rapes are caused by men. The Most Venerable Thích Hoan explained that because dragon women are dragons, they must turn into a human and then from a human who can become a Buddha. To conclude the presentation, he kindly offered a poem “The Role Model of Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī” to all Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī’s descendants:

THE ROLE MODEL OF MAHĀPAJĀPATĪ GOTAMĪ

*The wisdom moon shines eternally
Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī still a good example
Leave the luxury palace behind
Throw away the queen’s throne
Determined to find the truth without fear of difficulties*

*The direction of the Truth is hard
The royal ladies hope to find the wonderful Dhamma
Making a thousand torches after opening the way
Let sisters together to continue
Ancient footprints connected the light flower association
For the benefit of beings in three thousand worlds
Prajñā boat turned to the dream port.*

* * *

International Buddhist Institute, The Retreat Diary

California, June 20, 2014

Yours sincerely,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

1.23. VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST NUNS AT UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST- CALIFORNIA

Having known that the senior Venerable Thích Nữ Giới Hương will launch a new book entitled *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States of America*, I would like to contribute this writing about Vietnamese Buddhist nuns at the University of the West in California, who are diligently studying both general and Buddhist trainings with the sole purpose of planting “Bodhi seeds” in the West.

Propagating the Buddha Dharma and liberating sentient beings are ideals of all Buddhist practitioners. For such respected ideals, Buddhist nuns leave home, pursue Buddhist knowledge and cultivation from different spiritual masters and different universities in the world. At the University of the West, there are Buddhist nuns from many countries, such as Vietnam, South Korea, China, Taiwan and American Buddhist nuns. These Buddhist monastics have received ordinations from different Asian Buddhist traditions. As a school founded by byFoGuangshan, a Taiwanese Buddhist organization, the University of the West aims to build an East-West connection based on a friendly and open-minded spirit.

In the spring of 2013, I went to the United State of America for the first time with a wish to pursue knowledge in one of the most advanced countries. The population of Buddhist followers in the US has a modest number, yet it gives many chances for developing Buddhism - a religion of liberation and harmony here. This is because Americans highly appreciate value of freedom of religion and beliefs. In the field of education, Buddhism has been taught in different famous graduate schools of this vast country, in both graduate and post-graduate programs. In some departments such as Religious Studies, Philosophy or Regional Studies. In addition, many Americans have traveled to Asian Buddhist countries during the last decades for learning and practicing meditation in order to transform themselves. As messengers of the Tathagata, we think that we are able to come and introduce them to the faith and experience of Vietnamese Buddhism, the culture that has nurtured us and many generations of Vietnamese people throughout centuries.

In the same year, Venerable Nun LêNgộ and I represented Vietnamese Buddhist nuns who participated in a Buddhist forum organized by University of the West. All speakers were nuns of different Buddhist traditions who had been studying in various departments here. Accordingly, we took turns talking about our Buddhist traditions in which we grew up, as well as to share our dreams of training a future generation of Buddhist nuns and propagating Buddhism in the United State of America. Due to such meetings and forums, we have met our like-minded companions and seen our dreams more clearly.

Currently, there are six Vietnamese Buddhist nuns studying at University of the West in three faculties: Religious Studies, Buddhist Chaplaincy and Psychology. Religious Studies aims at an academic training in which learners will learn methods of analysis, reasoning and comparison of religions. Departments of Buddhist Chaplaincy and Psychology aim at a practical training in which learners will be trained methods of spiritual caregiving, listening and therapy with psychotherapy or religious counseling. Regardless of the majors we pursue, each of us is working hard so that we can be well-prepared for our future missions.

Beside studying, Buddhist nuns at University of the West are also active in interfaith workshops organized annually by the University. It is an opportunity for us to introduce Vietnamese Buddhist rituals to either other Buddhist traditions or other religions/ beliefs. Such a

diverse environment of ethnics and religions has nurtured our compassion and boundless sharing. Additionally, we are participating in other activities actively, such as organizing Buddha's birthday and teaching Buddhist meditation in prisons and detention centers, volunteering and doing internships in hospitals to offer spiritual support to sick people and their families.

We have participated in Buddhist activities such as Buddha's birthday celebration, Ullumbana Festival, summer retreats and Lunar New Year celebrations annually organized by some Vietnamese Buddhist Temples like ĐiềuNgự Buddhist Temple, DiệuPháp Buddhist Temple, Quan Âm Orange County Buddhist Temple, Phật Quan Âm Zen Buddhist Temple, Diệu Quang Buddhist Temple, Hương Sen Buddhist Temple and VạnHạnh Foundation. Due to help and support from senior members, every day we wish to share the grace of Dharma.

While studying at University of the West and joining Buddhist activities at some Vietnamese-American Buddhist Temples, we have somehow shaped our own paths for future services. Among six Vietnamese Buddhist nuns at University of the West, there are two nuns who have their own temples which have served communities in the traditional Vietnamese way. Building temples and serving Vietnamese communities in the US have been done by many Vietnamese senior monks and nuns for more than three decades. Those missions are difficult which need strong financial and moral support from the Vietnamese communities. Sometimes, it takes a lifetime for such commitments.

Realizing some limitations of Buddhist nuns, we think that we should focus on what we are good at for which we can contribute a small brick for building a "House of Buddhism" here. I have spent plenty of time myself working with different translation groups so that we could translate Buddhist works into various languages such as English, Chinese and Vietnamese. In the future, we will translate the Buddhist Canon into the English language gradually. Such a mission may take several hundred years or so to complete. This also needs hands of many generations. We are, in fact, continuing the work of previous Buddhist monks and nuns too.

Furthermore, we have conducted Buddhist classes in English every Saturday and Sunday. These classes are designed for children alone or with their parents. These classes go hand in hand with activities of the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Groups and Vietnamese language classes organized by Vietnamese Buddhist Temples. After graduating, we are planning to keep and upgrade these classes because we understand that education is the only way to train our next Vietnamese Buddhist generation in the United State of America.

Some of us are planning to focus on engaged Buddhist activities like teaching or working at schools, hospitals and prisons. We take them as chances to introduce Buddhist teachings and practices to American people out of our Vietnamese communities. For these works, some Americans have visited the Vietnamese Buddhist Temples and cultivated there as devout Buddhists. This would be a beginning of American Buddhist culture.

In conclusion, I wish all my friends and fellows good health with strong commitment on the path of learning and propagating the Buddha Dharma. May the American Buddhist community flourish every day.

University of the West, May 18, 2020

Sincerely Yours,

Bhikkhuni Thich Nữ Nguyễn Hiếu

hie.u.shakya@gmail.com



Student monastics in Hsi Lai University in 2015



Sri Lanka Buddhists offering Lunch at the Hsi Lai University



Rev. Lê Ngô and Rev. Chon Mẫn Graduated the Master Degree in the Commencement in 2016



Visiting Rev. Abbess Phước Nhẫn at Liên Hương Temple



Rev. Nguyễn Hiếu presenting her dissertation at the Professors of the Hsi Lai University



On the holidays, Rev. Nguyễn Hiếu (second right) come back to Huang Sen Temple mowing the lawn with the Abbess TN Giới Hương (far right) and Nuns in April 2020

1.24. CONTRIBUTIONS OF NUNS IN THE UNITED STATES

This afternoon has light rain and soft sunlight at the summer retreat of Điều Ngự Pagoda, California. On Friday, June 7, 2019, the Sangha requested a group of nuns (Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Ven. Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ, Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Ý, Bhikkhunī Hạnh Minh and Bhikkhunī Phước Nhân) to make a presentation on the “Nuns’ Role - Opportunities and Challenges in the United States.” Each nun shares her experiences:



Left: Presenters Rev. Phước Nhân, Ven. Minh Huệ,
Ven. Giới Hương, Ven. Nguyễn Ý and Rev. Hạnh Minh

First, **Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương** lectured on the role of nuns serving as prison chaplains. Going into this field will be a new thing for Vietnamese nuns. Conditions for fulfilling this mission: the nuns must attend a chaplaincy class for certification. Those nuns must be fluent in speaking, listening, writing and reading English, compassionate to prisoners and their circumstances. They must possess the gift of being able to reach out and convert those stubborn prisoners. The nun chaplain must master the practical sutras of the Buddha which really bring many benefits to daily life for the prisoners. To understand more about this role, Venerable Giới Hương was invited to read books online: *Nuns and American Prisoners (Nữ Tu và Tù Nhân Hoa Kỳ)* composed at Huong Sen Temple, Perris.



The monk and nun Sangha at Điều Ngự Temple, June 7, 2019

Bhikkhunī Phước Nhẫn explained that besides prison chaplaincy that Ven. Giới Hương just mentioned, there are also others, such as Army chaplains and hospital chaplains. Bhikkhunī Phước Nhẫn graduated from a hospital chaplaincy course at the University of the West in California. This chaplain functions as a psychological adviser who helps stressed patients have more confidence and vitality in their life.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Ý presented that nuns will face problems with the language and culture when preaching in the United States. For instance, it takes a long time for nuns to integrate into Western society and they need the support of monks. She also expressed that it is necessary to have a central nunnery as a place of residence for the nuns, suggested by the saying, “first settle a place, then develop a career” to promote the role of sharing Dharma. Moreover, the nuns’ residence also needs a secure financial base.

Bhikkhunī Hạnh Minh spoke about what nuns need to advance in America:

- Have sufficient means to promote their own capabilities in the field of press information, education and sharing the Dharma.
- Learn English to spread the teachings of the Buddha to Westerners. Thanks to the internet, this is easier than in the past.
- Study abroad in many countries that teach Buddhism.
- Nuns can teach subjects to monks and nuns, as there are many nuns doing this at Buddhist institutions. The nuns are encouraged to give lecture sermons to Buddhist assemblies or seminars.
- The nuns have been developing the process of encouraging the activities of benefiting beings to maintain the Buddha’s heritage.
- Nuns today have opportunities in all areas of life, from building and renovating temples to social charitable activities.
- Nuns have many opportunities to approach Buddhism and to inspire sentient beings.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ addressed the necessity for nuns to be eligible to promote their role, including things such as their internal strength, knowledge, reconciliation and sympathy. For a nunnery where they can have a place of refuge, it is necessary to train more

nuns to continue the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī’s establishment of the Bhikkhunī Sangha and to honor other ancestors.



Hall view of the seminar

After the presentation, Venerable Dharma Master Giác Đức praised the teamwork of the five nuns, who showed their kindness and interest in promoting the Dharma effectively. The chaplain’s role in prisons and hospitals are especially admirable and worthy of praise. However, when dealing with prisoners or patients, nuns should ensure security, especially for offenders or patients with mental problems.

In the question and answer period, one nun asked, “What accomplishments will be achieved after serving as a prison chaplain?” Ven. Giới Hương answered, “Thanks to approaching prisoners, we have developed compassion, experimentation, application of the Buddha’s teachings for various mental illnesses of the prisoners and shown the value of the five basic precepts⁴⁹ of the Buddha. We have displayed the meaning of mindfulness meditation (helping them reduce anger with less violence), and especially, the chaplain’s greatest achievement is turning the prison into an ideal daily peaceful retreat for prisoners.”

The lecture ended in the joy of the summer retreat and the nuns especially felt their role and responsibility were very significant in the mission, “Serving sentient beings is making offerings to the Buddhas.”

Afternoon of the Summer Retreat,
Điền Ngự Temple, California, June 7, 2019
Respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
hươngsentemple@gmail.com

⁴⁹ The five moral precepts are:

1. To refrain from taking life (not killing any living creature)
2. To refrain from taking what is not freely given (theft)
3. To refrain from wrong speech (lying or gossiping)
4. To refrain from drinking alcohol
5. To refrain from misuse of the senses or sexual misconduct (overindulgence in sex or committing sexual offenses).

1.25. CAN WOMEN BECOME ENLIGHTENED?

This is a complex and sensitive topic that has caused a lot of debate, not only for Buddhism but for almost all religions of mankind. It has been mentioned in a whole forest of books and scriptures by religious leaders, intellectuals, theologians and scholars around the world. My view is subjective-even the monasteries could not explain and even noble nuns themselves find it difficult to explain properly.

*Whoever practices, he knows himself?
Not enlightened yet, so he does not know.
Enlightenment already, he neither knows.
Soit had better be EMPTY?*

Sometimes, writing is easy and the words just flow. Depending on the mind, wisdom without a master can appear. Thanks to that wisdom, the senses are temporarily opened resulting in *pubbenivāsānussatiñānā* (the power to remember the past lives of oneself and others) and incarnations from male to female. Seeing that this “self” has gone through many lives and suffers in samsara, could it be that “I” used to be “Lan” who cut off the bell cord and fled ‘Điệp’⁵⁰ to become a nun because of heartbreak?

CONTRIBUTING AN ESSAY

I saw Venerable Bhikkhuni Giỏi Hương in the West on the occasion of her fortieth anniversary preaching and then later she contacted me during the world coronavirus pandemic when she emailed to ask me to contribute an essay. The phrase came to mind, “showing an ax skills to an ax expert” (or never offer to teach a fish to swim),⁵¹ revealing my ignorance.

She wrote, “I wish Mr. Trú would please contribute a short article about the image of nuns in meditation or sutras, or in reality in America, as I know Mr. Trú has a sharp insight on this topic. Please take advantage of the social distancing days with time to write an article. The title of the collection is *Nuns’ Contribution to Buddhism or Enlightenment* (from Venerable Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giỏi Hương, Abbess of Huong Sen Buddhist Temple, Perris, California). Maybe this is the karma that forced me to write, as I honestly confide to the readers that I am inherently ignorant. A word like “empty” can’t be written, more or less other sublime treatises.

*The quiet Laṅkāvatāra moon,
Neither border or destination
Know Empty without possessing.
Freely play in the samadhi.*

(Lê Huy Trú)

INTRODUCTION

To be honest, I have never had any knowledge of the nuns’ image in meditation or sutras nor in the United States. I also haven’t had the chance to witness the nun’s contributions to

⁵⁰ Lan Điệp is a famous story in Vietnamese. Ms. Lan is lovesick with Mr. Điệp and became a nun because of her heartbreak.

⁵¹ A Vietnamese proverb: Never offer to teach fish to swim (Múa riu qua mắt thợ).

Buddhism or enlightenment. However, wisdom (*prajñā*) does not need to learn; it is intrinsic knowing. Truth doesn't need to be propagated; it's convincing in itself. All sentient beings have the same inherent wisdom, but their capacities are different. Wisdom is a basic condition that leads to enlightenment. The intangible wisdom—we only know how to provoke it or does it provoke us?

*Guru is like a moon in the sky,
It shines everywhere with unlimited brightness.
People should know how to distinguish it,
Smoke fills the sky over the hill.*
(“Thinking II” [Cảm Hoài II], Bảo Giám Zen Master,
translated by Lê Huy Trú, January 7, 2018)

* * *

*Wisdom is clear like the moon and stars,
Worldly luminous clarity projection.
The essential cultivator does not discriminate,
Smoke mountain blue serene mist.*
(Lê Huy Trú, January 7, 2018, rewritten on the base
of Cảm Hoài II, Bảo Giám Zen Master)

I am sure that the nuns in the world always silently contributed to religion and life with countless merit. However, I still do not understand. Isn't it interesting that many people have volunteered to become monks and nuns in the end period of Dharma, especially in the United States? If there is no one practicing, temples cannot be built for pilgrims to visit, prostrate to the Buddha, listen to prayers and find the peace of mind. More difficult is the theme, “meditation, suttas and the enlightenment of nuns.”

*Self-practice, self-knowing,
Pleasure, suffering, self-knowing,
If you practice, you will attain,
No cultivation, hard to achieve.*

(Lê Huy Trú)

In fact, in America, is there any nun icon of enlightenment yet? Is the awakening offered for the happy or miserable? I am not a nun, so how can I know if nun is enlightened? In any case, the practitioner must have the conditions to cultivate and not just practice to escape the debt of life. It is difficult to practice to the end result. Practicing is more difficult than not practicing. Practice is going against the flow of life. Without practice one is going to be seduced into flow of life.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Like all sentient beings in the world, we realize that the role of women is quite important in the lives of all of us, including Siddhārtha Gautama. Maternal love is the source of life, nurturing almost all sentient beings. From Queen Maya, the mother of Prince Siddhārtha, to his second aunt, his father's second wife, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, to his beautiful wife Yasodhara—all of these played an important role in the life of Prince Siddhārtha.

However, a profound interior contrast occurred when he encountered the view, “Alone in the night, the Prince Siddhārtha watched the female dancers sleep in the harem, lying in a disgraceful posture: one lying down like an elephant, some snoring, legs stretched out indecently, some lay unconscious like corpses, eyes rolled upwards, others were gaping and drooling. Siddhārtha left the castle, leaving behind his young wife and newborn baby.”

This was an extraordinary decision of a great man, but it was considered an irresponsible action to ordinary people. The prince did not enjoy pleasure in the royal palace and instead was drawn to the ascetic life, homelessness without possessions.

The Buddha’s life was tied to the presence of women through three nuances. Firstly, maternal love: Queen Maya gave birth to him, his aunt nurtured and suckled him, the Sujata girl offered him a bowl milk rice when he was starving, and a prostitute offered food to him and the sangha. Secondly, the ephemeral body: The Buddha tells us that despite the refinements of a life of luxury, he was horrified to see the indignities of aging, sickness, and death and considered that this would happen to him. “Should I not seek a release from aging, illness, and death?” he asked himself. Thirdly, the equality between men and women: The Buddha allowed his adoptive mother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī to follow the pure path of the sangha and confirmed that “a woman also can win enlightenment, same as a man,”⁵² because gender discrimination is simply a completely meaningless convention, just the result of the desire for sex always engulfing people. When attaining enlightenment, that is, observing correctly all things, then people will no longer assign importance to gender.”⁵³

In the Sutta Pitaka, there is a famous argument between Bhikkhunī Soma, who achieved Nirvāṇa by practicing meditation and eliminating all cravings and Māra, who symbolizes craving and death. Māra said to the bhikkhunī, “The realm of the liberators (Nirvāṇa) is very hard to win. Women will never be able to attain it!” The nun retorted, “What is inferior to being a woman? Once you have focused your mind, all feelings will become pure. Māra, we always wonder, ‘If I am a woman or a man, that’s the way I speak in your language. Once your sexual desire has been completely eliminated, the dense ignorant darkness will melt and disappear. And Death God, even you will be destroyed!’”

The Samyutta Nikaya (Vol. I, Suttas five and six) also affirms this, and are considered by the Buddha, “Only the chariot (Dharma) is important. Whether male or female, anyone who knows thanks to the chariot has achieved Nirvana.”

The following verse of the Buddha’s adoptive mother Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī after attaining enlightenment and recalling her past lives, “I used to be a mother, a child, a father, a grandmother... I have never known such things before. [At that time] I could only follow my path [in samsara], and then I met the Blessed One! This body is the last one. I will no longer come back to be reborn from one life to another.”

Hoàng Phong commented, “Karma that leads to rebirth as a human being is one of the main types of karma, while other karmas are secondary, such as male, female, homosexual, beautiful, ugly, intelligent, dull, aggressive, meek, born into poor or wealthy families, in a Buddhist or Christian country or Islam and so forth. However, the effects of karma are complex, while human intelligence does not go beyond the biological functioning of the brain, so it is not possible to analyze and capture all the overlapping effects of karma.

⁵² Woman and Femininity in Buddhism, (La femme et le féminin dans le bouddhisme). Dominique Trotignon, Hoàng Phong translated into Vietnamese, <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a24546/nguoi-phu-nu-va-nu-tinh-trong-phat-giao>

⁵³ Ibid.

The interdependence (conditioned co-production) is an extremely complex operation through space and time, while human intelligence, even though a satisfactory level of enlightenment is achieved, it is not possible to untangle the interconnectedness. The exact result produced by karma is one of the four unknowable topics, similar to the origin of samsara, (immediate karma, after being created, will not retain its potential) because karma is as “impermanent” as all other phenomena, but immediately interacts with other karmas which have been inscribed on the knowledge stream, and will continue to be transformed by future karma.

SANGHA OF NUNS

The sutras recorded that the Buddha initially refused to allow women to become nuns and join the sangha. It was not until Venerable Ananda repeatedly asked the Buddha to accept women into the sangha. He accepted and then set strict rules for the congregation of bhikkhunis.

According to Minh Chinh who summed it up, “Many people also believe that the Buddha had a reason to reject distinguished women. The truth is not so. The Buddha’s intention was based on his reasoning that a woman who becomes a nun sacrifices a lot of her duties and deep emotional relationships with her family and children. Therefore, it is very difficult and it will be too great a sacrifice for themselves and their relatives if women become nuns. The simplest reason is that if the mothers renounce their lives and leave home, the situation of their children will be very worrying and miserable. If a father is a monk, the mother will still take care of the family and children because maternal love always is better than the father’s love.

It was not until five years later, after the founding of the sangha, that a group of women abandoned their families and became bhikkhunis, all thanks to the determination of Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the aunt of the Buddha. But these nuns had to follow more rules than monks, and among the rules there were strict laws of gender. First, the Buddha’s adoptive mother was disappointed, but the Buddha did not relent.

Among the lay Buddhists who practice at home, many are women and it is they who provide food for those who give up their families, who are mothers who raise and nurture the sangha. Among these are famous mothers, such as Ms. Ambapālī who, although a prostitute, was a very active donor. The Buddha treated this woman like a noble person! The Buddha also declared that women can also advance on the Path of Liberation, just like men and in fact has shown that many women achieved high levels on the path, fulfilling the enlightened form of the arahant. This is the ultimate result of the practice of ancient Buddhism (in Theravāda Buddhism, the meaning of this word is “The Path of the Ancients,” often incorrectly referred to as “Theravāda Buddhism”).⁵⁴

The Buddha foresaw this. Thus, his initial refusal was for those reasons and it may have been so women carefully consider all aspects before leaving home, becoming nuns.” This is just a diplomatic deduction of existential beings.

CAN NUNS BECOME SAINTS?

In the article, “Can a Woman Attain Liberation in this Present Life?” compiled by Minh Chinh, “Some nuns, or bhikkhunis, were highly praised by the Buddha at the time, such as the most knowledgeable Bhikkhuni Patācara on the Vinaya and the most knowledgeable Bhikkhuni Khema for wisdom. Among Upasikas, Ms. Visakhā is considered the most generous at making offerings to the Buddha and the sangha, and Ms. Samavati displayed the most compassion.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

According to Buddhism, all sentient beings, including men and women, contain the same Buddha nature and have the same potential for enlightenment but their levels are not the same.

According to the slightly contrary conception of Vajrayana, every man or woman has enough of the main (mother) and secondary energy. The secondary energy aspect is the measureless compassion and the main energy is the great omniscient mind, the source of all things. The two principles of main and secondary energy are interrelated and inseparable, thus all sentient beings are equal, inherent enough with Buddha nature and capable of enlightenment to become Buddhas.

Vajrayāna is one of the three “vehicles,” also known as the paths of Buddhism. The other two are Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. Vajrayāna means “Diamond Vehicle,” with the ultimate indestructible solid nature that is the symbol of the solid essence of all sentient beings and all things. Vietnamese scriptures often confuse Vajrayāna with tantric, a sect which was established in China under the Tang Dynasty.



Vajrayāna emphasizes the principle of the Model of Enlightenment through the images of the Buddha Mother Prajñā, the Buddha Mother Tara, symbolizing the source of all things. Therefore, it is called “the mother of all the Buddhas. The characteristic of the Mother Principle is the capacity to contain, produce and create. The mother Buddha is not only a will to create the law and the world but the essence of the world.

In the Vajra, the importance and enlightenment power of women is manifested through the thangkas, mandalas, symbols and tools. The image of the Blessed Mother, Dakini, in the posture of winning or resting in a meditative posture with a unique seal is adorned with precious treasures, bone fragments and a crown of bones or flowers. This certainly affirms the possibility of achieving enlightenment, that is, becoming a Buddha while in a woman’s body.

In the Tantra, the praises of the importance and meditative ability of the females, such as the yoginis and dakinis, means that the female practitioners practice yoga and the magical

power of the Mother Saints. A dakini transcends ordinary perception. She is the “Flying Mother” who rejoices in the nature of the spiritual world. They are also the holders of wisdom, the embodiment of Buddha Mother Prajñā, the mother of Buddhas.

There are great yogini practitioners in Vajrayāna history such as Yeshe Tsogyal, Yogini Niguma, the great Mahasiddha who founded the six yogas of Niguma; Gelongma Palmo, the founder of the Dharma method of Nyungnay, the great accomplishment of Avalokiteshvara, Machig Labdron (1055-1152) of the Chod lineage master—the practices and accomplishments of all these yoginis are clearly recorded in history as the evidence for the truth that the attainment of realization by a woman is a reality.

Mahāyāna tends to symbolize the Buddha’s identity with images that show he is an androgynous being, or rather has the potential of being male but may also be female. Images of the Buddha symbolizing anthropomorphic appearances (actually only beginning to appear around the beginning of the Christian era), often wearing very thin clothes that sticks close to the body, show an “empty space,” without any masculine sign (before the first century AD, the Buddha was symbolized by an empty throne or pedestal, or by a Bodhi tree, or a footprint of the feet. During the first five centuries of Buddhism’s development, the Buddha was never represented by an image that has the appearance of a person).

IMAGES OF NUNS IN MEDITATION AND SCRIPTURES

In Buddhism, not only is the intellectual quality unique to women, but also the kindness (*maitri*) has been a symbol of maternal love, as it has been featured in the very famous Metta Sutta from the Pitaka: “As a mother protecting her only child with her life, let us be compassionate and treat all species with kindness. Let us bring our unlimited compassion to cover the whole world and all species, from top to bottom, from left to right; compassion is not separated by anything.”⁵⁵

The Therigāthā (The Enlightened Verses of the Elder Nuns): The word “Theri” means elder or senior nuns and is the title for virtuous bhikkhunīs who have practiced a long time in a monastery. The Therigāthā is a collection of texts in the Khuddaka Nikaya, an episode in the Sutta Pitaka, which gathers “songs that speak of enlightenment,” (writings in the form of verse, also known as chanting or poems, narrating the life and enlightenment of bhikkhunīs). It is quite formulaic when narrating the nuns’ success, and what they had to go through in practice and in life. Along with the Verses of the Elder Nuns, in the Sutta Pitaka there is a collection of verses by the senior monks (the Theragāthā), which shows a markedly fair justice between men and women.

The Therigāthā is interesting because it is the only book in the Buddhist scriptures written by women. Many verses in the Therigāthā highlight the previous circumstances in the nuns’ own lives and have left us with specific evidence of the identity of the Indian women in those ancient times.”⁵⁶

These verses are short scriptures that we can recite. The verses are the means to help the practitioner attain awareness by the intuitive path, the mind transmitting the mind. The meditation poem is not exactly like normal poetry or literature. “Verses are also known as poems that convey Buddhist thought. Poetry is sometimes just short sentences

⁵⁵ Metta Sutta (Sutta of Loving Kindness) translated by Zen Master Nhất Hạnh. <http://tuyenphap.com/kinh-thuong-yeu-kinh-tu-bi-metta-sutta-1189>

⁵⁶ Người Phụ Nữ và Nữ Tính Trong Phật Giáo (La femme et le féminin dans le bouddhisme), Dominique Trotignon, Hoang Phong chuyển ngữ, <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a24546/nguoi-phu-nu-va-nu-tinh-trong-phat-giao>

like proverbs but usually are poems. The verses are short and profound discourses to teach disciples.”⁵⁷

The following Zen verses are respectfully dedicated to the Elder Nuns and the lay Buddhist women at home. In particular, the offerings are made to the Venerable Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giới Hương, the nuns and the meritorious people of Huong Sen Temple. Just follow this supreme teaching to practice. Guaranteed, your immortal diamond never decays. First of all, we are without knowledge and seek a secluded place with social distancing in order to enjoy the true spirit and enter samadhi. We must do so in order to attain enlightenment. Also, if not done correctly, you can suffer from the dimness of consciousness, psychological disorders and everything will be useless.

*Enlightenment isn't necessary when following Buddhism,
Ritual Buddhism limits the wisdom of mindfulness.*

Om Mani Padme Hum is the truth.

A pink halo appears in the sky.

(Thinking I [Cảm Hoài I] by Bảo Giám Zen Master,
translated by Lê Huy Trứ, January 7, 2018)

* * *

Enlightenment may not appear thanks to practice,

Abiding on mind is the wrong way

Following the wonderful Kuan Yin method

The sunlight with a morning star.

(Rewritten version by Lê Huy Trứ based on Cảm hoài, kỳ 1, by Bảo Giám Thiền sư)

THIS MIND FLOWS IN JUST ONE STREAM

Saying goodbyeto the impermanent world, lighting the intellectual torch on your own, enter the gateless gate to cross to the other shore to enter Nirvān, without regrets, trying to look back to find the boatman and the prajñā boat that brought us to the liberation destination.

*Borrow thread just raising a kite out of the wind
Leave the boat when the guests have crossed the river.*

(Anonymous)

This mind flows in only one stream. On top of the flying clouds, under the deep river, the practitioner drops her hair and leaves the end of the river. The east wind is gloomy on the river, the practitioner does not return.

*Have you become a nun, how many lives?
Loving father and mother, your hair left at the end of the river,
The West has Huong Sen Temple,
Upstream you stand by the ocean,
Across the river, left a life behind.
Floating in the wind, playing with the sunyata waves
Wave back to remove footprints,
Suddenly you were on the verge of liberation
This mind only one heart,*

⁵⁷ Mạc Vị Xuân Tàn Hoa Lạc Tận Đình Tiền Tạc Dạ Nhất Chi Mai (Do Not Tell the End of Spring, Flowers Falling. Before the eaves, there is a blooming flower), explained and noted by Nguyễn Cẩm Xuyên.

*Giới Hương is based on the brown garment,
Pressing the hands, the peach buds blossom.
The Pure Land and the four directions
Smile at this lotus,
A gentle willow with the compassion pure water
The seafloor is unclear.*

*Searching and not seeing, the ego is my shadow?
The world dreams are impermanent,
Leaving the raft at the other shore,
You reach the zenith of the fourth meditation,
The morning star soon grows for your manifestation body.
(Lê Huy Trứ)*

MANIFESTED BODY (NIRMĀNA KĀYA)

Hoàng Phong wrote that the Buddha, after attaining enlightenment, surpassed all dualistic conventions of the body and mind (transcending all forms of opposites; the body is no longer male or female and mentally does not show any emotion related to gender). The Buddha is neither masculine nor feminine, so he can manifest in both forms to transform sentient beings. These appearances are called his *nirmānakāya* and that is also the way to utter the two highest qualities of Buddhism: superior wisdom (feminine *prajñā*) bringing about liberation and ultimate compassion (masculine) manifested through the skillful means of the Buddha as a Supreme Buddha (Samyak-Sambuddha, the perfect one). The omnipotent one is able to preach to others based on his own enlightenment experience.

Masculinity and femininity are both considered to coexist within the bodies of every being, but that body is not a crude body being born from a parent but an “exquisite body” that radiates pure energy to penetrate the conventional body (i.e., the gross flesh body). The subtle body is the manifestation of Buddha essence (the nature of the Buddhas), hidden within all sentient beings, and the purpose of the practice is to manifest that essence. The nondiscriminatory character is not only the characteristic of the Buddhas who have attained success, but the natural basis that exists in every being.

In the Lotus Sutra, the Devadatta chapter tells the story of a female dragon that offered a pearl to the Buddha, signifying attaining the full liberation. The pearl is valued by three thousand celestial worlds who offered it to the Buddha who accepted it immediately. Long Nũ told Bodhisattva Jnanakara and Sariputta, “I offered the pearl and the Buddha received it. Is this quick?”

Answer, “Very quick.” The female dragon said, “Please use your mental powers to see who can become a Buddha faster than that.”

Regarding women and the possibility of enlightenment to become Buddhas, according to the Vajrayāna viewpoint, each man or woman has both the maternal and secondary energies available. The secondary energy aspect is the mind of immeasurable compassion and the great omniscience, the source of all phenomenon. The two principles of motherhood and fatherhood are interrelated and inseparable so that all sentient beings are equal, inherent enough in Buddhanature, and capable of enlightenment to become Buddhas.

I venture to explain as follows: We often hear that the X and Y chromosomes are also known as the sex chromosomes. Basically, according to scientific discoveries, the daughter inherits the X chromosome from her father with XX genotype. The son inherits Y from father with XY. The mother only transmits X chromosome to boys and girls.⁵⁸

What does the discovery of humanities relate to the enlightenment of human life, especially women? If we use the economic science model, supply and demand, supply is inversely proportional to demand. Ideally the equilibrium supplies and balances. So what is neutral in the human body? According to Taoism, when the extremes (yin and yang) are balanced, enlightenment is presented as extremes that become one. According to Buddhism, that is when duality becomes non-dual at the time when yin and yang (male and female) became one. At that time the practitioner can attain six magical powers and awareness.

I want to clarify the ideas of the sutta that women do not need to transform into male bodies in order to become Buddhas. In short, when the mind and body unite, the yin and yang balance is the mind at peace. With peace of mind, knowledge arises. When knowledge is won, the nature is neither female nor male. When abiding no place, the mind is born. Then the six superpowers are presented and the practitioners realize the mystery universe. When entering deep in the nature of the universe, enlightenment is reached and one becomes a Buddha.

The Buddhist scriptures are concise with a few sentences that are taught over and over, reciting and reciting the forest of scriptures for more than a thousand years and still not many people are enlightened. In the Diamond Sūtra,⁵⁹ the Buddha declared “Stay no place where the mind is arisen.” Dr. Birendra Kumar Mishra explained the equilibrium in biology which can be understood with the Buddhist view. “Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, meditating deeply on perfection of wisdom, saw clearly that the five aspects of human existence are empty. The body is exactly empty and emptiness is exactly the body.”⁶⁰ Neither impermanence nor emptiness. This results in a state of body balance. The state of the middle way, the tendency of impermanence is emptiness.⁶¹

I’m not enlightened, so why do I know that? I do not know. I don’t want to know but the wisdom knows. The wisdom caused me write that. Seeing reality clearly, the question whether women can be enlightened is meaningless. The best answer is silence. Because silence is also an answer, absolutely.

⁵⁸ X and Y Chromosomes by Roseanne F. Zhao, PhD, NIH M./PhD Partnership Training Program Scholar.

<https://www.genome.gov/27557513/the-y-chromosome-beyond-gender-determination>.

The human genome is organized into twenty-three pairs of chromosomes (twenty-two pairs of autosomes and one pair of sex chromosomes), with each parent contributing one chromosome per pair. The X and Y chromosomes, also known as the sex chromosomes, determine the biological sex of an individual: females inherit an X chromosome from the father for a XX genotype, while males inherit a Y chromosome from the father for a XY genotype (mothers only pass on X chromosomes). The presence or absence of the Y chromosome is critical because it contains the genes necessary to override the biological default, female development and cause the development of the male reproductive system. Further, among certain North American native communities, gender is seen more in terms of a continuum than categories, with special acknowledgement of “two-spirited” people who encompass both masculine and feminine qualities and characteristics.

⁵⁹ Key words in the Vajracchedika Sutra, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, 5th reprinting, publishing, Ananda Viet Foundation 2019. http://www.daophatngaynay.com/vn/files/file-nen/31._Key_Words_in_Vajracchedika_Sutra___TN_Gioi_Huong_295763554.pdf

⁶⁰ Heart Sutra, translated by Thich Nhat Hanh. <https://webpace.ship.edu/cgboer/heartsutra.html>

⁶¹ What is Equilibrium in Biology? Dr. Birendra Kumar Mishra (Nov 26, 2016) explained that a state of body balance for an actively moving animal, when internal and external forces are in equilibrium. Explanation: It results in a stable system. The state of balance, the tendency of change is absent.

CONCLUSION

Buddhism was transmitted from the west to the north, then developed deeply in the Dai Viet, now called Vietnam, since the first century AD, and was often regarded by many dynasties as the state religion. Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism from China-the three religions became a source of harmonizing peace in the national spirit.

Experiencing many ups and downs in history, monks' and nuns' congregations, as well as the Dharma, are still handed down to this day. Buddhism is recognized as a popular religion after Catholicism and Islam. Buddhism does not compete with other religions, being non-aggressive and with less organization.

The biggest shortcoming is that most Buddhist speakers lack creativity, only chewing over and over the same old things in the sutras with attaching words or knowledge. This is exactly the reason why the Dharma is not attractive and difficult to understand for young people who prefer to compete in the modern life. The "commercial" Dharma appeals to the old people who are afraid of death, seeking blessings for living, praying for deceased people, and who want to earn merit from donations.

Although the image of the nuns in religion, as well as in the world, is very humble in the ups and downs of history, it has an implicit importance in the decline or development of national history, especially in the final Dharma era today. Even now in the US and abroad, nuns are sharing Dharma and engaged in society and community in the spirit of national culture.

The common difficulty for both foreign and domestic Buddhism is how to propagate the supreme Dharma to the younger generation, how to adapt easily to the younger generations and especially within the context, language, culture, customs, ways of thinking and the spiritual needs of civilized societies in this nation. Especially, how can the senior nuns train young nuns with knowledge and high intelligence to replace the retired nun sangha? Bhikkhunis in the time of the ending Dharma period now know how to keep the mind from being dominated and free from temptations of materialism. There are thousands of hardships ahead. If a practitioner does not have the basic knowledge and wisdom to truly practice, it is very difficult to share Dharma with others, much less to save sentient beings.

Economic and financial obstacles are huge for those who practice. Especially competing with other religions, it is as commercial competition. It's no use preaching to a hungry man. Without these circuits, the world, the nation, the society, the family, individuals and humanity will head towards paralysis and collapse, along with religious organizations-same fate for all.

For example, the coronavirus pandemic is causing global deaths, fear and paralyzing all the daily activities of the world today. The true practitioners are rare like autumn leaves, while people with training backgrounds always are available. Buddhists should look for these genuine spiritual practitioners to help one another practice, who have merit in cultivation and are skilled at sharing Buddhism. The intellectuals, the female and male Buddhist followers have wisdom-they have composed many books and treatises and have the duty of protecting and reviving, as well as developing Dharma.

The majority of Buddhist philosophies, the classical interpretations with logical reasoning and science are spread scholarly but harmoniously, purely on the internet by great human beings, bodhisattvas, instead of at the temple. These nonprofit contributors are truly the guide for the modern generation of the world.

Mùa Virus Corona tại Virginia, May 20, 2020

Lê Huy Trú
trule9@gmail.com

1.26. NUNS IN NORTH AMERICA

On November 17, 2016, the Global Bhikkhunī Association, chaired by the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Pu Huei, organized the six-day global Buddhist Awards in Taiwan in honor of fifty distinguished nuns from fifteen countries. The Global Bhikkhuni Award recognizes outstanding senior nuns for their important contributions to Dharma. There were eight nuns in North America (USA and Canada) honored with an award: Chief Nuns Ayya Anandabodhi and Ayya Santacitta (co-abbesses of Aloka Vihara, California), Ven. Bhikkhunī Pannavati (Embracing Simplicity Hermitage, North Carolina), Ven. Bhikkhunī Sudharshana (Sri Lankan, practicing in Florida), Ven. Bhikkhunī Zhi Ru Ng (Singaporean, lecturer in Religious Studies at Pomona University, California), Ven. Bhikkhunī Ru Dao (abbess of Hài Minh Pagoda, USA), Ven. Bhikkhunī Pema Chodron (well-known author of Zen books and resident teacher at Gampo Abbey, Nova Scotia, Canada) and Ven. Bhikkhunī Thubten Chodron (American lecturer, abbess of Sravasti Abbey Temple in Spokane, Washington).



Ven. Bhikkhunī Thubten Chodron (left) and Ven. Bhikkhunī Pema Chodron

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Pu Huei, the chairperson of the association, gave a speech and shared, “We acknowledge that Buddhism is international and expanding, and women are at the forefront of that development. We understand that there are bhikkhunis around the world who are working diligently in leading people to practice the Buddha Dhamma, and this we want to recognize and celebrate.”⁶²

Vietnamese nuns in North America in the past forty-five years (1975-2000), have come a long way and have reached their goals of establishing nunneries, teaching, education, art, charities, prison chaplaincy, serving as hospital chaplains, offering religious services in funeral homes and at weddings to meet the needs of the masses. Through many difficulties, the senior

⁶² Eight North American Buddhist nuns, including Pema Chödrön and Thubten Chodron, receive “Global Bhikkhuni Award” by Lilly Greenblatt.

<https://www.lionsroar.com/pema-chodron-and-thubten-chodron-receive-global-bhikkhuni-award/>

nuns founded majestic nunneries representing the sacred Buddhist cultural heritage, along with founding various Buddhist associations with the aim of building a Vietnamese Buddhist foundation in the hearts and minds of Vietnamese expatriates, so that the Buddha Dharma will not disappear. We are proud and respectful of the venerable bhikkhunis of other traditions and Vietnamese nuns join all of the nuns of North America in using flexible means to share the Buddha's teachings in modern times and contribute to the missionary activities across the United States and Canada.

These are very worthy conducts to record in the Buddhist history of Nun Sangha.

Huong Sen Temple, July 20, 2020

A lotus for you,

Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

References

Người Phụ Nữ và Nữ Tính Trong Phật Giáo (*Women and Female Nature in Buddhism - La femme et le féminin dans le bouddhisme*), Dominique Trotignon, Hoàng Phong chuyên ngữ. <https://thuvienhoasen.org/a24546/nguoi-phu-nu-va-nu-tinh-trong-phat-giao> Kệ Thiển (Zen Verses), Lê Huy Trứ.

Nữ giới và khả năng giác ngộ thành Phật (*Women and their Capacity to be Buddhas*), Drukpa Việt Nam.

365 Lời Khuyên Tâm Huyết của Đức Đạt-Lai Lạt-Ma (*Devoted Advice of the Dalai Lama*);

Cẩm nang cho cuộc sống ngày nay của Đức Đạt-lai Lạt-ma (*Handbook for Life Today of the Dalai Lama*) Matthieu Ricard noted; translated into Vietnamese by Hoàng Phong.

Quan Điểm Về Phụ Nữ Trong Phật Giáo (*Women in Buddhism*) translated into Vietnamese by Phước Tâm.

Đàn ông và đàn bà (*Men and Women*), Cẩm nang cho cuộc sống ngày nay của Đức Đạt-lai Lạt-ma (*Handbook for Life Today of the Dalai Lama*), Matthieu Ricard noted; translated into Vietnamese by Hoàng Phong.

<https://www.genome.gov/27557513/the-y-chromosome-beyond-gender-determination>

<https://www.who.int/genomics/gender/en/index1.html>

1.27. THINKING OF THE ROOT

THE FLOATING LIFE OF A CONCUBINE IN PALACE

The moment, without hesitation
My heart filled with compassion
We look at Buddha, in front of my eyes is the Buddha
Like the pink haloon the earth.

Radiating a vast colorful array
Mind opens, thousands of ancient eyes bright
I suddenly saw the path filled with light
All stars sparkle to report the news.

I put aside the luxury life
The royal palace is like clouds floating
Since then, thousands of clouds guide the way
The renunciate is strong beckoning to long distances.

THE DIFFICULT WAY

Then soon, I cut off my own hair
I leave a luxury life behind
I embarked on the road so far away
Determined to follow the Buddha's way.

But strange! Behold, Sakya women
Five hundred royal women like me
Throw away the glory of the dream life
Sharing a path to find truth and happiness.

Gradually spread on the long road barefoot
Pebbles and thorns make our legs bleed
I do not manage the long way too hard
Sunny and dew, hills, paths, bumpy slopes.

How many days spent worn out vitality exhaustion
Night let go, how cold at night
The grim life does not lay the righteous thoughts
The road is getting shorter, oh! The good news informs.

But, the bamboo garden late at night
No one silenced without words
I stand still until the clear sky
Then the sun went up high.

VENERABLE ANANDA

Behold, there is a shadow of Anan
Indescribable joy!
Ananda asked: What reason has Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī come here?
Come here, please let me know it.

I reveal the willingness to become a renunciate,
“Often we want to follow the awakening path of the Buddha”
Ananda promised to convey my words to the Buddha
I wait but oh! Unexpected.

Ananda replied, the Buddha did not promise him
But, please wait, he would come to beg again
Begging three times, three times the Buddhawas silent
Ananda explain to the Buddha,
“Can women practice Buddhism?
And can they attain the the Holy fruit?”

THE SAME BUDDHA NATURE

Buddha smiled and said, “Female and male are false figure
Due to the Zen mind, we have equal Buddha nature
That’s why any woman who wants to renounce
To practice spiritually in our Dharma
They can attain the enlightened states.”

Listen to it, Ananda said joyfully to the Buddha:
“If a woman can succeed in saintly fruit, too
The Blessed One should allow them renunciation.”
Then the Buddha promised the golden words throughout the realm:
“I accepted Mahāpajāpatī Gotamīand women to renounce.”

TWO SETS OF SANGHA TOGETHER ON A JOURNEY

Since that time, the Saha realm has the shadow
Two sets of the monk and nun Sangha
Practice for the sake of many
Open paradise for glorious humanity.

Opening the wisdom torch, everywhere spilling light
Take people into the vast wakening ocean
To be worthy as a monastic
To attain the Unborn states.

IN THE MUD, LOTUS GIVES THE FRESH FRAGRANCE

I advise women and descendants
Do not look down on them
After awakening, the woman just the name only
Not yet aware, let's find the path of awareness.

In the mud, lotus gives the fresh fragrance
Lotus in the mud, the lotus smells sweet
Farewell now, wish women can join the entire holy road
The flesh body, please return to its source.

Want to imitate the perfect virtue
Bowling to Buddha once a dialog
The Samadhi fire from your human body burned
The aura is as good as the clouds.

Flavor flowers flying, the beautiful scenery as heaven
Heavenly music sings, ten proclaimed the Great Saint
How many centuries of naming the Great Patriarch?
Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī glowed amidst the stars.

THE HOLY NUN PATRIARCH

Today... we are still proud
The nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī lived
More than two thousand years ago
By the following thousand... Time goes on forever.

REMEMBER ON FEBRUARY 8

Vietnam... we found the landmark
Nuns overcame obstacles to engage in the pure path
Now look at that harmony nun sangha
Please respect and support forever together.

At the same time, commemorating the deep gratitude like the sea
Thanks to Patriarch Gotamī, nuns are represented and developed
Remember February 8, return to the roots
Attend the Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī Anniversary.

Summer Giác Minh Temple, May 7, 2020

Bow three times,

Đàm Liên

thuvantnguyen@yahoo.com

1.28. THE ANNIVERSARY OF NUN PATRIARCH MAHĀ-PAJĀPATĪ GOTAMĪ FOR THE FIRST TIME IS HELD IN CALIFORNIA, USA

At the end of August 2019, the city is dubbed the Yellow Flower Valley of Northern California, San Jose, is full of golden robes of nuns from many units, especially in Southern and Northern California, who gathered at An Lạc Pagoda to attend the great anniversary of the Nun Patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī. It is held for the first time in the United States and led by the most venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh, the abbess of An Lạc Pagoda.

An Lạc pagoda today covers a new color, from the main hall to the ancestral house, and dining area to the yard which are decorated with many beautiful fresh flowers and fruits. From the entrance gate, the front porch of the pagoda has a prominent red-yellow sign that marked the event:

Memorial Ceremony

Who has still remarked since a thousand year?

Shining the first Nun Patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī.



Time has gone for centuries, many disciple generations of Nun Patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī now are present in san Jose, to celebrate your dead anniversary. Thanks to her, today all of Nuns can wear yellow robes and join in the pure sangha of the Buddha. Bhikkhunī Hương Thủy, the MC of the ceremony starts the event with a nice poem:

As flipping through the historical pages
It like we see the Nun Patriarch coming home
The saint nun teaching is still continued
Impression of liberation left behind.

Yes! Thousands of years later, the high mark remains in order that today for the The most time about 50 nuns, such as the most venerable Bhikkhunī Như Hòa (*Dược Sư Pagoda*), the most venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh (*An Lạc Temple*), the most venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương (*Vạn Hạnh Pagoda*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Thông (*Dược Sư Pagoda*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Minh Phước (*Phật Bửu Shrine*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Tâm Nhật (*Đại Bi Quan Âm Temple*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương (*Hương Sen Temple*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc (*A Di Đà Temple*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện (*Huyền Không Pagoda*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Hiếu (*Đức*

Viên Temple), Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan (*Giác Minh Temple*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Quảng Tịnh (*Phật Quang Temple*), Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhật Phúc (*Giác Minh Temple*), with many other Ven. Bhikkhunīs from 30 pagodas as well as friendly Buddhist followers who have come here to attend the commemorate.

The chief Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh, head of the ceremony’s organizers, emphasized the nun origins as follows:

“From roots, the green trees spring up
From source, water can reach all over rivers.

After Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī ordained, many royal ladies and common women also asked to become ordained in the nun’s congregation. For more than 2560 years of history, Buddhist nuns not only have presented in India, but also spread their faith to many Asian countries. So far, Buddhist nuns have been spreading the Dharma for nearly five continents. Therefore, Kiều Đàm Di is considered the founder of Buddhist nuns.”



Tú, Ven. Đồng Phước, Ven. Chơn Pháp Cẩn... Representing for the monks, Venerable Nguyễn Tú high appreciated the nuns’ event today with the speech that, “In outside world, soliders, officers and great people are often honored more less the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī who is the virtue Nun Patriarch for all Bhikkhunīs and is step-mother to Siddhartha prince, so we can’t help but pay tribute to her...”

Venerable Chân Pháp Cẩn, a disciple of the most Venerable Nhất Hạnh presents in his speech that, “The Buddha promoted the right of feminism, so they should be ordained as monks. In the tradition of Zen Master Nhất Hạnh, every New Year, nuns prostrate monks three times and vice verse monks do prostrate three times in return... In society, the position of women are high, so that in many countries, there are women who are heads of state, prime ministers and many dignitaries like Jacinda Kate, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, or Mrs. Aung San, a Burmese politician, winning the Nobel Peace Prize (1991)...”

In the key word, the Most Venerable Như Hòa, Abbess of Dược Sư Pagoda, Southern California, expressed her gratitude to the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī who sacrificed her body with barefoot came from far away to beg the Buddha for woman to be ordained and at present on behalf of the attendant nuns to praise the contribution of the chief nun Nguyễn Thanh who has pioneered the organization of the ceremony for Vietnamese nuns in abroad in order that nuns have the good opportunity to gather for the memorial.



In the biography of the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī, Ven. Bhikkhunī Quảng Tịnh, the Abbess of Phật Quang Temple, San Jose, spoke of the salvated will of the Nuns so devoted that made the Buddha and the Sangha who were happy to see the nun disciples who have diligently practiced and attained the following sainthoods as monks which is shown in the below board:

No.	Monk Saints	Nun Saints
1	Venerable Śāriputra - The most wisdom	Venerable Bhikkhunī Kế Ma - The most wisdom
2	Venerable Moggallāna - The most superpower	Venerable Bhikkhunī Uppalavanna - The most magical power
3	Venerable Mahākāśyapa - The most ascetic	Venerable Bhikkhunī Nun Patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī- The most ascetic
4	Venerable Anurudha - The most divine eyes	Venerable Bhikkhunī Cổ Câu La - The most divine eyes
5	Venerable Subhūti - The most Sūnyatā	Venerable Bhikkhunī Tô Na - The most Sūnyatā
6	Venerable Pūraṇa - The most preacher	Venerable Bhikkhunī Pháp Dữ - The most preacher
7	Venerable Mahākātyāyana - The most debate	Venerable Bhikkhunī Chỉ Già La Ma Đa - The most faith
8	Venerable Upāli - The most discipline keeper	Venerable Bhikkhunī Ba Sát Già La - The most discipline keeper
9	Venerable A-nan - The most multi-disciplinary	Venerable Bhikkhunī Bạt Đà Nhã Đà La - The most multi-disciplinary
10	Venerable Rāhula - The most secret conduct	Venerable Bhikkhunī Nan Đà - The most secret conduct

Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện, abbess of Huyền Không Temple, with her disciple nun group perform the proper ritual of offering rice, tea and fruits at the altar of Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī and other patriarchs, their intonation are hamonized very well with the scriptures as follows:



“The great vow for beings forever, depending on the capacity will get the various sacred responses, the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī started the majestic for nuns which bought the happiness to heaven. Since then, the nun lineage has been spreading. The ocean of the pure community as the mindful field. Pay homage and take action of the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī’s will. Right now we would like honorly inviting the spirit of Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī coming to this bodhi place to prove our nun offering.”

The whole hall is very emotional and silent listening deeply at each word from our hearts to the nun patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī and the ritual rhythm instrument which makes the ceremony so mindful and solemn that touches both heaven and human realms. Next program, it is the dead anniversary rite on completed yellow bands of the late Venerable Tâm Hoa who was the master of the abbess Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh. When the abbess of An Lạc Temple read the biography of her Master, she shed tears remembering the time she was living and studied under her teacher, the Bhikkhunīs in the main hall could not hold back our tears. Oh! Thousands of the gratitude, memories, and fellow felling are imbued in the ceremony today..



After the lunch, under the co-direct of Ven. Bhikkhunī Giói Hương and Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện, an intimate tea party is held. In the warm atmosphere, we can share about the life and propagating of the ancestors and the elders of Nuns. The most Ven. Giác Hương (*abbess of Vạn Hạnh Pagoda, Seattle*) expressed her wishes that young nuns who must keep the Eight laws⁶³ of nuns seriously because it is the characteristics of a humble virtuous nun. Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc (*abbess of A Di Đà Temple, Southern California*) exclaimed it is pleasure to be here from Southern California for the memorial service. This is a connecting step to protect and support the nuns together, especially when we are abroad. Ven. Bhikkhunī Tâm Nhật also expresses her appreciation for attending the ceremony today and wishes the memorial can be held every year, and many other Bhikkhunīs also share ideas to build the nun sangha. After collecting the opinions, the head Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh concluded and declared that in July 2020 of the summer, the nuns will hold a summer retreat at An Lạc Pagoda for 6 days from Monday to Saturday. On the last day, it is the memorial ritual of the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī and the workshop. Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện suggested that at the workshop there will be at least two lecturers who present about the virtues of 1 or 2 prominent senior nuns as a motivating step for young nuns to follow.



Sunset has arrived; it is afternoon. Time passed quickly. Any happy meeting must be ended. Up to now, the commemorative ceremony of Nun Patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī and Senior Nuns, led by the most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh, abbess of An Lạc Pagoda, San Jose, California, cum the head of the organizing committee, have finished with satisfactory achievements. On behalf of the organizers, Ven. Bhikkhunī Giói Hương (Head of Hương Sen Pagoda, Southern California) expressed the following thank note:

⁶³ The Eight Respectful Book of the Discipline (S. Guradharmā ; P. Aṭṭha Garudhammā). vol v. An English translation of Disciplines. Cullavagga, chapter X; Sacred Book of East, XX. PP.354-355.

“The achievements of this commemoration are specially thanks to the honorly present of Venerable Nguyễn Tú, Venerable Đồng Phước, Venerable Chơn Pháp Cẩn, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Hòa, Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Hương, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc, and many other monks and nuns, as well as good friends, and Buddhist fellows who remember the death anniversary of the nun patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī, and the other nun predecessors and kindly come to pray... We wish this event will be maintained each year in order to create opportunities for nuns from all over the places who can attend to the meaning anniversary ceremony, encourage one another to study, share their knowledge, experience and practice of the Buddhas and the patriarchs’ teaching, following in the footsteps the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī to deserve to be their descendants on the path of exaltation of the Dharma, uphold the Tathāgata’s heritage.”

Thanks to the music and the lyrics
Gather as a place together
The deep gratitude and fellow feeling
Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī succeeded, the wonderful of Buddhism spread far.

Namo the First Nun Patriarch Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī proved.

San Jose yellow flower valley, August 31, 2019
Sincere report,
Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The most venerable Nguyễn Thanh and Bhikkhunī Giới Hương
On the Mahā-Pajāpatī Gotamī Day
at the main hall of An Lạc pagoda, August 31 2019

Part II

THE CONDUCT OF VIETNAMESE NUNS IN PROPAGATING DHARMA IN THE UNITED STATES

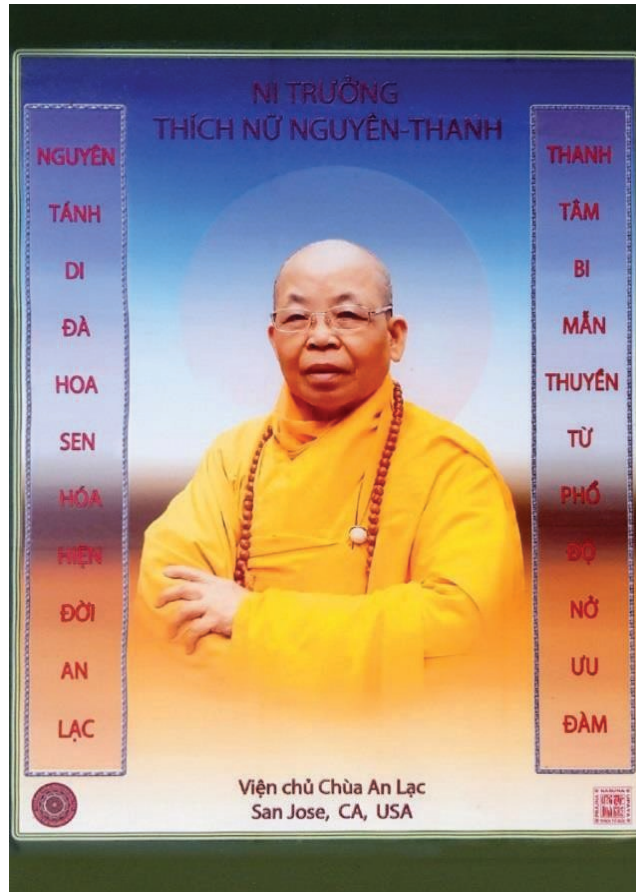
**2.1. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNI THÍCH NỮ NGUYÊN THANH
- AN EXEMPLARY PERSON OF THE NUN SANGHA
IN THE UNITED STATES**

Former Treasurer of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV)

Deputy Foreign Affairs - Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

Advisor to the Nun's Community in the Unified Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam (UBSV)

The Abbess of An Lạc Pagoda (San Jose, California)



The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh in 2017

BIOGRAPHY

Childhood

Venerable Nguyễn Thanh, world name Lê Thị Quan, was born in 1944 in Quy Nhơn, Vietnam, the third daughter in a family of five children. Her father is Lê Đức Khánh and her mother is Trần Thị Quýt, Phú Nhơn Village, Cát Trinh Commune, Phù Cát District, Bình Định Province.

Ordination

Venerable Nguyễn Thanh became a nun in 1957 at age fifteen with Venerable Master Bhikkhunī Tâm Hoa at the Tâm Ấn Pagoda, Quy Nhơn, Vietnam.

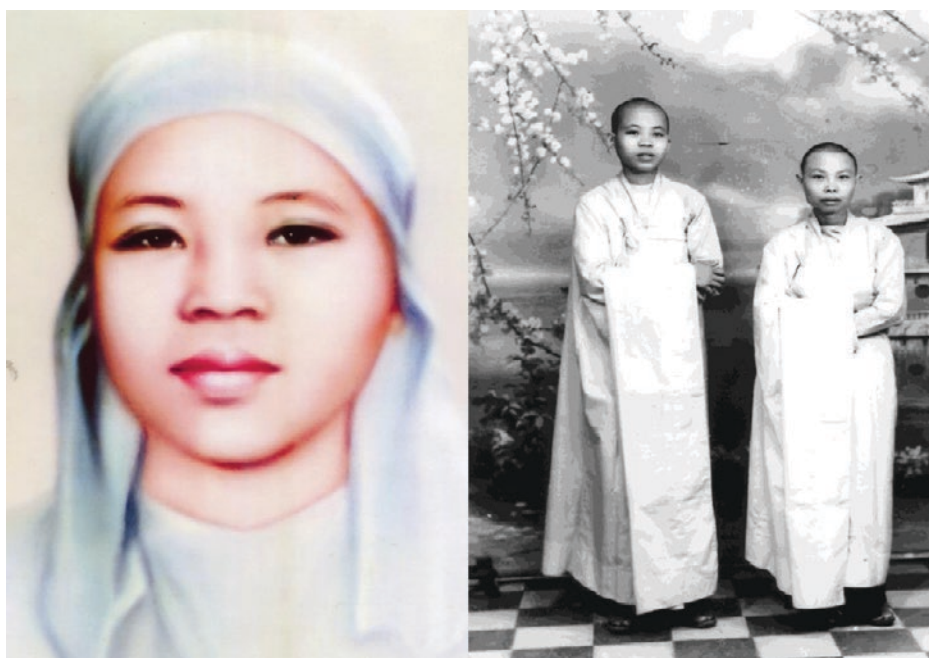


Master Tâm Hoa and Ven. Nguyễn Thanh at Tâm Ân Temple, Quy Nhơn

Samaneri ordination ceremony at Tâm Ân Pagoda, Quy Nhơn, in 1962.

Śikṣamāṇā ordination ceremony at Tâm Ân Pagoda, Quy Nhơn, in 1963.

Bhikkhunī ordination ceremony at Từ Nghiêm Pagoda, Sài Gòn, in 1965.



Sāmaṇerī Nguyễn Thanh and Sāmaṇerī Hạnh Bình

Conduct

The Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh attended Buddhist Studies Courses at Bồ Đề Institute, QuyNhon, Vietnam and was a teacher in local pagodas.

In 1968, she established Lộc Uyển Pagoda in Sài Gòn, Vietnam and assigned her nun disciple Bhikkhunī Minh Hạnh to become the abbess.

In 1984, she settled down in the United States. She stayed with the Most Venerable Đàm Lữ at Đức Viên Pagoda for two years (1984-1986). In 1986, she established Ưu Đàm Temple in Monterey, Marina City, California.

She bought a four-room house in San Jose to establish An Lạc Temple in 1988. In this small temple, monks and nuns of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam in the United States gathered, met and developed to this day. There are large assemblies of up to 2,800 people where she and local Buddhist followers offer their wholehearted support. When the prestige and virtue of the Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh became popular, the house became too crowded to house all of the Buddhists who wanted to be involved. Four rooms were not enough space for living and the neighbors complained about the parking and the noise; therefore in 1993, she bought a church and converted it to An Lạc Pagoda.

An Lạc Temple

Abbess: The Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh
1647 E. San Fernando St.,
San Jose, CA 95116
Tel: 408-254-1710; Cell: 408 594 8717
Email: Anlac1647@gmail.com



Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
in the United States of America, November 10, 2009

Nun Disciples of Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh:

Bhikkhunī Minh Hải, Bhikkhunī Minh Hoa, Bhikkhunī Minh Nguyễn, Bhikkhunī Minh Định and Bhikkhunī Minh Chiếu

Nun's Community at An Lạc Temple:



The Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh visiting the Fourth High Priest, Venerable Huyền Quang at Nguyễn Thiệu Monastery, Bình Định, October 3, 2007.

AN LẠC PAGODA ACTIVITIES

Daily Rituals:

The Dawn Chant, 5:30 am

Reciting the Offering of Rice to the Buddha, 11:30 am

Chanting the Offering of Food to Hungry Ghosts, 4:00 pm

Pure Land Chanting, 6:30 pm: Amitābha Sūtra, Lotus Sūtra, the Penitent Method of Lương Emperor and fifteen minutes of meditation

Monday, 10 am - 12 pm, The Medicine Buddha Sūtra Chanting Course (Liên Hoa Buddhist Association).

Wednesday, 2 pm - 5 pm, the Earth Store Bodhisattva Chanting Course.

Saturday, 7:30 am - 4 pm, Reading the Buddha's name, Chanting Sūtras (Liên Trì Buddhist Association), charity, medical examination and treatment.

Sunday, 7:30 am -10 am, Chanting the Amitābha Sūtra for the deceased and reciting the Avalokiteśvara Sūtra for Peaceful Rite, the ritual offering of food for newly deceased .

Every first Saturday of the lunar month (9:00 am - 5:00 pm), the Eight Precept Retreat for one day.

An Lạc Pagoda has a Vietnamese-language class for children age five to sixteen, an annual three-day renunciate retreat for lay Buddhists, the summer retreat, and a program for giving gifts to the homeless and elderly in two nursing homes in San Jose. In addition, there is a project for engraving benefactors' names on the bronze Amitabha Buddha statues worshiped on both sides of the main hall.

An Lạc pagoda also often holds the Taking Refuge Ceremony, the Ten-Precept Ordination and the Lay Bodhisattva Precept Ordination for Buddhists. In 2009, ordinations for bhikkhunīs, sikkhamānās and sāmaṇeris were organized. As a reputable nun in the United States, the Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh is often invited as the leading bhikkhunī for ordination ceremonies in many temples in the United States, France and other countries



Above left: Venerable Tịnh Từ, Ven. Thiện Trì and Ven. Giác Lượng.
 Below: Ven. Nguyễn Thanh (second right) at Ưu Đàm Pagoda,
 Marina, Monterey in 1986

CHARITY

An Lạc Pagoda usually sponsors four years for student monks and nuns at the Primary Buddhist School of Nguyễn Thiệu Monastery, Bình Định, where they visit and give gifts to the sick, orphans, those with leprosy and poor people. In addition, An Lạc Pagoda builds the Compassionate Houses (Ngôi Nhà Tình Thương) in Nha Trang, Di Linh, Cần Thơ.



Venerable Nguyễn Thanh visits Oncological Hospital
 In Ho Chi Minh City which serves as a main cancer center. tâm ở San Jose.

An Lạc Pagoda often visits homeless people to donate gifts of food and clothing, along with visiting two nursing homes in San Jose. Every weekend, physicians offer a pulse check, orthopedic services, and acupuncture for patients free of charge.

Venerable Nguyễn Thanh wants to help human beings and reduce suffering for the miserable, the hungry and the poor. The Guan Yin box in the yard of An Lạc Pagoda is noted for charity. In addition, the temple also gave one-fourth of the donation box in the main hall to add to this noble charity.

EXPERIENCE CONSTRUCTING THE CEMETARY

With aspiration, “Buddhists live on the door of the temple” and Buddhists die relying on the gate of the Buddha. The Venerable Nguyễn Thanh is famous in a unique action to establish a Buddhist cemetery in the United States.

At first, she thought that since there are so many Vietnamese Buddhists, they might need a hospital and nursing home (for older monks and nuns and Buddhists who can go there to retreat). The next site was going to be the small prayer hall to served the spiritual needs. She proposed this to the Saṅgha but in the end, there were not enough conditions to accomplish it. The monks and nuns are busy with many of the Buddha's works, such as trying to build local temples with a lack of financing and help. After that, she changed her mind about building a Shakyamuni Buddha monument (like in Vŭng Tàu). She had intended to buy forty acres of mountain land, priced around \$600,000 (US), and hire twenty-four hour security to watch the Buddha monument.

The intention of making *an outside monument* was finally concretized by placing a jade stone Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva statue at Oak Hill Funeral Home in San Jose. The program erecting the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva statue was extremely challenging and difficult, but thanks to his divine power, the erection ceremony was carried out at the scheduled time on Sunday, December 10, 2005. Ever since, Oak Hill Cemetery and Oak Hill Funeral Home San Jose are blessed with the presence of a Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva statue which makes the deceased resting there more religious and serene.



The ground erection ceremony of the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva statue at Oak Hill Funeral Home, San Jose, December 10, 2005

EXPERIENCE CONSTRUCTING THE TEMPLE

In 1993, Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh bought a church and remodeled almost 90 percent to change it from a church to the present An Lạc Pagoda. The flooded basement had to be repaired and took four years to complete. The period of applying for a permit and other legal requirements for the temple was extremely difficult and challenging, both financially and in terms of manpower, especially at the licensing stage; however, thanks to the Buddhas' blessing, all obstacles were overcome.

Although Ven. Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh is seventy-five with a frail and ill physical body, her spirit is still strong. She persistently and patiently overcame many difficulties to set up Uu Đàm Pagoda, An Lạc Pagoda and the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva statue at the Buddhist cemetery. She continues to make daily devotions for the sake of Buddhists. Let's imagine how much dedication and energy she put into accomplishing these difficult projects. From the grand things of constructing solemn majestic temples, participating in the establishment of the Saṅgha, and converting the renunciates and laypeople to the small things like planting, cleaning and cooking; everything she is engaged in sets an example for all. How greatly admired she is!



The Inauguration Ceremony of An Lac Pagoda, 2013

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

In 1986, when Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh first established Ưu Đàm Pagoda, she wrote a poem:

Udumbara flower has just bloomed
Its scent everywhere.
Gentle smile forever
Want to offer it to people.

She went to Europe in 1991 to attend the inauguration ceremony of Viên Giác Pagoda, then flew to France for a two-day visit with Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh, but didn't know the way to the pagoda. She thought that if she did not go, she would miss many opportunities. This thought and the concern led her to compose this poem:

Waking up and lying still
Lost in the thoughts
Going or back, I hesitated in two ways
I neither know the way to go nor the way back
May the Buddha bless me to move forward
Now the Tathagatas are sacred
Granting my golden dream be true

Everywhere I go, the Buddha always helps me.



Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh and Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh in Hồng Village, France, 1991

In 1992, one hundred nuns attended a three-day conference at Diệu Quang Pagoda in Sacramento, California. The conference was hosted by Venerable Nguyễn Thanh from Diệu Quang Pagoda. Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ was the head of the Mahāyāna Nun Sangha, while Venerable Bhikkhunī Liên Chi was the representative of the Mendicant Nun Sangha. Venerable Nguyễn Thanh was not well at the time, but when the nuns met, she gave a speech as powerful as that of a healthy person, lifting and brightening spirits.

Visiting Nguyễn Thiệu Monastery in 2016, Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh wrote this poem:

Today I come here with love
Young monks and nuns are studying in Nguyễn Thiệu
To help many beings in the future
As a gift to repay gratitude to parents and teachers.

As one of the senior nuns in the United States, she is often invited to be an honored speaker in Buddhist temples on various occasions such as Vesak, the Vu Lan Festival, the Buddha's Days, and Mother's Day. She also serves as the leading Venerable Bhikkhunī Nun in the precept ordinations.



The senior Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh leading the Sāmaṇeri and Bodhisattva Precept Ordinations at Huong Sen Temple, May 20, 2017

WHAT REMAINS

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh follows the Pure Land method and vows to be born in the blissful West Land: “Every joy meeting must be ended sadly, the joy of the Pure Land is really blissful forever” and “Pay homage to the Buddha, the karma sins are dissipated; every time the Buddha's name is recited, immeasurable merits will come.” She prays for rebirth in the Buddha world to have more favorable conditions to continue to cultivate. When there are many blessings and purity, then she will be back to this world for the sake of many. She advises us to follow the Buddha's teaching:

Take the precepts as a teacher
Take compassion as the aspiration
Take wisdom as a main career
Repay often at four upper gratitudes
Save beings in three lower realms
Keep the vow to become a Buddha
For the benefits of all species.

She wishes that nuns and Buddhists be pure and diligent in following the example of the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī. We can follow any Buddhist method, but we must pay attention to keep our body, speech and mind pure so that we can stop the deep karma. The Buddha well illustrated this as he taught, “If we do good deeds, because of the natural power, we will enjoy good karma. Even though the king has the power of an aid, it is not the same as the power of karma.” (Upāsaka Sūtra)



Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thanh (standing) gives lectures to the nuns in the summer retreat at Điều Ngự Temple, California, June 26, 2018

A ROLE MODEL FOR THE NUNS

Not only in San Jose, California, but throughout the United States, the Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh is well known as an exemplary nun in application and practice of the Buddha's teachings. Following in the footsteps of the Buddha, she showed her spirit with her self-discipline, other-effort, strictly observing the precepts, converting as well as guiding the renunciates and laypeople, doing charity work to somewhat alleviate suffering, establishing temples and a Buddhist cemetery to bring the ultimate practical benefit to all sentient beings. Together with the great monks in the mission to build the house of Dharma, Venerable Nguyễn Thanh, an outstanding Buddhist nun, raised the good image of nuns abroad.

*Blue pure water by the clear source
Beautiful fresh flowers thanks to the good roots*



Venerable Nguyễn Thanh speaking and pointing out pictures to Bhikkhunī Giới Hương who is writing a few words for Ven. Nguyễn Thanh's biography at An Lạc Pagoda Library, 8 am, June 22, 2018

Huong Sen Temple, June 26, 2018

High Regards,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

2.2. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ THÍCH NỮ GIÁC HƯƠNG - THE VẠN HẠNH FLOWER THE ABBESS OF VẠN HẠNH TEMPLE (SEATTLE, WASHINGTON)

Biography:

In 1944 (Giáp Thân), according to karmic mundane conditions, Bhikkhunī Giác Hương was born in Lê lineage, Quảng Nam Province. Her father is a physician, Lê Trung Cư, who specialized in offering free medicines to save people. He was fluent in French and Chinese characters. Her mother is Trần Thị Nhuận, a small trader in the Xuyên Mỹ Commune, Nam Phước, Duy Xuyên District. The family has eleven children. She is eighth in the family and is named Lê Thị Hoàng Hoa.

Conduct:

Although she was a beautiful young girl, she soon realized the impermanence of life, so at only fifteen she asked permission from her parents to become a nun and lead a monastic life.

Samsara originally a temporary realm
Rotation change follow the impermanence
Why we attach to sensuality and passion
There is nothing in the end.

Ups-downs, fame-benefits as the wind-fog
Maintain a fasting pure life.
Take the precepts and wisdom as the main career
Engage in moral conduct for the blissful West.

In 1959, she became a novice with the Dharma name Viên Luận, under the Master Venerable Thích Trí Tịnh, at Vạn Đức Pagoda, Thủ Đức.



At Vạn Đức Pagoda in 1959 (age sixteen)

- 1959, ordination at the samaneri ceremony at Phước Huệ Temple, Sađéc
- 1960, she entered Từ Nghiêm Nunnery (No. 415/417 Bà Hạt Street, District 10, Sài Gòn)
- 1962, she ordained as a śikṣamāṇā at Từ Nghiêm Pagoda
- 1964, received bhikkhunī ordination at Từ Nghiêm Pagoda



At Từ Nghiêm Nunnery in 1962 (age nineteen)

- In 1963 she participated in demonstrations and witnessed the historic moment of the most Venerable Thích Quảng Đức's self-immolation at Phan Đình Phùng crossroads

- 1964, she begged the Most Venerable Thích Tâm Châu to be her Master who gave her the Dharma name Giác Hương. After that, she worked at the Sangha Affairs Office of Việt Nam Phật Quốc Tự Monastery (Trần Quốc Toản Street, Sài Gòn) and taught at Kiều Đàm Kindergarten (District 3) and at a private school in Bình Dương.

- In 1966, she joined Linh Chưởng Pagoda (corner of Phan Đình Phùng Street, District 3, Bàn Cờ Market) to continue studying the culture.

- 1970, she graduated from high school and continued studying.

- 1972, she graduated with a Bachelor of Buddhist Studies from Vạn Hạnh University (Trương Minh Giảng, Sài Gòn)

- 1973, she completed the acupuncture course at Tam Tông Miếu Pagoda (Cao Thắng, District 3) and treated patients in a charity there.

In 1976, Venerable Đồng Giáo appointed her as the Abbess of Đại Hạnh Pagoda in Lý Thái Tổ, HCM City. In difficult times, to be economically self-sufficient, she made incense to sell to support her seven her nun disciples, as well as to fund charity to help the poor people in Cư Xá Hỏa Xa around Đại Hạnh Pagoda and other locals. In the morning, lay Buddhists often went to sell goods at Bàn Cờ Market and in the evening, about thirty people often came back to chant at Đại Hạnh Temple.



Abbess of Đại Hạnh Pagoda (1973-1984)

In 1984 with her ninth sister, she settled down in the United States. The Most Venerable Tâm Châu appointed her to be the abbess of Nam Quang Pagoda in Oregon for five years. From 1990 up to now, she was appointed to be in charge of the the Vạn Hạnh Pagoda (Seattle, Washington), in the northwestern United States.

Vạn Hạnh Temple
Abbess: The Most Venerable Giác Hương
4837 S Fontanelle St,
Seattle, WA 98118
Phone: (206) 722-5305, Cell: 206 883 3188



In front of Nam Quang Pagoda, Oregon, 1984
(The late Venerable Tâm Châu in the middle and Bhikkhunī Giác Hương next on the left)

As of today, she has spent sixty years within the framework of Buddhist precepts and the Zen life (1959-2020) with more than thirty-five years spent in the United States. As the chief nun abroad, she is known as the gentle internal quiet nun well depicted by her name “Giác Hương” (the scent of awakening). She is an exemplar of the spirit of self-discipline and other-awakened for the nuns to follow. At the conferences (the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam), the high ordination of a bhikkhunī (Từ Quang Pagoda-Canada, Điều Ngự Pagoda, Santa Ana, An Lạc Pagoda-San Jose), or retreat (Diệu Quang pagoda in Santa Ana, Đức Viên Pagoda, San Jose), summer course (Bảo Quang Pagoda-Santa Ana, Cổ Lâm- Pagoda, Seattle), and so on. As an elder nun, she often represents the nuns to give speeches to encourage and cultivate the conduct as the humble, diligent Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.



Ven. Giác Hương with Ven. Diêu Từ at Diêu Quang Pagoda in 1995

Willingness:

With inherent good deep roots in Buddhism, she became a nun in childhood, kept the fasting Buddhist concept with the aspiration to practice perfect morality, according to what the Buddha taught for the sake of many.

Lord Buddha - the Mercy One
 The wisdom pure bright
 Love without boundaries
 Rescue people out of the ignorance.

Graciously thinking about the future and knowing the younger generation needs to follow the Buddha’s precepts, Ven. Hương, along with Dr. Quỳnh Lâm and the other leaders in the Buddhist Youth Association have guided about 150 teenagers, children, and preschoolers to approach Buddhism, especially within the framework of Vietnamese culture. Vạn Hạnh Pagoda often opens Vietnamese language and Dharma classes for the Buddhist Youth Association, the eight-precept retreat for adults and offers sermons every Sunday.



Vạn Hạnh Pagoda under construction
 The Most Venerable Giác Hương, Bhikkhūnī Giới Hương
 and Buddhist followers, January 19, 2020

Time passes like sunshine through a window. Now Bhikkhūnī Giác Hương is old (seventy-six); she specializes in reciting the Buddha’s name, keeps the faith-virtue-vow to be reborn into the Amitābha world. Bhikkhūnī Tâm Phước, who is her disciple since the age of eight, is her successor as abbess at Vạn Hạnh Pagoda.



Bhikkhunī Tâm Phước, a nun disciple of Ven. Giác Hương in January 19, 2020



Overview of Vạn Hạnh Pagoda in January 2020

Long night dream about the old homeland,
Year end do not forget about the travel.
Ten thousand miles far from the Blissful Land
Devotedly forward the pure realms!

Tư Tề Lão Nhân



Venerable Giác Hương and Bhikkhunī Giới Hương
taken in front of the temple yard on January 19, 2020

* * *

New Year on the Cold Plateau, January 19, 2020
Recorded at Vạn Hạnh Pagoda, Seattle, Washington USA

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

**2.3. THE MOST VENERABLE NHƯ HÒA
-THE REVERENT MASTER
THE ABBESS OF DUỠCSU' TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)**

Duọc Sư Nunnery (Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns Association in America) was established in 1982, one of the major temples among the Vietnamese community in Garden Grove, southern California. It belongs to the Mahayana Vietnamese Buddhist Church and was established by Chief Nun Như Hòa. The majestic construction of the Three Jewels Hall was completed with sanctuary worship rooms and spacious parking lots. In the front yard, there is an outstanding beautiful Quan Âm statue standing on Phở Đà Sơn Rock Mountain next to the Asian artist's three-door gate.

Duọc Sư Temple
Abbess: The Most Venerable Như Hòa
Deputy: Venerable Bhikkhuni Như Thông
1111 Magnolia Street
Garden Grove, California 92841
Phone: (714) 638-4128
Email: nitruong@duocsutemple.com; chuaduocsuusa@gmail.com
<http://www.duocsutemple.com/lichsuchua.html>

This is one of the major temples for nuns established in the early days when Buddhism began to form in the United States. The temple has many nuns and offers weekly and monthly religious programs serving Buddhists, such as prayers for the living and the dead, one-day retreats, chanting, preaching and Vietnamese language classes of Chánh Tâm Buddhist Youth Association (about 400 students). Every year, there are New Year's Eve, Buddha's Birthday, Vu Lan Festival, the summer retreat for nuns, the rituals of worship, the Minh Dưong rite releasing ashes of the deceased, and social charities. Like the large nunnery, Duọc Sư Pagoda in the Bình Thạnh District of HCM City, this Duọc Sư Temple in California also organizes the great ordination ceremony for bhikkhunis (348 precepts), śikṣamāṇā (250 precepts), samaneri (ten precepts for renunciates), Bodhisattva precepts (fifty-eight precepts for renunciates or thirty-four for lay Buddhists), ten meritorious precepts and five precepts for the renunciates and lay Buddhists.

From Most Venerable Như Hòa's Duọc Sư Pagoda's website:⁶⁴

*Buddhism is the way of Enlightenment
Buddhism is the way of Wisdom
Buddhism is the way of Liberation*

It's difficult to be as a human being; it's even harder to listen to the Dharma. To reach the ultimate destination of liberation from samsara, we need to break the veil of ignorance that has pursued sentient beings from beginningless time. Buddhism will guide us to have wisdom, once wisdom is present, ignorance will disappear.

The Buddha taught us that believing in the Buddha without understanding the Buddha is defaming the Buddha. The path to full wisdom is based on Buddha Dharma and we must diligently practice listening to the scriptures, reflecting and practicing the doctrine.

⁶⁴ Duọc Sư Temple. <http://www.duocsutemple.com/lichsuchua.html>

Through these sincere words of the chief nun, hopefully, may you enjoy moments of peacefulness in the present life and liberation in the future.

In the opening speech on Buddha's birthday, May 22, 2016, the chief nun presented her two wishes as follows:

"I have two aspirations, as well as the prayers of Guan Yin Bodhisattva, who first descended to Phở Đà Mountain to save sentient beings from their sufferings. Today Dược Sư Temple actualized this vow by installing Phở Đà Mountain in California, USA with the aim to pray for all beings sacrificed for the country, and anyunfortunate spirits buried in the sea or the deep forest who can get peace in other worlds.

"The second great aspiration: I hope the elders in California don't get nervous about the California earthquakes, because if the earthquake is there or not, the Buddha can save sentient beings. I ask Buddhists to chant, pray, fast, repent and recite the Buddha's name, and naturally the Buddhas will bless and protect us from this disaster danger."

The Dược Sư Pagoda follows the Pure Land method, so the chief nun often advises Buddhists from near and far to follow the tradition of northern (Mahāyāna) Buddhist temples, read the sutras, repent, attend the eight-precept retreats and recite the Buddha's name to build the Pure Land for yourself in the United States, and then be reborn to the Pure Land in the West to practice under the guidance of Amitabha Buddha and the saintly Sangha.

Huong Sen Temple, June 1, 2020

Sincerely bowing three times,

Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



The main hall of Dược Sư Temple



The Most Venerable Nhu Hoa,
the abbess of DượcSu Temple



Buddhist monks
and nuns walking
to the main hall on
Vesak Day



The elder monk offering
incense on the day of the
Buddha's Birthday



Chanting



Offering flowers ritual

2.4. THE MOST VENERABLE ĐÀM LỰU & BHIKKHUNĪ ĐÀM NHẬT
- THE CAPACITY TO CONVERT NUNS
THE ABBESS OF NUNNERIES OF ĐỨC VIÊN (CA)-TỊNH UYỂN (CA)-TỊNH HẢI (HI)

Đức Viên is one of the famous nunneries in foreign countries because it possesses four things. In the field of historical dates, it was established at an early time (in 1980) in the United States; in the field of architecture, it is one of the old and beautiful monasteries; in the personnel field, it has a large number of resident nuns and lay Buddhists, and in the activity field, it has a rich weekly, monthly and yearly program for nuns and laypeople (adults and youth) to practice and chant, as well as many Vietnamese language classes with more than 500 pupils of all ages. It is considered an exemplary nunnery and an ideal center of practice for the Vietnamese-American community in San Jose, northern California.

- Đức Viên Nunnery was founded in 1980 by Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lưu (forty years ago).
- She was born in Tam Xá Village, Thanh Oai District, Hà Đông Province, Vietnam.
- She has been a renunciate since childhood at Cự Đà Pagoda.
- 1951, she took bhikkhunī ordination at Quán Sứ Pagoda, Hà Nội.
- 1952, she went to the south of Vietnam and studied Buddhism at Dược Sư Pagoda, Saigon.
- 1964, she went to study abroad in West Germany.
- 1979, she settled down in the United States and in 1980 founded Đức Viên Nunnery.
- In 1999, she passed away and since then, her leading disciple, Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Nhật (also known as Như Phước) replaced her as the abbess successor to take charge of Buddhist works at Đức Viên Nunnery. She received the full bhikkhunī ordination ceremony in 1985 at the Từ Nghiêm Nunnery, HCM City.

To continue the merits and virtues of Master Đàm Lưu, Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Nhật, Venerable Bhikkhunī Đức Hòa and other nuns of Đức Viên Nunnery have expanded the areas for nuns as in Đức Viên Tịnh Uyển Nunnery (in the wide city of Los Gatos with more than ten acres) and Đức Viên Tịnh Hải Nunnery (large two acres on the island of Maui in Hawaii). They offer retreats for many nuns in America where many gather to attend the summer retreat. Đức Viên, Tịnh Uyển and Tịnh Hải are places to cultivate self-discipline and enlightenment. They are the center of Buddhist culture, preserving and promoting Vietnamese traditions.

The founding master and her inherited disciples shed their lights of wisdom, diligence and virtue to create the noble scents of Đức Viên Monastery as a virtuous garden, Tịnh Uyển Monastery as a pure garden and Tịnh Hải Monastery as the pure ocean. May this light spread far and near to all people.

Đức Viên Nunnery
Abbess: Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Đàm Nhật
2420 McLaughlin Avenue,
San Jose, CA 95121
Tel: (408) 993-9158

Đức Viên Tịnh Uyên Nunnery
21055 Summit Road,
Los Gatos, CA 95033
Tel: 408-395-3673
Email: ducvienpagoda@gmail.com, damnhatl@gmail.com,
tnduchoa@gmail.com
Website: www.ducvien.org
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Nhật

* * *

Huong Sen Temple, June 26, 2020
Yours respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com

THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ ĐÀM LỰU
GRASS SLIPPERS GOING TO THE WEST
GOLDEN LOTUS BLOOMING

Namo Amitābha Buddha

The following is from a tribute given by Venerable Hương at the funeral service honoring the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu:

Respected Saṅgha, Monks, Nuns and organizers and the disciples of the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu,

I respectfully prostrate to the most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu.

Upon hearing that she had passed away, we would like to express our sincere condolences and fondness for Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lựu. Pray for the Buddhas, bless Master Đàm Lựu to be born in the Pure Land.

Its spring in the United States but the wind is still cold. Flowers and leaves are sprouting and the United States is transforming the sadness of birth-death with the impermanent signs. And your five-aggregate body of the Master merges into the impermanent rule of heaven and earth.

Remembering your life: You were a chief leader of the Nuns' Saṅgha in the United States. You lived a life of virtue, contributing to the Dharma and to the nuns. As you embarked on the cause of propagating the Dharma, you were not afraid of hardships, taking the virtue of compassion to cover and convert the junior nuns.

Take your mind like the Buddha and sacrifice to the Dharma. You had a broad education, but you were always humble, and lived detached from worldly objects. Even when there were problems, you still calmly taught and reminded the nuns to remember to take the precepts, the Eight Rules⁶⁵ of the Bhikkhunīs as a guide. You were a woman highly respected by the Venerable Monks and Senior Nuns; there was no one who did not respect and love you. You also taught the lay disciples the ultimate cultivation: to let go of greed, hatred, ignorance and live without hatred or resentment to expect full liberation.

⁶⁵ The Eight Respectful Books of the Discipline (Sanskrit, Guradharmā; Pāli, Aṭṭha Garudhammā). Vol. V. An English translation of the Disciplines, Cullavagga, Chapter X; Sacred Books of the East, XX. pp. 354-355.

You were a master teacher who dedicated her life to the nuns. Giác Hương knew you when you were in Vietnam teaching the nuns, like a mother looking after her children. From your gentle step to your modest words, your conduct was impeccable.

The magnificent pagoda is still there, the disciples are there, but the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lự has permanently gone. You struck the bell to wake up, to remind and encourage fellow Buddhists and nuns to cultivate to calmly overcome samsara and settle down in the West World, through the heartily reading the name of *Amitābha Buddha*.

Now, the body of Master Đàm Lự rests here, but the aftermath of her virtue and teachings as a guide on the road to liberation has remained forever the model for Buddhists and nuns, domestic as well as overseas. We who are living abroad have felt the loss of a revered nun who contributed so much to our religion, as well as to life. Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lự built a pure moral nun's community according to the teachings of the Buddha. In addition, the Master also actively supported conditions for many nuns studying in other countries, with the aim of training excellent descendants who can share and maintain the Dharma connection and the activities of the nuns.

Now, in front of the spirituality of the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lự, the late abbess of Đức Viên in San Jose, northern California, USA, we feel sad as we see you off to return to the Buddha field. We borrow these worldly words to express mournful exclamation, to pay homage and pray for the Buddha and the bodhisattvas who welcome Master Đàm Lự back to their blissful homeland.

Before finishing our eulogy, I am Bhikkhunī Giác Hương bowing to the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lự and offering my deep condolences to your relatives in Buddhism and life. May all of you be fully fortunate and courageous to overcome difficulties at this great loss and separation.

Vạn Hạnh Pagoda, Seattle, Washington, March 26, 1999
Respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giác Hương



The Three Doors Gate of Đức Viên Nunnery



The Three Doors Gate of Đức Viên Nunnery



Chanting at the main hall of Đức Viên Monastery



The ancestor room of the Late Master Đàm Lưu



The Abbess Bhikkhuni Đàm Nhật giving a lecture to children



Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Nhật at Đức Viên Tịnh Uyển Nunnery



Toward Tịnh Uyển



The Venerable
Bhikkhuni Như Thủy
and nuns in the garden



Nun disciples kneeling
on the twenty-first Death
Anniversary of the late Master
Đàm Lộ in February 29, 2020



Đức Viên Tịnh Hải
Nunnery, Maui, Hawaii

**2.5. THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ DIỆU TỪ,
VEN. TỊNH LẠC & VEN. TỊNH TÂM
- ENJOY THE RENUNCIATED VITUE
THE ABBESS OF DIỆU QUANG TEMPLE (SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)**

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ was born on March 8, 1943 (the Goat Year) in Đa Phước Village, Hòa Khánh Commune, Liên Chiểu District, Đà Nẵng City. She is the youngest daughter in a family of three boys and five girls. At the age of thirteen, she was sent to the nunhood by her parents and became a novice under the late Master Diệu Không, a famous nun in the ancient capital of Huế of the twentieth century.

After that, Venerable Từ went to HCM City to study and graduated with a baccalaureate, as well as completing a Buddhist studies course at Vạn Hạnh University with an optimal score. Among the ordination ceremonies of samaneri, śikṣamāṇā and bhikkhunī precepts at Dược Sư Nunnery (Gia Định, Sài Gòn), she took bhikkhunī ordination at the age of twenty in Huế. She achieved excellent high scores in the examinations. She is a natural genius in writing, singing and composing poems, music and literature.

In 1975, she went to study abroad in Japan and in 1981, she settled in the United States. On July 4, 1982, Venerable Diệu Từ, her disciples and lay Buddhists founded Diệu Quang Pagoda in Sacramento (located in northern California and within the capital of California). This is one of the earliest nunneries in the United States, as well as the earliest establishment of the “Buddhist Youth Student Union” in the United States.

To further the sharing of Dharma dignity spread in mid-1997, the nun expanded to the Diệu Quang pagoda (the 0.5 acre plot) and the Diệu Không Buddhist Cultural Center in Santa Ana, Orange County, Little Saigon-the central areas where the Vietnamese community lives in southern California.

Time passed and Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ’s health became worse. On October 20, 2018 (September 12, the year of the dog), she left her body, returning to the Pure Land. She had more than twenty nun disciples, and now the two leading disciples have replaced her as the abbess to take charge of the Buddhist works, spreading the Tathagata’s mission.

Diệu Quang Pagoda (northern California)
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Lạc
9229 Elder Creek Road,
Sacramento, CA 95829
Phone: (916) 381-4360

Diệu Quang Pagoda (southern California)
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tâm
3602 W. 5th Street,
Santa Ana, CA 92703
Phone: (714) 554-9588

The founder of the temple was a person with fine taste, so the two Dieu Quang Pagodas (in northern and southern California) have many architectural features of ancient Asian pagodas, such as curved roofs, three-door gate, Guan-yin Stupa, Cundī Hall, Medicine Buddha Stupa, Lumbini Garden, the main hall. They are very artistic and exemplify the Buddhist homeland of Vietnam.

Buddhist compatriots come to practice and chant every weekend and on the holidays festivals are very crowded. These two pagodas have a Facebook page where Diệu Quang Temple, Sacramento, posted this poem:

*When coming to Diệu Quang, I don't want to go back home.
Think of yourself without awakening, still ignorant,
Pray to the Three Jewels for blessings often,
Let us rely on Bodhi Root.*

Huong Sen Temple, June 11, 2020
Bowling respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com

THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ DIỆU TỪ- DIỆU QUANG TEMPLE

“Our family settled in Sacramento, USA, in 1996 under the immigrant HO program. My close friend, Phụng, visited and drove us to visit Diệu Quang Nunnery, less than fifteen minutes away from home. At that time, in the Sacramento capital there were only two Vietnamese pagodas: Kim Quang pagoda which was established long ago and Diệu Quang Pagoda which was newly established. Two months later, when our lives were temporarily settled, we started to go to Diệu Quang Pagoda to recite sutras, listen to the Dharma and offer service labor at the temple. Our three young children joined the Buddhist Youth Association as I used to be in Huế.”

It was touching to meet and talk with the Most Venerable Thích Nữ Diệu Từ. Upon learning that we had just arrived in the United States, she graciously asked about our accommodations, living conditions, school and asked if we had any difficulties and did we need any help from her? At the end of the ceremony, after lunch, she brought out rice, noodles, cooking oil, butter, milk and so forth and told us to take them home. We refused because we thought we had not offered anything but only received the temple's assistance, but she said, “Don't hesitate, we share hunger and thirst.” That statement made us shed tears. She took care of us with gentle gestures and cordial words as our master.

The lay Buddhists also welcomed our family very warmly, asking and giving instructions and advice on the weekly temple activities. Thanks to the kindness and compassion of the Most Venerable Abbess, the nuns and the lay Buddhists did not feel lost or strange. On the contrary, we felt as if we were children far away from our homeland, now returning the main patriarch's house and warmly welcomed by our relatives. Ever since then, we go to the temple to attend regular activities every week.

According to the recounting of nuns, when they first established the temple, the chief and young nuns had to do a lot of work, such as repairing the old room, renovating the garden and planting trees to create a temple scene. Sometimes lay Buddhists came to help, but most of the labor was done by nuns. Even the chief nun had to climb on the roof and repair the damaged areas. There was a time when Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Minh came from Vietnam, visited the temple and saw Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ sitting on a tiled roof. She exclaimed: “Practicing in America is so hard!” Thanks to those difficulties of the first days, today, Diệu Quang Pagoda has become a majestic temple with many visitors from far away coming to worship and take souvenir photos.

As a talented person in organization and sharing Dharma, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ divided Buddhists in the temple into four groups for studying Buddhism and contributing to service. Thanks to that, everything runs smoothly at the pagoda.. In the weekly Dharma talks, the chief nun often encourages her followers to recite the name of Amitabha Buddha, applying the Buddha's teachings to transform greed, hatred and delusion in everyday life. The chief nun is also very interested in young people. Along with other experienced elder Buddhists, she founded the Diệu Quang Buddhist Student Youth Union (LĐSVTTNPT) in 1985. Most of the students are descendants of lay Buddhists, so their parent's support is very enthusiastic. The association operates weekly on Sunday mornings and in addition to the youth activities, studying the Dharma, they also learn more about Vietnamese culture. During the Vesak Day Ceremony, Vu Lan, the Student Youth Union performed the flowering ritual with excellent performances of music, dance and animation.

In addition, the Diệu Quang Buddhist Student Youth Union has skilled dragon dancers serving the Vietnamese community for decades. Why did I establish the Diệu Quang Buddhist Student Youth Union (LĐSVTTNPT) but not the Buddhist Young Family? I sadly replied that the Buddhist Young Family in the United States is divided into two central instruction boards. Which one should I join? Both of the groups I knew well, so it was decided to create a new group.

In 1998, at the request of Buddhists in southern California, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ went to Santa Ana to establish the second Diệu Quang Pagoda whose model is similar to the one in Sacramento, but places more emphasis on music. She had the ability to translate Buddhist scriptures into lyrics and composes music with her own elegant melodies.

This is a very new way to share the Dharma and it is very effective, suitable for many ages. Many elders and middle-aged folks like to sing or listen to it- young people do too and children clap and sing at the union activities. The voice of the chief nun is very inspiring, pious, transforming the hearts of listeners. Sometimes in the Dharma talks, people would get sleepy, but when the chief nun sings a piece of music, people cheerfully woke up. Some scriptures performed through music are easier to understand and remember, such as the offering of incense and repentance. The meetings often are sung by the "chorus." Over ten years ago, we, by chance, heard a young singer in Vietnam sing a repentance song with a professional orchestra, transmitted over the internet and we thought it sounded quite lovely.

At that time, we all felt all the wonderful transformations of the chief nun's song in the hearts of the masses. Like other timeless choruses, many of the chief nun's songs will still resound amid this impermanent life.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ has succeeded in displaying the traditional ceremonies at two Diệu Quang Pagodas. The ceremony program is also lively, attracting crowded, colorful attendees on the stage and the audience. Besides the old Buddhists, there are small children, next to the yellow robes of the monastics. There are young singers with colorful dresses and innocent faces of the children offering flowers. After the ceremony, there is always a pure delicious vegetarian meal service that also offers takeout.

In the book, *A Lotus*, the author Đức Hạnh mentioned the healing ability of the Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ, which less people know about. The book contains the accounts of six Buddhists, Phú, Quảng Phổ, Quảng Giải, Quảng Tín, T. Đại and Quảng Thanh, representing hundreds of other patients. *A Lotus* recounts the life of the chief nun from birth to age thirteen when she ordained. She displayed talents at a young age. She continued to study, practice and propagate the Dharma in her home country and later abroad. Books were published by two Diệu Quang Pagodas in 2019, free of charge. The readers of the book, *A Lotus*, deeply admire the strength and discipline the chief nun displayed when encountering harsh and unfavorable

conditions. Yet she was always smiling and happy as she performed her duties and courageously devoted her life to the religion.

Without an elaborate practice and steady concentration, how could the chief nun be able to calmly continue on the journey of “serving sentient beings as offerings to the Buddhas”? Her lay disciples who have committed to the Three Rules with the Five Precepts are numberless; however, she is most attentive and supportive to the training programs in the monasteries, regardless of whether monks or nuns. She has twenty-five renunciate disciples, many of whom are contributing to the work of propagating the Dharma to benefit the USA. For example, Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Lạc, Abbess of Diệu Quang Pagoda in Sacramento,; Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang, Abbess of Quan Âm Monastery in Redlands, California, also teaches at the Bodhi Buddhist Institute in Santa Ana, southern California; Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tâm, Head of Diệu Quang Pagoda (Santa Ana), helped Master Diệu Từ in establishing the temple and its activities. Venerable Tịnh Hạnh, head of Từ Quang Pagoda in Alabama, has the gift of voice in chanting to touch people’s hearts.

The list of monastic disciples under Master Diệu Từ are Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Lạc, Rev. Tịnh Trí (deceased), Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Minh, Ms. Tịnh Châu (disrobed to be lay Buddhist), Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Phổ, Rev. Tịnh Chiêu, Ms. Tịnh Khánh (disrobed to be lay Buddhist), Rev. Tịnh Hiền, Rev. Tịnh Khánh (deceased), Rev. Tịnh Anh (deceased), Rev. Tịnh Huệ, Rev. Tịnh Nguyễn (deceased), Rev. Tịnh Thành (deceased), Rev. Tịnh Chơn, Rev. Tịnh Diệu (deceased), Rev. Tịnh Tâm, Rev. Tịnh Pháp, Rev. Tịnh Giới (deceased), Rev. Tịnh Huyền (deceased), Ms. Tịnh Viên (disrobed to be lay Buddhist), Rev. Tịnh Hạnh, Rev. Tịnh Ngọc, Rev. Tịnh An and Rev. Tịnh Hiếu.

Master Diệu Từ passed away on October 20, 2018, at the pagoda in Santa Ana at the age of seventy-six with fifty-four years in Dharma. At her death, dear disciples gathered to chant for her. With the virtue and vow of the chief nun, we fully believe that her soul will go to the Buddha-land to awaken the unproduction state; however, due to compassion, she will return to the saha world to save sentient beings.

On behalf of all Buddhist followers who wish to receive the education of the chief nun again, we would like to pay homage to the Most Venerable Diệu Từ, the forty-third Linchi Zen lineage of Zen, Trúc Lâm Sect, the abbess of Diệu Quang Nunneries in Sacramento and Santa Ana.

Sacramento, June 15, 2020

Paying Triple Homage,

Nguyễn Thành, Quảng Minh,

Quảng Diệu Minh, Quảng Từ Phổ, Quảng Diệu Thảo

tpho1996@gmail.com

MEMORIAL
THE VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ DIỆU TỪ
THE FOUNDER OF DIỆU QUANG PAGODA, CALIFORNIA

Namo Sakyamuni Buddha

We are Bhikkhunī Giới Hương and nuns of Hương Sen Buddhist Temple, Perris, California, have just knew that Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ, the abbess cum founder of Diệu Quang Pagoda, Southern California, United States, had passed away at 10 pm, October 20th 2018 (according to lunar year September 12th, the year of Dog), at the age of 76 in life and 56 years old in Buddhism.

Dear our Master,

I am propagating into Vietnam and I have heard Bhikkhunī Hạnh Quang (Diệu Giác Pagoda, District 2) informed that you had passed away. We are really sad and shocked by your departure. This is a great loss for overseas and domestic Buddhism, especially for our nuns. Master is a respectable talented female with full virtue. With constant deep compassion, you are intimacy for those who are predestined to see and learn from you. I remember the first days when I first set foot in the United States (2005), you and your Bhikkhunī disciple Thích Nữ Tịnh Tâm helped and shared the experience for me to get used to a new life. You offered me two long traditional renunciate dresses (áo nhật bình), a warm cloth and undergarment which I still keep as the valuable souvenirs. When I first set up a new establishment at Hương Sen Pagoda (2010) in a remote area of Moreno Valley, Cali, although your body was sick, but also you went along with your Buddhist followers of Diệu Quang pagoda to visit, and attend the ceremony to give preaching and support spiritual affinity for our nuns. In the summer, sometimes we come to Diệu Quang pagoda to recite the precepts (Uposatha) and give sermons to lay people. Later, my Buddhist works are so busy, I rarely to come back Santa Ana, and heard that your health is getting weaker and weaker often. You keep rest in room less talk and receive visitors. I often send tea cakes and card Mother's Day (on the first Sunday of May each year) to offer you instead of Vu Lan's gift. I also receive the phone call from you to thanks with a weak voice. Today I am very sad to hear that you have been left this world.

Terns fly all over the sky

Their shapes sink underflow of cold water.

Terns do not pay attention at their traces

Water has no saved their figures.

Master had come and gone, leaving no traces except the past echo. "Birth and vanish. Appearance and disappear" means that there is a birth in this life, there will be death. If there is a shape, there will be end of shape. That is the timeless principle, but why in our hearts like small pupils, it is impossible to stop the respect and miss our modest Master. From now, the meditation scene has been absent the most Venerable master, in the abroad nun sangha have been lost the chief Bhikkhunī with the high virtue, in Diệu Quang pagoda has been lost the compassionate teacher who kindly provided liberation for all her nuns and disciples. We feel helpless, lost and surprised when there is no Master to guide us on the spiritual path ahead...

At this sacred moment, towards the USA, in front of the burning incense, we pray that our Master will direct peacefully in the blissful Amitābha Buddha's world; however, out of great compassion to our beings, you kindly come back to this saha world to guide and convert all of sentient beings.

On this occasion, we also would like to send our deep condolences to all nun disciples and relatives of the Master as well as the Buddhists of Diệu Quang Pagoda to this great loss.

Namo Amitābha Buddha's world
adorning all directions of Buddhas.

Paid homage to The Late Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ proved.

Huong Sen Temple, October 23rd, 2018
Respectfully,
Bhikkhunī TN Giới Hương and Nuns
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Master Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ (speaking with microphone) and her leading disciples:
Ven. Tịnh Lạc (left) and Ven. Tịnh Tâm (right) at Vesak 2018



The three-door Gate of Diệu Quang Pagoda, Sacramento



Front site of Diệu Quang Pagoda, Sacramento



Main hall of Diệu Quang Pagoda, Sacramento



Vesak at Diệu Quang Pagoda, Sacramento in 2019



Diêu Quang Pagoda, Santa Ana



Members of Sangha praying at Diêu Quang Pagoda, Santa Ana



Vu Lan Festival at Diệu Quang Pagoda, Santa Ana, August 19, 2019



Right in first row: Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tâm, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Lạc and Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang at the main hall of Diệu Quang Temple in 2019

2.6. THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ NGUYỆN, VENERABLE NHẬT NHAN - THE GRACE OF DHARMA THE ABBESS OF XÁ LỢI TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. The Most Venerable Như Nguyệt

The Most Ven. Như Nguyệt (aka Nguyễn Ngọc Hiếu) was born in 1947 in Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu. She is the fourth child in the family of five sisters. In 1961, realizing impermanence when her two youngest siblings died, the chief nun and her mother left the world behind to lead a monastic life under the guidance of Master Như Châu at Từ Nghiêm Nunnery. The Dharma name of her mother is Thích Nữ Như Đức, while hers is Thích Nữ Như Nguyệt. Later, Bhikkhunī Như Đức was appointed to be the abbess of Viên Minh Pagoda (Lý Thái Tổ Street, the 10th District, Saigon City).

In 1969, after receiving bhikkhunī ordination, Reverend Như Nguyệt left Từ Nghiêm Nunnery to study and help Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Đức (her mother) with Buddhist works at Viên Minh Pagoda until the day she left for the United States.

In 1983, Bhikkhunī Như Nguyệt settled in the United States, sponsored by the Most Venerable Mãn Giác, the president of the Vietnamese United Buddhist Churches and the abbot of the Vietnam Buddhist Temple. Later, she was appointed to be the abbess of many pagodas, such as A-di-đà Temple (Los Angeles, 1986), Kiều Đàm Pagoda (Rosemead, California, 1988), Viên Minh Pagoda (St. Louis, Missouri, 1989), Minh Quang Vihara (Portland, Oregon, 1991) as well as keeping the post of deputy general director of the laity, along with serving as the general secretary of the Nun Sangha (Term I), the Second Office, the Viện Hóa Đạo Buddhist Office and the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation in 1992.

2. Xá Lợi Temple

It is known that Xá Lợi Temple (Rosemead, California) was founded by Bhikkhu Minh Hạnh in June 1981, and in 1998, he passed away (fifty-five years old) and transferred it to Chief Nun Như Nguyệt to be abbess of Xá Lợi Temple.

Xá Lợi Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Nhan
2755 Del Mar Avenue,
Rosemead, CA 91770
Phone: (626) 572-0389, Cell: (714) 873-3175
Email: chuaxaloi@yahoo.com

The Most Ven. Như Nguyệt has devoted all her energy and health to renovating Xá Lợi Temple. In order to expand the scope, she purchased a house next door so that Buddhists have a spacious place to practice. The temple offers a variety of weekly, monthly and annual activities such as organizing retreats, chanting, meditation, preaching, anniversaries, prayers for Buddhists in the local and surrounding areas and invites everyone to attend. She dreams of having a spacious hall with a curved Asian roof like the pagoda architecture of Vietnam.

In May 2016, she received the government's permit for building a new 2,400-square-foot and 20-foot-high hall. Thus, her wish was considered to be partially accomplished and

she began to dedicate herself to calling for support to start the project. However, at the age of seventy with sickness, she passed away on January 15, 2017 (seventy years old, fifty years old in Dharma). Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Nhan (the new abbess of Xá Lợi Pagoda) and her disciple, Bhikkhunī Như Tín (a new deputy head) continue to be in charge of constructing and guiding Buddhists to practice and develop the temple.

3. Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Nhan

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Nhan (world name Hiền Nguyễn) was born in 1967 in Gò Công Đông, Mỹ Tho. In 1980, she ordained under Master Như Huệ at Thiên Đức Pagoda, District 6, HCM City. She received full Bhikkhunī ordination on July 15, 1987. In 1999, Venerable Bhikkhunī was sponsored and settled down in the United States with the sponsorship of the Most Venerable Thích Minh Thông (Vĩnh Nghiêm Pagoda, Pomona, California). Ven. Nhật Nhan is a younger Dharma sister of the Most Ven. Như Nguyệt, because Ven. Như Nguyệt is a disciple of Master Thanh Lương (Master Như Châu and Master Như Huệ who are Dharma sisters and worked in Từ Nghiêm Pagoda, District 10, HCM City). Ven. Nhật Nhan became a nun at a young age, has sincerely practiced, is sociable and served the public. The Most Ven. Như Nguyệt entrusted and appointed her as the abbess of Xá Lợi Pagoda in 2017.

Currently, construction has been completed on the main hall. Only the interior decoration and parking lot (fifteen spots) are left to finish and this is expected to be completed in 2021 if the budget is sufficient. On the day of the inauguration ceremony with the elders, venerable monks and nuns, and lay Buddhists attending, surely the spirit of the late Most Ven. Như Nguyệt must return to witness and be very happy.

May the construction work be completed successfully and may Venerable Nhật Nhan, as well as Ven. Như Tín, stay healthy and strong in mind to complete the assigned the Buddhist works.

Namo Solemn Decorated Bodhi Place.

Hương Sen Temple, June 20, 2020

Bow three times,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com

MEMORIAL
THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ NGUYỄN

Namo Shakyamuni Buddha

We, Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, the nuns and Buddhist followers of Hương Sen Temple, Perris, California, just heard that the Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn, the General Director of the Nun Sangha in the Executive Council of the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation and the Abbess of Xá Lợi Pagoda, Rosemead, California, United States, passed away at 5:30 pm, January 15, 2017 (Year of the Monkey), seventy years old in life and fifty years old in Buddhism.



Dear Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn,

As one of the young nuns practicing Dharma in the United States, the elder's passing in the West make us, the nuns, feel depressed and sad with lack of support. This is a great loss for the Xá Lợi Pagoda in particular, and for the Sangha, the Buddhist monks and nuns and everywhere, and Buddhists in general. start here

We remember when you were alive, during the summer retreats, the Vesak festivals, the Vu Lan Day and the North American Buddhist Studies Courses, you appeared as a gentle, tolerant and quiet nun. Each of your steps and gestures show the dignity and majesty of the female disciples of the Sakya lineage. Your words are as the tender fragrance of the Nun Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī.

During a long journey, you stood side by side with the monk Sangha to build a Buddhist House abroad to promote the Dharma, train nuns, maintain the Tathāgata's heritage and repay the gratitude of the Three Jewels. Following the holy lineage, your great service to life and Buddhism remains in our hearts and minds, as it is well expressed in the Therīgāthā:⁶⁶

As a Bhikkhunī
The sense bases are practiced,
Transform all sufferings,
The necessary works are done,
The ignorant fermentations
Have completely ceased.
Therīgāthā, Verse 364

⁶⁶ Trưởng Lão Ni Kệ - Therīgāthā by Hòa thượng Thích Minh Châu dịch Việt
<https://archive.org/details/truonglaonike>.
Bhikkhunī Giới Hương translated into English.

At this sacred time, we sincerely pray that you will be born in the Amitābha Buddha’s world and as a result of your compassionate vow, (“follow the will” as your name says), Như Nguyễn, we pray that you come back to this saha world to guide us and all other beings.

On this occasion, we also would like to extend our sincere condolences to the noble Dharma disciples of the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn, and the Buddhist followers in Xá Lợi Pagoda for this great loss.

Namo the Amitābha Buddha’s blissed land

Prostrating to the Late Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn

Huong Sen Temple, January 18, 2017

Sincerely bowing three times

Bhikkhunī TN Giới Hương and the Nuns

huongsentemple@gmail.com



Facade of Xá Lợi Pagoda, June 2020





The Funeral Ceremony of the Most Ven. Như Nguyễn on January 23, 2017



Disciple Rev. Như Tín (leading the group and holding the picture of Master Như Nguyễn) and younger Dharma sister Ven. Nhật Nhan (holding the bowl behind), and the nuns took the coffin to the crematorium



The Most Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhr Hoà (Dược su Temple) stands to give a commemorative speech with the Sangha attending the funeral



The Most Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhr Hoà, the Most Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhr Tịnh and Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhr Phước and the nuns at the funeral



Left: the Most Ven. Thông Hải, the Most Ven. Thăng Hoan and the monks and nuns at the funeral



Front side of Xá Lợi Temple, June 2020



Inside the Xá Lợi Main Hall, June 2020



View of Xá Lợi Temple

**2.7. THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ TỊNH -
VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ CHON VIÊN
- THE PURE CHARACTERISTIC
THE ABBESS OF ĐẠI BI MONASTERY (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)**

The Most Venerable Như Tịnh (seventy-eight years old) whose hometown is Quảng Trị, is one of the renunciate disciples of the Master Như Thanh (Huê Lâm Temple). The Most Venerable Như Tịnh established Viên Thông Pagoda (Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu), and serves as abbess with more than 100 nun disciples, among whom are Venerable Bhikkhunī Chon Viên, a leading disciple she sent to immigrate to the United States and establish Đại Bi Monastery in southern California.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Chon Viên (world name ĐỖ Thị Phương Dung) was born in 1964 in Mỹ Tho. After graduating from grade twelve in 1980, she became a nun under the guidance of Master Như Tịnh at Viên Thông Pagoda (Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu). In 1987, she received the full bhikkhunī ordination at Phước Huệ Temple, Sa Đéc. She graduated from the Intermediate School of Buddhist Studies at Đại Tông Lâm Institute, Đồng Nai.

In 2005, Venerable Bhikkhunī Chon Viên settled in the United States by the grace of the Most Venerable Nguyễn Trí (Bát Nhã Pagoda) and in 2012, under the guidance of her Master Như Tịnh, she founded the one-acre wide Đại Bi Temple (*old address: 3210 W 5th St, Santa Ana, CA 92703*).

In 2012, the Master Như Tịnh started the paperwork to immigrate to the United States and in 2020, the Master Như Tịnh along with disciple Ven. Chon Viên and her local lay Buddhists decided to buy a church with three acres of land (costs about US \$7 million). Then on March 22, 2020, the temple moved to new premises:

Đại Bi Monastery
Parson: Chief Nun Như Tịnh
Managing abbess: Ven. Bhikkhunī Chon Viên
13852 Newland St,
Westminster, CA 92844
Cell: (714) 360-5355
Email: chonvien82@gmail.com

It is known that besides Ven. Chon Viên, the chief nun has many disciples in the United States, such as Bhikkhunī Chon Hương (temple in Michigan), Bhikkhunī Chon Như (An Lạc Hạnh Pagoda, Florida) and several other nun disciples at Đại Bi Monastery in California). Currently, the temple has about thirty nuns joining the monastery to study under the guidance of the Venerable Parson Thích Nữ Như Tịnh.

Đại Bi Monastery is a large nunnery with advantages such as many resident nuns, a completed construction facility, a large hall that can hold thousands, numerous spacious rooms, large yards, big parking lot, located in Westminster (the Vietnamese community living area of Little Saigon, southern California), convenient transportation, and so forth. Lay Buddhists come to study and many preachers come to teach and great conferences or retreats can be held.

Every Saturday and Sunday the temple offers activities for hundreds of lay Buddhists to study, listen to Dharma talks, and recite the Buddha’s name. On February 22, 2020, an inauguration ceremony was organized with more than 300 Buddhist monks and nuns, along with nearly 1,000 Buddhists attending and congratulating.

In an interview with Chief Nun Như Tịnh, she shared her ideas about Vietnamese nun Sangha in the United States:

“Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī gave up the golden palace, shaved her hair, went barefoot with bloody feet, and refused to stop, still determined to go to the Buddha to beg for the practice of renunciation and liberation. Thanks to her sacrifice and supplication, the Buddha accepted nuns to practice liberation together with the monks to build a Dharma house. Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī played the role as a gentle mother, like a great teacher leading the female children on the right way. Since then, we nuns must diligently practice, keep mindful at our body and mind to repay the profound grace of Buddha and Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, especially as we are in the twenty-first century in the luxury of the United States.”

Huong Sen Temple, June 14, 2020

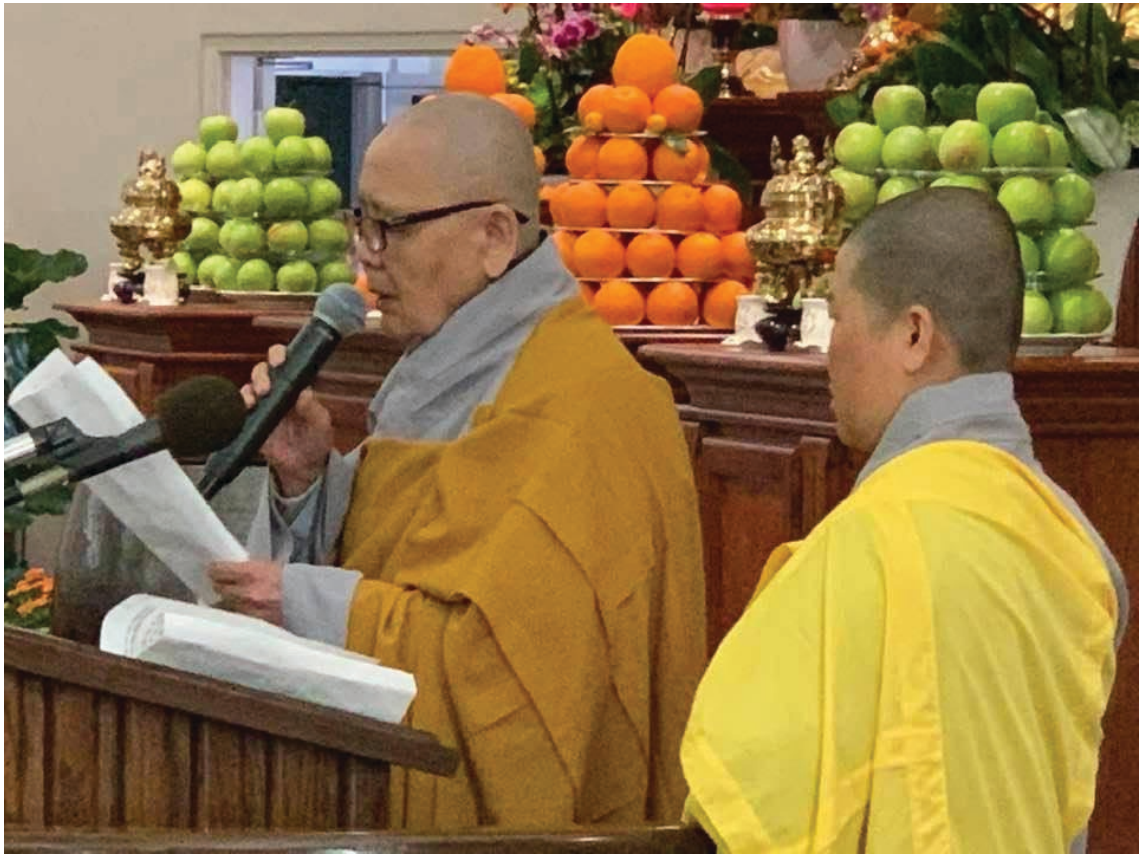
Respectfully,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



The front of Đại Bi Monastery



The Most Venerable Như Tịnh giving a speech
with her disciple, Bhikkhunī Chon Như



Venerable Bhikkhunī Abbess Chon Viên



Overview of the monk and nun Sangha attending the Inauguration Ceremony on February 22, 2020



The Inauguration Ceremony on February 22, 2020



Chief Nun Như Tịnh (right), Chief Nun Như Hòa (opposite),
Ven. Minh Phước and Ven. Giới Hương (wearing blue scarf)
At the Inauguration Ceremony on February 22, 2020



The Most Venerable Như Tịnh (sitting center)
and nuns of Đại Bi Monastery at the main hall in 2019



The Most Venerable Nhur Tinh and nuns
on the Ordination Ceremony in 2019



Chanting in the main hall in June, 2020

2.8. THE MOST VENERABLE HUỆ ÂN
-THE TRANQUIL LIFE
THE ABBESS OF QUAN ÂM PHỔ CHIẾU NUNNERY (MARYLAND)

Quan Âm Phổ Chiếu Nunnery in the eastern United States was established the Most Venerable Bhikkhūni Huệ Ân in 2010, so that Buddhists from New Carrollton (also known as Lanham) have a spiritual place to practice and recite the Buddha's name.

Quan Âm Phổ Chiếu Nunnery
Abbess: The Most Venerable Huệ Ân
7605 Good Luck Road
New Carrollton, Maryland 20784
Phone: (301) 552-4676

In the main hall, there are three saints (Amitabha Buddha, Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva) with both sides in the hall dedicated to the deceased. Outside in the yard, there are many white stone statues and engravings with many Dharma sentences such as:

1. At the reclining statue of Shakyamuni Buddha, there is an inscription:

“Let me go with you, to the hometown of the Buddha
Escaping samsara with a difficult path.”

2. At the Guan Yin statue, there are engraved words:

“Prostration in ten direction Buddhas,
Please give me calm
In the face of adversity
Although I am scolded verbally,
Or by a ruse.”

3. At the great bell, there is the epitaph:

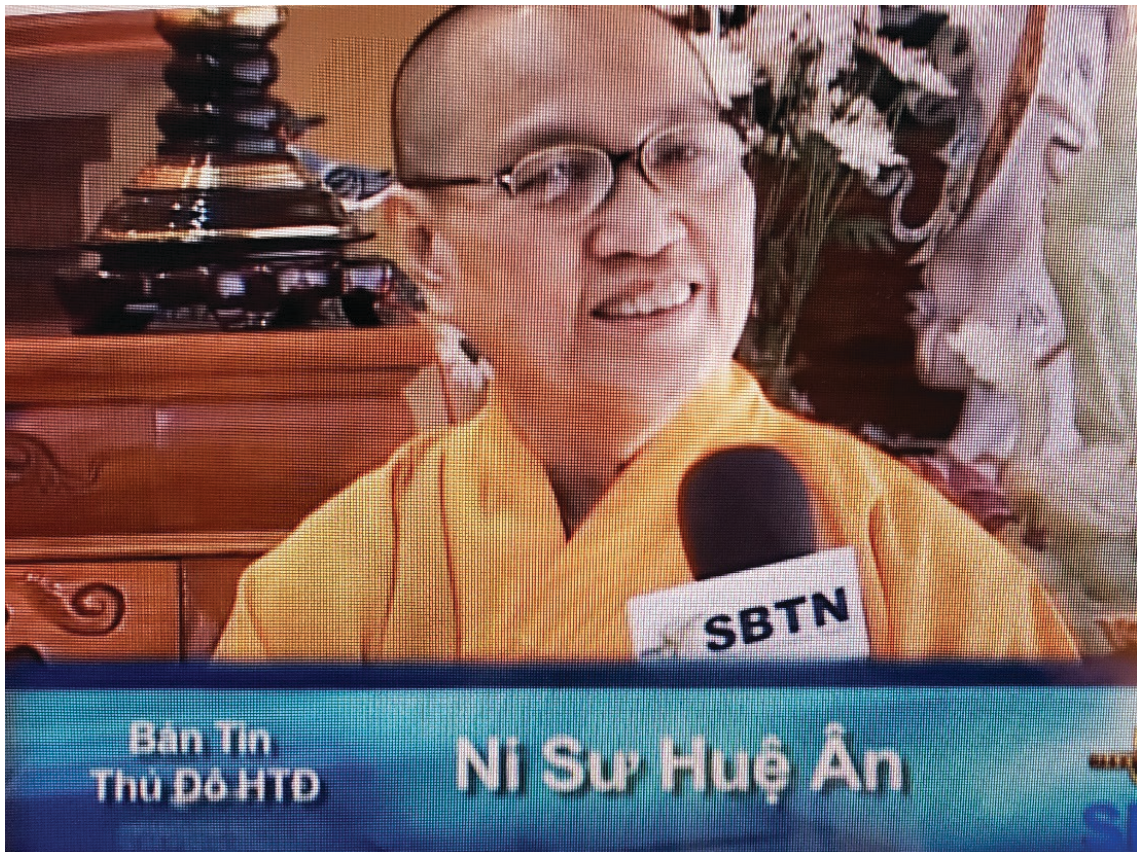
“A sincere thought from the ten directions,
Earning unpredictable measureless merit,
May we build together the Guan Yin Stupa
Pray for stopping rebirth to enter Nirvana.”

4. There are also inscriptions in many other places, such as:

“Happy is the noble Dhamma!
Dark night, borrow the paññā lamp
Light the mind to open smoothly a thousand ways.”

*Vu Lan Ceremony is set up for the liberation forum,
Purified water sprinkled with willow seeds
Thanks to the compassion of the Buddha,
Open the unjust to transform suffering, soul forward to the Buddha's land,
Life is turbulent, training us great experience,
Many times we failed, taught us wisdom.
I love this world forever,
Because here we live with full happiness and sadness.*

Huong Sen Temple, June 4, 2020
Respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Ân



Front of Quan Âm Phổ Chiếu Nunnery



The opening Sakyamuni Buddha statue



The main hall



The Zen garden



Meditation



The bell stupa

**2.9. THE MOST VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ KIẾN NGUYỆT
-THE ŚŪRAṄGAMA BRIGHT MOON
THE ABBESS OF PHẬT ÂN TEMPLE (KANSAS)**

Phật Ân Temple is located in Wichita, Kansas and is under the leadership of the abbess, Venerable Bhikkhunī Kiến Nguyệt. The temple was established in 1999 on four acres of land with an old garage, which was renovated to serve as the main hall for worshipping the Three Jewels.

Over time, Phật Ân Temple was reconstructed with a solemn temple hall, Bát Nhã Lecture Hall, a three-door gate and a spacious parking which were all completed in 2018.

Phật Ân Temple
Abbess: Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Kiến Nguyệt
3854 S. West Street,
Wichita, Kansas 67217
Phone: (316) 522-0385

The Grand Opening Ceremony of Phật Ân Temple was solemnly held for three days on the Enlightenment Day of Shakyamuni Buddha on the lunar fourth month in 2019. It was blessed with the honored presence of the Venerable Abbot of Vietnam (Houston, Texas), the Venerable Abbot of Phổ Đà Pagoda (Canada), the Venerable Abbot of Pháp Hoa Pagoda (Wichita, Kansas), Venerable Từ Đàm Pagoda (England), monks and nuns from far and near, lay Buddhists both domestic and foreign, who all gathered to attend the joyous Grand Opening Ceremony of Phật Ân Temple.

The main activities of Phật Ân Temple are on Saturday and Sunday, when anywhere from fifty to seventy Buddhists attend the ceremony, chant, listen to the Dharma talk, have vegetarian meals and do temple work. Every Saturday afternoon, Buddhists gather at the temple to study the Śūraṅgama Samadhi Sūtra. The chief nun is interested in this Mahāyāna Sūtra (please listen to it on YouTube). She also translated and noted the Śūraṅgama Samadhi Sūtra treatise of Master Từ Tuyên.

Every month, the chief nun leads the Buddhist Recitation Session and by the end of 2019, there will be the sixty-ninth Recitations Course.

On Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva Day (June 19 of the lunar calendar every year), Phật Ân Temple hosts the Avalokitesvara Festival, the three-steps-one-prostration course, lighting thousands of lamps and offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to pray for a peaceful country and peaceful people. During this festival, there is also a three-day retreat, with anywhere from 500 to 700 lay Buddhists and renunciates attending and listening to the lectures from the Most Venerable Masters. Up to 2019, Phật Ân Pagoda has maintained the Guan Yin Festival nineteen times. This is also a traditional ceremony around the world, helping Buddhists develop their minds towards nurturing compassion and liberation and gaining peace in the Dharma of the Tathagata.

The Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Kiên Nguyệt has dedicated her whole life to religion, preaching sermons, creating temples, and helping Buddhists have a pure life, away from the ocean of ignorance.

*Dharma is wonderful
Bringing people far from the illusional dreamland,
Knowing to be altruistic,
For the happiness of all people.*

Huong Sen Temple, July 12, 2020
Paying Triple Homage with Respect,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The three-door-gate of Phật Ân Temple



View of Phật Ân Temple



The Most Venerable Nguyễn Hạnh, the Most Venerable Bồn Đạt and the monks attend the inauguration of the main hall on May 12, 2019



Venerable Bồn Đạt (left) and Chief Nun Như Nguyệt (right) praying



Phô Đà Mountain - Quan Âm Statue



Chanting in main hall



The Venerable Monks, Nuns and lay Buddhists of Phật Ân Temple



The abbess gives the beads to Buddhist followers

**2.10. THE MOST VENERABLE TỪ LIÊN
& VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ TRANG -
FRAGRANT ORNAMENT IN READING THE AMITĀBHA BUDDHA'S NAME
THE ABBESS OF TAM BẢO TEMPLE (UTAH)**

Tam Bảo Temple was founded in a small house in July 1984 by a Buddhist group. Over time, with the contributions of the Buddhists, Tam Bảo Temple was renovated and officially inaugurated on November 18 in 1990.

The Most Venerable Từ Liên (also known as Như Liên) settled in the United States in 1991 and in 1992 was invited to be the abbess of Tam Bảo Temple until 2004. Currently, due to the frailty of old age, the chief nun nominated Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Trang as the head, and Ven. Như Thảo as the deputy.

Tam Bảo Temple
459 N 700 W,
Salt Lake City, Utah 84116
Phone: (801) 359-4311
Advisor: Sư Bà Từ Liên
Abbess: Ni sư Như Trang, Deputy: Sư cô Như Thảo

Tam Bảo Temple was built with a spacious main hall and many statues of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the natural bonsai garden. Each week sixty or seventy Buddhists come to join the chanting and listen to the Dharma. There is a one-day retreat and recitation of the Buddha's name every Saturday at the end of the month. The temple provides the service to pray for the living and the dead, preaching, marriages and services at funeral homes. They cook vegetarian food to sell on the weekends or full moon. It helps fellow Buddhists to practice vegetarianism and gradually practice to maintain the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition.

Namo Amitabha Buddha.

Huong Sen Temple, June 20, 2020
Respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The Most Venerable Từ Liên (center with brown robe) with monks and nuns in front of Tam Bảo Temple Gate in 2020



Second from left: Rev. Như Thảo, Ven. Như Trang, Most Venerable Từ Liên (sitting) and the nuns performing the ritual for a long life.



The Most Venerable Từ Liên (center), Ven. Như Trang (left) and Buddhists in front of Tam Bảo Temple in 2020



The main hall of Tam Bảo Temple at the New Year, 2020



Chanting

2.11. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ GIỚI CHÂU
- PRECEPTS AS THE GEM
THE ABBESS OF QUANG MINH TEMPLE (COLORADO)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu, the abbess of Quang Minh Temple in Northglenn, Colorado, is an ordained disciple of the late Most Venerable Diệu Lý of Quang Minh Pagoda (Đà Nẵng), who was ninety-seven years old. She passed away in 2018, and had more than fifty nun disciples, including some nuns in the United States such as Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Châu, Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Tâm (aka Nguyễn Thiện, abbess of Huyền Không Pagoda, San Jose), Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Huệ and Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Định (Bát Nhã Pagoda, California).

Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu graduated with a bachelor of Buddhist studies in the first course (1985-1989) at the Vietnam Institute of Advanced Buddhist Studies, HCM City. Then she went to study in the United States where she later earned many degrees, including a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Denver, a master's of religious studies at Harvard University (Boston, Massachusetts), and a master's of clinical social work from Boston College. She is also a licensed practical nurse in Denver, Colorado. She established Quang Minh Pagoda in Colorado (named after Quang Minh Temple which is the principle center of her master in Đà Nẵng).

Quang Minh Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu
10660 Rosalie Drive,
Northglenn, Colorado 80233
Phone: (303) 350-7252
Email: tngioichau@yahoo.com

Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu is one of the nuns who came to the United States early in the 1990s. She built a temple for nuns, went to universities and worked as a registered nurse to support her overseas preaching career. As a nun who got a job, paid off her temple and settled down in her life, she is able to help some new monastics just arriving in the United States to build temples. She supports them by co-signing on loans to buy houses or land for pagodas. In 2009, I (*Giới Hương, a disciple of Most Venerable Hải Triều Âm*) was one among those who used to call to ask her to cosign. I gave Venerable Giới Châu all my personal information for her to complete the financial papers when I was shifting from Wisconsin to California. Although after that, I used another way and did not use her co-signing information, so that she can help others. My gratitude to her is impressed on my heart. I always appreciate and respect her.

She worked as a nurse in a hospital to support herself and to comfort others, practicing the conduct of the Medicine Buddha. While still in Vietnam, she graduated from a nursing assistant course to prepare for supporting herself in the United States. During that time when she was attending this nursing course, I occasionally phoned to hear her experiences serving patients, and how to pass on the lessons she learned. She was always enthusiastic to share ideas. I also imitated her and attended two colleges at the same time, collecting knowledge of the overseas culture to know how to live, survive and integrate and preserve Buddhism in the United States. I have to say that Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu is a role model in the US for me to look up to.

Venerable Giới Châu is small, gentle, humble and willing to help people and the sangha. She has organized many vegetarian fundraisings in Colorado to support the activities of the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation so they can organize North American retreats and other Buddhist works. As she often says, “Quang Minh Pagoda is now paid off and I am no longer worrying about financial matters, so I spend more time taking care of the congregation as well as cultivating more.”

In 2017, she was nominated to the highest post of the director general of the Nuns’ Sangha in the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation. She often goes to Bát Nhã Pagoda (Council of Management Central Office, California) to teach Vinaya to nuns, because most of the nuns are living in southern California. She is one of the virtuous preachers who often teach nuns and Buddhists in the summer retreat and at temples in the United States and many other countries. With respect to the Buddha, Dharma and the Sangha, many monastic visitors and Tibetan lamas have been invited to give lectures or guide the retreat at Quang Minh Pagoda. Every weekend, Buddhists come to chant, study, recite the Buddha’s name and listen to the teachings under the loving guidance of Most Venerable Giới Châu who is an exemplary virtuous nun. “Instead of Buddhas, be the Tathagata’s messenger. Help beings transform their suffering.”

Huong Sen Temple, May 20, 2020
Paying Triple Homage,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



From left: Venerable Giới Tâm, Venerable Giới Châu, Venerable Tịnh Đức (the leading disciple of the late elder Master Diệu Lý and currently an abbess of Quang Minh Pagoda) and Venerable Giới Huệ kneeling to invite the Great Monks to start the ritual of the death anniversary of Master Diệu Lý on January 12, 2019



Front side of Quang Minh Temple



The abbess gives the beads to Buddhist followers



From right: Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu, Venerable Hạnh Bảo, the Most Venerable Như Điển (Germany), Reverend Thông Triết and Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Hương at the main hall of Quang Minh Temple, April 2018



Chanting at Main Hall of Quang Minh Temple



Listen to Dharma talks



Dining Hall



Upper: Great Monks
Standing from left: Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh, Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu,
Bhikkhunī Giới Hương and Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ at a Northern American retreat in 2016

2.12. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ PHƯƠNG
- COME AND GO FREELY
THE ABBESS OF PHỔ MINH TEMPLE (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Phương (world name Anna Đào) was born in 1945, in Gò Vấp, Gia Định. She often studied at Dược Sư Temple and Liên Hoa Temple. Renunciate at the age of twenty-one (1976) with the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Trí, the director of Từ Nghiêm Pagoda, she received full ordination in 1982. In 1990, she settled in the United States with her parents in Sacramento and started her career preaching there. She studied at Vạn Phật Thánh Thành Temple (The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, California), Linh Quang Pagoda (Philadelphia), Phổ Từ Pagoda and Ưu Đàm Pagoda (California). In 1997, she graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science (Micro Computer Systems Operator) at Contra Costa College in California. This year, she is seventy-six years old with thirty-eight years in the Dharma.

TEMPLE is pillars
PHỔ universal shines the sacred
MIND light shows the cause and effect.





Tibetan monks and Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhur Phuong (standing center)
at the main hall of Phổ Minh Temple in 2015

Phổ Minh Temple is named because firstly, it is the second Buddha's name among the eighty-eight Buddhas in *Hồng Danh Bửu Sám Sūtra* (the penance ritual of prostrating to the name of Buddhas) *Hồng Danh Bửu Sám* (the penance ritual of prostrating to the name of Buddhas) *Sūtra*; secondly, the abbess wants the enlightened light of the Blessed One to be disseminated everywhere. The half-acre pagoda was founded in 2000 in the city of Sacramento, the capital of California. Opposite the pagoda is Ethel Phillips Elementary School, which allows cars to park every weekend. This helps the temple expand its sharing of the Dharma.

Phổ Minh Temple

Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhur Phuong
2751 21st Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95820
Phone: 916 739 6344, Cell: 916 490 2368
Email: chuaphominh@hotmail.com

The temple has a schedule of reciting the Buddha's name, practicing and teaching every week, every month, and every year. On weekends, about thirty to forty Buddhist followers come to study and chant, as well as worship the deceased Buddhists. On the Lunar New Year, Buddha's Birthday, Vu Lan, Amitabha Buddha Day, hundreds of Buddhists from far away gather to attend. The temple also celebrates a *thủy táp* (releasing the deceased's ashes into the river) every year in San Francisco on the last Saturday of the seventh lunar month. Obeying the Buddha's teachings, every Vu Lan time the Venerable Bhikkhunī Abbess has followed the tradition of Venerable Moggallāna by offering food, clothing and medicine to the Saṅgha. She asks them to pray for her three dead masters who gave her the five precepts, the full bhikkhunī precepts and Buddhist knowledge, as well as offering this merit to pray for all of the dead ancestors and spirits.



Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhur Phuong and her group reciting prayers
to release the deceased ashes under the
Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, 2012

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhu Phương founded the temple with the aim to serve sentient beings, with these actions offered to Buddhas and to the long-term Dharma. Locally, when Vietnamese families have funerals, relatives often come to ask the temple who can perform the death ritual for them. The temple wholeheartedly takes action, without any conditions, because they know this is an occasion for us to share the Dharma with people who are not practicing Buddhists. This is the occasion for the temple to practice reading the Amitābha Buddha’s name, fasting, doing blessings for the dead, and practicing them by themselves. As such, the temple can save both in the living and death realms, which is the nun’s ability to contribute to Buddhism in the United States.

Buddhist monastics have the wish to live inwardly and without reciprocal treatment. The samsaric world is a fake. Beings in society think that it is real, so they keep scrambling to gain and the hatred piles up. A Buddhist monastic, a nun lives truly with the Buddha’s teachings, leaves no traces in life, and comes and goes freely in this mundane world. Later, if she arrives at the Buddha realm, she does not want to leave relics in life here, she just wants to deal naturally with this body and does not mind if many people know it. Her standpoint is to not create bad karma, not to quarrel. These actions influence the cause-effect of rebirth to return to this samsara world. Her spiritual keys are, “A thousand things let go, a thought is not risen,” or “Same sounds will respond and same ears will understand.” Let’s grasp these Dharma keys and take a powerful stance. If there is a return to this realm, she will no longer be an abbess anymore but a preacher who has only three robes and a bowl, who guides Dharma for the sake of many sentient beings. Whoever constructs the temple, creates the triple-jewel place, she will happily and wholeheartedly support.



Venerable. Thiên Phước (sitting), Bhikkhunī Nhu Phương (third from right), Reverend Nhu Hiệp with monks and nuns at the rite of Offering Food to Hungry Ghosts
Phổ Minh Temple, July 2019

The guideline of Phổ Minh Nunnery is the Meditation-Pure Land sect parallelism. She belongs to the main Linyi, following the line of the verse: “

*Thanks to the Amitābha Buddha
Making vows to bring people out of suffering
Maintain reciting the Buddha's name to rebirth the Pure Realm
Each page the sacred Dharma for preaching.
Namo Amitābha Buddha*

* * *

Huong Sen Temple, April 19, 2020

Yours Respectfully,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



Ven. Như Phương (Center), Rev. Diệu Hoa and Buddhists on the Vesak Day (in the Covid Virus Season) in May 03 2020

Rev. Diệu Hoa kneeling to offer a poem to the Abbess Ven. Như Phương at Phổ Minh Temple in May 03 2020





(Left) Rev. Diệu Hoa, Ven. Giới Hương,
Ven. Abbess Như Phương and Rev. Viên Tiến
On the Vu Lan Day at Phổ Minh Temple in August 23 2020



(Front) Ven. Giới Hương, Rev. Viên Tiến
Rev. Diệu Hoa, Rev. Diệu An
Chanting at Phổ Minh Temple in August 22 2020



Ven. Như Hạnh (kneeling), Ven. Như Nguyên,
Ven. Giới Hương, Rev. Viên Tiến and Buddhists
performing the Ancestor and Decade Ritual
at the Patriarch Hall of Phổ Minh Temple
in August 23 2020

**2.13. THE MOST VENERABLE NHƯ TÂM
- TEN PHỔ HIỀN CONDUCTS
THE ABBESS OF PHỔ HIỀN TEMPLE & LINH QUANG TEMPLE
(MASSACHUSETTS)**

Phổ Hiền Meditation Center was established in 1991 at 29 Milbury Street in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 1995, the center moved to its current address at 96 Dewey Street in Worcester.

In 2007, the temple's main hall was restored, the three-door gate was newly built and the statue of Guan Yin was placed in the temple courtyard. These are solemn images for Buddhists to worship. After that, the abbess bought a large area opposite the temple, to make a parking lot for fifty cars, expanding the scope of the temple.

The Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Tâm comes from a sincere Buddhist family. From the age of seven, she came with her mother to pray at the temple. In 1972, Ven. Như Tâm (age twenty) became a nun under the Venerable Master Như Thanh. In 1992, she and her sister settled in the United States. This year the chief nun was sixty-two years old and assigned her nun disciple, Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Phước to be the abbess to take care of Phổ Hiền Temple.

Every week Phổ Hiền Pagoda has a Buddhist Association meeting to recite the Buddha's name, chant, meditate, listen to Dharma, perform the mass ceremony, a ceremony of the Buddhist Youth Association Như Thanh (the name of the late Master of the Vietnamese Nun Sangha), and Vietnamese language class. On the occasion of the Lunar New Year and the great festivals, numerous Buddhists return to practice and attend. On the occasion of New Year's Eve, the mayor of Worcester, Massachusetts visited Phổ Hiền Pagoda and Như Thanh Buddhist Youth Association.

Phổ Hiền Buddhist Meditation Temple
Rector: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Tâm
Abbess: Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Phước
96 Dewey Street, Worcester, MA 01610
(508) 755-7817
Email: nhutamthich@yahoo.com

Phổ Hiền Pagoda is the place where, at the end of her life, the late Chief Nun Như Thủy (a famous preacher in Vietnam and abroad and the elder sister of Venerable Bhikkhu Thông Lai) resided to recover from illness. She passed away here on March 17, 2018.

Linh Quang Temple, established in April 2016, is a branch of Phổ Hiền Temple and the Vietnamese Buddhist Community in Massachusetts.

Linh Quang Temple
Linh Quang Buddhist Meditation Temple
Abbess: Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Phước
833 Washington Street
Abington, MA 02351
(339) 469-1732
Email: nhutamthich@yahoo.com

The temple is located in a quiet area of the city of Abington, Massachusetts. Every week, many local Buddhists gather to practice and assist the chief nun with work, cleaning and decorating the altar and the solemn temple. In the yard, there is a solemn statue of Kuan Yin (sculpted with Đà Nẵng's white famous stone).

With a frail body, Ven. Như Tâm followed the lead of the Venerable Master Như Thanh, overcoming difficulties, devoting all her heart, time, and health to establishing the temples, sharing the Dharma for the sake of many. Vietnamese fellow practitioners far from their homeland have a spiritual place to gather together to practice and enjoy the bliss of the Blessed One.

*Disciples of the Buddha, immense in great will,
Though hard, not seeking to fall backward,
Though arduous, never giving up,
Perseverance of the mind, practice upwards.*
(Chief Nun Như Thanh)

* * *

Hương Sen Temple, July 29, 2020
Bow and Salute,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The three-door gate of Phở Hiền Temple



The Venerable Bhikkhuni Nhu Tam



New Year's Eve, Mayor of Worcester Massachusetts visiting Pho Hien Pagoda and Nhu Thanh Buddhist Youth Association (From left: Ven. Bhikkhuni Nhu Tam, Mayor and the interpreter)



The Most Venerable Nhu Thủy giving a lecture in the main hall of Phổ Hiền Temple in Worcester, Massachusetts, December 2017



The Sangha offering incense at the Vu Lan festival



Chanting in the main hall



The female Buddhists of Phổ Hiền Temple at Quan Âm Statue



The Most Venerable Như Tâm (wearing yellow robes) with nuns and Buddhists



Ven. Nguyễn Thiện (third from the left) and Ven. Như Tâm (fourth) at Phổ Hiền Temple



Linh Quang Temple, Abington, Massachusetts



The Opening Quan Âm Statue



Linh Quang Temple,
Abington, Massachusetts



The main hall of Linh
Quang Temple, Abington,
Massachusetts



Ven. Như Tâm (second
right, wearing a yellow hat)
with the nuns and lay Buddhists
at Linh Quang Temple on
November 12, 2017

2.14. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ HIẾU ĐỨC
- TOWARD TO AMITĀBHA BUDDHA
THE ABBESS OF LINH QUANG TEMPLE (PENNSYLVANIA)

In the eastern United States in Telford City, Pennsylvania, there is a nunnery (3.5 acres) founded by Venerable Bhikkhunī Hiếu Đức in 1985. On July 31, 2016, the Grand Opening Ceremony of the Main Hall was held by Linh Quang Nunnery. Many Buddhist monks and nuns from the United States, Vietnam and Australia attended. The temple is solemn with an arched Asian roof, a pink lotus pond and tranquil statues of Maitreya, Guan Yin and Amitabha in the serene garden.

Linh Quang Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Hiếu Đức
821 Ridge Road (563 HWY)
Telford, Pennsylvania 18969
Phone: (215) 234-0930
chualinhquangpa@yahoo.com

Venerable Bhikkhunī Hiếu Đức who is a disciple of Master Hải Triều Âm, received full ordination in 1981 and also is a Dharma sister with Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương. She chose Linh Quang after the patriarch pagoda in Đại Ninh, where the late Master Hải Triều Âm lived and practiced. Linh Quang Pagoda follows the motto of Master Hải Triều Âm, dedicated to confessing, reciting sutras and reading the Buddha's name. Venerable Bhikkhunī Hiếu Đức has two monastic disciples, Bhikkhunī Chơn Hiếu and Bhikkhunī Viên Thanh, and several other nuns who came to live and practice under her guidance.

Every weekend the temple has a program of chanting and listening to Dharma for local Buddhists. Each month there is a one-day retreat for Buddhists and annually there are festivals, the Buddha's birthday, Vu Lan, and so on where hundreds of Buddhists gather to listen to the Dharma and attend the ceremony. Each year the temple also organizes a New Year Flower Festival, the pilgrimage to ten temples and a renunciate retreat to sow affinity. Venerable Bhikkhunī Hiếu Đức is very hospitable and often invites many monks and nuns, both domestically and abroad to lecture and guide the retreat here.

Huong Sen Temple, Sunny Season in June 2020
With metta,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Front side of Linh Quang Temple



Lumbini Garden



The delegation of Venerable Như Điền (Germany) passed the precept ordination to Buddhists at Linh Quang Pagoda on May 6, 2018



Grand Opening Ceremony of Linh Quang Temple Hall, Pennsylvania, August 13, 2016



From left: Michael, Diệu Hạnh, Diệu Châu, Venerable Giới Hương, Venerable Hiếu Đức, Reverend Viên Tiên, Diệu Sương and Trang visited Venerable Hiếu Đức on July 30, 2019



The pink lotus garden and the curved roof of the main hall of Linh Quang Pagoda



Venerable Giới Hương gave a lecture at Linh Quang Pagoda in 2013

2.15. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ MINH HUỆ
THE INTERIOR REFLECTION
THE ABBESS OF THANH LƯƠNG TEMPLE (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ was born in Long Xuyên, ordained when a child and received the bhikkhunī precepts in 1982. She graduated from the second course of Buddhist studies (1989-1992) at the Vietnam Advanced Buddhist Institute in HCM City. She studied abroad in India in 1994, graduated with a master's degree in Buddhism in 1997, and received her doctorate in Buddhism in 2003 at University of Delhi, India.

After that, she settled in Illinois in the United States and took charge as the abbess of Phật Bảo Pagoda in Illinois. In 2011, she founded Thanh Lương Pagoda (California), 8,000 square feet, in northern California.

Thanh Lương Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Huệ
3261 Trentwood Way
Sacramento, California
Phone: (916) 428-4871; Cell: (916) 896-6263
Email: nhumy@yahoo.com

Thanh Lương Pagoda has activities every Sunday morning. Local Buddhists come to study and pray from 10 am to 12 pm. Every year, she celebrates the Buddha's Birthday, Vu Lan Day, Buddha's Enlightened Day and so forth. There are more than 100 Buddhists attending these events. The temple also often welcomes monk or nun visitors to deliver the Dharma talks for the sake of many.

As a dignified and mature nun, in the nunnery or in summer retreat, she usually held the management or leading position. She loves to recite Buddha's name and meditate on the interior to pray for herself and the world.

*Focus your mind to pray,
Come back to tranquility,
We and the Buddha are one,
The world turns out peace.*

* * *

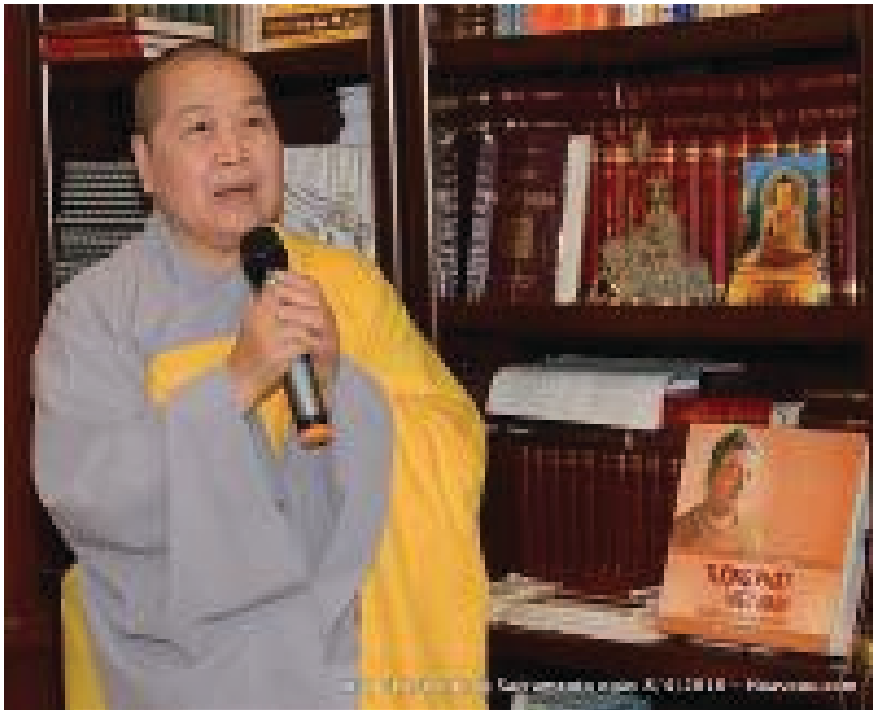
Buddha's Birthday in the isolation of Covid Virus,
the Eighth of the Fourth month in the Lunar Year
Hương Sen Temple
Respectfully,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The front yard of Thanh Luong Temple



The front face of Thanh Luong Temple



Venerable Bhikkhuni Minh Huệ



The delegation of Venerable Như Điền (Germany) giving the Dharma talk at the main hall of Thanh Luong Pagoda in 2018



Buddhists listening the Dharma talk at the main hall of Thanh Luong Pagoda in 2018



Venerable Minh Huệ (second right) and Ven. Giới Hương (third right) at summer retreat at Phật Học Viện Monastery 2016

2.16. THE VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ ĐỒNG KÍNH
- THE ZEN KEY
THE ABBESS OF VÔ ƯU BUDDHIST MEDITATION ASSOCIATION
(NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association

Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association in northern California began as a house on 1.6-acres that was offered to the Most Venerable Trúc Lâm Thanh Từ on November 13, 2002 by the Buddhist family, Chánh Quán Nghiêm and Chơn Niệm Trang. In 2002, Master Thanh Từ entrusted it to Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính (now known as Ven. Bhikkhunī Thuần Thành) to be in charge.

Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association
Abbess: Ven. Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính
1300 Church Avenue, San Martin, CA 95046
Phone: (408) 683-4498
Email: vouuthienvien@yahoo.com
Website: <https://thienvienvouu.org/>

The abbess, Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính, nuns and lay Buddhists contributed their health, time and financial support to the construction of the center to transform it into a solemn meditation center. In the main hall, there are statues of Shakyamuni Buddha, Manjushri Bodhisattva and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. In the back yard at the Zen Garden, there is a marble Bodhidharma statue of an ancestor standing between the green hills and impressive rocks. The Meditation Association is increasingly developing, becoming a peaceful ideal Zen center for renunciates and lay Buddhists to learn meditation.

Guidelines

Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association follows the method of Zen Master Thích Thanh Từ who combines the practice through the three lines: first Patriarch Trúc Lâm Trần Nhân Tông, the second Patriarch Huiko and the sixth Patriarch Dajian Huineng, Huệ Năng. The purpose is to realize our true nature and the Meditation Association is willing to share these guidelines with all who are interested.

The Meaning of “Vô Ưu”

Ưu means udumbara (rare), a precious flower that blooms once in a while. In the Lumbini Garden, Queen Maya caught a branch of udumbara flowers as she gave birth to Prince Siddhartha. “Vô ưu” means not disturbed, unconcerned. The Zen center wishes that practitioners who come here will release their worries, let go of the illusional guests (wrong thoughts), and practice living with their Buddha mind (true mind).

Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính

- Ven Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính (world name Nguyễn Thị Thoa) was born in 1949 in Sài Gòn.
- In 1972-1975, she studied and graduated with a degree in Vietnamese literature from a University in Sài Gòn.

- In 1980, she ordained as a nun at Đông Hưng Temple with the Master Hành Trụ.
- In 1983, the master sent her to study meditation at Chơn Không Monastery (Vũng Tàu) under the guidance of Zen Master Thanh Từ.
- In 1984, she took bhikkhunī ordination at Long Thiền Temple, Biên Hòa, Đồng Nai and taught Buddhism at Đồng Nai Intermediate School (led by the principal Venerable Nhật Quang, Thường Chiếu Monastery) for many years.
- In 2001, she came to the United States under the R1 category, guaranteed by the Quang Chiếu Zen Monastery (Texas).
- In 2002, Venerable Master Thanh Từ, appointed her to be the abbess of the Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association.

Nuns and Schedule

The Vô Ưu Center has eight nuns. On weekends there are local nuns who gather here to practice. The center has a rich schedule of activities every weekend, with monthly retreats and festivities on Buddha's Birthday, Vu Lan and the New Year festival. Each year, the Zen Center organizes a three-month summer retreat for nuns; particularly in the 2020 leap year, there will be four months from the tenth of the fourth lunar month (May 2, 2020) onwards. There are twenty-one venerable nuns attending the retreat. As everyone is isolated during this pandemic and Buddhists cannot come here, every day Venerable Đồng Kính gives an online lecture and on Wednesdays, she gives bilingual lectures (English and Vietnamese) from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Sharing the Grace of Dharma

Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính found many spiritual answers and has offered years of service to the Zen Association of Zen Master Thanh Từ. She treasures the practice and application of the Buddha's teaching in life based on three truths: the common truth (impermanence, dependent origination and cause-effect), the relative truth (dual between good and bad, samsara and Nirvāna) and the absolute truth (the realization of emptiness meditation, realizing your inherent true nature). She treasures the Śūraṅgama Sūtra and wants to live fully with the Dharma of the Lotus Sūtra, which encourages nurturing the Buddha seed equally. Before being ordained, she recited the Lotus Sutra daily at Đông Hưng Temple.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính teaches almost every day online with a variety of titles such as:

- All Phenomenon Returning to One Mind
- English Dharma Course
- Necessary Path to Enlightenment
- Wisdom of the Sergeant - the Fascinating Life
- Tale of Eighteen Arahants
- Four Immeasurable Minds,
- *Prajñāpāramitā (perfection of wisdom)*
- *Dhyana-paramita (perfection of meditation)*
- *Giving Pāramitā (perfection of donation)*
- *Khanti Pāramitā (perfection of patience)*
- Śūraṅgama Sūtra
- Four Noble Truths
- Buffalo Going Home

- Loving-kindness, Compassion, Joy and Equanimity
- Pañcāvidya, the Main Point of Zen
- Pañcānām Balānām (five powers)
- Enlightenment
- Three Types of Obstacles

Please visit the website: <https://thienvienvouu.org/>

In the United States, Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính also lectures at many Zen monasteries, such as Chơn Giác Zen Monastery, Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery, Đại Đăng Zen Monastery, An Lạc Pagoda, Đức Viên Pagoda (California), Trúc Lâm Pagoda (Illinois), Tuệ Quang Pagoda (Oregon), Quang Chiếu Zen Monastery (Texas) and many temples in Canada and Australia.

Regarding the next generation of young nuns in the future, Venerable Đồng Kính shared that “I am rather worried because in a developed country as the USA, nuns have to make great efforts to bring Buddhism to develop. It is very difficult for young nuns to study in the United States. Vietnam has a *strong religious atmosphere* while overseas there is very little of the religious flavor, with difficult circumstances of finance, debts, languages and transportation. The temple also serves the elderly lay Buddhists and monastics committed to diligent practice.”

Hương Sen Temple, July 12, 2020

Respectfully,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



The sign of Vô Ưu
Buddhist Meditation
Association



Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association



The plan of Vô Ưu Buddhist Meditation Association



Venerable Bhikkhu Tuệ giác (center) and Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính (left)



Abbess Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính



Venerable Bhikkhunī Đồng Kính and nuns practicing walking meditation in winter



The sixteenth birthday of Vô Ưu in 2018



Walking with blooming flowers in summer



The eleventh birthday of Vô Ưu in 2018



Gathering



Bodhidharma Zen Garden



Left: The Most Ven. Nguyễn Thanh, Ven. Đồng Kính, Ven. Giới Hương, Ven. Nguyễn Thiện and Ven. Quảng Tịnh at the Vesak, Yerba Buena Hall, San Jose, in 2019

2.17. THE VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ NGỌC
- GRATITUDE TO THE MASTERS
THE ABBESS OF A DI ĐÀ TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc was born in 1943 in Cần Thơ (Hậu Giang), the youngest child in a teaching family of ten children. She attended secondary schools, Thủ Khoa Nghiã (Châu Đốc), Phan Thanh Giản (Cần Thơ), Gia Long High School (Sài Gòn) and graduated from the Pedagogy Course in Sài Gòn. She received a master's degree of Vietnamese literature from Vạn Hạnh University in Sài Gòn, and a bachelor of Buddhist studies from Vạn Hạnh University in Sài Gòn.

In Vietnam, she taught at Vĩnh Hội High School, Petrus Ký School, Bồ Đề (Bodhi) Institute and Kiêu Đàm High Schools in Sài Gòn.

- In 1978, she went to Malaysia.
- In 1980, she settled down in the US and ordained under the Venerable Master Mãn Giác.
- In 1983, she received bhikkhunī ordination at Kim Quang Pagoda in Sacramento from the Most Venerable Abbot Thiện Trì.

Being a talented teacher in literature, she composed many poems and was a contributor to newspapers, such as *Vietnamese Buddhism News*, *Việt Báo News*, *Vietnam Pagoda Magazine* and *Trúc Lâm News*.

It is known that the late Most Venerable Thiên Ân founded the Vietnamese Temple in 1975 and established the A Di Đà (Amitabha) Temple in 1976. After his death in Los Angeles on November 23, 1980 at age fifty-six, the Most Venerable Mãn Giác was appointed to succeed him as abbot of the Vietnamese Temple and A Di Đà Temple. In 1992, the Venerable Mãn Giác assigned his disciple, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc, to be the abbess.

A Di Đà Temple
Thích Thiên Ân Buddhist Center
Abbess Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc
14042 Swan Street, Westminster, CA 92683
Phone: (714) 478-5678

A Di Đà Temple is located on the corner of Westminster and Swan Street near Garden Grove, so transportation is convenient with parking for Buddhists who attend the ceremony. The sanctuary hall worships the solemn Amitabha Buddha image and in the adjoining room, there is an altar honoring two respected Vietnamese Buddhist masters in the United States, the late Most Venerable Thích Thiện Ân, and the late Venerable Thích Mãn Giác. Venerable Như Ngọc often organizes tea ceremonies to commemorate the two venerable monks and invites the Most Venerable Phước Thuận, the Most Venerable Tịnh Từ, the Most Venerable Tri Tuệ, the Most Venerable Nguyễn Hạnh, the Most Venerable Như Minh, the Most Venerable Minh Mẫn, and Venerable Ân Giao, along with many religious elder monks and nuns attending, discussing the New Year and the program of music and poetry of Huyền Không (Ven. Mãn Giác's pen name).

*Respect for the Buddha at the hall
Three deep prostrations gratitude to the Master
Combine pure water, the mind is peaceful
Often sprinkled the sacred streams for understanding and compassion
After this life, we go to the Buddha's land
Leaving the rebirth for the blissful Western
Jewel relics opening the heavenly bright
Huyền Không (the Wonderful Empty) Stupa at the old homeland.
Honoring the Huyền Không Stupa
(Disciple Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc offering to Master)*

Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc is gentle, sociable and has good relationships with many temples in California and other states, so when there are ceremonies, holidays, retreats and conferences, she frequently attends and often invites venerable elder monks and nuns to attend the ceremonies at her A Di Đà Temple. Despite its modest campus, A Di Đà Temple is considered one of the earliest temples in the United States (established 1976) and is often visited by many monks and nuns who give lectures to Buddhists.

Huong Sen Temple, July 10, 2020
Warmly,
Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Kuan Yin Statue
of A Di Đà Temple



Venerable Nhu Ngọc performing the welcome for monks
in front of A Di Đà Temple



Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhu Ngọc in 2019



Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc inviting the Sangha for chanting



The Most Ven. Hành Đạo, Ven. Quảng Thanh, Ven. Minh Mẫn and Ven. Giác Lý and Sangha attend the Vu Lan Festival at A Di Đà Temple



Listening to Dharma



The main hall of A Di Đà Temple



Dining hall



The ritual



Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc Như Ngọc and Mayor of Westminster City, Tạ Đức Trí



Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Ngọc introducing Bhikkhunī Giới Hương to give a lecture at the Vu Lan Festival

2.18. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ GIỚI HƯƠNG- - A LOTUS BUD TO YOU THE ABBESS OF HUONG SEN TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Biography and Nunhood

Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương (world name Sunyata Phm), born in 1963 in Bình Tuy, Bình Thuận, comes from a peasant family of eight siblings has two ordained persons: Venerable Giới Hương had the good fortune to ordain under the Most Venerable Hải Triều Âm when she was fifteen years old at Tịnh Thất Liên Hoa (Lê Quang Định, Bình Thạnh, HCM City) and her young sister, Bhikkhunī Trí Minh is a disciple of the Zen Master Thích Thanh Từ. In the family line, there are three more who are ordained: an aunt (Bhikkhunī Tâm Diệu), a cousin (Bhikkhunī Thanh Đức) and a nephew (Śikṣamānā Viên Khuông).

During the time in Liên Hoa Temple, she studied the scriptures (sutras), precepts (Vinaya) and treatises (Abhidhamma) under the guidance of the most famous Hải Triều Âm. In the spring, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is taught; in the summer, the Vinaya is delivered, the autumn, it is time for the Śūraṅgama Sūtra and in the winter, the Amitabha Sutra is preached.

Venerable Giới Hương received full ordination as a bhikkhunī on October 12, 1983, at the forum of Long Hoa Pagoda, Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu. The monk Saṅgha included the Most Venerable Thích Như Mậu (who played the role of the leading venerable bhikkhu), the Most Venerable Thích Huệ Hải (as a lawyer) and the Most Venerable Thích Thanh Đức (as a teacher). The nun Saṅgha was held at Liên Hoa Temple with the Venerable Bhikkhuni Như Nguyễn (as the leading Venerable Bhikkhuni), Venerable Hải Triều Âm (as a lawyer) and Venerable Như Lý (as a teacher).

2. Education, Practice and Share Dharma

In 1989, Bhikkhunī Giới Hương left Liên Hoa Temple to enter the Advanced Buddhist Institute in Phú Nhuận, HCM City, which was founded and headed by the Most Venerable Thích Minh Châu. During the four years in dormitory, she was educated by many high monks and masters, as well as famous professors, such as the Most Venerable Thích Minh Châu, the Most Venerable Thanh Từ, the Most Venerable Trí Quảng, the Most Venerable Phước Sơn, the Most Venerable Phước Sơn, the Most Venerable Thiện Nhơn, the Most Venerable Thiện Siêu, Venerable Bhikkhunī Trí Hải, Professor Trần Phương Lan, Hoàng Như Mai, Nguyễn Khuê, Trần Tuấn Mẫn, and so forth.

In 1989, she studied literature at General University, which is now called the University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Đình Tiên Hoàng, HCM City).

In 1994, she graduated with a Bachelor of Buddhist Studies and a Bachelor of Arts in HCM City.

From 1995 to 2005, She studied in India for ten years, and in 2003 graduated with a PhD in Buddhist Philosophy from the University of Delhi, India along with certificates of Chinese and Japanese. (Intensive Advanced Diplomas in Chinese and Japanese-four years).

In 2005, she settled down in the United States.

The most Venerable Thích Mãn Giác appointed her to be the abbess of Phước Hậu Pagoda, Wisconsin, and there she later studied at Milwaukee Area Technical College, graduated from a Nursing Assistant Course with certificates in English and computer qualifications.

In 2010, she left Wisconsin for warm California and founded Hương Sen Temple, as well as studying sociology at Riverside Community College and later Moreno Valley College.

In 2015, she studied and earned a second Bachelor's Degree in Literature at the University of Riverside, California.

In 2017, she enrolled in the master's degree program at the same university, as well as serving as a part-time lecturer at the Vietnam Buddhist Institute, HCM City.

In 2000, she established Hương Sen Temple, Bình Chánh, HCM City, Việt Nam.

In 2010 - Now, she founded Hương Sen Temple in Perris, California, USA, and has thirteen disciples, including seven bhikkhunis along with three siksamanas and three samaneries seeking ordination:: Bhikkhuni Viên Bảo, Bhikkhuni Viên Như, Bhikkhuni Viên Tuệ, Bhikkhuni Viên Quang, Bhikkhuni Viên Chân, Bhikkhuni Viên An, Bhikkhuni Viên Trang, Śikṣamānā Viên Quý, Śikṣamānā Viên Nhuận, Śikṣamānā Viên Hiếu, Samaneri Viên Hoàng, Samaneri Viên Đàm, and Samaneri Viên Từ....

She is the founder the website: huongsentemple.com, the Daily Tivi on Facebook livestream: Hương Sen Temple and she also created the Bảo Anh Lạc Bookshelf where forty-one of her English and Vietnamese works are displayed, as well as eleven Buddhist music albums from 2004 to the present:

3. Writing and Translation

3.1. Books in Vietnamese

- 1) Bồ-tát và Tánh Không Trong Kinh Tạng Pali và Đại Thừa
- 2) Ban Mai Xứ Ấn (3 tập)
- 3) Vườn Nai - Chiếc Nôi Phật Giáo
- 4) Quy Y Tam Bảo và Năm Giới
- 5) Vòng Luân Hồi,
- 6) Hoa Tuyết Milwaukee
- 7) Luân Hồi trong Lăng Kính Lăng Nghiêm
- 8) Nghi Thức Hộ Niệm, Cầu Siêu
- 9) Quan Âm Quảng Trần
- 10) Nữ Tu và Tù Nhân Hoa Kỳ, (2 tập)
- 11) nếp Sống Tinh Thức của Đức Đạt Lai Lạt Ma Thứ XIV: (2 tập)
- 12) A-Hàm: Mưa pháp chuyển hóa phiền não, (2 tập)
- 13) Góp Từng Hạt Nắng Perris
- 14) Pháp Ngữ của Kinh Kim Cang
- 15) Tập Thơ Nhạc Nắng Lăng Nghiêm
- 16) Nét Bút Bên Song Cửa,
- 17) Máy Nghe MP3 Hương Sen: Các Bài Giảng, Sách, Bài viết và Thơ Nhạc của Thích Nữ Giới Hương
- 18) DVD Giới Thiệu về Chùa Hương Sen
- 19) Tuyển Tập 40 Năm Tu Học & Hoằng Pháp của Ni sư Giới Hương
- 20) Ni giới Việt Nam Hoằng pháp tại Hoa Kỳ

3.2. Books in English

- 1) Boddhisattva and Sunyata in the Early and Developed Buddhist Traditions
- 2) Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra
- 3) Commentary of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva
- 4) The Key Words in Vajracchedikā Sūtra
- 5) Sārnātha -The Cradle of Buddhism in the Archeological View
- 6) Take Refuge in the Three Gems and Keep the Five Precepts
- 7) Cycle of Life
- 8) Forty Years in the Dharma: A Life of Study and Service - Venerable Bhikkhuni Giới Hương
- 9) Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Nuns in United States of America
- 10) A Vietnamese Nun and American Inmates

3.3. Books in Vietnamese - English

- 1) Bản Tin Hương Sen: Xuân, Phật Đản, Vu Lan (*Huong Sen Newsletter: Spring, Buddha Birthday and Vu Lan*, annual/ Mỗi Năm),
- 2) Danh Ngôn Nuôi Dưỡng Nhân Cách - *Good Sentences Nurture a Good Manner*
- 3) Văn Hóa Đặc Sắc của Nước Nhật Bản - *Exploring the Unique Culture of Japan*
- 4) Sống An Lạc dù Đời không Đẹp như Mơ - *Live Peacefully though Life is not Beautiful as a Dream*
- 5) Hãy Nói Lời Yêu Thương - *Words of Love and Understanding*
- 6) Văn Hóa Cổ Kim qua Hành Hương Chiêm Bái - *The Ancient- Present Culture in Pilgrim*
- 7) Nghệ Thuật Biết Sống - *Art of Living*

3.4. Translation

- 1) *Xá Lợi Của Đức Phật (Relics of the Buddha)*, Tham Weng Yew, Thích Nữ Giới Hương chuyên ngữ,
- 2) *Sen Nở Nơi Chốn Tử Tù (Lotus in Prison)*, nhiều tác giả, Thích Nữ Giới Hương chuyên ngữ,
- 3) *Chùa Việt Nam Hải Ngoại (Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Temples)*, Võ Văn Tường & Từ Hiếu Côn, vol 2, Thích Nữ Giới Hương chuyên Anh ngữ
- 4) *Việt Nam Danh Lam Cổ Tự (The Famous Ancient Buddhist Temples in Vietnam)*, Võ Văn Tường. Chuyên Anh ngữ: Thích Nữ Giới Hương.
- 5) *Hương Sen, Thơ và Nhạc - (Lotus Fragrance, Poem and Music)*, Nguyễn Hiền Đức. Chuyên Anh Ngữ: Thích Nữ Giới Hương
- 6) *Phật Giáo-Một Bậc Đạo Sư, Nhiều Truyền Thống*, Đức Đạt Lai Lạt Ma 14th & Ni Sư Thubten Chodren, chuyên Việt ngữ: Ni Sư Tiên Sĩ TN Giới Hương,
- 7) *Cách Chuẩn Bị Chết và Giúp Người Sắp Chết-Quan Điểm Phật Giáo (Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying - A Buddhist Perspective)*, Sangye Khadro, Chuyên Việt Ngữ: Thích Nữ Giới Hương.

3.5. Music Albums from Poems of Ven. TN Giới Hương

1. *Đào Xuân Lộng Ý Kinh (The Buddha's Teachings Reflected in Cherry Flowers)*, Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Nam Hung, Volume 1, 2013.
2. *Niềm Tin Tam Bảo (Trust in the Three Gems)*, Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Hoàng Y Vũ & Hoàng Quang Huế, Volume 2, 2013.

3. *Trăng Tròn Nghìn Năm Đón Chờ Ai (Who Is the Full Moon Waiting for over a Thousand Years?)*. Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Võ Tá Hân, Hoàng Y Vũ, Khánh Hải, Khánh Hoàng, Hoàng Kim Anh, Linh Phương và Nguyễn Tuấn, Volume 3, 2013.

4. *Ánh Trăng Phật Pháp (Moonlight of Dharma-Buddha)*. Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Music: Uy Thi Ca & Giác An, Volume 4, 2013.

5. *Bình Minh Tỉnh Thức (Awakened Mind at the Dawn: Piano Variations for Meditation)*. Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Solo Pianist: Linh Phương, Volume 5, 2013.

6. *Tiếng Hát Già Lam (Songs from the Temple)*. Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Nam Hưng, Volume 6, 2015.

7. *Cảnh Đẹp Chùa Xưa (The Magnificent, Ancient Buddhist Temple)*. Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Võ Tá Hân, Nam Hưng, Hoàng Quang Huê, Volume 7, 2015.

8. *Karaoke Hoa Ưu Đàm Đã Nở (An Udumbara Flower Is Blooming)*, Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương and Musician Nam Hưng, Hương Sen Temple, 2015.

9. *Hương Sen Ca (Huong Sen's Songs)*, Thơ: Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Nhạc: Nam Hưng, Volume 9, năm 2018.

10. *Về Chùa Vui Tu (Happily Go to Temple for Spiritual Practices)*, Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Music: Nam Hưng & Nguyễn Hà, Volume 10, 2018.

11. *Gọi Nắng Xuân Về (Call the Spring Sunlight)*, Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Music: Nam Hưng, Hương Sen Temple, Volume 11, 2020.

4. Hương Sen Temple and following the Pure Land Zen Method

With the assistance of the Venerable monks and nuns, the lay Buddhists and especially her father, Phạm Văn Danh whose Dharma name is Chánh Đức Minh, Ven. Giới Hương could establish Hương Sen Pagoda at firstly a small house (three rooms, 2 parking spaces) in the city of Moreno Valley, Southern California on April 10, 2010. Then Buddhists came to practice and chant increasingly crowded activities, there was not enough parking, so on May 8 2013 it was moved to a new address (15 minutes away) and that is the current accommodation:

Huong Sen Buddhist Temple
19865 Seaton Avenue, Perris, CA 92570, USA
Tel: 951-657-7272 , Cell: 951-616-8620
Email: huongsentemple@gmail.com, thichnugioihuong@yahoo.com
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/huongsentemple>
Web: www.huongsentemple.com

Father Chánh Đức Minh were interested to live at Hương Sen Temple. He helped Ven. Giới Hương build Hương Sen Pagoda in Bình Chánh in 2000. After coming to America, he followed Ven. Giới Hương to assist with maintenance of the old temple in Moreno Valley and later assisted with the new temple in the city of Perris, California, until he passed away (87 years old) on October 6, 2018. Hương Sen Temple would like to thank him. In our daily chanting course, we often pray for him and all dead benefactors who are resting in peace in the Pure Land.

At first, Ven. Giới Hương bought 3.8 acres of land in Perris, California. Then over time, she purchased more land and ended up with a total of ten acres in a nice rectangle shape. This is a remote area with dry, semidesert land, so it is difficult to plant trees. There aren't many Vietnamese people in the surrounding area. We only see the Buddhist followers in local and neighbor areas here at the main ceremonies and festivals like New Year, Vesak, Vu Lan, retreats

and so on. There are currently seven resident nuns and some other disciple nuns study far away or have their own temples. The temple's practice follows the "Pure Land Zen" method of the Master Hải Triều Âm, therefore, we meditate, chant, have confession rituals and recite the Buddha's name for building the Pure Land in present and future.

5. The Daily Schedule

5:30 AM: Bell Ritual and the Morning Chanting

7:00 AM: Breakfast

8:00 AM: Labor + Class

11:30 AM: Lunch ritual

12:30 PM: Take a nap

2:00 PM: Wake up

4:00 PM: The Afternoon Chanting

5:00PM: Dharma Talks

(Abbess TN Giới Hương - TV Livestream Facebook: Hương Sen Temple)

6:00 PM: Dinner

7:00 PM: The Evening Chanting, Mantra, and Recite the Buddha Name

(TV Livestream Facebook: Hương Sen Temple)

10 AM every Sunday: Chanting and Read Amitābha Buddha Name

7PM the 30th and 14th day each month in lunar year: the Confessing Ceremony and Uposatha Recite.

For more information, please read at website: www.huongsentemple.com

GIỚI (Precepts) trains in ethics, preserves Tathagata's duty, actualizes Dharma works
HƯƠNG (Fragrance) nurtures the spirit, diligently cultivates the mind of the holy one,
engages as a great human.

Huong Sen Temple, June 20 2020

Respectfully,

Disciples of Rev. Viên Quang, Rev. Viên Nhuận...

VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ GIỚI HƯƠNG - A SENIOR BUDDHIST NUN IN MODERN TIMES

The Bhikkhunī Sangha, the female monastic Sangha or daughters of the Sakyamuni lineage is one group of great disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha. They have the ability to study the Dharma, understand the Dharma, practice the Dharma and propagate the Dharma. The Bhikkhunī Sangha protects the Dharma, obtains the Dharma and applies the Dharma in their daily lives to bring peaceful joy and happiness to themselves and to others, right here and right now.

“Giới Hương” is a compound phrase of Chinese and Vietnamese; “Giới” means the precepts or ethics and “Hương” means fragrance. So “Giới Hương” means the fragrance of a person who learns, understands, and practices the Buddha’s precepts. Here, “Giới Hương” is the Dharma title of the senior nun, the abbess of Huong Sen Buddhist Temple⁶⁷ in southern California, USA. Indeed, when reading the phrase, “Giới Hương,” we immediately think about a virtuous flower with a beautiful color and fragrance. When seeing that flower, we feel happy and think of the beautiful image of the monastic person. In one of his nature poems, the author Thích Trùng Sỹ wrote:

Vow to practice the virtues of FLOWERS
Pervading the fragrance of moral virtue
Skillfully saying loving speech
Granting it for every family.⁶⁸

The flower mentioned in the above poem is a symbol for a talented and virtuous person, or for a lay or monastic practitioner. In this article, the senior nun, whose Dharma title is Giới Hương, is one of the female monastic persons of modern times. Since she was fortunate enough to become a Buddhist nun, she has encountered many adversities in her life, but thanks to the ingenuity of learning, understanding, practicing, applying the Dharma, and using loving speech, she not only overcame adversities smoothly, but also built a good fraternity with Dharma friends and fellow monastics. She is skilled in teaching, cultivation, studies, the establishment of the Temple and the training of nuns.

Sandalwood or lavender,
lotus or the jasmine great,
of these many fragrances
virtue’s fragrance is supreme.

*Dhamapada, Verse 55*⁶⁹

* * *

The fragrance of flowers drifts with the wind
as sandalwood, jasmine of lavender.
The fragrance of the virtuous sweeps the wind,
all pervasive is virtue of the good.

*Dhammapada, Verse 54*⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Huong Sen Buddhist Temple, 19865 Seaton Avenue, Perris, California 92570, USA. Tel: 951-657-7272; Cell: 951-616-8620

⁶⁸ <http://dharmaeye.net/en/nature-lessons-by-rich-images/>

⁶⁹ The Dhammapada, Verse 55, The Buddha's Path of Wisdom, translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddharakkhita with an introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1996, <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.intro.budd.html>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

The physical flower blooms and fades, its scent flies in the direction of the wind; it cannot fly against the wind. The virtuous flower has never had birth and death; it originates from the cultivated practitioner who practices the Dharma, understands the Dharma, supports the Dharma, and applies the Buddhadharma in daily life to benefit many. This practitioner is shown to be a “True Person,” a disciple of the Buddha. The senior nun Giới Hương, one of the monastic disciples of the Buddha in modern times, has cultivated, studied, and taught both Buddhist studies and secular studies. She has matured and developed a beautiful moral and spiritual life. When we understand and practice so, the moral flower of the True Person is not hindered by any wind. It can fly high, fly far and spread in many different directions. When hearing and knowing this person, people feel happy and sympathetic.

As from a mass of flowers
many a garland may be made,
so by one born mortal
should many good deeds be done.

Dhammapada, Verse 53⁷¹

Relying on a pile of flowers, people can form many corollas. From this physical body, the practitioner can perform many good and wholesome deeds to benefit many. Conversely, if relying on this physical body, those who do non-good and unwholesome deeds will bring harm to themselves and other people in the present life.

As the sons or daughters of the Buddha, when learning, understanding, applying and practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, we have right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration so that we can recognize, purify and transform bad things into good things, wrong things into right things. When understanding and practicing so, we will bring authentic benefits and peace to all living things and living beings all over the planet.

Just as a bee in a flower
harming neither hue nor scent
gathers nectar, flies away,
so in towns a Wise One fares.

Dharmapada, Verse 49⁷²

Indeed, the Buddha’s disciples, whether monks or nuns, rely on the above verse of the Dhammapada, learning and practicing the virtues of the bees, finding flowers to feed on the nectar, and then flying away, without hurting the fragrance of the flowers.

The Buddha’s disciples went to villages and hamlets to organize Buddhist activities and perform sacred ceremonies. The disciples donated materials for the construction of temples, they cast bells and they printed scriptures. They considered their actions clearly and thoroughly to fit with the Buddhist activities. Do not take advantage of the gullible beliefs of almsgivers to seek profit for their own sake and do something that is not in accordance with the Dharma. We must safeguard against this or we will lose their faith and be guilty of violating the precepts of the Three Jewels. When understanding and practicing this way, we can bring so much credibility and confidence to lay people who will uphold and support the Three Jewels durably and effectively.

When learning the Buddhadharma, we know the mind manifests the external sign. The greedy mind manifests the greedy sign. The angry mind manifests the angry sign. The delusive

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

mind manifests the delusive sign. Conversely, the non-greedy mind manifests the non-greedy sign or the sign of almsgiving. The non-angry mind manifests the non-angry sign or the sign of compassion. The non-delusive mind manifests the non-delusive sign or the sign of wisdom and right view. With the mind of non-greed, we can express our charitable minds with almsgiving, offerings and the support and protection of the Three Jewels. With the mind of non-anger, we can practice loving speech and listening. With the mind of non-delusion, we can practice right view and right thought very firmly in life. As practitioners, disciples of the Buddha, we can recognize and select the right and the wrong, the good and the bad. The right and the good will be maintained and developed. The wrong and the bad will be well selected, recognized and transformed. When understanding and practicing, we can bring a lot of flowers and fruits of peaceful joy and happiness to many people.



Left: Bảo Sen, Rev. Viên Chân, Rev. Liên Hiều, Ven. Giới Hương,
Bhikkhu Trìùng Sỹ, Bhikkhu Quảng Đạo, Ven. Hạnh Quang,
Ven. Liên Tiến, and Rev. Viên Trang at Hương Sen Temple on January 8, 2020

Through the above mentioned things, the person who has the fragrance of precepts, the fragrance of concentration, that of wisdom, of liberation with right view is the person who has experienced the process of cultivating, studying, propagating the Dharma, protecting the Dharma, practicing the Dharma, and applying the Dharma into daily, weekly, monthly and yearly life.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương is both her Dharma title and the practitioner who cultivates, studies, practices, and applies Buddhadharma in her daily life to bring benefits for herself and others. Indeed, the senior nun, the Vietnamese monastic lady, one of the daughters of the Sakyan lineage, has succeeded in many fields of education, learning, teaching, writing, translation, and especially in building good fraternity with Dharma friends and fellow monastics.

Pháp Nhân Temple, April 25 2020
Yours sincerely,
Thích Trìùng Sỹ
Thichtrungsy123@gmail.com

A SNOWFLAKE RETURNING

My hot cup of tea has not cooled down. I had to excuse myself and come home early to get ready to leave. I'm returning to my hometown and there is not much time, but I will sketch a portrait of Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giới Hương, using my impressions of this nun with southern Vietnamese characteristics, mixed with the industrial life in the USA. But the feeling about a person can often be misleading, while the real proof is concrete: she has written twelve books⁷³ which she translated and published from 2004 to 2010 in the Bảo Anh Lạc Bookcase (founded by Ven. Bhikkhuni Giới Hương). This demonstrates the diligence of this nun. In these titles, I noticed the book, *A Nun and American Prisoners* (2 volumes), which recorded her visits and correspondences with inmates at a number of Wisconsin prisons.

Research in the United States states that from 1970 to 2000, the number of prisoners in each state has increased by 50 percent. In Wisconsin alone, more than half of the 24,000 prisoners were teenagers. The causes of the crimes are simple. The eternal truth is wanting money to satisfy the craving. The root of many crimes is still the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusion. It was through a letter from twenty-one-year-old James Lala that we can learn more about the strict sanctions of the American justice system: having sex with an underage teenager of the opposite sex led him to a seven-year sentence. After this term, he will have a suspended sentence. He wrote: "Do not go to the internet to watch or take any action related to pornography. In January 2005, I went online and took down pictures of young girls who are not naked but have a sexy style. So, I was detained for another nine months and twenty-two days."

Fortunately, those inmates still know how to rise up, as we often say, like lotuses from the mud. For example, Douglas Stream, thirty-two years old, was sentenced to life in prison for murdering someone in a fit of anger. The letter he wrote in 2007: "I've been in prison for a long time. Every year, I have to go to the amnesty committee... I hope to be released before 2010." He made his plans for the future while still in prison. He enrolled in a comprehensive college and spent time helping his fellow inmates. His hope is that after leaving prison, he will choose a job that can help many people.

Some of the above evidence is only a small portion of the hundreds of letters exchanged between the nun and prisoners. It is not new for monks and nuns to go to prison camps with the aim of guiding meditation or teaching Buddhism to support the spiritual life of inmates. In 1975, the Indian government turned vipassana meditation into a positive reform method in prison. Currently, Taiwan, England, New Zealand and Mongolia have also done that. In the USA, nine states have applied the short-term meditation courses for prisoners. In Vietnam, K.20 (in Bến Tre province) is the first prison that allowed Buddhist monks to enter the camp to share their Buddhist thoughts and guide prisoners on how to be vegetarian and meditate. The superintendent of the detention center said he felt more secure because he had reduced the level of disciplinary punishment. It is an effective reform direction where genuine love and proper conduct serve to influence the prisoners - much better than applying severe violent punishment.

⁷³ At present 2020, Bảo Anh lạc Bookshelf has forty-two works, translations and eleven music volumes which are composed by Bhikkhuni Giới Hương.

Please visit: <http://www.huongsentemple.com/index.php/kinh-sach/tu-sach-bao-anh-lac>

Knowing how to share the sufferings of your fellow humans, of Venerable Thích Nữ Giới Hương has made a meaningful contributions when bringing the light of Buddhism into the “dark” places. Her humility and manner are exemplary, especially for a monk or nun. I thought that it is not necessary to have good poetry to be a poet. There are those who write many poems but they are not really poets as the soul is still coarse, while some people just write a few sentences and they are actually poets. It is because the heart is sincere and sensitive to humans and life. Recognizing and appreciating beauty in the worldview: “Whoever said snow does not return / Snowflakes are full of handwriting.” I think, this is a valuable feature of the poet.

Her Dharma name is Thích Nữ Giới Hương.

Late Winter 2011
Nguyễn Đông Nhật



Front of Hương Sen Temple in 2020



Inscription of Hương Sen Temple



Daily Schedule at Hương Sen Temple, in 2020

HUONG SEN BUDDHIST TEMPLE - CHÙA HUONG SEN
 19865 Seaton Avenue, Perris, CA 92570, USA
 Tel: 951-657-7272, Cell: 951-616-8620
 Email: huongsentemple@gmail.com, Web: www.huongsentemple.com
 Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/huongsentemple

ĐÀI TRUYỀN HÌNH HUONG SEN TEMPLE
 Channel Facebook Livestream: **Huong Sen Temple**

CHƯƠNG TRÌNH

PHÁP THOẠI MỖI NGÀY - Thời gian: 30 phút từ 5g-5:30g chiều
 Thuyết giảng: Ni sư Thích Nữ Giới Hương
 Sẽ post lại bài pháp thoại trên Youtube và Website: <http://www.huongsentemple.com/index.php/phot-phap/phap-am>

TỤNG KINH MỖI NGÀY - Thời gian: 60 phút từ 7g-8g tối
 Xin Phật tử gửi danh sách Cầu An và Cầu Siêu để mỗi buổi tụng kinh online sẽ phục nguyện.

Trân trọng kính mời.
 Chùa Hương Sen

LIVE TVI SHOW HUONG SEN TEMPLE
 Channel Facebook Livestream: **Huong Sen Temple**

PROGRAM

DAILY DHARMA TALKS - Time: 30 minutes from 5-5:30 pm
 Preacher: Venerable Bhikkhuni TN Giới Hương
 Repost on YouTube and Website: <http://www.huongsentemple.com/index.php/phot-phap/phap-am>

DAILY CHANTING - Time: 60 minutes from 7:00-8:00 pm
 Please send your beloved names (died and alive) to pray at the online chanting.

Feel free to join and share. Very Welcome!
 Hương Sen Temple



Sharing the Dharma daily on Facebook Livestream: Huong Sen Temple



Backyard of Huong Sen Temple



The Master-plan of Huong Sen Temple



The Most Ven. Như Điển (Germany), monks, nuns and Buddhists praying for the constructional plan of Huong Sen Temple in April 12 2018



Quang Thiện Temple's pilgrims visit Huong Sen Temple on New Year in 2019



Mr. Chánh Đức Minh (Ven. Giới Hương's Dad, third right holding the certification) with Buddhists at the Bodhisattva Ordination of Huong Sen Temple in May 2018



Ven. Giới Hương holding a mic leading chanting with nuns



A retreat



The Most Ven. Nguyễn Thanh and Ven. Bhikkhunīs at the ordination of Samaneri and Boddhisattva in Hương Sen Temple in 2018



Listening to the Dharma at the front yard in 2019



Venerable Abbess TN Giới Hương (carrying a hoe) and nuns leveling for the parking lot in 2019



Venerable Bhikkhunī Giói Hương (second left and nuns clean the yard in February 4 2020



Venerable Bhikkhunī Giói Hương (far right) and her nuns cut summer grass in the back yard of Hương Sen Temple, April 25, 2020



Venerable Bhikkhunī Giói Hương (sitting) and nuns in 2020

2.19. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ THUẦN TUỆ
- THE ZEN DIGNITY
THE ABBESS OF DIỆU NHÂN ZEN MONASTERY (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Diệuh Nhân Zen Monastery

In 2002 on July 4, after accepting the offering of ten acres of land with a house from the Lục Hòa sisters, the Most Venerable Zen Master Trúc Lâm Thích Thanh Từ established Diệuh Nhân Buddhist Meditation Association, which belongs to Viên Chiếu Zen Monastery in his home country of Vietnam. The Master entrusted Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Như Đức to take charge of Diệuh Nhân Buddhist Meditation Association with the purpose of meeting the needs of all Buddhists who can take refuge in studying and promoting the teachings of the Buddha, especially practicing according to Trúc Lâm Yên Tử Way, the famous Zen Buddhism in Vietnam. Four months later, the Venerable Master Thanh Từ came to hold a ceremony to place the stone to build the main hall on November 16, 2002 - the Diệuh Nhân Zen Monastery⁷⁴ was officially born.

In 2012, the chief nun, Venerable Như Đức, appointed Ven. Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ as the abbess of the Diệuh Nhân Monastery and Ven Thích Nữ Thuần Bạch as the deputy.

Diệuh Nhân Buddhist Meditation Association
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ
4241 Duncan Hill Road, Rescue, CA 95672
Tel: (530) 676-7108; (530) 409-8336; (916)222-8784
P.O. Box 265, Rescue, CA 95672
Fax: (530) 672-2497
Website: www.dieunhan.net
Email: tvdieunhan2002@gmail.com; thuantuedn@gmail.com

⁷⁴ Diệuh Nhân is the name of the Vietnamese Zen Nun Master (1041-1113), seventeenth generation of the Vinitaruci lineage. according to historical data, her world name was Lý Thị Ngọc Kiều, the eldest daughter of Phụng Càn vương Lý Nhật Trung Prince (son of Lý Thái Tông King). At young age, she was very pure and gentle and was raised as a princess in the palace by Lý Thái Tông King. After the death of her husband, she volunteered to quit worldly life. One day she realized the worldly phenomenon were all vanity illusions, so she gave away all the jewels, then asked to become a nun and took the Bodhisattva ordination, as well as practicing under the guidance of Zen Master Chân Không. Zen Master Chân Không gave her Dharma name Diệuh Nhân and appointed her to be the abbess of Hương Hải Nunnery in Phù Đổng Village, Tiên Du, Bắc Ninh Province (now in Gia Lâm district, Hanoi city). Every day, Ven. Bhikkhunī Diệuh Nhân kept the precepts and meditated and attained the concentration state. Ever since the monks and nuns at that time respected her. She was the head of the seventeenth generation of the Vinitaruci lineage in the Lý Dynasty.

The Fourth Hội Tường Đại Khánh Year (in the year 1113), under the Lý Nhân Tông King's dynasty, Ven. Bhikkhunī Diệuh Nhân became ill. She left the enlightened verses to teach the nuns. At seventy-two, she sat cross-legged and passed away.

2. Daily Schedule

3:45 am	Wake up
4:00-6:00 am	Meditation
6:30-6:50 am	Exercise
7:15 am	Breakfast
8:30-10:30 am	Work offering
11:30 am	Lunch ritual
1:00-2:00 pm	Rest
2:30-3:40 pm	Dharma class
4:30 pm	Dinner
5:45 pm	Confession
6:30-8:00 pm	Meditation

Class Timetable:

Monday: Studying the Mahaparinirvana Sutra (Ven. Viên Chiếu) / Chinese Zen Masters (Ven. Bhikkhuni Thuận Bạch (every other week)

Tuesday: Silent retreat day

Wednesday afternoon: CD Master Trúc Lâm, Zen Buddhism in Vietnam

Wednesday evening: Enlightenment Songs (Ven. Bhikkhuni Thuận Tuệ)

Thursday: Various activities (every other week)

Friday: Nuns' class: The Will Sutra

Saturday: Learning CD Teacher Thông Phương / Shurangama Sutta (Ven. Bhikkhuni Thuận Tuệ, every other week)

3. Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery Activities

Saturday Practice Day every two weeks.

Monday night class for young Americans and Buddhists.

Four-day annual spring and fall retreat; each session may be longer in the future.

Occasional outdoor picnics, nights of watching the moon, drinking tea, sermons on the temple grounds, creating favorable conditions for young people and students to come and study.

Guiding the practice of meditation in prison (Volunteer Sangha) in the Buddhist Pathways Prison Project at Folsom State Prison.

Teaching and guiding retreats in other states and Canada, England, France, Belgium and Germany.

Teaching at Buddhist Youth Training Courses.

Although there are not many Diệu Nhân Buddhists, from young to old they practice wholeheartedly and zealously take care of constructing the center. The Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery has become as it is today thanks to many benefactors, the deep virtue of the Venerable Master Thích Thanh Từ, the protection of the Trúc Lâm Zen Sangha, the leadership and nuns of Viên Chiếu Zen Monastery, and the enthusiastic support of Buddhists for the Diệu Nhân Meditation Center. To repay these benefactors, Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery has diligently practiced following the Master Thích Thanh Từ's method, maintained a long-term mind, shared the practicing joy with those who are interested in the Zen path, returning to the inherent mind.

4. Purpose of Zen Practice - Theory Method:

• Diệm Nhân Buddhist Meditation Association belongs to the Trúc Lâm Zen School of Vietnam, restored by the Venerable Thích Thanh Từ in 1970.

• The foundation of the practice is the Shakyamuni Buddha's Dharma.

• Advocate: "Zen Practice -Theory Companion."

• Zen Buddhism does not focus on the sutras, because Zen is the mind of Buddha, the sutra is the mouth of Buddha. If the Buddha's mind and mouth are no different, then Zen and Dharma are inseparable.

• Trúc Lâm Zen Buddhism in Vietnam does not follow the later Chinese Zen Buddhism sects, such as Caodong (Tào Động), Linji (Lâm Tế), Gui Yang (Qui Nguỡng), Yunmen (Vân Môn) and Fayán (Pháp Nhãn).

• Based on the treatises and sutras of the Buddha, Trúc Lâm Vietnam Meditation combines three important landmarks of Zen Buddhism tradition from China to Vietnam: The second Patriarch Huike (Huệ Khả), the sixth Patriarch Heineng (Huệ Năng) and the first Patriarch Ke Lin (Trúc Lâm) to apply and create the particular Vietnamese practice under the guidance of Zen Master Trúc Lâm:

1. Knowing the delusion, we do not follow, because the delusion is the illusory mind.

2. Mind does not appear, because it is a false temporary combining.

3. Do not engage with the dualism, because it is not real.

4. Living with the real, without following the false. Apply meditative care to realize there is a true mind.

• These are the four means the Zen Master Trúc Lâm made to guide practitioners. Depending on the capacity of the practitioner, the application is different in each instance.

• Diệm Nhân Zen Monastery's teaching is based on the Venerable Trúc Lâm's method to apply the practice and instruct Buddhists.

5. Venerable Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ:

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ (aka Tôn Nữ Tịnh Tâm) was born in 1958 to a sincere Buddhist family in Huế. Thanks to her mother and father's instructions, every day the whole family recited sutras and meditated. When she was ten years old, she became a vegetarian, and at age fourteen, she asked to become a nun. Her parents promised to give permission whenever she finished her university studies. She was a student at the famous Đồng Khánh High School in Huế and the English department in Huế University. There are five renunciates in her family who follow the Zen Master Trúc Lâm (parents, two sisters and Ven. Thuần Tuệ).

In 1981, she became a nun under Zen Master Trúc Lâm Thanh Từ at Chân Không Monastery (Vũng Tàu, Vietnam).

In 1984, she received the bhikkhunī ordination at Đồng Nai Province.

In the nearly thirty years since she became a nun, she was blessed to study under the guidance of Master Thanh Từ at monasteries such as:

• 1981: Bát Nhã Meditation Center, Chân Không (Vũng Tàu)

• From 1983 to 1994: Viên Chiếu Zen Monastery (Long Thành, Đồng Nai)

• From 1994 to 2010: She became a Zen nun teacher at Trúc Lâm Phụng Hoàng Zen Monastery (Đà Lạt)

When the master returned to Thường Chiếu Monastery in 2010, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ returned to the Viên Chiếu Nunnery. At that time, the chief nun, Như Đức (abbess

of Viên Chiếu Zen Monastery) sent her to the United States to take on a new position as abbess of the Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery in Rescue, California.

- Since 2012, she has dedicated herself to guiding the spiritual life for nuns and Buddhist students, wholeheartedly building a more spacious and more favorable Zen Monastery for the sake of the masses.

- Currently, there are ten resident nuns. Every week there are around thirty to fifty Buddhists studying meditation at the monastery and hundreds of people coming from all over on the occasions of the big holidays (Buddha’s Birthday, Vu Lan) or the fall retreat and winter retreat.

Works and translations of Venerable Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ:

- Tâm bình thường (*Normal Mind*, 2016)
- Từ Một Tâm Trong Lặng (*From a Quiet Mind*, 2019)
- *Keys to Buddhism* (2008), Zen Master Thích Thanh Từ (English translation)

Nurturing the Zen seed from a young age with Master Trúc Lâm, the chief nun Như Đức and the venerable sangha in the Trúc Lâm Zen lineage, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Thuần Tuệ can share the Zen style with her nuns and lay Buddhists in three ways, such as the noble manner (*the body teaching*), dedication to sharing the Zen life (*the oral teaching*) with students of all ages and ethnic groups. Her instruction is simple, clear, practical, bringing the person straight back to “their inherent Buddha nature” and “their ownership” (*the mind teaching*). The Zen fame of nuns, descendants of the nun Patriarch Diệu Nhân (eleventh and twelfth centuries) are increasingly spreading throughout the United States, Vietnam, and around the world in this twenty-first century.

A thousand years ago, the Patriarch appeared,
A thousand years later, the high marks have remained,
Fresh wind with sweet scent,
Diệu Nhân Nun Patriarch forever grateful.

Hương Sen Temple, June 24, 2020
Respectfully,
Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com

NGỌ VÂN HUT⁷⁵

(Cloud Sleeping Hut, Thích Nữ Thuần Tuệ)

Ngọ Vân Hut!
Ngọ Vân Hut!
Mountain slope with the vast bamboo
Stone slanted
The road is long and still light
The wind comes
Mountain head
Ngọ Vân Hut!

Story of the ancient days,
At a wild jungle place
People looking for a place to hide
Far away the Imperial court,
alienate the distance
Just keep the bright pure heart
Blue sky
high mountains
Clouds shine throughout the months and years
Cloudy shadows cover the time traces
A small hut
wandering
A quiet sky.

Today we return
Look for the ancient footprints of patriarchs
Trace the small path in forest leaves
Step by step bumpy
high and low
low and high
Loving the skinny bamboo sticks!
A thousand years passed
Patriarch came here to open the way
Old body like an ancient tree
Still looking for a way to live long
For the descendants later.

⁷⁵ Trần Nhân Tông King (1258-1308), after the completion of the army task of the north and south, his leading son, Trần Anh Tông Prince took charge of the administration of the country in order that in 1299, his father, Trần Nhân Tông King could become a monk and practice asceticism. He took the title Hương Vân Đại Đầu Đà (the fragrant cloud practiced by the ascetic) with the name Trúc Lâm Đại Sĩ (Bamboo Great Monk).

After the transmission of yellow robes and bowl to the next patriarch successor, Pháp Loa, in 1307, he went into seclusion at a small hut on the Am mây Ngủ (Sleeping Cloud) Peak. In 1308, he passed away there. According to his will, his body was cremated there and Patriarch Pháp Loa built a stupa to worship a part of his master's relics. Ngọ Vân Đỉnh or Am mây Ngủ is a peak located on Bảo Đài Mountain, belonging to the Yên Tử mountain range, Đông Triều District, Quảng Ninh Province.

Oh, a small Ngọa Vân Hut!
On the mountain peak
Today
Any cloud cluster
leaning back to sleep
Ngọa Vân Hut!
My heart cherished
Which vow
high on top of Đông Sơn Mount
Which vow
Hard to fray
Patriarch went ahead
Anyone who keeps following?
Seven hundred years ago,
Your footprints
Why is it still clear?
In the sun and wind, the voice has not stopped
The Heart Sutra without words
The Heart Sutra that everyone has in mind
Never disappeared.

Ngọa Vân Hut!
Is hut in the pristine mountains?
Or is hut here
in the midst of my clarity?
Every moment
One second of exposure
There are no partitions
From the past
Present
Future
No trails
This one
This two
Voiceless
Here I am
Here you are

Ngọa Vân Hut!
A calm sky
Bright in the rhythm of life
Immense fluency
Flowering living
Throughout the empty mind
I am staying
Ngọa Vân Hut!
Cloud sleeping!

(1995)



Zen Master Thanh Từ during the ceremony of laying the stone to build Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery, November 16, 2002



Diệu Nhân Monastery in a white snowy winter



Ven. Bhikkhunī Thuần Tuệ at the entrance to the monastery, under the autumn red maple leaves



Giving lucky money and fruit to Buddhists on Lunar New Year 2020, Ven Thuận Tuệ (smiling with a bag of red envelopes).

The Venerable Nuns from Viên Chiếu Monastery (Vietnam) guiding the Fall Retreat in 2019 at the Diệu Nhân Monastery, (Front row from left): Ven. Thuận Bạch, Ven. Hạnh Như, Ven. Giải Thiện, Ven. Như Đức, Ven. Hạnh Huệ and Ven. Thuận Tuệ



The Zen Tea Night at the Buddha's Enlightenment Day in 2019



Meditation



Dharma talk in
Montreal in 2019



Guiding a retreat in
Belgium, 2020



Ven. Thuận Tuệ (fourth middle with nuns in Diệu Nhân Zen Monastery in 2020



Ven. Giới Hương (right) and a disciple Rev. Viên Tiên (left) Visited the abbess Ven. Thuận Tuệ (center) and Venerable Nuns at Diệu Nhân Monastery in August 23 2020



(Left) Ven. Thuận Bạch, Ven. Thuận Tuệ, Ven. Giới Hương and Rev. Viên Tiên at the Main Hall of Diệu Nhân Monastery in August 23.2020

2.20. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NGUYỄN BỔN
- THE TRANQUIL MIND
THE ABBESS OF KIỀU ĐÀM TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Bôn was born in 1963 in Saigon, ordained in 1976 with the most Venerable Như Như at Thiện Hòa nunnery (Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu). She was received the Bhikkhunī ordination in 1984 and settled in the United States in 2004. When she came to the United States, she relied on her second master, the Most Venerable Thích Thắng Hoan (Chief at Council of management, Central office of Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation).

In 2013, she founded Kiêu Đàm Pagoda with an area of 13,000 square feet (1,208 square meters) in Santa Ana, Orange County, California. Because the temple is located in the Vietnamese community, Buddhists also often go to the temple to chant, prayer, and attend Buddhist retreats every week and every month. In 2013, she had a sister named Nguyễn Vân who also ordained as a nun and now resides in Kiêu Đàm Pagoda with her.

Kiêu Đàm Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Bôn
1129 South Newhope Street, Santa Ana, CA 92704
Tel: 714-927-8484
Email: chuakieudamusa@gmail.com

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Bôn is gentle, mindful and dignity. At every summer retreat, she is always exemplary in diligent participation in chanting sessions and activities. Her good action as the body teaching way (different from speak / teach from mouth) is a beautiful image.

*Diligently recite the scripture day after day,
Pure Land is presented in the impermanent realms.*

Huong Sen Temple, April 28, 2020
Warm Regards,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Bôn, The Abbess of Kiều Đàm Temple



The main hall of Kiều Đàm Temple



The back yard of Kiêu Đàm Temple



The Most Venerable Thắng Hoan, Ven. Thông Hải, Ven. Thiện Long
And other monastics in the Fund Raising of Kiêu Đàm Temple July 27 2019



Left: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Hòa (Dược Sư Monastery), Ven. Minh Phước, Ven. Giới Hương (with scarf) and Ven. Nguyễn Bồn at Đại Bi Monastery on February 22, 2020

2.21. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ HUỆ HẢO - SPREADING BUDDHISM IN FAR ISLAND THE ABBESS OF TỪ HẠNH TEMPLE (MAUI, HI)

Hawaii is the fiftieth state of the United States and is the only island state with an area of 1.67 million square kilometers. There are many large islands including the Big Island, Maui, Oahu, Molokai, Lanai, Kauai, Kahoolawe, and Nihau. Honolulu is the capital of the Hawaiian Islands. Hawaii is a famous tourist destination in the world, with quiet golden sandy beaches and a blessed nature full of shady coconut trees.

As an archipelago far from the mainland, not many Vietnamese residents live in Hawaii. Oahu Island has five Vietnamese temples which were founded by monks. Chân Không Monastery and Linh Sơn Pagodas are the two earliest with the followed by Bồ Đề Pagoda, Thanh Nguyên Pagoda and Long Sơn Pagoda.

There are also nearly 100 Asian pagodas from many countries like Japan, Korea, Thailand, Laos, Campuchia and China.

On the island of Maui, there are two nunneries: Từ Hạnh Temple and Đức Viên Tịnh Hải Monastery. Từ Hạnh Temple was established by Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Hảo and Ven. Bhikkhunī Chân Vị.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Hảo (world name Bùi Thị Cúc) was born in 1952 in Sài Gòn. In 1975, she became a nun under Master Thanh Từ at Vũng Tàu Chân Không Monastery and was ordained as a bhikshuni in 1984.

- In 1983, she settled in the United States sponsored by the Most Venerable Mãn Giác.
- In 1989, she went to Plum Village in France to learn meditation with the famous Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh.
- In 1995, she returned to the United States.
- In 1996, Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Hảo and Ven. Bhikkhunī Chân Vị visited the island of Maui and realized that there was no Vietnamese temple, so they made a vow to stay to establish the temple.

In 2000, Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Hảo and Ven. Bhikkhunī Chân Vị bought 9,890 square feet of land with a old house built in 1920. The house is small, thus the living is very modest and all activities must be outdoors. It was not until 2016 that the pagoda was rebuilt. Thanks to the kind donations from Buddhists from all over the world and two fundraisings in Houston (Texas), and others in San Jose (California) and Oahu (Hawaii). As a result of these kind actions, the temple had enough conditions to finish the building.

Từ Hạnh Temple
Vietnamese Buddhist Center
Abbess: Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Hảo - Ven. Bhikkhunī Chân Vị
385 South Puunene Avenue
Kahului, Maui HI 96732
Phone: (808) 873-8654; Cell: (714) 722-7893
Email: chuatuhanh@gmail.com

In 2019, the pagoda successfully organized a four-day Tri Ân (Gratitude) Retreat under the guidance of Ven. Thích Pháp Hòa, the highly talented virtuous young monk from Canada. About 200 people from countries all over the world attended.

Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Hảo and Ven. Bhikkhunī Chân Vị are gentle, cheerful and hardworking. They organize fundraising campaigns to create a comfortable temple for the island people to approach Buddhism and spiritual practice, and enjoy the pure land on Maui Island, Hawaii. This is a very rare conduct. That's why the temple name is Từ Hạnh.

TỪ (compassionate) water sprays all over human and heaven beings,
The vast sea of HẠNH (conduct), vowing to save all sentient beings.

SONGS SUNG AT TỪ HẠNH PAGODA:

The Bell

The bell is hit to inform the chanting course
I walk gently step by step
On the soft earth
Go to the meditation hall without thinking.

Always keep your breath in and out
Breathing in, your heart relaxes,
Breathing out, you sit still
So much sorrow has now released,
Body and mind live in peace.

* * *

Birth and Death

Birth and death were born many times
Do not be afraid even if being an incarnation
Birth and death are normal
Live in the present moment
Whether birth or death
Of course, there will be no more birth and death.

Hương Sen Temple, June 20, 2020

With metta,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Từ Hạnh Temple



In 2000, this house was purchased to be the temple



Abess Huệ Hào (right) and Ven. Chân Vị (left)



From the right: Chief Nun Diệu Phước (Berlin, Germany),
Ven. Huệ Hào, Ven. Thanh Lương and Ven. Minh Liên at Từ Hạnh Pagoda on April 17, 2013



Welcome ritual for the Elder Nuns



The Vesak 2013 - teenagers offering flowers to the Buddha



Ven. Huệ Hào (right) and Ven. Chân Vi (left) at the old Từ Hạnh Pagoda.



The new main hall in 2018



Vu Lan Ceremony at Từ Hạnh Pagoda in 2017



Vesak at the new temple in 2018



Buddha's Birthday Ceremony at the new temple in 2018



The Tri Ân Retreat at main hall of Từ Hạnh Temple September 13, 2019



Venerable Pháp Hòa leads the Tri Ân Retreat
at Theresa Basilica Church, Kihei, Maui.
It was organized by Từ Hạnh Pagoda
September 13-17, 2019



The Tri Ân Retreat at Kamaole Kihei Sea, Maui, in 2019



The New Year of Rat 2020

2.22. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NGUYỄN THIỆN
- THE COMPASSIONATE STREAM
THE ABBESS OF HUYỀN KHÔNG (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)
& AN LẠC TEMPLES (INDIANA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện (also known as Giới Tâm), is the abbess of An Lạc Pagoda (Indiana) and Huyền Không Pagoda (San Jose, California). She is a Dharma sister of Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Châu (Quang Minh Pagoda, Colorado), Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Huệ and Venerable Giới Định (Bát Nhã Pagoda, California). Being a Dharma sister means that the nuns were all ordained disciples of the late Elder Master Diệu Lý (Quang Minh Pagoda, Đà Nẵng).

She graduated with a bachelors in journalism at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Vietnam and also completed a Buddhist studies course at Thiện Hòa Nunnery (Đại Tùng Lâm). For three years, she attended a Chinese-language interpretation class of the late Most Venerable Tịnh Hạnh at Quảng Hương Già Lam Pagoda in Saigon. She and her disciple nuns of An Lạc and Huyền Không Pagodas are young, talented and enthusiastic in serving the Three Jewels.

An Lạc Temple
Vietnamese American Buddhist Association
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện
5249 E. 30th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46218
Phone: (317)545-1234 - Email: anlactemple@yahoo.com
<https://www.facebook.com/anlactempleindy>

Huyền Không Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện
14335 Story Road
San Jose, California 951270
(408) 824-5696

Huyền Không and An Lạc Pagodas have weekly, monthly and yearly programs for teaching the Vinaya, the sutras and Buddhist retreats. There are activities for all ages, not only for the Vietnamese-American community, but also for native Americans. They also engage in charitable programs supporting the poor and students in Vietnam. The Ritual Chanting Committee of Huyền Không Nunnery (following the etiquette of central Vietnam) is so famous that many local and regional temples invite them to perform the rite at their ceremonies. During the Memorial Ceremony of the Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī at An Lạc Pagoda (San Jose, August 30, 2019), Venerable Nguyễn Thiện was the leader, with her chanting group of nuns who performed the rites with their soaring, harmonious voices accompanied by choral instrumentals. The beauty and solemnity of the rite touched the hearts of attendants.

Under the ingenious and virtuous guidance of the abbess, Huyền Không and An Lạc Pagodas become two of the active pagodas, representing nuns in integration with the Vietnamese-American Buddhist culture. Venerable Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện is like the shadow of a big bodhi tree radiating love and wisdom to many lay Buddhists, as well as to nuns.

The sumptuous Bodhi tree stood here over years
Carrying the suffering beings back,
Bodhi leaf bears the loving heart of Buddha.
Wide arms welcome beings from everywhere.

Huong Sen Temple, May 14, 2020
Warm Regards,
Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



From right: Venerable Tịnh Đức, Venerable Giới Châu
Second row right: Venerable Nguyễn Thiện and Venerable Giới Huệ
on the first death anniversary of Master,
Quang Minh Monastery, Đã Nẵng, on January 12, 2019



Main hall of An Lạc Pagoda, Indiana



H.E. Choje Ayang Rinpoche gave a lecture at An Lạc Pagoda, September 15, 2019



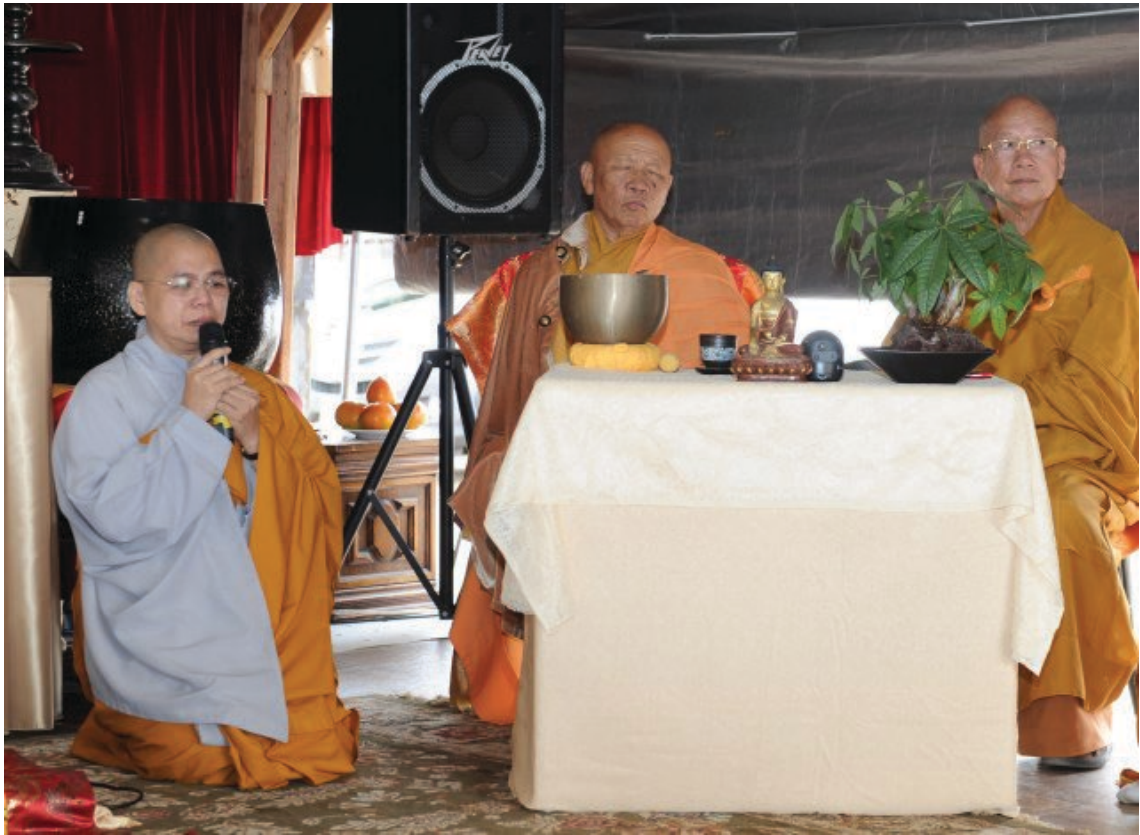
The Abbess Nguyễn Thiện and nuns conduct welcome ritual for H.E. Choje Ayang Rinpoche at An Lạc Pagoda, September 15, 2019



Venerable Pháp Hoa and Buddhists at An Lạc Pagoda, Indiana January 6, 2019



The Most Venerable Tịnh Diệu, Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện (left) and monastics in front of Huyền Không Pagoda, San Jose



Abess Bhikkhunī Nguyễn Thiện (kneeling), the Most Venerable Tịnh Từ and the Most Venerable Tịnh Diệu at Huyền Không Pagoda in 2019



Listening to the Dharma at Huyền Không Pagoda



Lunch offering at Huyền Không Temple



The Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh, Venerable Đồng Kính, Venerable Giới Hương
Venerable Nguyễn Thiện and Venerable Quảng Tịnh on the Vesak
Yerba Buena Hall, San Jose, in 2019

2.23. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ TIẾN LIÊN

- A BEAUTIFUL FIGURE OF THE MENDICANT NUN

THE ABBESS OF NGỌC HÒA TEMPLE (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Birth and Origin

Venerable Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên was born in 1966 in Sài Gòn, Vietnam. She grew up in a family with a father who was an army officer of the Republic of Vietnam. He was a captain in the Marines. The family resided in District 4 in Sài Gòn City. Based on the good karma from Buddhism for many generations, although still very young, thirteen years old, she enjoyed learning about Buddhism, going to sutra chanting every night at Ngọc Khánh Mendicant Vihara, in the Fourth District. Every week, she attended the Dharma talk to listen to the teachings of Zen Master Thích Thanh Từ at Xá Lợi Pagoda, and the Most Venerable Thích Thông Bửu at Quan Thế Âm Pagoda, Phú Nhuận district. Occasionally she went to the Trung Tâm Mendicant Monastery, Bình Thạnh District to listen to sermons.

2. Nunhood

In 1980, Venerable Tiến Liên was fortunate to enter the temple with the nuns to attend the robe-offering ceremonies of the Buddhist Nun Buddhist Sangha Church in Vietnam, and then ordained as a priest at Ngọc Chiêu Vihara, La Gi Province, Hàm Tân. The renunciation ceremony was held at the Buddhist Community Center at Ngọc Phương Vihara. Her Master is the Most Venerable Sanh Liên. Venerable Tiến Liên took sāmāṇerī ordination in 1983, and was ordained as a śikṣamāṇā in 1984. Because of her family's fate, she was preparing documents to immigrate to the United States under the H.O. (humanity opportunity) category and did not know the exact time she would be leaving Vietnam. Because of the unusual situation, Venerable Tiến Liên was allowed to ordain as a bhikkhuni by Chief Nun Huỳnh Liên at the temple in 1985 (all the precept ceremonies of the mendicant sect were held at Ngọc Phương Vihara).

3. Buddhist Study and Secular Degrees:

- In 1985, Venerable Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên graduated from high school at Hà Huy Tập, HCM City, Vietnam.
- In 1986-1989 she studied and graduated from the Literature and English Department of Tổng Hợp University, HCM City.
- In 1989-1991, she graduated from the Basic Buddhist Studies Course at Vĩnh Nghiêm Pagoda, HCM City.
- In 1996, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work at San Diego State University, California, USA.
- In 2003, she graduated with a master's of social work at San Diego State University, California, USA.
- In 2009, she completed post-graduate classes and currently is doing a PhD thesis in the Religious Studies Department at University of the West, California, USA.

4. The Vietnam Mendicant Nun Congregation and Many Mendicant Viharas

In January 1991, Venerable Tiến Liên and her family settled in the United States in San Jose, California. From 1991 to 1994 she lived and studied at Đức Viên Pagoda with teachers such as Master Bhikkhunī Thích Đàm Lữ, the Most Venerable Thích Minh Đạt, the Most Venerable Thích Tịnh Từ and the Most Venerable Thích Giác Lượng.

In 1994, Venerable Tiến Liên moved to San Diego with a number of Buddhist mendicant sisters who founded Ngọc Đăng Vihara (2405 W. Jewett Street, San Diego, California 92111) with the blessings of the Most Venerable Thích Giác Nhiên, the Most Venerable Thích Giác Chân, the Most Venerable Thích Minh Hồi, the Most Venerable Thích Minh Thiện and the Chief Mendicant Bhikkhunī Hạnh Liên.

After three years of being the abbess of Ngọc Đăng Vihara, in 1996, Venerable Tiến Liên had a chance to establish the Ngọc Minh Vihara (3776 46th Street, San Diego, California 92105) and founded the Vietnamese Mendicant Nun Congregation in the United States. In addition, Ven. Tiến Liên assisted the senior monks of the World Buddhist Mendicant Sangha in establishing some religious facilities, such as Như Lai Thiền Tự in Arizona, Minh Đăng Quang Monastery in Georgia, Đức Mẹ Hiền Monastery in New Jersey and Đại Bảo Trang Nghiêm Monastery in New York.

In 2008, Venerable Tiến Liên founded Ngọc Hòa Vihara in northern California where she is now living and actively teaching Buddhism.

Ngọc Hòa Vihara
Abbess Venerable Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên
766 S. Second Street, San Jose, CA 95112
Tel: (408) 295-2436 / (408) 507-2363
Email: ngochoatemple@gmail.com
Website: www.buddhaya.net / www.ngochoatemple.org

She also participated to become a member of the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation and holds the position of Deputy General and General Secretary of the Nun Sangha in the Executive Council (led by the late Chief Nun Như Nguyệt as the General Director). Now Ven. Bhikkhunī Giới Châu (abbess of Quang Minh Temple, Colorado) keeps the post.

In 2011, Venerable Tiến Liên founded the Overseas Mendicant Nun Congregation and the Buddhist Center for World Peace (2054 Old Piedmont Road, San Jose, CA 95132) on an area of nearly forty-three acres. The Buddhist Center has now completed the meditation hall, Amita-Buddha Hall and Nun Hall.

Overseas Mendicant Nun Congregation

Vietnamese Buddhism usually has three sects: Mahāyāna, Theravāda and Mendicant. In the United States, the image of Vietnamese Theravāda does not exist (hopefully it will appear in the near future). Theravāda practitioners are living and preaching in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Cambodia. Currently in the United States, the nuns are mostly from the northern sect (Mahāyāna) and the Mendicants.

A short history of the overseas Mendicant Nun Congregation: The Buddhist Mendicant Sangha was founded in 1980. At that time, most of the activities were performed by monks with only one nun, Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Chi. There was no Nun Congregation, only nun members of the World Buddhist Mendicant Sangha in the 1980s until 1997. After that, the personnel in the Sangha changed as shown below:

President: The Most Venerable Thích Giác Nhiên

General Secretary: Venerable Thích Minh Tuyên

Director of the Executive Council: Venerable Thích Giác Lượng

Deputy Director: Venerable Thích Giác Ngời

General Director, Sangha Affair Department: Venerable Thích Giác Chân

General Director, Spreading Dharma Department: Venerable Thích Giác Sơn

General Director, Lay Buddhist Department: Venerable Thích Minh Tôn

General Director, Department of Youth Buddhist Association: Venerable Thích Minh Thiện

General Director, Social Affairs and Construction Department: Venerable Thích Minh Hối

General Deputy, Social Affairs Department: Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Chi

By 1991, the Sangha had more mendicant nuns who followed their families to settle in the United States. At this time, although there were about ten mendicant nuns as the members of the Sangha, there was no Nun Sangha.

In 1997, the Overseas Mendicant Nun Congregation was founded by Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên (first and only). It has the traditional mendicant sect from Vietnam in which two divisions (monks and nuns) live independently and have their own Buddhist affairs. Only on the occasion of the Tụ Tứ Ceremony or the yearly ordination, do monks and nuns gather to perform the rituals.

The World Buddhist Mendicant Sangha and the Overseas Mendicant Nun Congregation are two independent Sanghas. So, there is only one Mendicant Nun Congregation.

In 1997, the mendicant nuns in the United States were not many; however, in terms of personnel required to establish the Church according to the standards of California, there were enough nuns. The Overseas Mendicant Nun Sangha was established with the following personnel structure:

President: Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên

Secretary: Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Thủy

Treasurer: Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Lam

Since 2005, the personnel composition has changed a lot. However, this includes:

President: Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên (Abbess of Ngọc Hòa Vihara, San Jose)

Secretary: Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên (Abbess of Ngọc Minh Vihara, San Diego)

Treasurer: Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Thiện

Members include Ven. Bhikkhunī Quảng Liên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Hạnh Liên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Hương Liên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Hiếu, Ven. Bhikkhunī Hiếu Liên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Liên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Cát Liên, Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Hiền and Ven. Bhikkhunī Liên Lam.

Because the Nun Sangha does not have enough personnel to take on duty in all departments, members of the congregation take turns propagating the Dharma, performing ceremonies and guiding the Buddhist groups, depending on their relationships and abilities.

5. Activities and Sharing the Dharma in the United States

Venerable Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên became a nun at the young age of fourteen and is a young, intelligent, energetic bhikkhunī in the Mendicant Nun Congregation. Having been fortunate to study both secular and supersecular fields, she has strong Buddhist knowledge and solid practice experience to help her share the Dharma overseas. She is a rather famous prestigious person who has taken on many great responsibilities of both the nun and monk sanghas, as well as establishing many monasteries for the Mendicant Church. She has earned many degrees in American universities so that she can have enough qualifications to integrate and teach in the USA. Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên is sociable, open-minded, always welcoming and enthusiastically works for the Buddhist Sangha.

During festivals or congregation meetings, she often attends and shares responsibility. At Ngọc Học Vihara, her socialization program is very rich. In 2008 and 2009, Ven. Tiến Liên

attended and served as the MC for the lecture program of the 14th Dalai Lama in New York. In addition, the local press often provides information about Ngọc Hòa Vihara's activities, such as the 2010 Organizing the Jade Buddha Worship Program, with the participation of more than 200,000 people with authorities from all levels such as the mayor, councilmen of San Jose and the supervisor of Santa Clara County. All attended and praised the largest Jade Buddha procession which is very rare overseas. In 2014, the Jade Buddha worshipping program was again organized by Ngọc Hòa Vihara at the fairgrounds of San Jose with thousands of people attending for forty-nine days and nights. She also holds important Buddhist ceremonies and prayers for the victims of natural disasters of the world and memorials for the deceased elder monks and nuns of Vietnam Buddhism, as well as lay Buddhists who had contributed to Vietnamese Buddhism.

Ngọc Hòa Vihara and Ngọc Minh Vihara created many conditions and sponsored young nuns to come to the United States to study and propagate the Dharma. Every year, at Notre Dame High School, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiến Liên gives five lectures introducing Buddhism and her temple activities to the American students. With relentless effort, she is building a vihara, establishing a church, helping nuns, lay Buddhists and sharing the Dharma. She is committed to Buddhism with tireless effort and has built a beautiful image of mendicant nuns in the USA. She is one of the accomplished mendicant nuns in a foreign country who has made significant contributions to the activities and propagation of Vietnamese Buddhism in the United States.

Huong Sen Temple, June 1, 2020

Respectfully,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

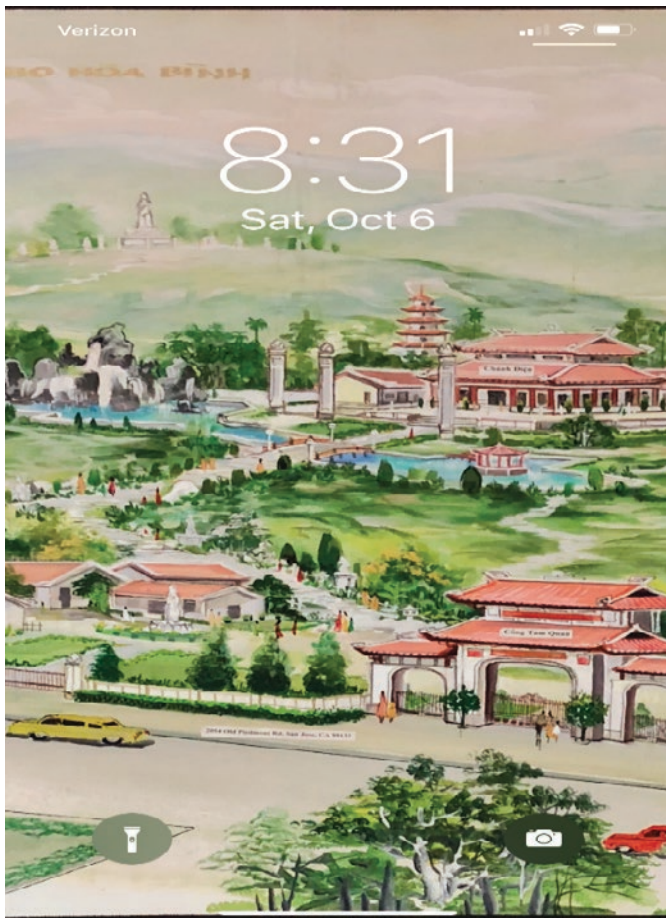
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Ngọc Hòa Vihara in San Jose



The Buddhist Center for World Peace (San Jose) under construction, 2020.



Project on Buddhist Center for World Peace (San Jose)



The Dalai Lama offering a khata to Venerable Tiến Liên in New York, 2009



The Death Anniversary of the Patriarch Minh Đăng Quang
at Minh Đăng Quang Monastery, California,
February 1, Mouse Year (2020)



The Most Venerable Phước Tịnh (in a brown dress), Ven. Minh Tuyên, Ven. Minh Hôi, Ven. Monks and Bhikkhuni Tiến Liên at the summer retreat of Như Lai Thiền Tự Temple in 2019



Ven. Tiến Liên (second row left), Ven. Giới Hương (eleventh in the second row) at the summer retreat at Minh Đăng Quang Monastery on July 27, 2014



Venerable Bhikkhunī Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo (President of the Sakyadhita International Association) and Ven. Tiên Liên in Hong Kong in 2007



Ngọc Hòa Vihara's nuns chanting, 2019



Ven. Tiến Liên introduces Buddhism to High School students in San Jose, 2018



The welcoming ceremony with the Emerald Buddha in San Jose, 2010,
hosted by Ngọc Hòa Vihara



The Jade Buddha for Universal Peace in San Jose, 2010,
hosted by Ngọc Hòa Vihara



Monastics and guests attending the Jade Buddha for Universal Peace
in San Jose, 2010, organized the second time by Ngọc Hòa Vihara

2.24. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ MINH NGHIÊM
- AN EXEMPLARY OF THE RENUNCIATE
THE ABBESS OF PHƯỚC HẢI NUNNERY (NORTH CAROLINA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nghiêm (Hoàng Thị Kim Chi) was born in 1955 in Sài Gòn. Her family has eight daughters, four of whom are ordained, all settled in the United States. She is the oldest sister in the family and in 1980, she ordained with Chief Nun Tịnh Nguyễn at Phước Hải Pagoda, District 3, HCM City. The fourth younger brother is Reverend Thiện Đức, now abbot of Tây Phương Pagoda in Atlantic. The fifth sister is Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Hương (now in Phước Hải Pagoda, North Carolina) who ordained as a nun in 1976. Her eighth younger sister, Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Hải, ordained in 1978 (currently presiding at Huệ Nghiêm Pagoda, southern California).

- In 1973, she graduated from high school.
- In 1986, she received the bhikkhunī precepts at Phước Huệ Pagoda, Sa đéc.
- In 1997, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in Buddhist studies at the Advanced Buddhist Institute (course III) and then the Most Venerable Minh Thông (Vĩnh Nghiêm Pagoda, California) invited her to the United States in the form of R-1.
- In 2000, she established Giác Tâm Pagoda in Minnesota and entrusted her disciple, Bhikkhunī Phước Tâm to be the abbess. Currently, the temple is spacious with much development.
- In 2002, she went to Louisiana to preach.
- In 2006, in North Carolina she established Phước Hải Pagoda and studied with her older sister Venerable Bhikkhunī Như. Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nghiêm has six monastic disciples: Bhikkhunī Phước Vinh, Bhikkhunī Phước An, Bhikkhunī Phước Huệ, Bhikkhunī Phước Tâm (Minnesota), Bhikkhunī Phước Viên (Canada) and two novices Phước Ngọc and Phước Tạng.

Phuoc Hai Buddhist Temple
1818 Little Rock Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28214
Phone:(704) 394-6869
phuochainc@gmail.com

- In 2014, she bought 6.6 acres of land (a fifteen-minute walk or a three-minute drive from her present temple) and in 2017 built the main hall (90 percent complete). This year, the temple plans to move to a new facility.

Phuoc Hai Buddhist Temple
7004 Tuckaseegee Road
Charlotte, North Carolina 28214

The temple has regular activities every Sunday. Every half month there is a regular ceremony of penitence, Uposatha, and monthly there is a one-day retreat for Buddhists. On the occasions of New Year, Vesak, Vu Lan festivals, more than 200 Buddhist followers attended and listened to the lectures from the inviting monks and nuns. The abbess also often goes to give lectures in the other temples such as Phổ Hiền Pagoda (Massachusetts), Giác Tâm Pagoda (Minnesota), Huệ Nghiêm Pagoda (California) and Phước Hậu Pagoda (Wisconsin).

Thanks to the kindness and diligence of the abbess' practice, combined with the goodness of nuns and lay Buddhists, Phước Hải has been developed day by day. Phước Hải Pagoda is about to move to a new large facility. Buddhists in the eastern United States, as well as local Americans, will have the majestic Phước Hải Nunnery, a pure land in the human world.

*Please listen the prayer
Return to be with serenity
Together one mind with Buddha
The world becomes peaceful.*

Huong Sen Temple on June 11, 2020
A lotus for you,
Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The late Most Venerable Tâm Châu (seated), Bhikkhuni Minh Nghiêm (left) and Bhikkhuni Giới Hương (right) at Viên Quang Pagoda, Clover, South Carolina in 2014



Venerable Phước Tịnh, Venerable Minh Quang, Bhikkhuni Nguyễn Thiện and all Venerable monks and nuns attending the Vesak hosted by Phước Hải Pagoda in Charlotte Hall



There are seven flower cars with the baby Buddha on top parading in the Vesak in 2018



Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nghiêm
and a disciple



Five disciples of the abbess: Bhikkhunī Phước Vinh, Bhikkhunī Phước An, Bhikkhunī Phước Huệ, Bhikkhunī Phước Viên and Phước Ngọc



The new Phước Hải Pagoda at 7004 Tucsasegee Road, Charlotte, NC



Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nghiêm (second left), Venerable Giới Hương (third left),
nuns and Buddhists of Phước Hải Pagoda, October 27, 2013

2.25. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ QUANG
- SKILL IN DISCIPLINE
THE ABBESS OF PHƯỚC QUANG (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Quang (world name Lương Thị Thu Dung) was born in 1961, District Six, Saigon. She is the second daughter in the family with five sisters (her father is a soldier of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam). He died in 2012. Her mother, Samaneri Huệ Cảnh, eighty-three years old, ordained as a nun in 2011 and received the samaneri precepts in 2014. At a young age, she had a dream to lead a pure life in a monastery like the nuns at Sắc Tứ Phụng Sơn Tự Pagoda (also called Pagoda Gò / Cây Gõ) located beside her house, which she visited daily.

Time passes fast. There were many ups and downs according to the circumstances of the country. In 1976, she moved with her family to her hometown in the countryside of Long Hưng Commune, Lấp Vò District, Sa Đéc Province (now Đồng Tháp). It was a place where the nunhood was beginning to flourish and gradually revive. In July 1978, she took refuge with the Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Dung at Thanh Hoa Pagoda (not far from her home). Venerable Như Dung is a virtuous nun respected by everyone. She is now eighty-eight years old. During this apprentice period, novice Như Quang started to study two chanting courses in the morning and afternoon to prepare the first step for those who want to become truly ordained, to become a nun to overcome reincarnation. That is the first standard; it must be observed without excuse. Originally, her father was an ancestor worshiper, while mother was Catholic, so she did not have the consent of her parents to leave home and live in a monastery.



Sitting: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Hương, Venerable Bhikkhu Minh Mẫn, Venerable Bhikkhu Giác Sĩ.
Standing center: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Quang
The Vesak in 2015 at Phước Quang Temple

Because of good conditions available in the past, day by day she secretly raised aspirations at night while she waited for the family to sleep soundly. She quietly burned an oil lamp, crawling under a table, using the cloth to shield the light from the outside as she studied scriptures. Each time she opened a page of a sutta, she silently prayed: “May the Buddhas in ten directions and the Heaven Dharma Protectors bless me.” Disciple Diệu Quang⁷⁶ studied the Buddhist sutras: “What I learn, I will remember; learn one but I can understand ten with the bright wisdom. Bodhi mind is developed. Life after life I always ordained, practiced to repay the parents’ grace to become a Buddha for the sake of many.”

Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Quang recounts: Every time I opened the pages of the scriptures to learn, I recited a prayer of gratitude. Thanks to the strength and determination, after two weeks, I had memorized the two prayer courses. Master was very pleased and praised me. However, due to my family situation, until 1982 when my parents were not at home my Master was taken from me and my younger sister. Như Minh went to the Phước Huệ Pagoda (Sa Đéc) to become a nun with the the Venerable Bhikkhunī Giác Ngộ. Her younger sister, Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Minh, stayed in Phước Quang Temple, southern California, USA). For many generations, Phước Huệ Nunnery has been a place to train talented nuns. At that time, this temple was also a place for nuns to study and become self-sufficient to earn their living by means of making soy sauce and tofu sauce which was famous in the Mekong River Delta (called the Fourth Region). It was administered by five elder nuns among the nun sangha in the southwest of Vietnam.

As time went on, the four masters passed away, and now the only elder left is Master Giác Ngộ, who is 104 years old. Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Quang graduated from high school, and became a bhikkhunī in 1987. She studied basic Buddhist studies in the first course (1989-1993) at Thiện Minh Pagoda (Thủ Đức) presided over by the Most Venerable Từ Thông, ninety-three years old.

Afterward, Như Quang attended the first course of Propagating Thiện Hòa in 1994, and graduated in 1997 at Quảng Đức Center (294 Nam Kỳ Khởi Nghĩa, the third District) led by the principal, the Most Venerable Trí Quảng, Head of the Sangha Missionary Department. In 1994, at the same time, Ven. Như Quang and Ven. Như Minh founded a small place named Phước Quang Temple, which has only 140 meters square in the Seventh District. Every day, each nun had a bicycle to drive on the familiar road from the temple to class. Despite the difficult circumstances, the two sisters still tried to overcome and lived according to their abilities. The responsibility of the nuns was always directed towards the wish of “preaching is a duty, saving sentient beings is ambition.”

In 2007, the two sisters moved to the United States and settled in southern California in the mobile home area of Westminster. At this second homeland, even though it was just as hard as the previous difficulties, the two of us always tried their best. Besides, Như Quang often said: “If we are without Venerable Master, the abbot of Bát Nhã Pagoda, he spreads his compassion to guarantee that the two of us (Như Quang and Như Minh) can present here, in this country of America.”

Ten years passed. In July 2017, the two sisters had to rely on the sympathy and help of the monks, nuns and lay Buddhists from near and far, so we established Phước Quang Pagoda with 10,800 square feet in Garden Grove City, southern California.

⁷⁶ Diệu Quang is her previous Dharma name as she attained the taking refuge ceremony of the Triple Gem and Five Precepts.

Phước Quang Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhr Quang Nhr Quang
& Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhr Quang Nhr Minh
12471 Euclid Str., Garden Grove, CA 92840
Cell: (714) 360-3938, (714) 213-5692
Email: phuocquangtemple@gmail.com



Ven. Nhr Quang (right) and Ven. Nhr Minh (left) at the main hall

Currently, there are four Dharma sisters living and practicing with Ven. Bhikkhunī Nhr Quang. The pagoda has to pay a mortgage for thirty years and every month the nuns have to work hard to sell vegetarian food to cover funding. The temple is small, but every Sunday there is a chanting program at 10 am, and lunch after 12 am. Though not many people, it still warms the heart to see the bhikkhunis full of joy.

Every year in addition to the two main celebrations of Buddha's Birthday and Vu Lan in March of the lunar year, the temple organizes two days of "Mother's Gratitude Day" according to the Maudgalyāyana Scripture in which all children have to know how to repay their mother. The temple also organizes a week of autumn retreat for nuns at the end of August (usually twenty-five nuns and some Buddhist practitioners) specializing in chanting the Lotus Sutra. Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhr Quang established the temple with the aim to create facilities for nuns and female Buddhists to return to the temple to practice together, because "virtues of the sangha are like the sea" and the image of "many yellow robes" is very beautiful in this foreign context.



Phước Quang Pagoda was still limited in facilities with a modest campus, but she set up a tent in the yard so the Dharma sisters from many different places can gather to practice together. Although conditions are inadequate, she keeps her aspiration to open the retreat with a devotion to Buddhism so that it can be present here. The nuns from afar understand her goodwill and are hospitable to return and practice together to nurture precepts-concentration-wisdom.

At the summer retreats, she is often invited to read the precepts on the Uposatha. She strictly observes the vinaya, so in the retreat, the rule of Phuoc Quang Pagoda is to prohibit leaving the boundaries of the temple to keep it serene and peaceful for other nuns during the retreat. The temple has opened two summer retreats for nuns in 2018 and 2019.

The Most Venerable Diệu Từ respected the conduct of Ven. Như Quang so much that she donated twenty fabric beds for the nuns to have a place to lie down. She also ordered her disciples to cook food for the nuns. The Most Venerable Minh Mẫn gave his spiritual and physical support to the nuns. Ven. Như Quang's room has three beds for sharing with other nuns who can stay to cultivate. She does not require a private room even though she is the abbess. Although lacking facilities, she is happy to serve and respect the image of the nuns, the disciples of the Tathagata.

Following the Buddha's compassion, during the covid-19 pandemic, she made many vegetarian rice hamburgers to donate to the doctors, nurses and staff at Garden Grove Hospital, Fountain Valley, Oregon Coast of Fountain Valley and others. She also purchased 3,500 masks from Vietnam to offer the doctors, nurses and medical staff who are the leading Bodhisattvas in saving lives.

Huong Sen Temple, May 1, 2020
A Lotus for You,
Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The gate of the Summer Retreat at Phước Quang Temple in 2019



The nuns in summer retreat chanting at the main hall of Phước Quang Temple in 2019



Venerable Giới Hương (first with the bead) and Venerable Như Quang (behind)
in the summer retreat at Huệ Quang Pagoda, 2016

2.26. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHẬT LAN
- ORCHID UNDER THE SUN
MANAGER OF GIÁC MINH TEMPLE (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan (world name Nguyễn Thị Thu Vân) was born in 1966 in Sài Gòn and is a disciple of the Most Venerable Thanh Cát. On the surprising occasion, in 1973 at Đức Hòa Pagoda, Suối Lò-ò, she had the great blessing to have her hair cut by four high-ranking monks, the Most Venerable Master Thanh Cát, the Most Venerable Chân Lý, the Most Venerable Tâm Châu, and the Most Venerable Thanh Kiểm (Vĩnh Nghiêm Pagoda). In 1987, she received bhikkhunī ordination. She graduated from grade twelve in HCM City, as well as the basic and intermediate Buddhist studies courses at Vĩnh Nghiêm Pagoda.

In 1998, she settled down in the United States and was entrusted by Master Thanh Cát to take care of Giác Minh Pagoda (one of the first temples in northern California founded in 1977 by the master). In 2010, the master becomes old and weak and wants to focus on reciting the Buddha's name, so he appointed his disciple Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan to be the manager of the temple.

Giác Minh Pagoda
763 Donohoe Street
East Palo Alto, CA 94303
Phone: (650) 326-2087
www.chuagiacminh.org
Email: chuagiacminh@gmail.com, thichnunhatlan@yahoo.com
Manager: Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan

Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan's gentle voice is like a beautiful orchid under the sun. She diligently chants mantras and replaced the master to guide the nine nuns and hundreds of lay Buddhists on holidays and weekends. She does her best to repay the Three Jewels and especially Master Thanh Cát.

*Grace to the Three Jewels, we liberate,
Grace to parents, we are present
Grace to the Master, we are sponsored
Grace to country, we have a shelter.*

The Isolation Vesak in Huong Sen Temple
The Eighth Day of the Lunar Fourth Month
Mouse Year, 2020
A lotus for you,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The Master Thanh Cát and disciple Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan



Chanting



Front side of Giác Minh Temple



Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan



Venerable Bhikkhunī Nhật Lan (third left) with nuns in the main hall of Giác Minh Temple



Venerable Nhật Lan (sixth from left) and Venerable Giới Hương (eighth from left) at An Lạc Pagoda, San Jose, on Memorial Day for Patriarch Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, August 30, 2019

2.27. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNI QUẢNG TỊNH
- THE PEACEFUL KARMA
THE ABBESS OF PHẬT QUANG TEMPLE (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Quảng Tịnh (World name Trương Du Hy) was born in 1957 in Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu. After graduating from high school, she often went to the temple to learn Buddhism. In 1983, she became a nun under the Most Venerable Master Trí Lãng, Vạn Thông Pagoda (Đại Tòng Lâm). She received bhikkhuni ordination in 1987 and in 1998 she followed her family to settle down in the United States.

In 2000, she earnestly begged the Most Venerable Thích Đức Niệm to be her master (International Buddhist Institute, Southern California). In 2003, after the master passed away, she asked the Most Venerable Minh Tâm to be the master (abbot of Khánh Anh Monastery, France) who was the Dharma brother of the late Most Venerable Đức Niệm. In 2002, she established the Phật Quang Temple in San Jose, northern California.

Phật Quang Temple
Venerable Bhikkhunī Quảng Tịnh
801 N 15th Street
San Jose, CA 95112
Phone: 408 295 8391
Email: chuaphatquang@att.net

Phật Quang Temple is 6,000 square feet with a basement to serve as a dining hall. The temple had nine nuns; some among them went outside to establish their own temples. Now there are two disciples taking care of the Three Jewels with the Venerable Bhikkhuni Quảng Tịnh. Every Sunday, there are chanting activities and listening to the Dharma from 10 am to 2 pm. Every Saturday at 6:30 am, there is a repentance course where about forty Buddhists come early to repent and then go to work. Every second week on Saturday, per month, the nun guides the triple karma (body, speech and mind) retreat.

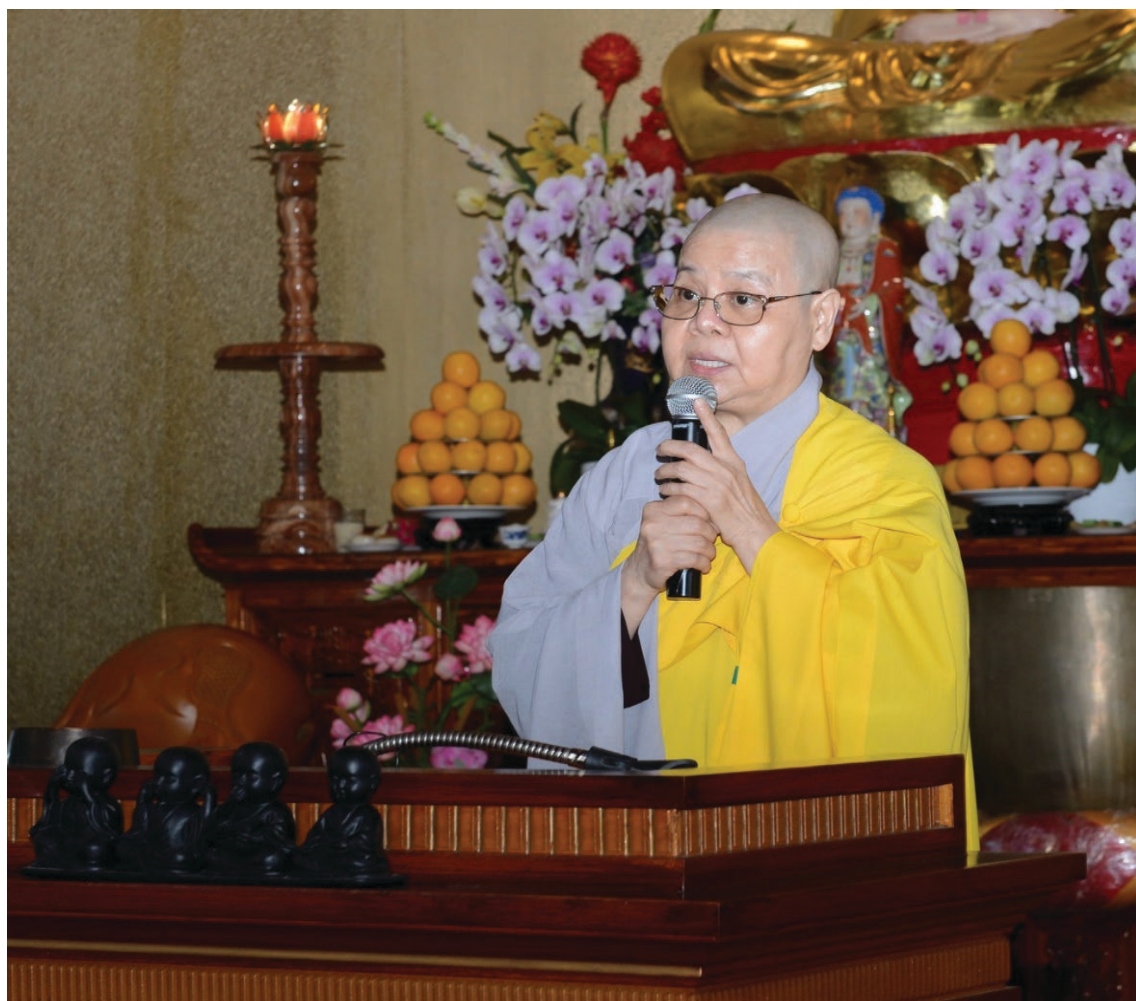
Venerable Bhikkhunī Quảng Tịnh explained that lay Buddhists attend from morning till afternoon, as they observe their body, speech and mind. It could be called the “triple karma retreat.” Each retreat has about forty or fifty people attending. She instructs the masses to practice every second, every minute. They must keep their body, speech and mind pure, then precept-concentration-wisdom will open.

Baggage of a monastic life,
Enjoy a pure life,
Abandon all the greed and anger,
Proceedings practicing precept-concentration-wisdom.

Huong Sen Temple, April 29, 2020

With metta,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Venerable Bhikkhuni Quảng Tịnh



In front of Phật Quang Temple



The main hall of Phật Quang Temple



Venerable Bhikkhū Quảng Tịnh sits second from left

2.28. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNI DIỆU PHƯỚC
- THE WONDERFUL MERIT
THE ABBESS OF VIÊN MINH TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Venerable Bhikkhuni Diệu Phước (world name Dương Thị Hương) was born in 1966 in Huế. Her family members are sincere Buddhists who support Buddhism, and agreed their sixth child among eight would become Nun Diệu Phước and their youngest son would become Reverend Quảng Long, who currently is living at the pagoda in Bình Châu, Việt Nam.

- In 1980, at age fifteen, Reverend Diệu Phước ordained under the Most Venerable Bhikkhuni Chơn Thông, Diệu Viên Pagoda, Huế, and continued her education until graduating from grade twelve.

- In 1988: She ordained as a bhikkhuni at the great ceremony at Bảo Quốc Pagoda, Huế. In 1988-1990, she went to the south of Vietnam and lived in Pháp Hoa Pagoda, Long Thành.

- 1990-1994: Graduated from Basic Buddhist Studies Course at Thiện Hòa Nunnery, Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu.

- 1994-1997: Studied and graduated from the Buddhist College at Thiện Hòa Nunnery, Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu.

- 1998-2003: The Sangha nominated her to be the abbess of Pháp Linh Pagoda, Vũng Tàu City. Currently, her younger Dharma sister, Venerable Diệu Liên, is in charge.

- November 24, 2003: The Most Venerable Pháp Châu, Vietnamese Temple (Garden Grove, California) sponsored her to come to the USA. She stayed at the Vietnamese Temple to study for five years.

- In 2010: She set out to establish her own place of religious practice by renting a private house at 12471 Trask Avenue, Garden Grove, California. In 2015 on Thanksgiving Day, she officially bought a house and converted it to Viên Minh Temple:

Viên Minh Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Diệu Phước
11721 Magnolia Street, Garden Grove, CA 92841
Tel: (714) 705-5692
Email: chuavienminh.cali@yahoo.com
Dieuphuoc11721@gmail.com

Regarding the meaning of the word “Viên Minh,” she explained that the name of her patriarch’s temple in Huế is Diệu Viên Pagoda, so she chose Viên. She has always liked the phrase, “Viên Minh Nhất Điểm,” which means “at an inherent point, we are equally insightful,” so she chose that for her temple: Viên Minh Temple.

For three years (2015-2018), the activities of the temple ran smoothly, however, unfortunately on the first day of the New Year 2019 (the Pig year), the temple burned down. With the financial assistance of insurance and contributions from fellow Buddhists, in 2020, Viên Minh Pagoda is being rebuilt with two floors totaling 7,800 square feet. The main hall can accommodate 100 people, with lecture halls, a dining room, five guest rooms, all the facilities for the retreats and a parking lot. Hopefully with the enough financial conditions, in summer 2021 the construction will be completed.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Phước wished with the establishment of Viên Minh Pagoda to open retreat courses for fifty nuns in the summer, autumn and winter along with one-day retreats for lay Buddhists to practice together to repay the grace of the Three Jewels. Buddhism has a saying: “Deep gratitude to the Buddhas, sincerely practice to repay.”

Hương Sen Temple, July 10, 2020
A Lotus for You,
Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The sign of Viên Minh Temple



The plan for Viên Minh Temple



Left: The Most Venerable Minh Mẫn, Ven. Phước Thuận, Ven. Nguyên Trí and the Venerable Monks attend the Vu Lan Ceremony at Viên Minh Temple



Bhikkhuni Diệu Phước kneeling and listening to the words of Venerable Nguyên Trí



Offering the Vu Lan season at Viên Minh Temple at Viên Minh Pagoda



The Hungry Ghost Offering Ritual at Viên Minh Temple



The chanting monk group with Buddhists



The third-year anniversary of Viên Minh Temple



Reunited on the Lunar New Year

**2.29. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ CHÁNH
& VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ NHƯ BẢO
- SERVICE IN THREE JEWELS
THE ABBESS OF HUÊ LÂM TEMPLE (MASSACHUSETTS)**

On January 7, 2005, the nuns bought an old church (built in 1920) in the city of Fitchburg, Massachusetts to convert it into a Vietnamese temple, Huê Lâm Temple (a branch of Huê Lâm Temple, the 11th District, HCM City) as a place of practice for nuns and Buddhists in the eastern United States.

Huê Lâm Temple is fifteen years old and has gone through many stages of repair. In 2010, the roof tiles were replaced, in 2012 the main hall was repaired and in 2017, the meditation halls were renovated, along with the guest rooms. With generous contributions, labors and efforts of fellow Buddhists from near and far, and with the nuns on the spot to help, today there is a solemn Vietnamese temple set amidst the golden-leaved hills of Fitchburg, Massachusetts.

Hue Lam Meditation Center
2 Vernon Court,
Fitchburg, MA 01420
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Chánh
Deputy: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Bảo
Phone: (978) 345-9038 / (978) 906-1399
Email: huelamdethuong@yahoo.com; fitchburgtemple@gmail.com
<https://www.huelamtemple.com/>

With the moderate space (can accommodate about 200 people) of the main hall, Huê Lâm Temple every year organizes a retreat for nuns throughout the United States where fifty people gather for a ten-day course. They open many retreats in English and Vietnamese for Buddhists and adolescents from the Buddhist Youth Association, such as the the course, “Listen to understand, look back to love.” The temple has many enriching weekly, monthly and yearly programs with the purpose of sharing the Dharma and maintaining and introducing Vietnamese traditional culture to the local Vietnamese and American community.

In order to remind each other to live in the Dharma, many insight Dharma proverbs are engraved on the stones in the temple and in the yard:

Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh:

Everything we touch in our daily lives, including our bodies, is a miracle. By putting the kingdom of god in the right place, it shows us it is possible to live happily right here, right now.

Mindfulness is the kind of Light that shows us the way... Mindfulness gives birth to insight, awakening, compassion and love.

Venerable Thích Như Thanh:

*Oh disciples, the shrine I set up
Oh disciples, the sacred text I transmitted
Someday when I pass away
I will transmit all my aspirations to you.*

*A gathering house, everywhere peaceful.
Remember Buddha, recite Buddha's name.*

*By the fruits of karma, we are gathered here,
Practice for ten days,
Sisters diligently follow Dharma together
Keeping the meditation lamp of ancestors.*

*Body and mind pure
The resilient and strong will,
The wisdom-merit practice together,
The Bodhi is manifested
The achievements attain soon.*

*Fame and fortune are illusory games,
Talent and beauty are faded as the sunset.*

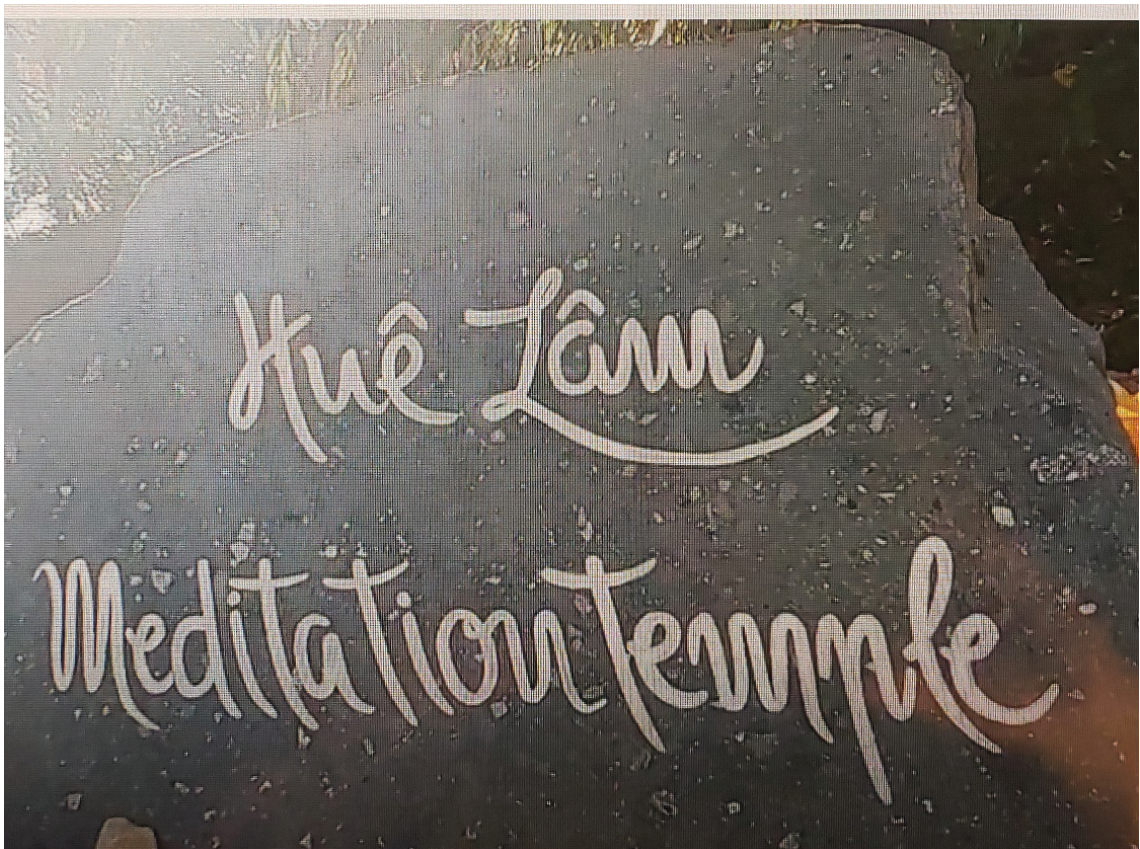
*Let the traveller return, the road is long,
Dust, grief, with much sadness
Gentle sleeping in the heart of Dharma,
To soul of poetry hidden cherished.*

*You practice virtue whole life, nuns gather toward you,
The everlasting benefit of sentient beings,
The mirror of conduct along with nun sangha.*

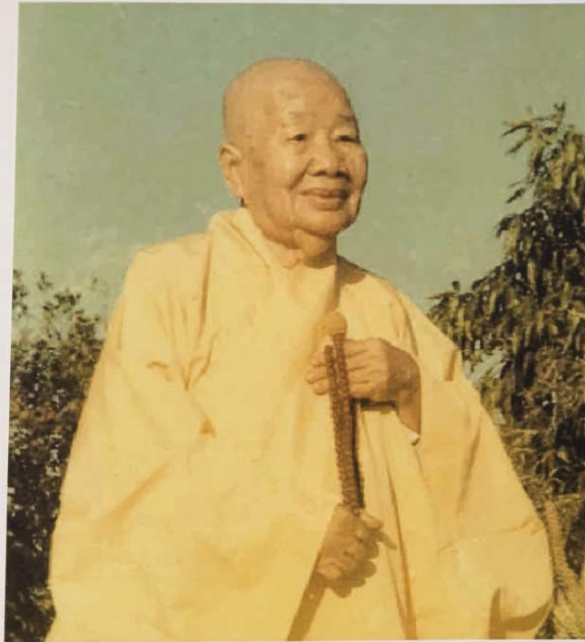
Huong Sen Temple, July 4, 2020
Warm Regards,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The sign at Huê Lâm Temple



Huê Lâm Meditation Temple



‘...Này con ơi, đạo tràng Thầy lập
Này con ơi, Kinh tập Thầy truyền
Mai kia Thầy đã tịnh yên,
Bao nhiêu chí nguyện Thầy truyền cho con...’
Sư trưởng Huê Lâm

‘...Oh disciple, the shrine I set up
Oh disciple, the sacred texts I transmitted
Someday when I will have passed away
I transmitted all my aspirations to you...’
Venerable Thích Như Thanh

The Most Venerable Master Nhu Thanh



Chanting



The solemn ritual at the late Venerable Master Nhu Thanh's altar



The commemoration ceremony for the late Bhikkhunī Venerable Nhu Thủy at Huệ Lâm Pagoda, Fitchburg, Massachusetts, October 15, 2018



The commemoration



The Most Venerable Nhr Đức and Venerable Nuns



Ven. Bhikkhunī Như Bảo



Welcoming the spring at Huệ Lâm Temple Hall, 2019

2.30. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ HUỆ NGHIÊM
- THE GENTLE FIGURE
THE ABBESS OF HẢI AN TEMPLE (GEORGIA)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Nghiêm settled in United States in 1993 and established Hải Ân Temple in 2004 on 3.16 acres in Georgia. At that time, it was a forest full of thorny grass surrounding a rotten old wooden house that had been abandoned for more than two years. After more than four months of repairing the seventy-year-old damp house and clearing the trees, the appearance of a simple pagoda with a golden-brown roof graces the peaceful neighborhood with several Vietnamese homes.

Hải Ân Pagoda celebrated its first Buddha's birthday on the full moon day of April 2004 with ten Buddhists attending.

Hải Ân Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Huệ Nghiêm
5375 Sanders Road, Lake City, GA 30260
(404) 366-0042, Cell: (404) 643-2785
huenghiem@hotmail.com

Ven. Bhikkhunī Huệ Nghiêm is a disciple of the late Venerable Huyền Huệ, the abbess of the Hải Ân Pagoda in Tân Phú District, HCM City (the same Dharma lineage as the Bình Quang Pagoda in Phan Thiết).

Near the end of 2007, she purchased the house and one acre close to the pagoda which was large enough for future temple construction (according to Georgia law, the land must be five acres wide to get permission to build a temple). In addition to practicing religious activities, the temple has Vietnamese language classes. Initially, it had only eight young students who were brought to temple to learn by their parents. In the following years, especially in the summer, the number of students reached over eighty.

Every weekend, thirty adult Buddhists come to the temple to chant, while teenagers learn Buddhism and the Vietnamese language. Each year, there is a retreat in the winter (Thanksgiving) and on the festivals of Vesak, Vu Lan and Kuan-yin. At the annual festival, hundreds of Buddhists attend the ceremony and to listen to Dharma under the guidance of the visiting monks and nuns, both domestic and abroad.

After more than fifteen years, the temporary house that was used as a main hall is dilapidated (although it has been repaired many times); it is seriously degraded and very dangerous, especially during a big storm season. The temple will officially build the new main temple in fall 2020.

May the Hải Ân Pagoda soon accomplish its goals to meet the spiritual needs, to bring the Bodhi incense and the grace of Dharma to the Vietnamese-American community in Georgia, in the southeastern USA.

*Dharma torch bright and far away dark night
The wonderful Triple Jewels spread the Bodhi incense
Transform from secular to supersecular state
Dharma towards upper, transcending space and time.*

(Song of Faith at Triple Jewels - Thích Nữ Giới Hương)

Namo incense offering Bodhisattva.

Huong Sen Temple, July 06, 2020
Warm Regards,
Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The sign of Hải Ân Temple



The main hall of Hải Ân Temple in the New Year, 2020



Mid-Autumn Festival with the moon-lights in 2019



Almsround on Vu Lan Day in 2018



Hải Ân Vietnamese class



The Ven. Bhikkhunī Abbess TN Huệ Nghiêm and workers digging the foundation to build a new hall in 2020

**2.31. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ THANH LƯƠNG
& VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ MINH LIÊN
- SERVICE IS A WAY FOR A BLOOMING LOTUS
The Abbess of Viên Thông Monastery (Texas)**

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương was born in 1955 into a middle-class Buddhist family. She lived in Saigon and as the youngest daughter, she was deeply cherished by her parents and siblings. When she wanted to become a teenager nun, her mother did not agree. Without wanting to go against her mother's, she still cherished the mind of renunciation and continued to study at the University of Science and Biophysical Division in Saigon. In 1978, she settled down in the United States.

During the years 1980-1982, Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương served at the Vietnamese America Association in Oklahoma to help the refugee community just arrived in the United States. It seems that when she was exposed to the hardship of the cross-border people and the lonely helplessness of the refugees, initially her seed of renunciation grew stronger than ever before. It created an inner impetus, causing her to flee her family to find a religious teacher. But at that time, there were very few Vietnamese pagodas in the new land (USA), so she went to practice at the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, a practice center of the San Francisco Zen Center in California. Until Kim Son Monastery was founded, she was the first female to be ordained under the Venerable Master Tịnh Từ. Shortly after being ordained, her master sent her to Đức Viên Pagoda (San Jose, California) to learn Dharma with Venerable Bhikkhunī Đàm Lữ.

In 1987-1992, Master Tịnh Từ sent her to study mindfulness meditation at Hồng Village in France under the guidance of the famous Most Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh.

From 1993 to 1994 she was a teacher at Kim Son Monastery.

In 1995-2000, obeying the teachings of Venerable Master Tịnh Từ, she went to Tâm Quang Temple in Michigan to work as a spiritual guide for Buddhists. During that time, she studied at the University of Michigan and graduated with two master's degrees in comparative religions and psychology, as well as a certificate in psychotherapy (holistic or mind and body healing).

2002-2005: During this time, she was invited to propagate everywhere and had the good fortune to stop in Houston to establish a religious place - Viên Thông Temple. It was originally a welding factory that a Buddhist lent to use as a temporary practice place for Buddhism.

During this time, she was alone as she cared for the Three Jewels. While building up the temple and offering guide practitioners in other places, she did not have enough time to do everything so she invited Bhikkhunī Minh Liên from Vietnam to America to help with her missionary activities. She and her family knew Bhikkhunī Minh Liên when she was a young novice.

In 2005, to meet the needs of activities for Buddhists as well as to fulfill the aspiration to create a fully equipped temple that can provide retreat courses for nuns and lay Buddhists, two bhikkhunīs (Venerable Thanh Lương & Venerable Minh Liên) built the Viên Thông Monastery.

Viên Thông Monastery
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương
17355 Groeschke Road, Houston, TX 77084
Tel: (281) 829-0816; (832)-638-1453; (281) 829-0830
Cell: (832) 605-5503
thichnuthanhluong@yahoo.com
vienthonghouston@yahoo.com
www.vienthongtu.org

Initially establishing the monastery was extremely difficult. The two nuns and their renunciates and lay disciples worked together to build the main hall, auditorium and nuns' buildings. Although both the bhikkhunīs and their disciples did not have experience with construction, they were able to engage in all of the construction jobs, such as climbing on the temple roofs, laying roofing tiles, digging the foundation, making wooden walls, pouring the foundation, leveling the ceiling and leveling and compressing soil to make a parking. Finally, the spacious Viên Thông Monastery with the beautiful Asian architectural features, both inside and outside, has been completed and built to serve the majority of Buddhist practitioners, as well as to preserve the Vietnamese language by opening Vietnamese language classes, at times with over 400 pupils.

The construction of the temple by most of the nuns with their own strength, has been entered the history of Vietnamese nuns. This is a very beautiful image that brightens the history of nuns in the United States. This feat has been praised by domestic and foreign sangha, intellectuals, Buddhists, and media journalists who have posted much on YouTube, in newspapers, television, and history books.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên is a teacher at Viên Thông Monastery. She was born in 1960 in Đà Lạt and in 1968, she became a novice at the age of eight under a Most Venerable Monk at Khuôn Hội Lộc Uyển (now as Lộc Uyển Temple - Ward 4 - Đà Lạt).

In 1975, because of the country's circumstances, the temple had no adults to take care of things. As she was very young, Khuôn hội Lộc Uyển Temple was closed and she was sent back to her family.

In 1976, Khuôn Hội Lộc Uyển Temple invited the Most Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Phú to be the abbess. She accepted and considered Reverend Minh Liên as her first nun disciple.

In 1978, her master sent her to Từ Nghiêm Nunnery in Sài Gòn which had the opportunities for her to learn Buddhism and worldly academics. At that time, she was the only novice in Từ Nghiêm Nunnery.

In 1984, she received the full great precepts of bhikkhunī ordination at Từ Nghiêm Nunnery.

She graduated with a bachelor of Buddhist studies (Course II, 1989-1993) at the Advanced Buddhist Studies of Vietnamese Institute, HCM City, as well as earning a bachelor's of literature at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in HCM City.

In 2002, Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên accepted an invitation from Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương to come to the United States to guide and implement her missionary activities abroad.

From a young age, Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên has lived in a nunnery, trained in the environment of the Tripitaka of Sutra, Law, and the Abhidharma. She is very learned about Dharma. The Great Tripitaka and the Mahayana Sutras form the basis of her studies.

With deep knowledge of the Dharma and the diligent practice of meditation, she is able to convey the Buddha's teachings to the listener's mind in a way that is simple and easily understood, but very profound. She is often invited to give lectures and guidance to retreats all over the world.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên and Venerable Bhikkhunī Giới Hương spent time together on a few occasions. They lived for four years in the same dormitory at the Advanced Buddhist Studies of Vietnamese Institute (Phú Nhuận). Every morning, they, along with twenty nun students, chanted the Śūraṅgama mantra at the temple of the chief nun Trí Hải next door. They also were classmates for those four years at the institute, as well as classmates for four

years in the literature department at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Saigon. At that time, sometimes they sometimes rode together on a motorbike to save gas.

At present, Viên Thông Monastery has six nuns and many lay Buddhist apprentices under the compassionate guidance of Abbess Thanh Lương and Master Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên.

Viên Thông Monastery has many rich programs, such as the summer and winter retreat for laypeople and the skills course for children, the nuns' retreat, Vietnamese language classes for many ages, Buddhist recitation and mindfulness meditation, yoga exercise, martial arts with body and mind therapy, group exercise (qigong, dancing with sticks), the cultural program, outdoor activities, weddings, funerals, prayers for the living and the dead, (following the Vietnamese tradition) and water funeral ceremonies. In addition, they also have plans to build Tịnh Tâm Hall for retired people to study Buddhism, to build Compassion Houses (for the poor people in Vietnam), to offer scholarships to students, construct kindergartens in the central region, West Highlands Tây Nguyên - Daklak, to build wells, assist patients, distribute New Year gifts for the poor and offer relief to people suffering from natural disasters.

The main ambition of Viên Thông Monastery is to preserve the Vietnamese culture, develop a spiritual life, and guide Buddhists to practice the right Dharma to transform suffering into peace and happiness.

May the Buddha bless Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương and Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Liên to be healthy and continue with the Buddhist works of Viên Thông Nunnery, so that the nuns will always be a bright and beautiful image of Vietnamese bhikkhunis in the United States.

Namo Amitābha Buddha.

Summer Sunshine in Hương Sen Temple, California 2020

Bow and Smile,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



The Autumn Nuns' Retreat at Viên Thông Monastery, October 3-17-2019



From top left: Venerable Bhikkhunī Như Nguyễn, Venerable Như Đức, Venerable Như Huệ, Venerable Thanh Lương, Venerable Giải Thiện, Venerable Hạnh Huệ, Venerable Hạnh Như, and Venerable Minh Liên at the Autumn Nuns' Retreat in 2019



The Autumn Nuns' retreat at Viên Thông Monastery, October 3-17-2019



The Vesak at Viên Thông Monastery in 2019



The abbess attaching roses to Buddhists on Vu Lan Day



Vietnamese Language Class



Front of Viên Thông Monastery



From right: Bhikkhunī Viên Anh, Venerable Bhikkhunī Thanh Lương, Venerable Minh Liên, Venerable Đồng Anh, Venerable Minh Nguyệt, Venerable Giới Hương, Bhikkhunī Viên Chân, Bhikkhunī Viên Hòa in the guest room of Viên Thông Monastery on June 3, 2014



Venerable Thanh Lương (in brown robe) next to Venerable Giới Hương (yellow robe)
with Buddhists in the main hall of Viên Thông Monastery, Texas 2016

2.32. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ DIỆU TÁNH

- THE WAY IS GONE IN THE SANGHA

THE ABBESS OF THIỀN TỊNH ĐẠO TRÀNG TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Dream or Truth

Buddha's Birthday, 2526-1982, I attended the Grand Opening of Tam Bảo Pagoda, Montréal Canada, and from that occasion, I met the late Venerable Thích Đức Niệm, who became the Master of my life.

Three months later, I decided to go to the United States to visit him at his International Buddhist Institute (Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế) in California on the occasion of the Vu Lan Day. During this great ceremony, there was a taking refuge in the Triple Gems and five precepts ceremony, the ordination ceremony of nun Quảng Tâm, Mr. Minh Đức, and Mr. Minh Tuấn. This ordination image so impressed in my heart that later, I also joined the cherished holy path of my life to become a renunciate.

The first time I understood what was to be a nun, I was so grateful that I bowed to the late Most Venerable Thích Đức Niệm, granting me to receive the ceremony of the three Jewels and Five Precepts. Starting from that day, I became a lay Buddhist with the Dharma name Diệu Tánh. In the garden of Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute, after taking the precepts, I often walked and wondered whether I was living in a Dream or in Reality.

2. I Go a New Way



During the two months I stayed at the institute, I listened to the teachings on impermanence, cause-effect, karma, conduct and virtue of the renunciates. During this time, I felt that my heart was really peaceful and liberated. I also learned more of the aspiration of Master Thích Đức Niệm about establishing the Buddhist Institute with the purpose of training faithful monks, lay Buddhists, and a research center for Buddhism and Dharma practice.

His wishes and the spiritual situation of the refugees desperately needed a spiritual refuge. He lived with faith and devotion with every step of the way, overcoming all difficulties and obstacles to complete the mission of establishing the Buddhist Institute in the direction that he outlined.

Before going back to Canada, I asked Teacher to give me one more step on the path to enlightenment, that is, to become a renunciate. He taught, "The day you return to the United States, I will approve you with the other six people to become nuns/monks, if you memorize the mantras of Sūraṅgama and Amitabha scripture, "The Universal Door of the Bodhisattva Kuan-Yin" (who listens to the Voices of the World) and samaneri discipline." Hearing his words, my heart was overjoyed, knowing that he had promised me.

The night before I left the United States to return to Canada, I also asked the master give me receive the Bodhisattva precepts so that during the days away from the Master, I could take it as a goal to keep the wish to return to Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute to become a nun.

When I returned to Canada to arrange for some of the work, the Master's profound teachings and liberating manner always made me feel more spiritual strength. I really decided to go on this new path, the path of a nun, and gave my whole life to serve sentient beings. "I will return and vow to follow the path of the Teacher who has gone...", I said to my heart.

3. Creating Merit and Helping the Master

Buddha's Birthday 2527-1983, I returned to Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute determined to become a nun for the sake of all sentient beings. I have truly become a nun ever since.

Early Autumn, on September 2-3-4, 1983, the great ceremony Thiện Hòa was held in the Zen garden of Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute. Many venerables, reverends and sangha from everywhere - France, Germany, Australia, Canada, and Taiwan came to attend. The ordination ceremony of the bhikkhunī, śikṣamāṇā, samana, samaneri, Bodhisattva precepts, and the Five Precepts take place in a solemn atmosphere. As for me, I received the samaneri precept. At that time I was twenty-seven years old. Seven years later, I received the the full Bhikkhunī precepts in 1990 with some of the nuns I remember, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Liên (Vietnam Temple, Los Angeles), Venerable Bhikkhunī Đức Thường and others.

I remember in the beginning, the scene of Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute was so wild and far from the Vietnamese community. Many Buddhists were worried about the future of this place because it is "like a tiger leaving the forest, a fish leaving the water." But the master still calmly reassured us that "If the precept and disciplines remain, then Buddhism exists. The precepts are observed, then the circumstances are solemn. Morality has the power to change circumstances." Although Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế institution was still cramped and poor, there was a trend of development. Although at that time only three renunciates and six practitioners were practicing, it also marked the first sign of Vietnamese Buddhism to train the ordained and provide a refuge for Buddhists to have a place to study Dharma in the new land of the United States in a civilized society.

In addition to Buddhist studies, law, chanting prayers, the renunciates have to grow vegetables and make soy sauce. Not only that, there was a shortage of Vietnamese scriptures for the overseas Buddhist community, especially in the period when there is no exchange of goods between Vietnam and the outside world. The master always pays attention to preserve and develop the traditional Vietnamese culture, literature, and Buddhist scriptures in the Vietnamese language. Therefore, he founded the publishing house, Ananda, at the Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute, and I worked closely with the master (1983-2000) for seventeen years in the role of a treasurer, receptionist, librarian, typist and designer. I often took charge of the publishing room for typing, designing, printing new and old scriptures, producing printed works until 2000. Now there are about 235 books of all kinds. We made publications and periodicals to disseminate news and teachings to the Vietnamese Buddhist communities scattered throughout the world. It has been constantly publishing periodic journals that are fully accredited. The titles of sangha organizations in the US are different, but the content remains the same. There were the following journals from 1980 to 2000:

1. *Journal of Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Institute* (from 1980 to 1984)
2. *Journal of Buddhist Studies* (from 1985 to 1988)
3. *Journal of United Buddhist Sangha* (from 1988 to 1993)
4. *Journal of Overseas Buddhist Congregation* (from 1994 to 2000)

In addition to the articles published in the *Buddhist Journal*, the late Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Đức Niệm also translated and compiled many sutras, the vinaya treatises so that the monks and nuns and lay Buddhists have materials for study and research. Please refer to the following:

1. *The Core of Dharma* (Compilation - 1988)
2. *Abhidharmakosa Sastra* (Translation - 1985)
3. *Ratnakuta Sutra Explanation* (Translate and Explanation - 1986)
4. *The Lay Bodhisattva Precepts* (Compose and Translation - 1989)
5. *The Summary Stories of Previous Birth of the Buddha* (Compose and Translation - 1988)
6. *The Mahayana Pure Land Sàstra* (Compose and Translation - 1989)
7. *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* (Interpretation - 1990)
8. *The Method to Change the Fate* (Compose and Translation - 1991)
9. *Dharma's Words* (Compose - 1991)
10. *Ananda's Question and Answer son Good and Bad* (Interpretation - 1994)
11. *The Vajracchedika Prajñāparamita Sastra* (Translation - 1997)
12. *The Heart Sutra* (Translation - 1998)
13. *Sudhana Search the Truth* (Compose and Translation - 1998)
14. *Forever Human Beings* (Compose - 1996)
15. *Vu Lan Seasons* (Compose - 1996)
16. *For the Springs* (Compose - 1996)

4.I Set a Sail

Time passes quick as a fly. Master Thích Đức Niệm got older and weaker every day. He started to arrange for his disciples in the future. His monk disciples continue to preserve the Dharma works at the International Buddhist Institute. As for me, in July 2000, he established Thiền Tịnh Đạo Tràng (Pure Land and Zen) Temple in the Orange County of southern California for me to propagate the Dharma. But just after a few months, I had to go back to the International Buddhist Institute because my teacher's illness worsened ... and also to let the monks have time to peacefully guide Buddhists to study at the International Buddhist Institute.

Impermanence does not single out anyone. It comes to everyone-we are born, we get sick, we die and our teacher was no exception. He passed away at the age of sixty-seven on the day of commemorating Avalokiteshvara (February 19, 2003) at the International Buddhist Institute. The master who followed the law of impermanence was no more, but his great contribution to Vietnamese Buddhism abroad and the Vietnamese Buddhist literature in a foreign country will exist forever.

Despite understanding the doctrine of impermanence, I could not help but mourn when the teacher is gone forever. As for me, I always feel that I must change my sadness and regret to become enthusiastic in serving the Dharma because my master's whole life was lived that way. I voluntarily devoted my whole life to the ideals of benefiting beings, following the wishes of the master and patriarch, and continuing to step on the path of religious service to the Sangha. In this way, we can partially repay the father, the mother, and the religious teachers. - I really set a sail.

Thanks Master teaching to upbringing our manner
Conduct of Master so great that hard to repay.

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

- SERVING THE SANGHA SINCE THE MASTER PASSED AWAY

Reviewing the great things that the venerable master guided me for seventeen years on the way to study and practice. Now, my way begins without teacher by my side. I have to boldly walk the path of religious practice and serve the sangha in the direction that his entire life lived and looked forward to doing. So, I always believed that my master would bless me to go forward for the sake of many.

5. Study in Distant Areas

In 2005, I went to Viên Giác Pagoda, Hanover, Germany to spend the three-month summer retreat with monks there. I also attended the seventeenth Buddhist Studies Course in Europe. During the summer retreat, the pagoda organized the Đôn Hậu ordination and I was invited to be the Fourth Master of the Ordination ceremony by the Venerable Thích Như Điển.

6. Open Heart

With the dedicated financial and material support of all Buddhists from near and far, every year I often go to charity events around Vietnam from the south to central to the north to offer scholarships for monks and nuns studying abroad in the United States, India, Taiwan, China. Support is offered for the construction of the historic pagodas that were damaged during the war, such as the Hải Đức Buddhist Institute in Nha Trang. I need to do charity more to make my heart wider. I am the one connecting the monks in Vietnam with the benefactor Quảng Nguyễn (Brodard Restaurant, California), who is interested in building:

1. The first-class Nha Trang Buddhist Institute in Khánh Hòa province (51 Hải Đức Street, Phương Sơn Ward, West of Nha Trang City, Khánh Hòa Province).

2. Phật Ân Temple (33-B, Trần Phú Street, Lạc Đạo Ward, Phan Thiết City, Bình Thuận Province) is the headquarters of the Provincial Buddhist Association of Bình Thuận Province, also built by Quảng Nguyễn Brodard Restaurant. They have contributed to the construction of a large part of the temple when the late Ven. Thích Chơn Thành was the abbot. Now the successor abbot is Venerable Thích Minh Nhật.

3. And many other places - Where needs are predestined, we have come. We continuously go to fulfill a disciple's Tathagata mission.

7. Service Sangha

On September 20, 2008, the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation (VAUBC) was established and appointed members. I was appointed as the general treasurer of the Sangha, the president was the late Venerable Thích Chơn Trí and general secretary was Venerable Thích Nguyên Siêu. I also kept the post as the treasurer of the Chánh Pháp monthly newspaper of VAUBC. The cost of printing up to now (June 6,2020) and the Journal number is 103, donated by Quảng Nguyễn Brodard Restaurant.

I have always worked for the Sangha because serving the congregation means to do for ourselves. Therefore, the programs and activities of the Sangha such as the Buddhist Studies Course, summer retreat, Vesak, I have participated in and contributed enthusiastically.

On May 31, 2011, there was a tsunami in Japan. Continent Charity Mission around fifty people went to help victims of the tsunami: Venerable Thích Như Điển, Ven. T. Quảng Ba, Ven. T. Bồn Đạt, Ven. T. Trường Phước, Ven. T. Minh Hiếu, Ven. T. Nhật Quang, Ven. T. Thông Hải, Ven. T. Minh Dung, Ven. T. Nhật Huệ, Ven. T. Tâm Minh, Ven. T. Tâm Phương, Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh, and many others. Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh, treasurer of the VAUBC and treasurer of the delegation, mentioned that Quảng Nguyễn Brodard Restaurant could offer \$500 to each of

the Venerable monks and nuns in the charity mission to Japan. May the Buddha bless that merit and we pray to the Buddhas to bless Quảng Nguyễn's families and thousands of other Buddhist families across four continents on this planet.

On August 8 2013, follow the will of the late Ven. Thích Đức Niệm, his monk and nun disciples who consider the Most Venerable Minh Tâm (Khánh Anh Pagoda, France) as the second master to replace him. The ritual to receive the second teacher was solemnly performed before the day of the coffin moving and in front of the grave of the venerable senior monk. Since then, all the venerables return to the Buddhist Institute to guide and care for his disciples.

And then this year 2013. Again, one of our beloved teachers, the Most Venerable Minh Tâm passed away. The most Venerable Minh Tâm built so many works and constructions for both life and religion through many struggles and thorns of history and the Dharma path. He could not see his fellow disciples through his breath and heartbeat, but his disciples have contemplated the master's actions as the role model for them. When the breath strength of life is no more, the body of earth will return to dust and time will give back to nature. Life or religion is subjected to impermanence like this, never favoring anyone! Whoever comes will surely go; whoever lives must die with our thousands of farewell words from here!!!



On December 30, 2013: Relief of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines- Continent Charity Mission sent a delegation of monks and nuns from Australia, Europe, the United State, and Canada and lay Buddhists to the Philippines from December 11-13, 2013. The delegation consisted of twenty-four people, such as Ven. T Nguyễn Trí, Ven. T Quảng Ba (director), Ven. T. Minh Trí, Ven. T. Bồn Đạt (deputy), Ven. T. Tâm Phương, Ven. T. Thiện Tâm (general coordinator); Ven. T. Phước Tấn, Ven. T. Trường Phước, Ven. Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh, lay Buddhist Giác Quý (treasurer of the delegation), Ven. T. Giác Tín (secretary of the delegation), Ven. Thích Tuệ Uy (photography) and some lay Buddhists. Our mission donated 401,000 US dollars for 3,500 victims and helped to rebuild eight damaged schools after the disaster. Again, Venerable Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh encouraged the Buddhist family of Quảng Nguyễn Brodard Restaurant who offered \$500 each to the monks and nuns in the delegation. May the Buddha bless Quảng Nguyễn and all.

After this Philippine trip, the monks and nuns each had their own business to attend to, so they parted ways to continue the journey in another area. But Ven. T. Tâm Phương, Ven. T. Tuệ Uy, Ven. Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh, lay Buddhist Quảng Huệ, Nguyễn Chiêu Tường and Rev. Nhật Thoại flew back to Vietnam on December 14, 2013 do relief work in Quảng Nam, Đà Nẵng, Bình Định, Qui Nhơn and other areas.

On December 17, 2013, I was told that my mother in Canada died. Sadness but I could not leave the group. Every time our delegation stopped, we did not forget the prayers for my mother.

*Now, tmother has returned to the Buddha realm,
Going to the blissed land... leaving many things to remember,
I respectfully send the incense,
Namo... Bodhisattva... souls on earth.*

On August 6, 2015, the fifth North American Buddhist studies course was organized by the leader, Venerable Thích Minh Dung. I, along with a number of other nuns, played the roles of assistants to take care of this retreat at the Town Country Resort Hotel in San Diego, southern California, USA.



8. Looking Back

As of March 19, 2019, twenty years have passed since I began to live independently and serve in Buddhism. Thiền Tịnh Đạo Tràng Temple was ruined. I chose this day to start the restoration, which is also the anniversary of my master's death, to commemorate his generosity and compassion for teaching and guiding me to be a useful nun.

March 15, 2020: During this time, the coronavirus epidemic appeared in the United States. Although I am busy in the restoration of Thiền Tịnh Đạo Tràng Temple, I do not forget the welfare of others and Buddhist activities and mobilized to sew masks for needy places and offered 4,000 masks to hospitals. I encouraged Tịnh Nguyên's family and their friends who offered rice, salt, instant noodles and so forth to the temples and local nuns.

On the path of religious practice for decades, through small or large charitable works, if it had anything beneficial to the Buddhism, it is certainly due to the dedicated help of the monks and nuns and all lay Buddhists.

I sincerely thank all of you and pray that you, keep the Bodhi mind without regressions, cultivate spirituality, lead a life of good deeds and actively help your family live in the Dharma.

Finally, may the merits extene to all beings! May all beings be liberated!



The Main hall, Thiên Tịnh Temple, from 2000 to 2019

Thiên Tịnh Đạo Tràng Temple
11502 Daniel Avenue,
Garden Grove, California 92840
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Diệu Tánh
Tel: 714-638-0989, 714-266-4171
dieutanhthich@yahoo.com

Thiên Tịnh Đạo Tràng Temple, June 10 2020
Sincerely,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Diệu Tánh
dieutanhthich@yahoo.com

English translator: Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

2.33. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ THIỀN TUỆ
- MANY HONORLY REWARDS
THE ABBESS OF PHỔ LINH TEMPLE (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

When talking about the dedication to cooking vegetarian food to offer to the masses of the retreats, charitable and social activities of the USA Vietnamese community, one cannot go without mentioning Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiền Tuệ of Phổ Linh Temple in southern California.

The young nun from Quảng Nam is very compassionate and friendly, not only to the monastics, the Buddhist compatriots, but she also engages with representatives of local and state government. She is one of the special nuns to receive many awards from the United States Buddhist Congregation of Vietnam and local leaders.

She comes from a moral family with a grandfather and two uncles who are teachers. The family has four renunciants: Ven. Bhikkhunī Hạnh Minh (Head of Trà Kiêu Pagoda, Duy Xuyên District, Quảng Nam), Ven. Bhikkhunī Hanh Mãn (Bảo Thắng Pagoda, Hội An), Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiền Tuệ and Ven. Bhikkhu Thích Khải Định. Her mother and younger brother are both devout Buddhists, always upholding the Triple Gem.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiền Tuệ became a novice in 1980 under the master, the head of Phổ Chiếu Meditation Center (Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu) of the Zen branch of the Most Venerable Trúc Lâm Thanh Từ.

* From 1990 to 2001, her master sent her to stay and study at Kim Liên Pagoda, District 4, HCM City, under the guidance and teaching of the chief nun, Abbess Khiết Minh.

* In 1993, she was ordained at the great Bhikkhunī Ceremony at Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu.

* In 1993 (in the summer retreat), she passed at the top of the Dhamma lecture exam and won over all contestants from seventeen districts (held two days at Ân Quang Pagoda in the 10th District, HCM City).

* In 1997, she graduated with honors, Basic Buddhist School at Vĩnh Nghiêm Pagoda, HCM City.

* In 2001, she graduated with a bachelor's of Buddhist studies, Vietnam Buddhist Institute at Vạn Hạnh Zen Monastery (Course 4), HCM City.

* In 2001, she studied abroad in China and graduated with a master's degree in psychology in 2006.

* In 2008, she settled down the United States with the sponsorship of the Most Venerable Nguyễn Trí (Bát Nhã Pagoda, Santa Ana).

* In 2014, she founded Phổ Linh Temple in Garden Grove, California.

Phổ Linh Temple
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiền Tuệ
11612 Dale Street
Garden Grove, CA 92841
Phone: (714) 204-8933

* In 2015, during the retreat season when 200 monastics attended, Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation at Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế Monastery (International Buddhist Institute) promoted her to the position of Venerable Bhikkhunī.

Regarding the schedule of Phở linh Temple: Every Sunday morning, from 10-12, Ven. Thiên Tuệ, Ven. Đức Huy and Ven. Tịnh Vân instruct Buddhists to recite the Great Compassion Mantra, the penitent Hồng Danh and to meditate. Every Sunday, there are about thirty fellow Buddhists come to chant and practice. On festive days such as Vesak or Vu Lan, 200 people attend.

Especially during the Buddha's Birthday season or the Vu Lan ceremony, she often organizes almsround as the ancient image of the Buddha and the Sangha, so that Buddhists can make offerings of good seeds to the Sangha.

Vu Lan is a celebration of gratitude to parents. Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ always creates opportunities for children to offer marigold flowers to their parents and elders with the meaning of wishing the elderly and parents good health and long life as a marigold flower as in the ancient proverb, "Much merit as the East ocean, long life as the high mountain."

At the Thanksgiving Season each year (beginning in 2013), Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ organizes a Thanksgiving ceremony at major restaurants with the purpose of expressing gratitude: Grateful for the United States of America, the Buddhist Masters, the benefactors, the martyrs, local congressmen, and deceased heroes. Each year, elder monks such as the Most Venerable Thích Nguyên Trí (abbot of Bát Nhã pagoda), the Most Venerable Thích Nguyên Siêu (abbot of Phật Đà Temple and Pháp Vương, San Diego), the Most Most Venerable Thích Minh Mẫn (abbot of Huệ Quang Temple, Santa Ana), monks and nuns and government representatives, such as Representative Alan Lenthenthal, Representative Senator Janet Nguyễn, Representative Supervisor Andreu Đỗ, mayor of the city of Westminster, Tạ Đức Trí, mayor of Garden Grove City, Steven R. Jones, Deputy Mayor Bùi Phát, Councilman Kimberly Hồ, lawyer Dr. Huỳnh Tấn Lê, and many others.

In 2019, she successfully organized the Thanksgiving ceremony at the Diamond Seafood Palace Restaurant in the city of Westminster with 800 guests attending.

Since the establishment of Phở Linh Pagoda, she has fulfilled her wish to cook vegetarian food (sometimes with ten thousand servings) to offer to retreats, Dharma assemblies, the summer retreat, and Buddha's birthday ceremonies of the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation (in 2016, 2018, and 2019 it was held at Mile Square Park, Fountain Valley). Every two weeks, she and Buddhists of Phở Linh Pagoda donated food to the homeless in Santa Ana, continuously in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ is one of the young nuns who have received eighteen awards and many praises from elder renunciates, Representatives Loretta Sanchez and Alan Loenthal, Senators Lou Correa and Janet Nguyen, Supervisor Andrew Đ, mayors, deputy mayors, and council members in Garden Grove and Westminster.

The Most Venerable Thích Nguyên Siêu praised the merit of Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ, "On behalf of the Vietnamese American United Buddhist Congregation, we would like to express our sincere thanks to Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ and Buddhists at Phở Linh Pagoda for donating ten thousand vegetarian meals on the Buddha's Birthday, Buddhist calendar 2560" (May 2, 2016).

Mayor Tạ Đức Trí noted, "Westminster City Council respectfully acknowledges Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ and Phở Linh Pagoda for merit and sharing Buddhism with sentient beings" (October 3, 2015).

Senator Thomas J. Umberg (34th Senate District of California) recognized that "We would like to thank you, Senior Nun Thiên Tuệ of Phở Linh Temple in Garden Grove for your effort to serve more than ten thousand people during Buddha's Birthday Festival every year" (April 14, 2019).

Dr. Huỳnh Tấn Lê is a well-known attorney in the maintenance of Three Jewels and specializes in the field of paperwork sponsoring numerous monks and nuns to obtain legal papers in the United States, as well as the lawyer who is the connection between Buddhism, government, media and fellow Buddhists through Vesak celebrations and church retreats. Dr. Huỳnh Tấn Lê also praised the merits of Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ, “Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ is a passionate young nun capable of carrying many great Buddhas during Vesak and Thanksgiving ceremonies, regularly taking part in religious activities, as well as in the community.”

Not only in southern California has her heart and compassionate hands reached out to support retreats and charitable activities in other countries, such as Homeland Vietnam (almost every year), Australia (2016), India (2017, 2018), Burma (2018, 2019) and Canada (2018, 2019).

In Vietnam since 2008, every month she has steadily given two pots of rice soup to patients at the hospital at Duy Xuyên District (Quảng Nam); on the seventeenth of each month, she prepares luncheon for 200 lay Buddhists studying Buddhism at Trà Kiệu Pagoda; she made offerings to a thousand student monks and nuns at Đại Tông Lâm (Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu province in 2018) to build the charitable house and drill wells in her homeland. She also gives gifts to poor families, the elderly, the sick, orphans in the provinces of Quảng Nam, Quảng Ngãi, Thanh Hóa, Thái Nguyên, and other ethnic minority regions. Every year there are 700 gifts sponsored by Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ and Buddhists of Phở Linh Pagoda. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Phở Linh Pagoda donated 300 gifts on June 1, 2020, including a well drilled 100 meters deep in Mộ Đức District, Quảng Ngãi Province.

In 2018, Ven. Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ and eight Buddhists of Phở Linh Pagoda cooked food offerings for the last two days of the retreat at Tây Thiên Pagoda in Edmonton City, Canada, organized by Venerable Thích Pháp Hòa. That afternoon, she prepared the dish “bún mắm,” the vegetarian vermicelli soup with special sauce. It was so tasty that a young boy about thirteen did not know how to be a vegetarian, but on that day, he ate three bowls of soup at one sitting, complimenting the food. Ever since then, Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ has the nickname. “Ni sư bún mắm” (the vegetarian vermicelli soup nun).

Her conduct and commitment to serve and contribute to religion and life is an exemplary example. She built a beautiful image of the nun sangha and Buddhism abroad. How admirable is her reputation! She made the American and Vietnamese-American community appreciate Vietnamese nuns in the United States, as the words of journalist Bình Sa (Việt Báo News) described:

*With mercifulness, she brings happiness to life,
PHỞ LINH a peaceful sky corner,
She shares the grace with an immense world,
The echoes of generous offering throughout the regions.*

Hương Sen Temple, July 02 , 2020
A Buddha to be,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



The Sign of Phổ Linh Temple



The main hall



Venerable Bhikkhunī Abbess Thiên Tuệ



Chanting in the main hall of Phổ Linh Temple



The Most Venerable Nguyễn Trí and the Most Venerable Nguyễn Siêu and monastics attend the Vu Lan ceremony at Phổ Linh Pagoda in 2017



Offering to thousands of monks at Đại Tùng Lâm, Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu in 2018



Offering to thousands of monks in Bodh Gaya, India



She smiled when the practitioners enjoyed their meal at the retreat in Australia in 2016



Mayor Tạ Đức Trí attended the Vu Lan Ceremony in 2018



Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ (left) and MC Bhikkhu Khải Định (her younger brother)



Thanksgiving at Seafood Palace Restaurant in 2018



Venerable Thiền Tuệ (grey hat, middle) and cooking group for 10,000 meals on the Buddha's Birthday in 2018



From left: Venerable Bhikkhunī Thiên Tuệ, Venerable Pháp Hòa at the retreat of Tây Thiên Pagoda, Canada in 2018



The Certificate of Appreciation to Venerable Thiên Tuệ from the United States Buddhist Congregation of Vietnam



The award to Ven. Thiên Tuệ from Congressional Representative Loretta Sanchez



The award to Ven. Thiên Tuệ from the mayor of Garden Grove City, Steven R. Jones

2.34. ZEN MASTER THÍCH DIỆU THIỆN
- WAKE UP TO END REBIRTH
ABBESS PHỔ MÔN MEDITATION CENTER (TEXAS)



Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện, 2020

DEEP QUESTIONS - LIFELONG SEARCH FOR AWAKENING

Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện, originally named Diệu Thiện, surnamed Nguyễn, was originally from Hue, born in 1971 in Vietnam. Born into a devout Buddhist family, from a very young age Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện already had deep questions and doubt about the constant changes in life and the suffering of birth and death. At the same time, she also knew that there is a world where there is no suffering, no birth and death. However, she did not know how to return to that world. Her persistent questions about awakening were the powerful motivation to help her constantly seek answers.

ORDINATION IN SEARCH OF AWAKENING

At the age of thirteen, she had a chance to read books about the Bodhisattva Gautama's journey to search for awakening (Crown Prince Siddhartha). The Zen Master was very happy to know that there was an awakened teacher who found the light of awakening and attained enlightenment to end the cycle of birth and death. This was strong evidence that gave her more trust, motivation and strength to ordain in search of awakening.

- In 1989, the Zen Master graduated from high school at the age of eighteen and ordained as a nun with Abbess Thích Như Châu at Hoa Nghiêm Meditation Center, Định Quán.
- In 1993, she received bhikkhuni ordination at Đại Tông Lâm.
- In 1994, she graduated from the College of Buddhist Studies at Thiện Hòa Nunnery (Bà Rịa, Vũng Tàu) in Vietnam.

Even though in those five years she diligently studied the sutras, vinaya and shastras, the Buddha's teachings, disciplinary codes and analytical doctrines with early morning and late evening devotion, diligently practicing, her deep and persistent questions grew stronger because she still could not find the answer.



*Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện
Master's Degree in 2000*

- In 1994, at the age of twenty-three, the Zen Master immigrated to the United States with her family and settled in Houston, Texas.

- In 1995, the Zen Master was invited to Tâm Quang Temple, Michigan. She taught Buddhist practitioners and then attended Western Michigan University, studying Buddhism with the hope to find her answers.

- At the end of 2000, the Zen Master graduated with high honors, receiving a master's degree in Comparative Religion and Holistic Health. Holding the master's degree in her hands, looking ahead to the future, all became meaningless to her because she still had not found the answer to her deep questions about the awakening destination.

TRAVELING AROUND THE WORLD SEARCHING FOR AN AWAKENED TEACHER

Six years had passed with a vast amount of Buddhist practice and knowledge, but it did not lead her to enlightenment. In February 2001, at the age of thirty, the Zen master decided to let go and leave everything behind, with no regard for her life, traveling around the world, hoping to meet an awakened teacher. The Zen Master made a great vow, "On this trip, if I cannot find the awakening destination, I will not return to America."

When learning that the Zen Master was beginning the journey to search for awakening, the abbot of the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles, California, the Most Venerable Thích Mãn Giác, was persistent and convinced her to reconsider because of all the unforeseen dangers along the way. Whereas Venerable Thích Nguyên Hạnh, the abbot of the Vietnam Buddhist Center in Houston, Texas, wholeheartedly encouraged the Zen Master, "Be courageous to go on your way, don't give up. Go until you find what you want to find, and return." In the end, seeing that the Zen Master already had made a decision, the Most Venerable Thích Mãn Giác wished for her to soon achieve her goal.

Long ago, the Bodhisattva Gautama spent six years in ascetic practice, experienced many meditation practices, and attained the four stages of meditation and four stages of concentration with the gurus, but he also renounced it and finally took a vow to look within to face himself and became enlightened under the Bodhi tree. In these modern days, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện, a woman who carried the will of a great, noble minded person, went alone with three robes and one alms bowl, one small suitcase, some clothes and a little money to go on a quest to find awakening. She did not plan in advance where to stay, sometimes slept in the forest, on the mountain, at the train station, eating only crackers and a few bananas every day. She also stopped at many prestigious meditation centers in countries such as France, Sri Lanka, Thailand, experienced many meditation practices, breaking through and fully realizing many layers of consciousness inside, but the Zen Master still had to depart, because she had not yet found the answer to the deep questions of her life.

MERGING INTO THE AWAKENED MIND, ENDING THE SUFFERING OF BIRTH AND DEATH

Finally, in Thailand, hitting rock bottom in her search and deadlocked in her quest for awakening, the Zen Master decided to stop and took a vow to turn within to face herself.

On April 8, 2001, at the Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage, the eighth day of the ten-day meditation retreat, the Ultimate Truth of Awakening burst forth, the deep questions were answered. The Zen Master had “shattered the source of ignorance, infinite wisdom appeared, seeing the truth, breaking the system of greed and hatred, completely merging into and living with the pure, immense, immaculate essence of the Buddhas. Right there, all questions had answers: What is Awakening? Where? What is suffering? Why is suffering present? Who am I? How to wake up to end the cycle of birth and death? The Zen Master returned to and has been living in the Awakened Mind every moment.”

THE GREAT VOW TO HELP SENTIENT BEINGS

In the very moment of waking up, the great vow to help all sentient beings awaken appeared. Awakened Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện vowed to continue spreading her living awakening teachings to countries such as Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan until the end of 2001, when she returned to the United States.

*I just want people to be truly happy,
Soon find the source of Awakened light,
Which has been illuminated for so long
But covered by ignorance for many lifetimes,
Soon return to fully realize the source of Awakened light within.*

*Even knowing it is difficult to wake people up,
Nothing stops me
Because of life, I vow to fully devote
Guiding the Awakening seeds to blossom in people
And from now, I commit myself fully to wake people up from the source of suffering
So the forever smile is always blooming on their lips
On everyone's lips...*

(“Forever Blooming Smile on the Lips” - Awakened Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện)

ESTABLISHING UNIVERSAL DOOR MEDITATION CENTER & SUOI TU MEDITATION CENTER



The meditation hall of Universal Door Meditation Center



The Awake Mind symbol inside the meditation hall of the Universal Door Meditation Center

In 2003, Awakened Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện established Universal Door Meditation Center on a one-acre property in Houston, Texas, and in 2017 moved to a new nine-acre site.

Universal Door Meditation Center is wide-open and welcomes all people, regardless of religion, race, culture or background. The center rests on her boundless great vow to help others open the wisdom mind and understand, trust, clearly realize, and merge into the awakened world, ending the suffering of birth and death.

With utmost reverence, Universal Door Meditation Center displays the Awakened Mind symbol, instead of the Buddha statue, to wake people up to understand the core teaching of Buddhism, which is awakening. That practice is returning to live in the Buddha wisdom.

In 2004, the timing was right for Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện and Zen Master Thích Thông Hội to meet. Instantaneously knowing that both were awake and had taken the great vow, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện invited Zen Master Thích Thông Hội to come to Universal Door Meditation Center to join in her vow to wake up the world. In 2013, they co-founded Suối Từ Meditation Center on a six-acre site in Dallas, Texas.

◆ UNIVERSAL DOOR MEDITATION CENTER

Abess: Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện

15202 Dora Lane, Sugar Land, Texas 77498

thienvienphomon2001@universaldoor.org | (281) 565-9718

Website: www.thienvienphomon.org

Youtube: Thien Vien Pho Mon

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/thichdieuthien>

◆ SUỐI TỪ MEDITATION CENTER

Abbot: Zen Master Thích Thông Hội

3903 W. Pipeline Road, Euless, TX 76040

thienviensuoitu2013@thienvienphomon.org | (972) 861-9728

Website: www.thienviensuoitu.org

Youtube: Thien Vien Suoi Tu

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SuoiTuMeditationCenter>

ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL AWAKE SANGHA

The Light of Awakening radiates in all directions, generating a living force, trust and inspiration for many people in the world to come for awakening practice. To this day, through nineteen years of living awakened and helping people, the seeds of awakening have been sprouting on American soil. The Zen Master has fifteen monks and nuns who ordained with the goal to wake up, many of whom were born and raised in the American society, coming from all ages and different cultures and religions.

Sư cô Phổ Nguyễn and Sư cô Tuệ Thanh are Americans who grew up in Christian traditions. Sư cô Phổ Niệm is Indian, from a Brahmin family that follows Hinduism. After the Zen Master helped them to realize the awakening destination, they renounced everything -social status, prestige and overcame the barriers of religion and culture requesting to follow the Zen Master to ordain and join the Awake Sangha.

Besides monks and nuns, the Awake Sangha Phổ Môn - Suối Từ has a team of core students who are sincere, devoted and earnestly vow to wake up first for themselves and then to connect many people with the awakened teachers.

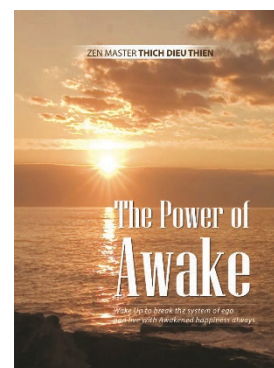
Every week, at these two meditation centers, more than 100 students come for wisdom-opening teachings, meditation practice and volunteer opportunities. The number of students of all ages (youth, teens and adults) from all parts of the world (India, Bolivia, United States, Canada, Africa, Mexico, Spain, Pakistan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan, China, Vietnam) coming to practice to be clear about the awake destination is increasing through the meaningful, mind-opening meditation programs, such as the five-day Awake Summer Camp for youth and teens and the ten-day Awake retreat for adults.



Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện (sit right) and Zen Master Thích Thông Hội (sit left)
With Awake Sangha Phổ Môn-Suối Từ, in 2020

BOOK RELEASE, *THE POWER OF AWAKE*

With the Great Vow to bring the essence of Awakening to everyone, Awakened Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện released the book, *The Power of Awake*, English and Vietnamese versions, published in October 2016. It was ranked first for Amazon new releases and ranked third for Amazon bestsellers. The book is small, but each word flows from infinite wisdom, boundless compassion and unlimited awake tools of the Zen Master and thus can awaken the potential to wake up in each person.



DYNAMIC AWAKE TOOLS SPREADING ACROSS MANY COUNTRIES

Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện is fresh, young and fluent in English. Her wisdom-opening teachings and interactive guidance are very spontaneous, innovative and dynamic, and she can use any means to Wake Up each person. Her liveliness easily engages and inspires listeners, no matter their situation, level of practice or religion. Therefore, the reputation of the Zen Master is widespread and known to many centers in the world. The Zen Master often travels to Australia, Canada, India, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam to open wisdom, pinpoint and guide people to Wake them up to soon realize and merge into the Awake mind.

To build up the Awake destination and awaken the deep questions in each person, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện wrote this poem:

The Miracle of the Mirror

*The Mirror is originally sparkling clear
always bright and luminescent
infinitely transparent in every direction
dissolving all darkness.*

*Open, endless space
unscratched, undefiled
unchanging
crystal clear in essence.*

*Even more amazing
is the capacity to use it in miraculous ways
infinitely flexible and always spontaneous
appearing instantly, knowing exactly what to do.*

*Crystalline mirror is our origin
why not return and live
which nothing can taint
the nature of the mirror is always pure.*

*Fighting and resisting
having and not having, winning and losing
in the end, for what?
Only to deepen the system of ignorance.*

*An entire life, lived in a dream world
but did not know and thought to be real
suffering our whole lifetime
How to ever get out?*

*So, truly what am I?
Or: Who am I truly?
Right here, right now, need to see the truth!
The Mirror will appear.*

AWAKE RETREAT FOR VIETNAMESE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSAL DOOR MEDITATION CENTER



Awake retreats and wisdom-opening teachings for international students at the Universal Door

MEDITATION CENTER AND OTHER COMMUNITY CENTERS

*At Universal Door Meditation Center:



*At other community centers in Texas:



Wisdom teachings seminar for the American community at Yoga Expo

AWAKE RETREATS FOR VIETNAMESE AND AMERICAN ADULTS, YOUTH AND TEENS

*Five-day Awake Retreat for parents and Awake Camp for Youth & Teens - Spring 2020



***INDIA - Home country of Sư cô Phổ Niệm:** In August 2017, Sư cô Phổ Niệm invited Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện, Zen Master Thích Thông Hội and the Sangha to Chennai, India to help her family members and the people in her hometown. The Awake teaching trip and the visit to the Buddha's land marked a big inner revolution for many nuns and lay students in the group being able to touch the Awake essence through the wisdom-opening teachings of the Zen Masters. Most surprising were the Indians with a strong sense of seeking Awakening, like Dr. Abhai, with a doctoral degree in Buddhist Studies. After receiving wisdom-opening teachings from the Zen Masters, he bowed at the Sarnath Deer Park to take refuge as a disciple following the Awakened Zen Masters to Wake Up.



Mind-opening teaching evening for Sư cô Phổ Niệm's family in Chennai, India



Indian university professor with doctoral degree in Buddhist studies - Dr. Abhai (red shirt) bowed at the Sarnath Deer Park to take refuge to become the Zen Masters' disciple

***MICHIGAN - Home of Sư cô Phổ Nguyễn:** In 2018, after seventeen years, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện returned to many cities in Michigan, and brought the English Sangha. Here, Sư cô Phổ Nguyễn earnestly pleaded with the Zen Master to open wisdom for her former meditation instructors and others. In just a short amount of time, their minds were opened and problems pinpointed. These people had breakthroughs in their minds and realized that Awake is the ultimate destination that we must return to in order to end the source of suffering completely.



The Zen Master opened about the Awake Destination for university professors and meditation instructors

Ms. Barbara Brodsky, the meditation teacher of Sư cô Phổ Nguyễn before she followed Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện to ordain.

***THAILAND:** At the end of 2018, the Phổ Môn - Suối Từ Awake Sangha visited Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage in Thailand, where nearly twenty years ago Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện awakened and merged into the Awake Mind. By good chance, the Zen Master reconnected with the former abbot, Most Venerable Ajahn Poh, and met Venerable Ajahn Maetiko.



In 2001, Awakened Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện and Abbot Ajahn Poh

In 2018, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện, Venerable Abbot Ajahn Poh, Venerable teacher Ajahn Maetiko, and Zen Master Thích Thông Hội (left to right)

After the sharing, the two Ajahns felt the Awake essence of the Zen Master. Happily, Ajahn Maetiko immediately turned to the Sangha and said, “This Meditation Center is also Bodh Gaya, where Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện Awakened” and hoped that this light of awakening will spread widely in Thailand.



The Abbess warmly welcomed the former student to bring the Awake Light back

***VIETNAM:** At the end of 2018, during the Awake teachings trip in Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện returned to visit her beloved teacher, head of the Thiện Hòa Nunnery, Abbess Thích Như Như and was encouraged by the abbess to share mind-opening teachings and the essence of awakening to all nuns.



Venerable Tắc Viên (left), the Abbot of Liên Hoa Pagoda, Long An, earnestly pleaded with Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện to help him merge into the essence of Awake

Because of the sincere pleading of Venerable Tắc Viên, abbot of Liên Hoa Pagoda, Long An, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện opened his wisdom and pinpointed his longtime restless questions and helped Venerable Tắc Viên break through the inner mind and merge into the pure, empty, immaculate Awake essence. Immediately all illusions fell apart, and the venerable said he often read that the Buddhas and the patriarchs said, “Transmitting from mind to mind,” and now he experienced what it is like.

ZEN MASTER THÍCH DIỆU THIỆN’S AWAKE LIVING AND CAPACITY TO HELP SENTIENT BEINGS

After waking up, the Awake tools in Zen Master became very dynamic, spontaneous and unpredictable. The Zen Master can help sentient beings anytime, anywhere, regardless of whether they are near or far. Seeing the exact moment to step in, she can say or do anything to awaken students to immediately realize what is illusion and what is Awake.

With her Infinite Wisdom, the Zen Master clearly sees the different levels of each disciple's practice and the depth of their inner question. From there she opens their wisdom and guides them accordingly, so the tools given to each person are also different. Depending on each disciple's level of Awake experience, she helps them develop their inner question about the suffering of birth and death, without using any fixed method.

(1) For those who don't have deep questions, Zen Master helps them realize that suffering is caused by the source of ignorance, and step by step opens their mind to clearly know:

“What is Awake? How do I end suffering? Who am I? Where did I come from? Where do I go after death?”

(2) For those who already have deep questions, the Zen Master will help them to experience the karmic force that is always running and surrounds their mind, then suddenly they realize the suffering of drifting, and make a vow to Wake Up to end the suffering of birth and death.

(3) When the disciples have developed the goal to Wake Up, realizing what is real and what is not real, from there they have trust in the Awake world. Their practice will become more clear, deep and consistent. When the right conditions line up, as the sun rises, the snow melts, Awakened Zen Master just needs to use one sentence, a laugh, a shout, a punch ... will burst the final stuck point in each disciple to merge into Awake world - to see through and collapse the source of ignorance - become one with the Buddhas, and instinctively continue to move, dissolve the habit energy and karma, until they fully merge with the Buddhas, Awake Zen Masters, and Awakened disciples.

To learn more about the means and Awake tools of Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện, please visit: www.thienvienphomon.org and visit the section “Journey to the Awake Mind.”

THE PRACTICE METHOD & THE FRUIT OF AWAKENING



Sư cô Tuệ Thanh, an American and traditional Christian



Zen Master and nuns together in the main hall of Universal Door Meditation Center

Zen Master's energy and the means for helping sentient beings come from her Awake living, and show that her teachings are *not based on any fixed practice methods*. She does not let disciples attach to any practice methods that settle down the mind like “a stagnant pond.” She uses a myriad of ways to help her disciples go “directly to the true mind, merge with the Buddha essence, liberate from the suffering of birth and death” just like in the time of the Buddhas and the patriarchs.

Sư cô Tuệ Thanh, whose birth name is Christa, is an American with a strong desire to achieve the Awake goal. She has a strong attachment to the concept of success-failure,

although she has been restlessly looking for Awakening for more than twenty years. Seeing clearly her stuck point, Zen Master Thích Diệu Thiện pinpointed it out for her. Being pinpointed, seeing the mistake, her ego immediately said, “I fail, cannot do it, I don’t have the capacity to be Awake.”

The Zen Master gave her a specific medicine by asking her to leave the center if she trusts and clings tightly to that thought. The Zen Master said, “Before you leave the Center, return your yellow robe here.” Sur cô Tuệ Thanh was ready to leave because of the ego’s attachment to the success-failure thoughts in her being satisfied. She immediately put her robes on the table and looked up at the Zen Master to say farewell. Right at that moment, the seed of Awake, which Zen Master had been cultivating in Su co for months, brightened when she was able to connect to the Zen Master’s Awake energy.

Right there, Zen Master asked a few questions, step by step, to awaken the wisdom mind inside her.

“How is your mind now?”

She answered, “Suffering a lot!”

The Zen Master asked, “How is the suffering?”

Sur cô Tuệ Thanh gradually felt and described the state of suffering that was inside her.

The Zen Master asked, “Do you want to live with that suffering?”

Sur cô Tuệ Thanh replied, “No.”

The Zen Master saw that Sur cô had clearly felt the suffering that was running in her mind, so she asked, “So who makes you suffer?”

Sur cô replied, “It is the thought of success-failure in me that makes me suffer.”

Seeing that Sur cô had realized suffering, and the cause of suffering, the Zen Master continued to open her mind, “Right now do you feel the pure and immaculate essence in Thay (Zen Master)?”

Sur cô Tuệ Thanh, “Yes!”

The Zen Master asked, “How is it?”

Sur cô felt and clearly described the empty, serene, immaculate essence of the Zen Master.

Zen Master asked, “Do you want to live in that pure, immaculate and empty essence to liberate from the suffering that is controlling your body and mind?”

Sur cô Tuệ Thanh said, “Yes, I do.”

Immediately, the Zen Master asked, “Where’s your suffering?”

Upon hearing this, Sur cô looked back inside herself, and immediately said, “I don’t see it.” Right at that moment, her essence brightened, merged with the empty, clear, all-knowing essence of the Zen Master. Right there, the stuck points in her automatically burst and all the questions were answered. Now Sur cô looked at everything inside and outside herself and saw it clearly as it is, seeing things clearly like the people, the table, the vase, the wall... but this seeing was completely different from the previous seeing. The seeing was empty, clear, all-knowing, penetrating the nature of everything. She saw that everything inside and outside is just the combination of conditions, not real. The seeing is miraculous, serene, open, infinite, beyond space and time. It is right there without any hindrance. Zen Master smiled as verification, *the serene smile forever blooming on her lips*, space and time ceased. Sur cô Tuệ Thanh burst out laughing, knowing she is Home, completely liberated from the illusive attachment that had bound her for millions of lifetimes, and sincerely bowed to Zen Master to show her gratitude.



Sư cô Tuệ Thanh is just one of more than twenty disciples who were opened to merge into the Awake mind by the Zen Master. Although each student has a different level of practice and questioning, the wisdom and miraculous tools of the Zen Master can help students cultivate the wanting to be Awake, liberating from the suffering of ignorance.

For her whole life, as a result of achieving the Awake goal and helping sentient beings, Zen Master Diệu Thiện, a young Vietnamese American, after many years of deep questioning, finally returned and lives completely with the original, serene mind in herself. From there, she has been unceasingly, wholeheartedly involved in

Awake teaching everywhere, bringing the Awake spirit to countless people.

After nineteen years of helping people, the fruits of Awake are blossoming, her Great Vow has helped many people understand, trust, realize and merge into the Awake mind. That is why the force of living Awake is spreading more powerfully every day. More and more people trust in Awake and trust in the fact that Zen Master has the capacity to help people merge completely into the Awake world, ending the suffering of birth and death.

Please visit the website to find out more about Awake, the Awakened Zen Masters, the development of the Awake Sangha at the two meditation centers, and the Awake Sangha all over the world.

Resources:

www.thienvienphomon.org

www.facebook.com/thichdieuthien

Youtube: Thiền Viện Phổ Môn

Huong Sen Temple, May 21, 2020
Bow and Smile,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



2.35. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ TỊNH TUYỀN
- AN UPRIGHT SPIRIT
THE ABBESS OF TỊNH NGHIÊM QUAN ÂM TEMPLE (KANSAS)

Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tuyền (world name Huỳnh Ái Chi) was born in 1967 in Mỹ Tho City, Tiền Giang Province. She took refuge and the five precepts in 1985, as well as ordaining in 1988 under Master Bhikkhunī Tịnh Nghiêm, Tịnh Nghiêm Pagoda. In 1988, she ordained as a samaneri and in 1990 she received the sikkhama precepts at Thiên Phước Pagoda, Long An Province. She took bhikkhunī ordination at Đôn Hậu precinct, Vĩnh Tràng Pagoda in 1992 and graduated from the Basic Buddhist Studies Course in 1994. In 1997, she was nominated by the master to be the Deputy Head of Phước Thành Pagoda, Phước Thuận Commune, Châu Thành District, Tiền Giang Province. In 2003, she settled in Florida in the United States.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Liễu Hà, abbess of Báo Ân Pagoda, allowed her to stay at her temple so she could attend school. In 2007, she graduated with an associate of arts degree from Valencia Community College, Orlando, Florida. In 2011, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in psychology at the University of Central Florida.

In 2018, with the support of the late Venerable Thiện Huyền, abbot of Bửu Quang Pagoda (Wichita, Kansas) and Vô Lượng Quang Pagoda (St. Louis, Missouri), she founded the Tịnh Nghiêm Quan Âm Temple in Wichita, Kansas. She also invited the Venerable Master Thiện Huyền, who played the role as an adviser on her way to serve Buddhism and to repay the Triple Gems.

In September 2018, the Ceremony of the Buddha Foundation was presided over by the late Venerable Leader Thiện Huyền. In October 2018, the worship ceremony of the Buddha's relics (from the Buddhist Institute of Sri Lanka, Missouri Buddhist Meditation Center) was organized. In early November, the Venerable Leader Thiện Huyền passed away.

Quan Âm Tịnh Nghiêm Temple is small and although it has lost its spiritual support from Venerable Leader Thiện Huyền, it relies on the spirit of “four groups⁷⁷ practice together; Buddhism lasts forever.” The abbess and lay Buddhists still diligently cultivate the spiritual path. The temple has regular activities on Sunday, and every night there is a program of meditation and chanting at 6:30 pm. Every half month there is often the ceremony of Repentance - Chanting Uposatha. A “Peaceful Day Retreat” is held monthly and at Quan Yin Bodhisattva's feasts and celebrations. On the occasion of the Buddha's Birthday, around twenty Theravāda monks are invited to attend. On Vu Lan Day, Mahāyāna monks and nuns in the city are invited, in particular, to celebrate the great sacrifice of the Spirit in the death anniversary of the Venerable Master Thiện Huyền.

The temple was originally renovated from an abandoned Protestant church. It took nearly one year in a residential area of mostly indigenous people. The surroundings are empty and wild. Within just two years, this place has turned into a Buddhist establishment with a solemn appearance. With the iron fence surrounding, the temple courtyard increases the majesty. The statues of Maitreya Buddha and Guan Yin Bodhisattva are on both entrance sides of the main hall.

⁷⁷ The four Buddhist groups: bhikkhu, bhikkhunī, upāsaka (masculine) or upāsikā (feminine).

At the end of May this year, Tịnh Nghiêm Quan Âm Pagoda was only two years old; it looks very new. Thanks to financial support, co-workers of the temple committee and lay Buddhists have developed Tịnh Nghiêm Quan Âm Temple and promoted the ideal daily practice place for Buddhists in the central area of the United States.

*The foot enters the path, the mind settles deep,
The path of liberation to transform suffering,
Taking refuge in the Three Jewels, we are joy,
The road is wide, the miraculous dharma opens.*

Huong Sen Temple, May 02, 2020
Yours sincerely,
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com





Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Tuyên and Buddhists on Vu Lan Day, 2019, in front of Tịnh Nghiêm Quán Âm Pagoda gate



The one-day retreat every month at the temple



Venerable Bhikkhuni Tịnh Tuyên at the main hall
of Tịnh Nghiêm Quán Âm Temple

2.36. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ TỊNH QUANG
- THE FAVOR TEACHER
THE ABBESS OF QUÁN ÂM MONASTERY (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Introducing Quán Âm Monastery

Quan Âm is a small monastery on the outskirts of Redlands, California, a city founded in the late nineteenth century.

In 2004, the monastery was introduced by the late Venerable Thích Tịnh Trí who bought this property and spent nearly two years creating the Lumbini Garden. At the same time, he had a construction license, so he, together with the lay Buddhists, engaged in renovation of the duplex to be the main hall. The rooms on the left wing are the residences of the abbot, office and visitor's room and the right wing is the kitchen, dining room and lounge for the visiting monks and nuns.

Venerable Thích Tịnh Trí is my Dharma brother, so we often called each other by the lovely words, "Su Trí" (brother Trí) and "Su Quang" (sister Quang). His world name is Lê Văn Chon, born in 1965 in Thuận An, Phú Vang, Huế. In the early 1980s, Venerable Trí and his relatives traveled overseas and immigrated to Sacramento. He continued his high school and when one of his grandfathers in the Lê family passed away, he and his relatives went to Diệu Quang Pagoda to ask Venerable Bhikkhunī Thích Diệu Từ, the abbess of the pagoda, if it could provide the funeral service and the chanting in seven weeks for the deceased. During this time, the karma to be monk was sufficient, so after doing some labor at Diệu Quang Pagoda for a while, he asked her to be ordained with the Dharma name Quảng Thông. In 1986, he was allowed to receive bhikkhu ordination. Venerable Trí is a very intelligent and courageous man who was in charge of all the construction work, bonsai gardens, tree planting, creation of ponds and the heavy work of Diệu Quang Pagoda in Sacramento. Ever since, it has been a spacious temple with a beautiful and famous Guan Yin statue in the capital of California.

Back to Quán Âm Monastery in Redlands - he chose this name because of a coincidence. Five Quan Yin (Quán Âm) statues were offered to him, so he thought it was the result of karmic conditions to use the title of Quán Âm for the temple. After more than two years of remodeling, the Quán Âm Monastery has a relatively complete facility as an ideal place for local Buddhist practice.

In mid-2006, Venerable Trí was diagnosed with colon cancer and after more than a year and a half of treatment, he passed away near the day of Bodhisattva Quan Yin in 2007 (September 18 in the lunar calendar). In 2007, just before he passed away, I was graduating with a PhD at the University of Wisconsin in Madison City. Venerable Trí and his family and his beloved Buddhists came to Madison to attend my graduation ceremony, and then he invited me to be his successor to take care of the Quán Âm Monastery because he was on medical treatment and I rearranged my plans to come to help him.

Quán Âm Buddhist Meditation
12670 18th Street
Redlands, CA 92373
Abbess: Ni Sư Thích Tịnh Quang
Phone: (909) 389-1570
Email: tinhquang@gmail.com

2. Biography

Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang (world name is Nguyễn Thị Minh) is often called Sister Minh. I am the youngest of my family and was born in Hà Nội in 1953. My father took the whole family to live in the south of Vietnam in 1954. In the 1960s, my father was an officer in the Republic of Vietnam Army and our family shifted to Đà Lạt to live until 1975. In 1970, I graduated with a baccalaureate II and finished the first year of the Department of Biology (science, physics, chemistry, nature) at Thụ Nhân University, Đà Lạt. Later, my mother was not well, so I dropped out of school to help her take care of my family until I left South Vietnam for the USA.

In 1975, because of the good merit our parents planted, except for the older brothers who remained in Vietnam to fight on the HQ805 Battleship of the Republic of Vietnam Army on April 30, 1975, our family left Vũng Tàu for Subic Bay in the Philippines and Guam and finally arrived at Camp Pendleton in southern California to wait. Our family was sponsored by an Episcopal church in Woodland Hills in Canoga Park in mid-August 1975.

After being sponsored by the church and finding a place to live, all family members, besides my mother and the children who attended high school and elementary school, we all got jobs with minimum wage to earn a living. In the evening, I enrolled in computer programming classes at Pierce College, Woodland Hills. I then went on to study computer science at California State Los Angeles while working in this field for fifteen years.

3. Renunciation

In 1989, all my brothers and sisters were reunited with the family in California. At the end of that year, I asked my mother to leave home to live in the monastery with Venerable Master Bhikkhunī Diệu Từ, Diệu Quang Pagoda. I was given a new Dharma name, Quảng Thuận. At the end of 1994, our master sent me and three other disciples to the International Buddhist Monastery (Phật Học Viện Quốc Tế) in Los Angeles led by Venerable Karuna. Two of us took bhikkhunī ordination, and two received the samaneri going forth. This was the first time Venerable Karuna organized the Great Precepts with the nun who played the role as the leading Venerable Master. Many nuns from various countries attended to receive precepts in the ordination ceremony.

In 1998, Venerable Master Diệu Quang opened a second branch in southern California and I and a few sisters went to set up the temple's main hall, rooms and assist with temple activities. With her skillful arrangement and the efforts of the masses and some zealous Buddhists, Ven. Master Diệu Quang transformed two small houses on the half-acre plot in Garden Grove into an active place. Numerous Buddhists attend Sunday classes and ever since, the second Diệu Quang Temple in the city of Santa Ana has started to take action.

4. Return to University

In 1999, I asked the master's permission to leave the temple to continue my studies. In late 2000, I completed my BS degree in computer information systems (CIS) and in early 2001, I went to Madison, Wisconsin to study in the master's program at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. After a year and a half, I completed a master's degree and continued my PhD program with the Department of Languages and Cultures of Asia with the dissertation on "Buddhist Monastic Education and Regional Revival Movements in Early Twentieth-Century Vietnam."

5. Sharing the Grace of Dharma

When I entered Buddhism, with the simple intention of helping people, my time at Diệu Quang Pagoda helped me understand that I needed to be trained in a Buddhist environment, but there was no such program in the United States. In Vietnam, the result of the revival of Vietnamese Buddhism is a Buddhist program at basic, intermediate, college and university

levels. In fact, Vietnamese Buddhism in the United States has not had had a Buddhist program for all levels, I In 1973, the late Venerable Thích Thiện Ân established the College of Oriental Studies and the International Buddhist Training Institute but, he passed away in 1980, leaving an educational program unfinished. It disappeared because there was no heir.

In 2007, after the funeral ritual of Venerable Thích Tịnh Trí, I and Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Minh (my Dharma sister) maintained activities at the Quán Âm Monastery. Two years later, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Minh returned to help her family when her father passed away in Hawaii. The lay Buddhists of the Quán Âm Monastery are also taught by our teacher Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nguyệt (A Dharma sister of our master), who graduated from the first course of the Vietnam Buddhist Institute in Sài Gòn.

Our late Venerable Tịnh Trí named his monastery Quán Âm Buddhist Meditation; perhaps he intended to practice and teach Zen there. He received transmission from Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh to be a teacher when he practiced at Plum Village, France. But when we came to receive the duties as the abbess of Quán Âm Monastery, we realized that the lay Buddhists prefer to follow the Pure Land method and so we turned our studies to the Pure Land.

Following are the activities at Quán Âm Monastery:

- Sunday at 11 a.m. - prayers for the dead and the living; 12:30 p.m. Dharma talk; 1:00 p.m. lunch; 2-4 p.m. walking meditation and reciting the Buddha's name.
- Third week of each month: one-day retreat.
- Sundays: Learning the Vietnamese language and Dharma activities for students: 9-11 a.m.; 11 a.m. lunch.
- Monastic sessions with venerable monks such as the Most Venerable Thích Như Điển, the Most Venerable Thích Nguyên Hạnh, the Most Venerable Thích Trí Thoát.
- Offering vegetarian food, gifts (sleeping bags, warm jackets, wool gloves, personal hygiene), and confectionery to homeless people on holidays such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, General Holidays. We intend to offer Buddhist ceremonies such as Buddha's Birthday and Vu Lan Day.
- Ritual for the deceased, funerals, and weddings.
- Organizing to cook Chung and Tét Cake packages to celebrate Vietnamese New Year.
- Providing facilities and conditions for Boy Scouts to visit the monastery, participate in the monastery's charitable programs, and complete the requirements for the "Eagle Scout Badge."
- Selling vegetarian food.

In addition to working at the Quán Âm Monastery, we run a small business to have income to maintain the temple and the Buddhist works. After Venerable Bhikkhunī Minh Nguyệt traveled around the country to share Dharma for a few years, we decided to sell the business and use the entire net amount to restore the Quán Âm Monastery, which was seriously damaged and leaked. The restoration was not simple because I had to overcome a big obstacle and spend more than two years on the plan, but it still was still not finished. In the end, I was fortunate to receive the help of an architect who was willing to redo the drawing for the city of Redlands to accept and permit the construction plan.

With the finances obtained after the sale of the business and a few fundraising parties at restaurants and at Bồ Đề Phật Quốc Institute (Bodhi Buddha Country Temple where we teach a Buddhist history class for intermediate students since 2016), I and Buddhist followers of the Quán Âm Monastery were introduced to a reputable contractor by a lay Buddhist to begin construction in early 2020. Along with all activities around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic spread, the construction work has been delayed, but I hope it will be completed this fall. We

at Quán Âm Monastery only wish to rebuild the monastery's facilities so that we can have a good place to practice. After completing Quán Âm Monastery, I wish to have more time to contribute to the field of education of Buddhism, such as participating in teaching and setting up a Buddhist library.

Quán Âm Monastery, July 1, 2020
Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Tịnh Quang
tinhquang@gmail.com

English translator: Bhikkhunī TN Giới Hương



Overview of Quán Âm Monastery after complete construction



Front side of Quán Âm Monastery



From left: The Venerable Nguyễn Tâm, Venerable Ân Giao and Venerable Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang in 2020



Left: Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang, Ven. Bhikkhunī Diệu Tánh, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Minh, and the Chief Nun Ven. Liên Chi



Left: Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Minh, Ven. Bhikkhunī Minh Nguyệt, Ven. Bhikkhunī Tâm Nguyệt, and Ven. Bhikkhunī Tịnh Quang with supporters in 2013



Venerable Abbess Tịnh Quang in 2020



Left: Rev. Trí Hòa, Ven. Tịnh Quang, Ven. Minh Nguyệt, Ven. Như Ngọc, Ven. Giới Hương and Rev. Thông Hoa on the Vu Lan Day 2013



Children dancing to celebrate Buddha's Birthday in 2019



Vesak Day in Lumbini Garden, 2019



The three steps and salute ritual in 2019



Activities with local American Boy Scouts in 2019



Ven. Tịnh Quang and Buddhists Quán Âm Monastery in 2018

2.37. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ THU LIÊN
- MINDFUL OF THE AMITABHA BUDDHA
THE ABBESS OF NGỌC THANH VIHARA (NORTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Nunhood and Education

• Venerable Bhikkhunī Thu Liên (world name Vương Thị Nhẫn and pen name Tường Vân), was born in 1969 in Bình Dương province.

• She became a nun on February 4 in the year of Đinh Mão (in 1987) at Ngọc Phương Vihara, Gò Vấp, HCM City and is a disciple of Venerable Master Châu Liên, head of the Ngọc Lợi Vihara, Bạc Liêu.

- In 1990, she was ordained as a samaneri.
- In 1992, she received the śikṣamāṇā ordination.
- In 1994, she was ordained with the bhikkhunī precepts.
- Studied the first course of Intermediate Buddhist Studies in Kiên Giang.
- Graduated from the first course of Intermediate Preacher in HCM City.
- Graduated the third course of Buddhist College in HCM City.
- Earned a bachelor's degree in Buddhist philosophy (the fourth course) at the Buddhist Institute in HCM City.
- Graduated from the Advanced Preacher program (the fourth course) in HCM City.
- May 15, 2015, settled in the United States.
- On October 16, 2017, she purchased 2.03 acres of land with a house and turned it into Ngọc Thanh Vihara:

Ngọc Thanh Vihara
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Thu Liên
7324 Gardner Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95828
Tel: (916) 465-5681
Facebook: Tịnh Xá Ngọc Thanh Sacramento
Email: tinhxangocthanh8@gmail.com

2. Daily Schedule at Ngọc Thanh Vihara

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 5:00 am: | Morning chanting |
| 5:30-6:00 am: | Meditation |
| 7:00 am: | Breakfast |
| 8:00 am: | Water flowers, gardening |
| 12:00 pm: | Lunch |
| 1:00 pm: | Rest period |
| 2:00 pm: | Take care of flowers and fruit trees (depending on the season) |
| 6:00 pm: | Various activities |
| 8:00 pm: | Recitation of the Dharma Sutras (Ksitigarbha, Medicine Buddha, etc. with lay Buddhists. |

On the monthly 14th, 29th or 30th evening in lunar year, the confession ritual is performed. Every Sunday Ngọc Thanh organizes a Peace Chanting and every month the abbess instructs lay Buddhists to take the Eight Precept Retreat twice with the timeline as follows:

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 8:30 am: | The Confession Ritual (the titles of the Buddhas)
- Ordination
- Mindful walking
- Break |
| 10:30: | The ritual
- Dharma Talk |
| 12:00 at noon: | Lunch
- Take a rest |
| 1:30 pm: | Business Class
- Meditate
- Break
- Lecture (Dhammapada)
- Chanting the Popular Door Sutra |
| 4 pm: | Day is complete |

Under the guidance and care of Ven. Bhikkhunī Abbess Thu Liên and Rev. Liên Hiếu, lay Buddhists have been diligent in their study of Buddhism and increasingly understand Buddhism, especially the Mendicant Traditional Sect, applying the Pure Land Zen Method.

3. Poem and Wish

Regarding the Vietnamese nuns in the United States, Ven. Bhikkhunī Abbess Thu Liên shared, “It must be said that depending on the fate of each nun, her activities are different and also according to each nun’s wishes, her Buddhist spreading is also slightly different. If nuns meet many favorable conditions, their temples and practice on the land of foreign people are very flourishing. If, however, nuns encounter obstacles, their activities are also somewhat difficult and slow. However, generally many nunneries are growing in the United States. This is also praiseworthy because “having one more temple means to reduce one more prison.”

HAPPINESS IS NOT FAR

(Trường Vân)

Do not look for happiness too far away
Come back to find it in us
Just peace of mind, we will recognize it
Because happiness is the simplest thing.

Eating deliciously is happy
When the ears still hear the sound
When the eyes still see the clouds
When walking, standing and doing things freely.

Knowing helping with practical things for the sake of many
Knowing to share the material and spiritual
Sympathetic to every human's problem
Know how to solve it with our true love.

The happiest person is the quiet one
Human's heart is truly for humanity
Everything works with mindfulness
Peaceful mind is always present.

Independence Day of the USA, July 4, 2020

Yours sincerely,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

huongsentemple@gmail.com



Ven. Bhikkhunī Thu Liên,
Abbess of Ngọc Thanh Vihara
at the main hall, June 28, 2020



The Most Venerable Bửu Chánh giving a lecture at Ngọc Thanh Vihara in February 4, 2020



The Pilgrimage of Ven. Phổ Đức on New Year's Day, 2019



Ven. Phước Toàn with lay Buddhists at Ngọc Thanh Vihara, November 19, 2019



The Pilgrimage of Mỹ Phụng on New Year's Day 2019



Rev. Giác Phổ (center), Ven. Bhikkhunī Thu Liên (left)
Rev. Tâm Đăng and Buddhists at the main hall of
Ngọc Thanh Vihara. August 18, 2018



Chanting in the Buddha Statue Installation Ceremony, June 17, 2018



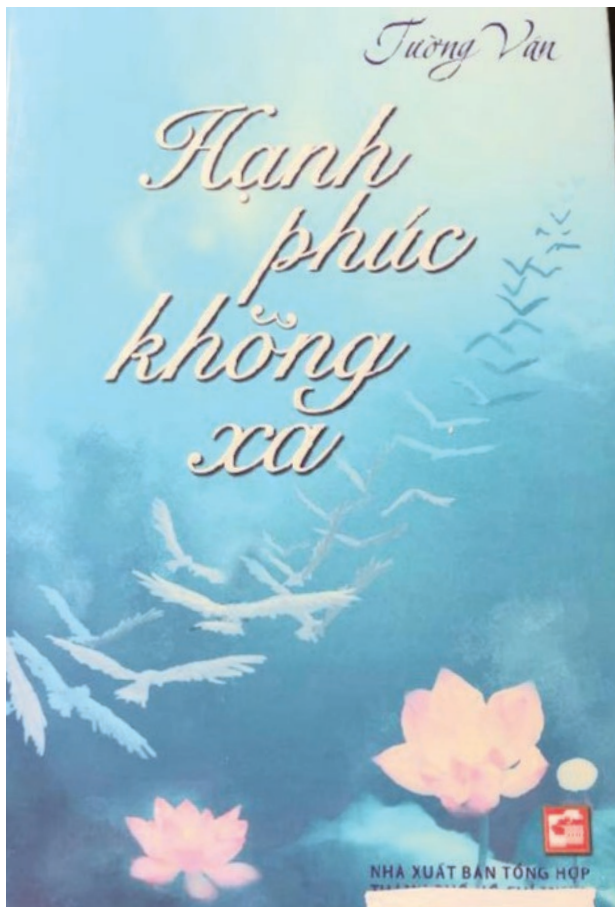
Chief Nun Khuê Liên (abbess of Ngọc An Vihara, Sacramento),
Ven. Bhikkhunī Tiên Liên (abbess of Ngọc Hòa Vihara, San Jose) and nuns
Bhikkhunī Nhạn Liên, Bhikkhunī Trí Liên, Bhikkhunī Mỹ Liên,
Bhikkhunī Dung Liên... in the 2018 ceremony



Ven. Giới Hương and her disciple Rev. Viên Tiên visited Ven. Thu Liên and Ven. Hiếu Liên at Ngọc Thanh Vihara in August 22 2020



Right: Ven. Hiếu Liên, Ven. Thu Liên, Ven. Giới Hương and Rev. Viên Tiên at the Main Hall of Ngọc Thanh Vihara in August 22 2020



Happiness Not Far (Hạnh Phúc Không Xa, 2015) by Ven. Bhikkhunī Thu Liên (Tường Vân)



Pray in Silent (Thầm Nguyện, 2017) by Ven. Bhikkhunī Thu Liên (Tường Vân)

**2.38. VENERABLEBHIKKHUNĪ CHÂN THIỀN &
VENERABLEBHIKKHUNĪ CHÂN DIỆU
- SMILE AT THE FLOWER TO OPEN MIND FOR THE MASS
THE ABBESS OF SÙNG NGHIÊM ZEN MONASTERY(SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)**

Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery often writes about many fields in Buddhism and life - sometimes with poetry. I accepted an invitation from the abbess of Hương Sen Temple, Venerable Giới Hương, to write a biography and to describe the activities of Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery. Wow! Writing about myself is difficult! Sitting and thinking for hours and hours without a word because I am nothing! Nothing worth to write.

As time passed quickly nearing the deadline (end of April 30, 2020), she urged me to get started, but the deadline to submit the papers was reached. Oh my Buddha! Older Dharma sister (Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Thiền) looks at the younger Dharma sister (Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Diệu); younger sister looks at older sister???

Then, an unimaginably fortunate occasion - suddenly a light at the end of the tunnel was flashing! We have seen the old yellow newspapers, such as Người Việt (*Vietnamese People*), Việt Báo (*News in Vietnamese*), Viễn Đông (*Far East*), as well as other magazines like Y Tế (*Medical*), Văn Hóa (*Culture*), Sài Gòn Nhỏ (*Little Saigon*), Sức Sống (*Vitality*), Nắng Mai (*Morning Sunlight*), Báo Mới (*New Newspaper*) and the Sài Gòn Post News. These old newspapers provide much information, because they included everything, including different opinions, comments on the way of life, as well as the Dharma sharing of Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery. This sharing provided encouragement and support to individuals making the first hard steps in search of a true master.

* * *

The following two articles are from famous journalists:

**The Way of Practice of Venerable Nuns
at Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery
(Phan Tấn Hải, editor of Việt Báo News)**

“Three Sisters Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Như, Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Thiền, Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Diệu have been studying Zen under the Zen Master Philip Kapleau for more than a decade. They were only interested in direct enlightenment without thinking about anything in the world again. During that time, the three nuns were still not ordained, even though they were received by Zen Master Philip Kapleau and ‘entered the house’ at the Rochester Zen Monastery, which means they became descendants of the Zen lineage after many years of hard practice through the “shessin” retreats with many difficult koans.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Koan means Japanese Kōan in Zen Buddhism of Japan, a succinct paradoxical statement or question used as a meditation discipline for novices, particularly in the Rinzai sect. Koans (from Chinese kung-an, literally “public notice,” or “public announcement”) are based on anecdotes of Zen (Chinese: Ch'an) masters.

The effort to “solve” a koan is intended to exhaust the analytic intellect and the egoistic will, readying the mind to entertain an appropriate response on the intuitive level. Each such exercise constitutes both a communication of some aspect of Zen experience and a test of the novice’s competence.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/koan>

“Venerable Bhikkhuni Ch�n ThiĐn recounts the days of study at Rochester Monastery, which were full of challenges. Zen Master Philip Kapleau wondered, ‘I don’t believe the three of you will be able to endure this harsh practice for three weeks.’ Rochester Zen’s activities are according to ancient rules, ‘A day without work is a day without.’ The practitioners at that time, in 1987, were mostly white she said. She and her two younger sisters were the only Vietnamese. The probationary period was three weeks. Now, in 2004, according to Ch�n ThiĐn, the challenge period has increased to three months. All expenses for accommodation, meals and living expenses are all self-paid, and must be paid in advance by the Zen practitioners to the Zen Monastery. After the trial period, those who are recognized as having passed the test, sincerely seeking the ultimate Dharma, will be allowed to practice free of charge, and will be allowed to stay as long as necessary. All of the cost will be covered by the Rochester Zen Monastery.

“For the first few days, Venerable Ch�n ThiĐn was assigned to clean toilets five hours a day. Readers can imagine when a female practitioner applied to study Zen, despite having gone through many retreat courses, is assigned the task of cleaning toilets for several hours a day, it was very hard. The instructor at that time told her, ‘You must see that the toilet and yourself are one,’ pure with impurity is as one... and ‘You have to enjoy every moment.’ It means always cherishing the religious life. Everything in the day was always supervised, monitored. ‘They spy us’ according to Venerable Ch�n ThiĐn, ‘monitoring our every movement.’ Compared to the ancient Zen tradition, this challenging time can be understood as a method of penance to resolve karma, like the stories in ancient books about practitioners who carry water, chop wood, and labor before they are given the difficult practices.

“After that, the three Vietnamese were assigned to do lighter work, such as washing dishes, gardening and digging the soil - normal activities. At this time, speaking in a worldly manner, there is no such thing as dreaming about reading books, drinking tea and so forth. When communicating, they found themselves surrounded by the upper class of the United States - doctors, lawyers, university professors, engineers and businessmen. Most of them are very erudite. They read all sorts of books, practice all kinds of Dharma, and then they come here.

The normal schedule is eight hours a day, excluding the time of Zen and time to meet the sensei (teacher) in person to present the practice, the obstacles during meditation, or to receive the instructions, according to each case. Every day there is a teisho hour, which is the time when the master is preaching. Entering the ‘shessin’ (focus on mind) is extremely arduous with meditation sessions up to sixteen hours a day, and sometimes longer.

“Venerable Ch�n ThiĐn recounted that at that time Zen Master Kapleau was very old and only a part-time teacher, but he especially respected these Vietnamese nuns because he could recognize their enthusiastic search for the Dharma. Venerable Ch�n ThiĐn remembered that many questions she had her whole life about Buddhism were answered by the teacher.

“Thanks to the Buddhist knowledge which she gained since the time she listened to her mother reciting the Buddha’s name and chanting sūtras, she was a young member of the Vĩnh NghiĐm Buddhist Youth Association at GiĐc Minh Temple, Tũ Quang temple and others. She learned under the Venerable Master Duy Lũc and then went to meditate at Cao MĐn Pagoda in China. The wisdom gradually opened and she and the nuns were cherished and respected by the teacher and fellow practitioners.

“When the questions and problems were raised by the nuns, depending on the time and the environments, the answers were flexible and the questions were answered skillfully.

“After the trial period, the nuns stayed to study. Venerable Ch�n ThiĐn recounted, ‘Actually, now we are invited to attend sesshin sessions continuously because practicing is for a lifetime.’

The atmosphere of cultivation is too joyous to imagine or describe. There, the predecessors help descendants. There, the delight does not need to show, just feel the silence, the purity and the tranquility. Sometimes the whole day goes by without a single word spoken. Not only because there is no longer any sound needed, but because the serene inner feeling is happening within, even with the noise when we went down the mountain into the market.

“When the time is measured in years, of course it does not describe the practice effort of each person. The years of studying Zen in Rochester are not easy to describe at all!

“In the mid-1990s, Venerable Chân Thiên suddenly became ill. Her body kept bleeding. When she entered the Zen Monastery, she weighed 118 pounds, and later became only eighty pounds. The critical illness was clearly visible on her face. Zen Master Philip Kapleau asked her to be admitted to the hospital. Venerable Chân Thiên had to leave the monastery and be taken to a hospital in San Diego (southern California) where she stayed for two months. If you understand the Dharma, then there is no problem living with death.

“Yet she escaped death - she did not understand why. Gradually the natural health slowly returned.

“After that, she wanted to share the Dharma. The three sisters went to the Most Venerable Thích Tịnh Từ (abbot of Kim Son Monastery in northern California) to receive the precepts. Listening to the three sisters’ spiritual training and presentation, Venerable Thích Tịnh Từ decided to organize a great ordination ceremony in 1997 for the three sisters. It was very special for them to receive three kinds of precepts: samanera, śikṣamāṇā and bhikkhunī on the same day.

“Venerable Chân Thiên now came back to find the means of propagation. She wrote books, composed poems, made music, printed CDs, lectured on Zen Buddhism and recited the Buddha’s name. This time, instead of just repeating the Buddha’s name, she asked a question, ‘Who is reciting Buddha’s name?’ exactly as in Zen Buddhism. In regard to chanting, practitioners must concentrate absolutely 100 percent on each sūtra. Venerable Chân Thiên explains, ‘With every sentence we chant, we neither rush nor let our mind wander. The essence is chanting to understand the meaning of each sentence. If we just chant by heart and do not have a deep understanding of the words, then we are afraid that mind will remain in delusion, thinking wildly!’

“Regarding Buddhist music, on the subject of Vu Lan on Buddha’s birthday, and so forth - poetry and music became a means of sharing the Dharma, not letting the worldly objects enchant and delude anymore.

“All three of the sisters had the good fortune to meet Venerable Thích Tâm Châu again in the United States. The three remembered childhood days in the courtyards of Saigon pagodas and the days they were in the Young Buddhist Association, when the image of the Venerable Tâm Châu paid the role of virtuous master who carried many Buddhist’s works for the sangha through the ages.

“The three nuns went back to Orange County and opened the Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery to preach. They parted with Rochester Zen Monastery.”

California, July 23, 2004
Sincerely bowing three times,
Phan Tấn Hải
The Editor of Việt Báo News
www.vietbao.com

The Buddhist Association Leader of Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery
Opening Speech of the Master's Gratitude Ceremony
Looking Back After Thirty Years
(Zen Practitioner Phước Đổ)

“Dear Sangha Members and Friends,

“Today, Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery is celebrating its thirty year anniversary and expresses gratitude to the Master with many programs. This event welcomes the newly printed *Prajna* and also congratulates Zen practitioner Lý Thu Vân, now Reverend Chân Minh.

“After the end of World War II, Zen Master Suzuki, a famous scholar, came to the United States to teach Zen. At that time, Zen Master Philip Kapleau was a young man who had just finished his mission during World War II. He greatly admired Zen Master Suzuki and asked to follow him to Japan to practice Zen. After a long time, he became enlightened and returned to America to open the Rochester Zen Center. Zen Master Phillip Kapleau was the teacher of Venerable Chân Thiên, and was also ‘the origin of Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery’ thirty years ago. Sùng Nghiêm Meditation Center was first established in San Diego, then moved back to Orange County with a total of thirty years of activities, a long way in the life of Abbess Venerable Chân Thiên.

“Today we are pleased to welcome you to this celebration. Please allow us to look back on the journey of Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery’s thirty years, even though we know that words are sometimes not enough.

“The Way of Practice:

“Sùng Nghiêm Meditation Center follows the method of the ancestors’ meditation, using the koan method taught by Zen Master Phillip Kapleau. The kōan of MU plays the main role. It is a word with no meaning so it eradicates bad thoughts and is a skillful means to bring one to the Tathatā and Bhūtatathatā! Being easy to cultivate is the featureless practice that the Sixth Patriarch Heineng transmitted. Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Thiên organized her disciples personally every week to activate this Tathatā, Bhūtatathatā and to understand each koan, one after another... sometimes hundreds of koans! This way the Zen house was called: ‘enlightened at once’ (頓悟漸悟) by the Sixth Patriarch Heineng.

“The Thirty-Year Operating Achievements:

“Sùng Nghiêm Monastery has been established for thirty years. Some people come in, some people go out, some people reach enlightenment at home as laypeople, but still practice at the Zen Monastery. Currently, the ‘Zen Monastery’ has regular activities. Each week includes meditation, listening to Dharma and the personal presence of master bhikkhunis to help with the practice.

“The Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery also organizes the yearly Lunar New Year, the Buddha’s Birthday, Vu Lan, the opening ceremony for the deceased, along with activities in harmony with all religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Caodaism, Hoahaoism in Orange County. All Zen practitioners of the monastery community offer service every week and especially during the holidays to show the spirit of harmony in the monastery work. This harmony is very rhythmic, brightening the bodhi and meditative mind in every action. Zen practitioners call this the ‘Zen manner’ that expresses the awakening path, showing truthfulness, goodness, and beauty in every action.

“Sùng Nghiêm Monastery also has a choir. All of the meditation songs of Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery are created by Venerable Chân Thiên and performed by the practitioners in unison to keep a pure ‘religious mind’ when singing. Singing the Buddha Dharma is also a way to express the participation of koan every moment because every Dharma verse is sung with a boundless mind and is a secret way to embrace one’s own koan. The practitioners’ enlightened attainments are a result of diligence and strength over time and they gradually break down the koan they are considering.

“Service:

Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery has a TV program every week to share Dharma with everyone. This TV Program has never stopped for decades. The program includes:

“Dissemination of Dharma, sūtras and all activities of the Zen Monastery:

- Adult Meditation Class
- Childrens’ Meditation Class
- Vietnamese-language class for children

- the a TV program to share the Dharma; Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery has tried to preserve this TV program, with its rather large cost, for several decades now.

“The Spread of Meditation Music:

“Venerable Chân Thiên composed poems and music with famous musicians such as Phạm Duy, Tuấn Khanh, Nguyễn Hiền, Lê Cao Phan, Nghiêm Đông Quân, Uy Thi Ca, Giác An, Võ Tá Hân, Hoàng Bá, Nam Hưng, and Nguyễn Hà. They applied the Dharma teaching with Buddha’s voice, bringing lyrics and vocals into people’s hearts. Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery has hundreds of CDs, DVDs, karaoke songs, Dharma discourses and all kinds of performances and lectures, such as the ‘Poetry of Zen Music.’ They have all served to bring forth the full nuances of Zen Buddhism.

“Publishing Buddhist Books:

“It is often said that Zen Buddhism was established without letters, so there are no sūtras or books. This is wrong, because the Buddha’s intention was that we avoid attaching to the scriptures, texts and letters then forget to pay attention to the mind. As soon as the Bodhi Master went to China, he entrusted four volumes of the Lankavatara Sūtra to Huiku. Later the Sixth Patriarch Heineng realized the gnostic, thanks to the verse, ‘Without abiding any place that creates a mind’ (Ứng Vô Sở Trụ Nhân Sanh Kỳ Tâm) in the Vajnaprajñāpāramit Sūtra in the prajñā system.

“Venerable Bhikkhunī Chân Thiên has popularized the Mahaprajñā Sūtra through many editions. We welcome the newly published book, *Directing Mind to the Heart Sutra: A Brief Explanation*.

In the past thirty years, Venerable Chân Thiên has printed many books on meditation such as:

- 1) *Along With the Moonlight* (Cùng Vàng Trăng Soi)
- 2) *Close the Six Realms of Samsara* (Đóng Cửa Sáu Nẻo Luân Hồi)
- 3) *Why Not Open Your Eyes to Rebirth While You Are Alive?* (Tại Sao Không Mở Mắt Vãng Sinh Khi Đang Hiện Sống?)
- 4) *The Implications for Death We Need to Know* (Những Liên Hệ Đến Cái Chết Cần Biết Rõ)
- 5) *The True Meaning of the Heart Sūtra* (Chân Thật Nghĩa của Bát Nhã Tâm kinh)
- 6) *The Heart Sūtra Directing to Mind - A Brief Explanation* (Bát Nhã Tâm Kinh Trực Chỉ, Lý Giải ngắn gọn)

- 7) *Tathāgatagarbha* (Như Lai Tạng)
- 8) *Bell Ringing*, Vol I (Tiếng chuông ngân I)
- 9) *Bell Ringing*, Vol II (Tiếng Chuông Ngân II)
- 10) *Zen Poem Without a Name* (Thiền Thơ Không Tên)

“Lineage and Succession of Sùng Nghiêm Monastery

“Recently we had Reverend Chân Minh, a Zen Practitioner Thu Vân, who has just ordained, visit the monastery. This is very inspiring for the whole Buddhist association and the monastery because succession is the necessary work for Zen Buddhism with the path of not crowding the disciple. Due to the direct meditation between the Zen Master and the disciple, the mind transmits the mind, and the enlightenment is authenticated from the master through the disciple. The master’s contribution to her disciples is very direct and full of energy. Zen Buddhism does not have as many members as the other sects.

“Dear Sangha Members and Friends,

“Today we celebrate the thirtieth year of the establishment of Sùng Nghiêm Meditation Center, and at the same time we welcome the newly printed book, *The Heart Sūtra Directing to Mind - A Brief Explanation* composed by Venerable Chân Thiền. It is also the Master’s Gratitude Day on the occasion of Thanksgiving season in the United States. We also celebrate Reverend Chân Minh, the successor to Zen Monastery.

“Namo Amitabha Buddha.”

Sùng Nghiêm Zen Monastery, May 18 2020

With metta,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Chân Thiền

Phan Tấn Hải

Thiền Sinh Phước Đổ

sungnghiem@hotmail.com

English translator: Bhikkhunī TN Giới Hương



Venerable Nguyễn Siêu, Venerable Minh Mẫn and the Sanghas - Bhikkhunī Chân Thiên, Bhikkhunī Chân Diệu, and Buddhists on the occasion of community activities in 2019



Venerable Chân Thiên leading a meditation class at Sùng Nghiêm Monastery, 2020



The venerable nuns instructing Buddhists to chant



The venerable nuns and members at the Sùng Nghiêm Main Hall in 2020



Venerable Minh Tuyên, Bhikkhuni Giới Hương (far left) with venerable nuns chanting Vu Lan Scripture at Sùng Nghiêm Monastery



Dharma class for children at Sùng Nghiêm Monastery

2.39. VENERABLE BHIKKHUNĪ TRIỆT NHƯ
- WISDOM IS THE MAIN CAREER
THE ABBESS OF TÁNH KHÔNG MEDITATION ASSOCIATION
(SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

1. Life and Service

- Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như (aka: Bùi Thị Anh Hoa)
- Hometown: Gia Định Province, southern Vietnam
- Former female student, Gia Long All Girls High School (Saigon)
- Bachelor of Arts and Law in Saigon
- Former Professor at Hồ Ngọc Cẩn Male High School, Gia Định
- Settled in the US in 1983
- Ordained as a samanera under Venerable Master Thích Thông Triệt on November 9, 2004, in Bodh Gaya, India
- Received the bhikkhunī precepts August 1, 2005, at Tánh Không (Emptiness) Meditation Monastery in southern California.
- The Zen master granted her the Basic Teacher’s Degree on July 5, 2008, at Tánh Không Meditation Monastery.
- The Zen master granted her the Prajna Teacher’s Degree on July 5, 2008, at Tánh Không Meditation Monastery.
- The Tradition Day celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Meditation Master Thông Triệt, “Spreading Dharma,” February 22, 2015 was also the ritual of the next successor, Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như who received the robes and Zen inheritance boards, held at the headquarters of Tánh Không Meditation Monastery (Perris, California).
- Since that day, Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như has served as the Head of the Central Administration of the Tánh Không Meditation Association.
- Venerable Meditation Master Thông Triệt passed away on December 27, 1919, at Chân Như Texas Monastery, at age ninety, with forty-five years in Buddhism.

2. Purpose

- The basis of practice and guidance is the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha.
- Combining the quintessence of Buddhist systems of the Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Meditation (dhyāna).
- Compare brain research and science to shed light on the value of Zen Buddhism.

3. Practicing Process and Instructions

Basic Meditation Course: Theory and practice to recognize and experience the wordless awareness of enlightenment through seeing, hearing and touching.

Prajna Course: Consists of four levels: Intermediate 1, 2, 3 & 4: “Theory and Practice of Topics From the Mundane Truth of the Prajnaparamita Sūtra” (the Three Characteristics, the Four Noble Truths, and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness) to the topics of the supermundane truth of prajna (emptiness, illusion and the truth).

Buddhist Psychology Course: Advanced level 1 & 2. Learned about the four periods of Buddhist history. Studied history of the denomination period and the nuances of mind in Buddhism.

4. **Tánh Không Meditation Association (TKMA' nonprofit)**

Headquarters: Tánh Không Meditation Association (TKMA), Perris, California

Tánh Không Meditation Association
Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như
18525 Frantz Road, Perris, CA-92570
Phone: 951 789 0682
<https://www.tanhkhong.org>

Branches: 2. San Jose TKMA, 3. Sacramento TKMA, 4. Houston TKMA, Paris TKMA, 6. Toulouse Vong TKMA (France), 7. Stuttgart TKMA, Germany, 8. Lausanne TKMA, Switzerland, 9. Ontario TKMA, Canada.

5. **The Active Tánh Không Meditation Association**

The Tánh Không Associations are popular both domestically and abroad in places like southern California, San Jose, Sacramento, Houston, Washington, Toronto, Montreal, Paris, Toulouse, Stuttgart, Germany, HCM City, Switzerland and Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra in Australia.

6. **Zen Master Triệt Như**

Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như is a nun disciple and a successor of the late Venerable Thông Triệt (the founder of Tánh Không Meditation Monastery in Perris, California), She replaced and assumed the responsibility of abbess of Tánh Không Meditation Monastery, as well as serving as the head of the Central Association of the Tánh Không Association in the United States and many countries around the world.

Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như looks wise, calm, gentle and often shares on the website her books, poems, lectures and Dharma talks about her valuable experience on emptiness meditation and Buddhist philosophy. She has discussed the *Book of Present* by the Master (Bàì Trình Thầy); articles like “Suffering and Happiness, Let the Clouds Fly, Inspiration Poems, What Is This, Who Knows, Quiz Who Knows, Crossing the Sea, Midnight, I Am in Life,” or lectures on topics such as “Prajna, the Path Of Self-Salvation and Other-Salvation for Laypeople,” the law of emptiness (sunyata), egolessness, three nuances and many more. Her writing style is clear, concise, complete, and receptive to all levels and identities. She is one of the most prominent and respected nuns in the United States and many other countries, as the undefiled flower offers its fragrance to Buddhism and life:

Amidst the black mud sea,
Reaching up like a lotus.
Zen master for a lifetime,
Terns across the sky.
(Mood to Write [Cảm ề] – *Thích Nữ Triệt Như*)
* * *

Waking up, seeing life as a game,
Tranquilly walking my steps in life,
Who cares sun, rain, and snow,
Taking a coat as illusory, we keep playing.
(I Am in Life [Ta trong đời] – *Thích Nữ Triệt Như*)

Huong Sen Temple, Summer Afternoon in May 21, 2020

A Lotus for You,

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com



Most Venerable Thông Triệt (sixth right), and Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như (fifth right) with the sangha and practitioners at the main hall Tánh Không Meditation Monastery (Perris, California), 2005



Master Thông Triệt passed the Meditation Seal to his disciple successor Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như



Venerable Bhikkhunī Triệt Như received robes and meditation boards, inherited the Meditation Lineage at Tánh Không Meditation Monastery (Perris, California), February 22, 2015



Venerable Monks and Nuns and Practitioners on February 22, 2015



Headquarters - Front side of Tánh Không Meditation Monastery (Perris, California) 2020



Venerable Triệt Như giving a lecture at Mất Thương Nhìn Đòi Association (California), 2019

2.40. BHIKKHUNĪ HOA TÂM
- THE OPEN HEART
THE PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSAL VIRTUE BUDDHIST CHARITIES
(SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

One of the famous charities in southern California led by nuns is the Universal Virtue Buddhist Charities founded by Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm and Buddhists in southern California.

Phổ Hiền Temple is the headquarters of the association, located in the city of Garden Grove, California. The association was founded in 2006 with the wish to ask fellow Buddhists living in the United States, especially in southern California, to share some of their good luck with the unlucky individuals or families in homeland Vietnam.

Members of the association make a monthly contribution, deducted from their salary, so the association's program is fully operational every month even though the COVID-19 epidemic is affecting the globe. The association calls for donations of \$10 USD per month for the disabled, blind, elderly and studious children in Vietnam. Particularly in the United States, Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm works very hard, often in conjunction with a team of medical doctors to organize psychological counseling support for mental patients, as well as visiting, praying for sick people in hospitals, for the elderly in nursing homes, seniors, children who commit crimes, prisoners, and so forth.

Phổ Hiền Temple
The Universal Virtue Buddhist Charities
Abbess and President: Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm
Federal ID # 20-5784880
10222 Larson Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92843
Telephone: (714) 537-2234; (714) 837-0636; (714) 878-4294
Fax: (866) 690-6029
E-mail: hoituthienphohien@yahoo.com
Web: www.hoituthienphohien.com

The website offers monthly reports and photos of the charity program's activities to help the blind, disabled and poor families of Tiền Giang Province and Tịnh Nghiêm Nunnery, Mỹ Tho. The chief nun, Abbess Thích Nữ Tịnh Nghiêm on Buddha's Birthday gives gifts to each home of poor people or nurturing centers in Thừa Thiên, Huế. She also gives gifts to Pháp Quang Temple, Đại Lào Commune, Bảo Lộc District, and Lâm Đồng Province. Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Liên Nguyên, Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm and the volunteer members of the association have been very active, with compassionate minds evidenced by their numerous charitable activities according to the Bodhisattva Phổ Hiền's conduct as mentioned in the Avatamsaka Sutta:

May I be a good doctor for those who suffer from illness,
A guide for those who have gone astray,
A lamp for those who dwell in darkness,
A source of treasure for those in poverty and need.
(Vows of Samantabhadra, Avatamsaka Sutra)

Bhikkhuni Hoa Tâm encourages fellow Buddhists to generate and follow the compassionate mind according to the virtues of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to earn merits, giving oneself and others a meaningful and happy life. The Phổ Hiền's virtue of Bhikkhuni Hoa Tâm is expressed through the teachings of the Dhammapada, the Great Master Chứng Nghiêm and Vietnamese folk poems as below:

The doer of good delights here and hereafter; he delights in both the worlds.
The thought, "Good have I done," delights him,
and he delights even more when gone to realms of bliss.
(Dhammapada 1:18)⁷⁹

Seeing people suffering then love,
Seeing the disabled, even more care.
Seeing old and weak, worn-out people,
Give medicines, rice porridge to support.
The Buddha helped anyone, who is kindness
People have virtue, gain thousands of glories.
(Vietnamese folk saying)

"Myself and sentient beings, even without knowing anything, their suffering is our suffering. Their pain is our own pain. Their bodies suffer but our hearts worry. The wound is in their body, but suffering is in our hearts. This spirit is the same great compassion." (Great Master Chứng Nghiêm)

"Know yourself, know people, know progress, both our body and mind are always peaceful; knowing merit, accumulate merit, always creating merit, wide affinity for good grace everywhere." (The Great Master Thánh Nghiêm)

Namo Universal Virtue Bodhisattva.

Huong Sen Temple, July 10, 2020
Warm regards,
Thích Nữ Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com

⁷⁹ The Dhammapada (The Path of Wisdom), Verse 18, translated from Pali into English by Thich Minh Châu.
<http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism/dp01.htm>



Logo of the Universal Virtue Buddhist Charities



The Sign of Phổ Hiền Temple



The Abbess Hoa Tâm's welcome ritual for the Most Venerable Chon Thành, the Most Venerable Phước Thuận and the sangha attending the Vesak at Phổ Hiền Temple



The memory photo at Phổ Hiền Temple



Rice offering



Chanting in the main hall of Phổ Hiền Temple



Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm (saffron robe, fifth from left) between two nuns and Buddhist volunteers



Bhikkhunī Hoa Tâm (saffron robe center) between two nuns and Buddhist volunteers at the main hall of Phổ Hiền Temple



Bhikkhuni Hoa Tâm and children



Charity event at Thừa Thiên Huế, April, 2020



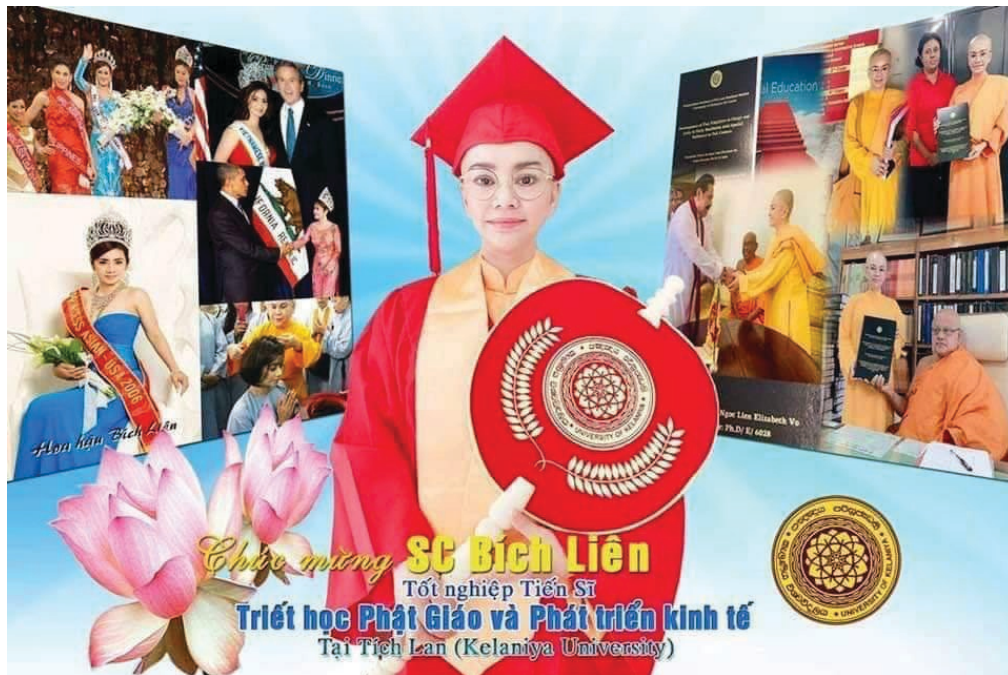
Donating New Year gifts to villagers at Quan Âm Temple, Bà Rịa



Charity at Tiền Giang Province, Tịnh Nghiêm Nunnery, Mỹ Tho

2.41. BHIKKHUNĪ NGỌC LIÊN - A MISS BECAME A NUN THE ABBESS OF MINH ĐĂNG QUANG VIHARA (SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA)

Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien (Dr. Elizabeth Vo), former international beauty queen, is an excellent daughter of Phu Quoc Island. She was born in Vietnam, and is a shining star in the contemporary Buddhist sky. She gave up a successful career in business at the peak of her career to enter the path of Buddhism.



After going to a Buddhist temple for learning and practicing, with her intelligence, she learned and was able to find her own direction. As a child who settled in the United States at a young age, living in a civilized society like the United States, she understood that education has always played an important role. Only education can enable people to enter the field of knowledge. Even a Buddhist monk or a nun is no exception. It is necessary to improve knowledge of Buddhism and general education to combine the practice of cultivating spiritual life with sharing and spreading the Dharma to everyone. Along with that dream, Bhikkhunī Bich Lien is always concerned about how to bring Buddhist lessons for all in Western countries and meet the missionary activities. Referring to some ideas from the most experienced and wise Buddhists, she made a decision to go to Sri Lanka and study Buddhism.

During her studies, she still actively participated in community activities and contributed to a wide range of social charity work.



After more than four years studying for a PhD in Buddhist philosophy at Kelaniya University, Colombo, Sri Lanka, on September 5, 2019, she received her doctorate in Buddhist philosophy. This was the 110th graduation ceremony of Kelaniya University and she was the first Vietnamese-American bhikkhunī and also the first bhikkhuni with a PhD on this island. It can be said that this is an extremely proud and honorable thing for the Vietnamese American Buddhist Congress in the United States and for the Minh Dang Quang Buddhist Congress.



Buổi lễ nhận bằng Tiến Sĩ của Sư Cô Bích Liên tại Sri Lanka



Buổi lễ nhận bằng Tiến Sĩ của Sư Cô Bích Liên tại Sri Lanka



Buổi lễ nhận bằng Tiến Sĩ của Sư Cô Bích Liên tại Sri Lanka


කැලණිය විශ්වවිද්‍යාලය - ශ්‍රී ලංකාව
UNIVERSITY OF KELANIYA - SRI LANKA
 BANDARANAIKE MEMORIAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE HALL
 110TH GENERAL CONVOCATION
 05.09.2019





ATV

PDC BY - KSR, MUMALI +91 71 2726 549

Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien is talented young nun who has a strong dream about the path of development for the younger generation of Buddhists in the United States. While still a student studying in Sri Lanka, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Highest Most Venerable of Sri Lanka for her positive contributions to that country and to the Buddhist Congress of Sri Lanka. In addition, with the ability to communicate with skill and subtlety, she was lucky to meet Venerable Walpola Piyananda, the founder, president and abbot of Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara in Los Angeles, California, USA, who is also the head of the Sangha in the United States and Canada. He invited Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien to be an adviser on religious and international affairs.

After graduating, she returned to the United States and continued to establish the Lotus International Meditation Center, located at 9241 Trask Street, Garden Grove in southern California. Under the guidance of Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien, the meditation center is working, and the Sri Lankan teachers directly conduct meditation lesson, teaching Dharma and the Pali language.

In honor of her previous and present contributions for the Buddhist society and the community in the United States, US Congressman Alan Lowenthal visited the meditation center on November 6, 2019 and conferred two certificates of appreciation from the US House of Representatives.



Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien founded an International Bhikkhunī Congress to connect young nuns around the world to share experiences of learning and help them with practicing with Buddhist issues. In particular, Dr. Bich Lien teaches the younger nuns of different races and cultures, be able to connect with each other, to listen and share the difficulties in monastic life. The purpose is creating an opportunity to help the younger nuns standing up to the Buddhist way to convey the inherent love, compassion and energy of bhikkhunis in this present life. This plan will be organized at the first meeting in Sri Lanka in early 2020.

Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien is a very special person with deep wisdom and much merit. She entered the Buddhist way to continue her bodhisattva mission. It can be said that the image and example of Bhikkhunī Dr. Bich Lien have made many people respect and desire to learn about Buddhism.

Hopefully the image of holiness and compassionate energy of a talented young bhikkhunī will spread all over the world and always inspire young nuns to follow Truthfulness-Compassion-Beauty.

In present (2020) Bhikkhunī Ngọc Liên is the abbess:

Minh Đăng Quang Vihara

Giác Nhiên Patriarch Vihara

8752 Westminster Blvd. Westminister, CA 92683

Phone: 714 902 4822/ 714 248 9998

Cell: 714 458 2654

phapvienminhdangquangca@yahoo.com

bichliendoctorate@yahoo.com, sucobichlien@yahoo.com

California, 2019

Vietnamese Language: **Minh Quang**

English translator: Bhikkhunī TN Giới Hương
huongsentemple@gmail.com

2.42. SOME VIETNAMESE NUNNERIES ABROAD

To find an accurate statistic for nuns' temples in overseas is not easy. Thirty years ago, the number of nunneries was very modest. For example, in India, there is Linh Sơn Pagoda (in 1945); Germany has the Linh Thử Pagoda (in 1987); the United States has Đức Viên Pagoda (in 1980) Today, in the United States, there are hundreds of nunneries everywhere, from cities with a large number of Vietnamese-Americans such as Dược Sư Pagoda, Diệu Quang Pagoda, Thiền Tĩnh Temple, Phước Quang Pagoda, Sùng Nghiêm Meditation Center, Đại Bi Monastery, Kiêu Đàm Pagoda, Hương Sen Pagoda, Quán Âm Monastery (southern California), An Lạc Pagoda, Huyền Không Temple, Ngọc Hòa Vihara (northern California) to the cities with fewer Vietnamese-Americans: An Lạc Pagoda (Indianapolis, Indiana), Từ Liên Pagoda (Snellville, Georgia), Phước Hải Pagoda (Charlotte, North Carolina)).

In 2014, Hương Quê Publishing House (USA) and two authors, Võ Văn Tường and Từ Hiếu Côn published the first volume of "Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Temples" in four languages: Vietnamese-English-Chinese-Japanese, 720 pages of 22cm x 28cm size. It has 2,800 images to introduce seventy-two Vietnamese temples around the world. There are ten nunneries in seventy-two temples in the first edition.

In 2017, Võ Văn Tường and Từ Hiếu Côn continued to publish volume two with 2,600 images introducing 100 Vietnamese temples in the US. There are eighteen nunneries in 100 temples introduced. Because Đức Viên and Hương Sen Pagodas were included in first edition, and reintroduced in the second edition. Out of 172 temples in the two volumes, we have a total of twenty-six nunneries.

We would like to introduce some general statistics, addresses and photos of each of the following nunneries:

India: one temple; Germany: one pagoda, Canada: one pagoda, USA: twenty-three pagodas.

In the United States, there are seven states with twenty-three temples. California has thirteen temples; Florida: one pagoda, Georgia: one pagoda, Indiana: one pagoda, Massachusetts: two pagodas, North Carolina: one pagoda, Texas: four pagodas.

Regarding the Buddhist sect, Mahayana has twentytwo temples (Zen Buddhism: three pagodas) and the mendicants have four temples: Ngọc Hòa Monastery, Minh Đăng Quang Vihara, Ngọc Minh Vihara and Minh Đăng Quang Zen Monastery.

Currently, we have documents and photos of more than 300 Vietnamese temples in foreign countries, including more than fifty nunneries, but due to lack of conditions, volume three and four have not been printed to launch readers and libraries in many countries around the world. Particularly in Vietnam, the Library of General Sciences in HCM City (69 Lý Tự Trọng,

District 1) has a set of books, *Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Temples* (two volumes) serving readers daily.

We hope to have good fortune. With the financial support of sincere Buddhists, the next volumes of the *Vietnam Pagodas in Overseas* series will be published, or published in a separate book for nuns abroad.

Namo Kuan-Yin Boddhisattva.
North California, May 25, 2020
Warm regards,
Võ Văn Tường
vvtuong04@yahoo.com

**LIST OF TWENTY-SIX NUNNERIES
IN THE BOOKS OF OVERSEAS VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST TEMPLES**

USA

1. Phổ Minh Pagoda

2751 21st Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95820

Tel: 916-739-6344

Cell: 916-346-7680

Email: chuaphominh@hotmail.com

Website: www.chuaphominh.org

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Như Phương



2. Diệu Nhân Zen Center

4241 Duncan Hill Road, Rescue, CA 95672

Tel: 530-676-7108; 530-409-8336; 916-222-8784

P.O. Box 265, Rescue, CA 95672

Fax: 530-672-2497

Website: www.dieunhan.net

Email: tvdieunhan2002@gmail.com

Email: thuantuedn@gmail.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Thuận Tuệ



3. An Lạc Temple

1647 E. San Fernando Street, San Jose, CA 95116

Tel: 408-254-1710

Tel: 408-594-8717

Email: anlactu1647@gmail.com

Abess: the Most Venerable Nguyễn Thanh



4. Đức Viên Monastery

2420 McLaughlin Avenue, San Jose, CA 95121

Tel: 408-993-9158

Tịnh Uyển Monastery

21055 Summit Road, Los Gatos, CA 95033

Tel: 408-395-3673

Email: ducvienpagoda@gmail.com; damnhat1@gmail.com, tnduchoa@gmail.com

Website: www.ducvien.org

Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Đàm Nhật



5. Ngọc Hòa Monastery

766 S. Second Street, San Jose, CA 95112

2054 Old Piedmont Road, San Jose, CA 95132

Tel: 408-295-2436; 408-507-2363; 408-934-9328

Email: txnh9@yahoo.com

Email: ngochoatemple@gmail.com

Website: www.buddhayana.net

Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Tiến Liên



6. Vô Ưu Zen Center

1300 Church Avenue, San Martin, CA 95046

Tel: 408-683-4498

Fax: 408-683-4498

Cell: 408-612-6610

Email: vouuthienvien@yahoo.com

Website: www.thienvienvouu.com

Abbess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Đồng Kính



7. Kiều Đàm Temple

1129 South Newhope Street, Santa Ana, CA 92704

Tel: 714-927-8484

Email: chuakieudam1129@yahoo.com;

Email: chuakieudamusa@gmail.com

Abess: Ven. Bhikkhuni Nguyễn Bôn



8. Minh Đăng Quang Institute

Minh Đăng Quang Vihara

Giác Nhiên Monastery

8752 Westminster Blvd., Westminster, CA 92683

Tel: 714-248-9998

Email: sucobichlien@yahoo.com

Founder: The Most Venerable Thích Giác Nhiên

Abess: Bhikkhuni Ngọc Liên



9. Duoc Sur Temple

11111 Magnolia Street, Garden Grove, CA 92841

Tel: 714-638-4128

Fax: 714-638-0721

Email: nitruong@duocsutemple.com

Email: chuaduocsuusa@gmail.com

Website: www.duocsutemple.com

Abess: The most Venerable Như Hòa

Deputy Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Như Thông



10. Thiên Tịnh Temple

11502 Daniel Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92840

Tel: 714-638-0989, 714-266-4171

Email: dieutanhthich@yahoo.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Diệu Tánh



11. Phổ Hiền Temple

Phổ Hiền Charity Association

10222 Larson Avenue, Garden Grove, CA 92843

Tel: 714-537-2234, 714-837-0636, 714-878-4294

Fax: 866-690-6029

Email: hoituthienphohien@yahoo.com

Website: www.hoituthienphohien.com

Abess: Bhikkhuni Hoa Tâm



12. Hương Sen Temple

19865 Seaton Avenue, Perris, CA 92570

Tel: 951-657-7272

Cell: 951-616-8620

Email: huongsentemple@gmail.com

Email: thichnugioihuong@yahoo.com

Website: www.huongsentemple.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Giới Hương



13. Ngọc Minh Vihara

3776 46th Street, San Diego, CA 92105

Tel: 619-282-1673

Tel: 408-507-2363

Email: txngocminh1@yahoo.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Tiến Liên



14. Minh Đăng Quang Zen Monastery

14634 Bellaire Blvd, Houston, TX 77083

Tel: 281-988-9989

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Tường Liên



15. Quang Chiếu Zen Monastery

5251 Rendon Road, Fortworth, TX 76140

Tel: 817-483-8670; Fax: 817-483-8670

Thích Nữ Hạnh Diệu

Email: quangchieuzen@yahoo.com, quangchieu@juno.com

Website: www.thienvienquangchieu.org

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Hạnh Diệu

Contact: Bhikkhuni Huệ Thanh and Bhikkhuni Linh Toại



16. Viên Thông Temple

17355 Groeschke Road, Houston, TX 77084

Tel: 281-829-0816, 832-638-1453, 281-829-0830

Cell: 832-605-5503

Email: thichnuthanhluong@yahoo.com

Email: vienthonghouston@yahoo.com

Website: www.vienthongtu.org

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Thanh Lương



17. Phổ Môn Zen Monastery

15202 Dora Lane

Sugar Land, Texas 77498

Tel: 281-565-9718

Email: thienvienphomon2001@universaldoor.org

Website: <https://www.thienvienphomon.org/>

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Diệu Thiện



18. An Lạc Temple

5249 E. 30th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46218

Tel: 317-545-1234

Cell: 408-329-3199

Email: anlactemple@yahoo.com

Website: www.anlactemple.org

Email: gioitam58@gmail.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Nguyễn Thiện



19. Diệu Đế Temple

9603 Nims Lane, Pensacola, FL 32534

Tel: 850-477-8291

Tel: 850-292-3257

Email: thngioinguyen@yahoo.com, huongloc07@yahoo.com

phumh02@cox.net

Contact: Bhikkhuni Giới Nguyễn and

Bhikkhuni Thích Nữ Hương Liên



20. Từ Liên Temple

6308 Highway 42, Rex, GA 30273

3465 Lenora Church Rd, Snellville, GA 30039

Tel: 770-968-8372, 770-736-5425

Email: tulientemple@yahoo.com

Website: www.chuatulien.us

Abess: The Most Venerable Tâm Thường



21. Phước Hải Temple

1818 Little Rock Road, Charlotte, NC 28214

Tel: 704-394-6869

Email: phuoCHAINC@gmail.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Minh Nghiêm



22. Phổ Hiền Temple

96 Dewey Street, Worcester, MA 01610

Tel: 508-755-7817

Fax: 508-755-7817

Email: chuaphohien1@yahoo.com

Web: www.chuaphohienma.com

Email: thichnhutam@chuaphohienma.com

Email: nhutamthich@yahoo.com

Email: thuky@chuaphohienma.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Như Tâm



23. Linh Sơn Temple

16 Ruthven Avenue, Worcester, MA 01606

Tel: 508-853-8120

Email: trihoathich45@gmail.com

Website: www.linhsonmass.org

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Trí Hòa



VANCOUVER, CANADA

Bảo Lâm Temple

6025 St. George Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5W 2Y5 Canada

Tel: 604-327-5546

Fax: 604-327-5546

Email: thichtrihanh@yahoo.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Tịnh Pháp



KUSHINAGAR, INDIA

Linh Sơn Temple

P.O. Distt Kushinagar 274403 U.P., India

Tel: 0091-9936-837-270

Email: thichnutrithuan10@yahoo.com

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Trí Thuận



BERLIN, GERMANY

Linh Thú Temple

Heidereuter Str. 30 – 13597 Berlin, Germany

Tel: (030) 36711287

Email: pagodelinhthuu@yahoo.com

Website: www.linhthuu.de

Abess: Venerable Bhikkhuni Diệu Phước





BẢO ANH LẠC BOOKSHELF

1. *Bodhisattva and Śūnyatā in the Early and Developed Buddhist Traditions*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, 1st-2nd reprints, Delhi-7, Eastern Book Linkers, 2003–2006; Vietnam Buddhist University, 3rd reprint, 2010.
2. *Bồ-tát và Tánh Không Trong Kinh Tạng Pali và Đại Thừa (Bodhisattva and Śūnyatā in the Early and Developed Buddhist Traditions)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Delhi-7, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2005. NXB Tổng Hợp Tp HCM, 2nd-3rd reprints, 2008 and 2010.
3. *Ban Mai Xứ Ấn (The Dawn in India)*, (3 vols.), Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Delhi-7, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2005. Publisher Văn Hoá Sài Gòn, 2nd-3rd reprints, 2006 and 2008.
4. *Vườn Nai-Chiếc Nôi Phật Giáo (Deer Park-The Cradle of Buddhism)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Delhi-7, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2005. NXB Phương Đông, 2nd-3rd reprints, 2008 and 2010.
5. *Xá Lợi Của Đức Phật (The Buddha's Relic)*, Tham Weng Yew, translated into English by Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Delhi-7, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2003. 2nd-3rd reprints, 2005 and 2006; NXB Tổng Hợp Tp HCM, 4th reprint, 2008.
6. *Quy Y Tam Bảo và Năm Giới (Take Refuge in the Three Gems and Keep the Five Precepts)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, Wisconsin, USA. 2008. NXB Tổng Hợp Tp HCM, 2nd-3rd reprints, 2010 and 2014.
7. *Vòng Luân Hồi (The Cycle of Life)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Phương Đông, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2008. NXB Phương Đông, 2nd-3rd-4th reprints, 2010, 2014, and 2016.
8. *Hoa Tuyết Milwaukee (Snowflake in Milwaukee)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương. NXB Văn Hoá Sài Gòn, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2008.
9. *Luân Hồi trong Lăng Kính Lăng Nghiêm (The Cycle of Life in Śūrangama Sūtra)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Văn Hoá Sài Gòn, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2008. 2nd-3rd-4th reprints, 2012, 2014, and 2016.
10. *Nghi Thức Hộ Niệm Cầu Siêu (The Ritual for the Deceased)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Delhi-7, Eastern Book Linkers. 2008.
11. *Quan Âm Quảng Trản (The Commentary of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Publisher Phương Đông, 2010. 2nd-3rd reprints, 2012 and 2014.
12. *Sen Nở Nơi Chốn Tử Tù (Lotus in the Prison)*, many authors, translated into English by Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Văn Hoá Sài Gòn, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2010. 2nd-3rd reprints, 2012 and 2014.
13. *Nữ Tu và Tù Nhân Hoa Kỳ (A Nun and American Inmates)*, (2 vols.), Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Văn Hoá Sài Gòn, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2010. 2nd-3rd-4th reprints, 2011, 2014, 2016.
14. *Nếp Sống Tỉnh Thức của Đức Đạt Lai Lạt Ma Thứ XIV (The Awakened Mind of the 14th Dalai Lama)*, (2 vols.), Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Hồng Đức, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2012. 2nd-3rd reprints, 2014 and 2016.
15. *A-Hàm, Mưa pháp chuyển hóa phiền não (Agama-A Dharma Rain Transforms the Defilements)*, (2 vols.), Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Hồng Đức, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2012. 2nd-3rd reprints, 2014 and 2016.
16. *Góp Từng Hạt Nắng Perris (Collection of Sunlight in Perris)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Phương Đông, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2014.

17. *Pháp Ngữ của Kinh Kim Cang (The Vajracchedikā-Prajñāpāramitā-Sūtra)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Phương Đông, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2014. 2nd-3rd reprints, 2015 and 2016.
18. *Tập Thơ Nhạc Nắng Lãng Nghiêm (Songs and Poems of Śūraṅgama Sunlight)*, Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB Phương Đông, Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc, 2014. 2nd reprint, 2015.
19. *Chùa Việt Nam Hải Ngoại (Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Temples)*, vol. 2, Võ Văn Tường and Từ Hiếu Côn, translated into English by Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Nhà Xuất Bản Hương Quê, Hoa Kỳ. 2016.
20. *Việt Nam Danh Lam Cổ Tự (The Famous Ancient Buddhist Temples in Vietnam)*, Võ Văn Tường. Translated into English by Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, NXB, Phương Nam. 2017.
21. *Rebirth Views in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Fifth Edition, Ananda Viet Foundation, USA. 2018.
22. *Commentary of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva*, Fourth Edition, Ananda Viet Foundation, USA. 2018.
23. *Phật Giáo-Một Bậc Đạo Sư, Nhiều Truyền Thống (Buddhism: One Teacher, Many Traditions)*, Bhikṣu Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama and Bhikṣunī Thubten Chodron, translated into Vietnamese by Dr. Bhikkhunī Giới Hương, Prajna Upadesa Foundation Publication. 2018.
24. *Nét Bút Nơi Song Cửa (Reflections at the Temple Window)*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, NXB Hồng Đức: Tủ Sách Bảo Anh Lạc. 2018.
25. *Bản Tin Hương Sen (Anh-Việt): Xuân, Phật Đản, Vu Lan (Hương Sen Newsletter: Spring, Buddha's Birthday, and Vu Lan, annual/Mỗi Năm)*, Hương Sen Press, USA. 2019.
26. *Máy Nghe (Hương Sen Digital MP3 Radio Speaker): Buddhist Lectures, Books, Articles, Songs, and Poems from Venerable TN Giới Hương (383/278 pieces)*, Hương Sen Buddhist Temple. 2019.
27. *Phóng Sự về Chùa Hương Sen (Introduction to Hương Sen Temple)*, USA. Executive Producer: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Producer: Phú Tôn. 2019.
28. *Danh Ngôn Nuôi Dưỡng Nhân Cách-Good Words Nurture a Good Manner*, collected by Thích Nữ Giới Hương, NXB Hồng Đức 2020.
29. *Hương Sen, Thơ và Nhạc-Lotus Fragrance, Poems, and Music (Bilingual Language)*, Nguyễn Hiền Đức. English translator: Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
30. *Cách Chuẩn Bị Chết và Giúp Người Sắp Chết-Quan Điểm Phật Giáo (Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying-A Buddhist Perspective)*, Sangye Khadro, translated into English by Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
31. *The Key Words in Vajracchedikā Sūtra*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
32. *Văn Hóa Đặc Sắc của Nước Nhật Bản-Exploring the Unique Culture of Japan (Bilingual Language)*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
33. *Take Refuge in the Three Gems and Keep the Five Precepts*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
34. *Sống An Lạc dù Đời không Đẹp như Mơ-Live Peacefully though Life Is Not Beautiful as a Dream (Bilingual Language)*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
35. *Sārnātha-The Cradle of Buddhism from an Archeological Perspective*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
36. *Hãy Nói Lời Yêu Thương-Words of Love and Understanding (Bilingual Language)*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
37. *Văn Hóa Cổ Kim qua Hành Hương Chiêm Bái-The Ancient to Present Culture in Pilgrim (Bilingual Language)*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.

38. *Cycle of Life*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
39. *Nghệ Thuật Biết Sống-Art of Living* (Bilingual Language), Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
40. *Ni Giới Việt Nam Hoàng Pháp tại Hoa Kỳ*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
41. *Tuyển Tập 40 Năm Tu Học & Hoàng Pháp của Ni sư Giới Hương*. Thích Nữ Viên Quang, TN Viên Nhuận, TN Viên Tiến, and TN Viên Khuông, Xpress Print Publishing, USA. 2020.
42. *Forty Years in the Dharma: A Life of Study and Service-Venerable Bhikkhuni Giới Hương*. Thích Nữ Viên Quang, TN Viên Nhuận, TN Viên Tiến, and TN Viên Khuông, Xpress Print Publishing, USA. 2020.
43. *Sharing the Dharma - Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States*, Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
44. *Tập Thơ Nhạc Lối Về Sen Nở* (Songs and Poems of a Blooming Lotus on the Way). Thích Nữ Giới Hương, Hồng Đức Publishing. 2020.
45. *A Vietnamese Nun and American Inmates*. Huong Sen Press, USA. 2020.

BUDDHIST MUSIC ALBUMS

1. *Đào Xuân Lộng Ý Kinh* (The Buddha's Teachings Reflected in Cherry Flowers), Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Nam Hung, Vol. 1. 2013.
2. *Niêm Tin Tam Bảo* (Trust in the Three Gems), Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Hoàng Y Vũ and Hoàng Quang Huế, Vol. 2. 2013.
3. *Trăng Tròn Nghìn Năm Đón Chờ Ai* (Who Is the Full Moon Waiting for for Over a Thousand Years?). Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Võ Tá Hân, Hoàng Y Vũ, Khánh Hải, Khánh Hoàng, Hoàng Kim Anh, Linh Phương và Nguyễn Tuấn, Vol. 3. 2013.
4. *Ánh Trăng Phật Pháp* (Moonlight of Dharma-Buddha). Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Uy Thi Ca and Giác An, Vol. 4. 2013.
5. *Bình Minh Tỉnh Thức* (Awakened Mind at the Dawn) (*Piano Variations for Meditation*). Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Solo Pianist: Linh Phương, vol. 5. 2013.
6. *Tiếng Hát Già Lam* (Songs from the Temple). Poems: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Nam Hung, vol. 6. 2015.
7. *Cảnh Đẹp Chùa Xưa* (The Magnificent, Ancient Buddhist Temple). Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Võ Tá Hân, Nam Hung, Hoàng Quang Huế, vol. 7. 2015.
8. *Karaoke Hoa Ưu Đàm Đã Nở* (An Udumbara Flower Is Blooming). Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Musician: Nam Hung, Huong Sen Temple. 2015.
9. *Hương Sen Ca* (Huong Sen's Songs), Thơ: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Nhạc: Nam Hung, vol. 9, năm 2018.
10. *Về Chùa Vui Tu* (Happily Go to Temple for Spiritual Practices), Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Nam Hung and Nguyễn Hà. Volume 10. 2018.
11. *Gọi nắng Xuân Về* (Call the Spring Sunlight), Poem: Thích Nữ Giới Hương. Music: Nam Hung, Huong Sen Temple. Volume 11. 2020.

Please consult the **Bảo Anh Lạc Bookshelf** at this website: www.huongsentemple.com

LIST OF PATRONS FOR PRINTING

1. Ni trưởng Giác Hương	\$1000.00
2. Sư bà Như Phương	\$1000.00
3. Sư bà Như Ngọc	\$200.00
4. Ni sư Giới Hương.....	\$1000.00
5. Ni sư Thuận Tuệ	\$500.00
6. Ni sư Nguyên Bồn.....	\$200.00
7. Ni sư Huệ Hảo.....	\$1000.00
8. Ni sư Minh Nghiêm.....	\$500.00
9. Ni sư Như Quang	\$200.00
10. Ni sư Nhật Lan	\$500.00
11. Ni sư Thanh Lương	\$1000.00
12. Ni sư Diệu Tánh	\$200.00
13. Ni sư Thiền Tuệ	\$600.00
14. Thiền sư Diệu Thiện	\$500.00
15. Ni sư Tịnh Tuyền.....	\$200.00
16. Ni sư Tịnh Quang	\$200.00
17. Ni sư Tịnh Tâm	\$500.00
18. Ni sư Thu Liên	\$200.00
19. Ns Chân Thiên & Ns Chân Diệu	\$500.00
20. Ni sư Triệt Như.....	\$300.00
21. Sư cô Diệu An	\$200.00

22. Sư cô Ngọc Liên.....	\$500.00
23. HL Thân phụ Ns Giới Hương.....	\$1000.00
24. Mỹ Chi	\$50.00
25. Nhân Trần.....	\$200.00
26. Phương Ngân và Tâm Hảo	\$100.00
27. Tâm Huệ.....	\$300.00
28. Đỗ Hương.....	\$50.00
29. Diệu Lý.....	\$50.00
30. Ánh Đăng	\$100.00
31. Trần Văn Tân	\$40.00
32. Nguyễn Thị Nở.....	\$40.00
33. Trần Nhân.....	\$30.00
34. Trần Vinh.....	\$30.00
35. Trần Diễm.....	\$30.00
36. Trần Ngọc.....	\$30.00
37. Gia đình Quảng Hồng	\$100.00
38. Bé Jenny Đan Anh.....	\$200.00
39. Mỹ Phụng	\$100.00
40. Võ Thị Tâm	\$25.00
41. Nguyễn Văn Duyệt.....	\$25.00
42. Nguyễn Thành Thái.....	\$25.00
43. Nguyễn Jasmine	\$25.00
44. Hamilton Đăng	\$25.00
45. Huỳnh Kim Huy Aden.....	\$25.00

SHARING THE DHARMA

Vietnamese Buddhist Nuns in the United States

Bhikkhunī Thích Nữ Giới Hương

NHÀ XUẤT BẢN HỒNG ĐỨC

Địa chỉ: 65 Tràng Thi - Quận Hoàn Kiếm - Hà Nội

Email: nhaxuatbanhongduc65@gmail.com

Điện thoại: 024.39260024 Fax: 024.39260031

Chịu trách nhiệm xuất bản

Giám đốc: BÙI VIỆT BẮC

Chịu trách nhiệm nội dung

Tổng biên tập: LÝ BÁ TOÀN

Biên tập: Phan Thị Ngọc Minh

Sửa bản in và trình bày: TKN Viên Quang

In 2.000 bản, khổ 20.5x29cm, tại Công ty TNHH TM-DV Hải Triều, TP.HCM số 3614-2020/CXBIPH/72 - 60/HĐ. Số QĐXB của NXB: 681/QĐ-NXBHĐ cấp ngày 01/10/2020. In xong và nộp lưu chiểu năm 2020. Mã số tiêu chuẩn sách quốc tế (ISBN) 978-604-302-775-4