

DI LẶC BUDDHA

I. BIOGRAPHY:

He was a Brahman. He was named Di Lặc with a last name A Dật Đa. His parents were Ba Bà Lợi.

II. THE MEANING OF HIS NAME:

A Dật Đa - Most compassionate; diligent in practicing religion

Di Lặc - He practiced the Wisdom Seal (Tam Muội) method in his past life and attained enlightenment in the past live.

In addition, his mother became benevolent and generous since the day he was conceived.

III. PAST LIVES:

In one of his past lives, he and Gautama Buddha engaged in the practice of enlightenment. Since he lacked self-perseverance he only became a Buddha to Be when Gautama actually became a Buddha. He will be the future Buddha when the time is right for him.

1. ***His Beliefs:*** His method of practice was Conciousness-only which he did not believe in the true existence of all things. He believed in the chain of causes and effects in which a thing existed.
2. ***His Wishes:*** He is now living in the highest level of the Heaven and teaches his methods to the beings who live there. Due to his pledge, anyone who lives there will advance and will not receive punishment. Until a person on earth reaches 80,000 years old, Di Lặc Buddha will then become a Buddha.
3. ***One Of His Appearances:*** He appeared in Minh Châu, China and played as a venerable Khê Tử. His physique was huge. He was always happy. He spoke differently. He could rest at almost any place that rest could be found. He usually begged for food to feed the children in town. People usually called him "Bố Đại Hòa Thượng". Before he passed away, he left behind a few words:

"I am truly Di Lặc.
My appearances are infinite
I usually appear as a common citizen.
Nobody actually sees the image of me".

VI. HIS IMAGES IN BUDDHISM:

His statue stands on the right side of Gautama Buddha. It has been mold with a huge body and a happy face with six kids hanging from his body. These kids are symbolic of the trouble caused by the six senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, thought). Since he had achieved Duy Thúc, he remained calm and happy.

V. VOWING HIS NAME MEANS:

Learn how to forgive

Learn how to stay happy

Try to be his follower.

SUPERIOR WISDOM BODHISATTVA

I. THE MEANINGS OF HIS NAME:

Văn Thù : Superior

Sư Lợi : The most virtuous, wisest person.

II. HIS ROLE:

He was a Buddha but in the past he existed as a venerable monk in helping Gautama Buddha by spreading Gautama Buddha's teachings. He usually stood on the left side of Gautama Buddha and faced Ngài Phổ Hiền. He was honored for having the most wisdom in the Bồ Tát class.

III. HIS WISDOM WAS THE GUIDANCE FOR ALL BUDDHAS:

All Buddhas achieve enlightenment through the practice of Wisdom. Therefore, his wisdom served as a symbol of a mother to all Buddhas.

IV. HIS FEATURES:

1. There were 5 special features on his head which represented the virtues of a Buddha.
2. His right hand held a sword which represented the slashing of sufferings.
3. His left hand held a lotus which represented Wisdom and annihilation of suffering.
4. He rode a green lion. Since the lion is the king of all animals, it signifies that his wisdom is above all.
5. He held a green lotus and rode a green lion. Green is the color of the East, where the sun rises, and emphasizes that his wisdom is as bright as the sun rays and will end all darkness.

V. HIS PAST LIFE:

In the Pháp Hoa sutra it had been written: Before Nhật Nguyệt Đăng Buddha achieved Enlightenment, Ngài Văn Thù Sư Lợi was a king with 8 children. He sought enlightenment and became a Buddha. After he passed away, his children sought for enlightenment with help

from Ngài Bồ Tát Diệu Quang and eventually achieved this goal. Therefore, Văn Thù Sư Lợi Bồ Tát was Gautama Buddha's teacher.

VI. ONE OF HIS MEMORABLE STORIES IN TEACHING THE FOLLOWERS WAS THE USE OF HIS SWORD WITH THE INTENTION OF HURTING THE BUDDHA.

During Gautama Buddha's years, there were 500 chiefs (A La Hán) who achieved the Power of Full Understanding of Life (Túc Mạng Thông). Knowing there were too many problems within themselves they surrendered to the problems. Ngài Văn Thù Sư Lợi knew their thoughts and confronted the Gautama Buddha with his sword and pretended to hurt the Buddha. The Gautama Buddha calmly said: "I have achieved the non-self, I don't see myself being hurt or anyone that can carry out such action." The 500 A La Hán then awakened and realized the method of Non-Self, the true cause of troubles. Therefore they achieved the Non Self Method.

VII. HIS IMAGES IN BUDDHISM:

- Look up to his Absolute Wisdom.
- Wisdom is needed of a Buddhist.
- Buddhism is a Wisdom religion.
- His Wisdom can be called "The Mother of All Buddhas."
- Wish for his help in the process of achieving wisdom.

BAO QUOC PAGODA

Bao Quoc Patriarchal Pagoda, with its original name Ham Long Son Thien Tho Tu, was founded by Most Venerable Phap Ham, with the honorable name Giac Phong Lao To, in the late 17th century. It was the celebrated Patriarch Lieu Quan of the Tao Dong sect who came to this pagoda for his religious lessons during his first visit to Hue in 1690. This monk died in 1714. His remains were finally laid at peace inside the stupa Nirvana together with the remains of the other patriarchs. There are at present two new stupas here dedicated to Most Venerable Tri Thu and Venerable Thanh Tri.

In 1747, Lord Nguyen Phuc Hoat enlarged the pagoda and recognized it as national pagoda with "bien ngach sac tu"*, the pagoda was renamed Bao Quoc. Most Venerable Te Nhan Vien Giac, one of Lieu quan best disciples, was officially appointed headmonk of the pagoda. This monk died in 1753 and the senior monk Hoa chat took his place to preside over the pagoda until 1766.

Then twenty two years later, the Tay Son Family's army turned the pagoda into an arsenal. The staff of monks as a result, was dispersed, the pagoda left in neglect for 20 years. In 1808, Queen Hieu Khuong, Mother of king Gia Long, had the pagoda restored renaming it, Thien Tho. Most Venerable Dao Minh Pho Tinh was appointed headmonk of the renewed pagoda. He was dharma successor to Most Venerable Dai Hue Chieu Nhien who came from Thien Lam Pagoda. Twenty nine disciples of this monk were venerable monks of high religious achievements, honoured with Buddhist names beginning with the word "Nhat". Of these monks, the most outstanding were Nhat Chon-Tu Quang Pagoda, Nhat Dac-Thien Hung Pagoda, Nhat Nguyen-Hue Lam Pagoda, Nhat Dinh-member of the staff at Thien Mu Pagoda, Nhat Niem-Bao Quoc Pagoda, Nhat The-Bao Lam Pagoda and Nhat xung- Thien Hoa Pagoda.

Most Venerable Dai Minh Pho Tinh died 8 years later. His tomb and stupa is now in the cemetery in front of Van Phuoc Pagoda. Most Venerable Tanh Thien Nhat Dinh succeeded him to take care of the pagoda for about 14 years.

In 1824, king Minh Mang paid a visit to the pagoda and gave an edict for its name to be changed back to Bao Quoc. Then, on the occasion of the 40th royal birthday anniversary in 1830, the king held a great worship ceremony here, and officially designated Most Venerable Nhat Dinh as royal-recognized monk of "quan Linh Huu".

As a result, Most Venerable Hai Thuan Dieu Giac, Nhat Dinh's best disciple, took over Bao Quoc Pagoda. He was also royal-recognized monk of Dieu De Pagoda. He died in 1895.

In 1858, king Tu Duc and his Mother, Tu Du, granted funds for reconstruction of the main hall, the back house, the two eastern and western lateral houses and the kitchen. The pagoda was once more reconstructed in 1868 with a grant of 700 "quan" from the throne. In 1873, the three-entrance gate dating from 1803 was restored. Further reconstruction was carried out in 1822 and 1890. In 1898, the Ngu Cong Duc House was erected.

After Most Venerable Dieu Gia's death, his disciples, Most Venerable Tam Quang, Tam Truyen and Tam Khoan successively took over. Then from 1928 to 1953 Most Venerable Phuoc Hau was in charge of the pagoda. He was dharma successor of Venerable Tam Truyen, one headmonk of Linh Quang Pagoda. This monk was both a dhyana master and a poet. It is regrettable that now, after so many changes all that remains of his works is merely a poem, as his last words imbued with Buddhist thoughts:

Buddhist Sutra are not few.

My learning cannot be said to be satisfactory or poor.

I have forgotten all, it seems, now looking back

*There only remains in my heart the word "Nhu"**.*

Together with the common tendency advocating enhancement of Buddhism, Bao Quoc Pagoda also turned over a new leaf itself.

In October 1953, the Buddhist School for beginners of the Association of Annam Buddhism which had temporarily been positioned at Van Phuoc Pagoda before, was officially established at Bao Quoc Pagoda. It was under the direction of a monk named Tri Do, along with the Tay Thien Buddhist School, for Central Vietnam, but also for the whole nation. In 1944, it was moved to "Dai Tong Lam Kim Son". Then in 1948, the Buddhist school at Tay Thien was transferred to Bao Quoc. The pagoda has been a training center for Buddhist monks ever since.

After Most Venerable Phuoc Hau's death, the Buddhist Clergy appointed a board of management for Bao Quoc Patriarchal Pagoda, consisting of Most Venerable Tri Thu, Mat Hien and Vinh Thua.

The contemporary history of the pagoda was closely linked with the Most Venerable Tri Thu's life who devoted efforts to disseminate Buddhism. As dharma successor of the senior monk named Vien Thanh, he set his heart on popularizing Buddha's teachings among the people and initiating them into the wonderful way taught by the Buddha. He was burdened with the various positions of President of Institute for dissemination of Buddhism, Director of Bao Quoc Buddhist School, headmonk of Ba La Mat Pagoda and Bao Quoc Pagoda and, at the same time, supervisor of Quang Huong Gia Lam Monastery in Sai Gon.

Worn out by his trying duties, he took ill and died later in early 1984.

* *"Bien ngach": horizontal panel with the name of the pagoda granted by the monarch.*

** *A Buddhist term referring to the ultimate non-existent nature of things.*

THUYỀN TÔN PAGODA

This great pagoda was founded by the patriarch Liễu Quán. In 1708, it was merely a small thatched pagoda temporarily built for his meditation. After his death, his tomb and stupa were built on the ground of the pagoda. The new pagoda was built approximately 500 meters behind his tomb in 1746 with the aids of the Head of Eunuchs Mai Van Hoan, who served in Lord Nguyễn Phước Hoạt's court, and of the believers in Trieu Phong District of Thuận Hóa Province and Quảng Ngãi District of Quang Nam Province at the time. The great-size bell was casted at this time, dating the 8th year of Cảnh Hưng reign.

The pagoda is located in Ngu Tay hamlet, An Cuu Village. To its right is the Thien Thai Mountain; hence its name is Thien Thai Thuyen Ton Pagoda. It is also called Thien Thai Noi Pagoda in order to distinguish it from another one with the same name, Thuyen Ton Ngoai Pagoda, in Duong Xuan Village.

Te Hiep Vien Minh, Te Hai Vien Giac, Te Man To Huan, and Te An Luu Quang, who were Lieu Quan's senior disciples, succeeded in taking charge of the pagoda after his death. These four disciples belonged to the 36th generation of the Lam Te sect. The Most Venerable Dai Hue Chieu Nhen and Dai Nghia Tri Hao were the next successors in taking care of the pagoda. The pagoda was first reconstructed during the Most Venerable Dai Hue's time. During the reign of Tay Son in late 18th century, the staff of monks had to be separated under his order therefore the pagoda was left unattended. However, the two Dharma masters, Dao Minh Pho Tinh and Dao Tam Trung Hau, kept up their efforts to preserve the pagoda.

In 1808, Master Pho Tinh was officially designated headmonk of Thien Tho Pagoda by Queen Hieu Khuong which then left the monk, Dao Tam Trung Hau, in charge of overlooking the Thuyen Ton Pagoda. At this time, the pagoda underwent a second reconstruction with the donation of Le Thi Ta. Masters Dao Tai So Tri, Tanh Thien, and Most Venerable Hai Nhuan, consecutively succeeded in taking charge of the pagoda until the end of the 19th century. Entering the early years of the 20th century, Master Tam Thien took on the responsibility of tending the Thuyen Ton Pagoda. As time passed by, the pagoda slowly deteriorated.

In 1937, while being the headmonk of Thanh Duyen Pagoda, the Most Venerable Trung Giac Nhen was also appointed headmonk of Thuyen Ton Pagoda. He was the disciple of the Most Venerable Tam Tinh. Most Venerable Trung Thuy Giac Nhen put all his effort into restoring the pagoda with an overall reconstruction plan for the main hall, the front hall, and the side rooms, giving the pagoda its shape today.

During his 40 years at Thuyen Ton Pagoda, Most Venerable Trung Thuy Giac Nhen made several contributions, such as: enlightening members of the staff and fellow citizens, restoring discipline and order in the pagoda, improving its design, and also participated in taking part in the reorganization of Buddhist branches. In 1973, he took over the position of Supreme Monk of The United Buddhist Congregation of Vietnam. He died in 1979 at the age of 102 and his stupa was erected in the pagoda's garden.

To this day, Thuyen Ton Pagoda still preserves its ancient architectural features as well as the traditional system of worshipping. Its main hall is divided into three sections. In the middle section, the statues of the three Buddhas of the Past, Present, and Future are set at the highest level. The main statue of Shakyamuni

Buddha is placed in front of those statues. Finally, the foremost statues of the Three Bodhisattvas, Samantabhadra, Cundi, and Manjusri, are put at a lower level from that of the Shakyamuni Buddha. The left section is dedicated to the three statues of Sariputta, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and Kasyapa. The right altar is dedicated to Kshitigarbha.

There are 2 subordinate altars to the left and right of the main hall, each with 5 statues of the Ten Kings of Hell. Then in front of the two subordinate altars are two smaller ones. The left has the statue of Quan Thanh and the right has the statues of the Spirit of the Earth, Spirit of the Kitchen, Emissary Giam Trai, and the Spirit of Fire. The back of the main hall is used for worshipping all of the late masters of the pagoda as well as the deceased people who contributed considerably to the pagoda's welfare.

The famous poet Nguyen Du, who served as a courtier for the Nguyen's Dynasty, paid a visit to the pagoda. From the sight of the pagoda half hidden behind the Autumn leaves, an elderly man seemingly standing among the white clouds, and the ancient great-sized bell symbolizing Canh Hung's reign, Nguyen Du began to recall such memories of his past. This in turn gave him the inspiration to compose this famous poem:

*East of the royal citadel stands the pagoda on Thien Thai Mountain.
The paths seems harder with the river between.
The ancient form is concealed in the yellow leaves of Autumn.
White clouds obscure the shape of the monk from the former dynasty.
How I regret to be bound in ties of life at an advanced age,
Not with Nature can I keep my promise.
The ancient bell still remains there the other year when I came,
Reminding me about my old dear memories.*

Presently, Most Venerable Thich Thien Sieu is the headmonk of the Thuyen Ton Pagoda and has been improving the pagoda to uphold its reputation of Lieu Quan's Meditation branch.

VIEN GIAC TEMPLE

Due to the facility's need to accommodate the increasing number of Buddhist Vietnamese in Oklahoma City, a Buddhist monk named Thích Giác Sơn and several other Buddhists began to look for a new facility in August, 1981. After they received unconditional resale from a Vietnamese Buddhist, Mr. La Long Phát, in October 4, 1981, they began to remodel a burned-down house into a main hall chamber. They named it Viên Giác Temple.

On February 22, 1982, Thầy Thích Giác Sơn left the Temple to continue his Buddhist activities in another place. A Board of Directors was temporarily organized to manage the unfinished projects.

On February 25, 1982, Oklahoma City issued a permit for the Temple's activities. The post office, at the same time, granted a permit for reducing the mailing cost.

On May 2, 1982, the main hall was completed and the An Vị Phật ceremony was organized under the guidance of the Venerables Thích Pháp Nhân and Vjeckananda (a Thái Buddhist monk). Since that time the Temple has been open for service to all local Buddhists on Sundays.

On August 21, 1982, a major Buddhist occasion named Vu Lan (Veska) and a Praying ceremony were first held at the Temple. The ceremony was led by Venerable Thích Mãn Giác, President of The Buddhist Congregation in The United States, and three other Buddhist monks: Thích Minh Đạo, Thích Minh Châu and Thích Thiện Huệ.

September 18, 1982, due to a request from the Board of Directors, Venerable Thích Tịnh Từ accepted the position, a spiritual leader until the arrival of Venerable Thích Trí Hòa. Venerable Thích Tịnh Từ stayed at this Temple for three months.

March 23, 1983, Venerable Thích Trí Hòa arrived from West Germany; under the direction of Venerable Thích Mãn Giác a ceremony to honor him as a resident monk of the Temple was solemnly held on May 8, 1983.

The number of members increased weekly; therefore, during the celebration of Buddha's birthday held on May of 1983 (2530 of Buddhist calendar), a Cấp Cô Độc II fund raising program was established to build a bigger Service hall and facilities at a new location. It was bought for \$50,000.00 for 7.5 acres. (Lễ Động Đất 3/6/90). A ground-breaking ceremony was held on September 16, 1990, under the direction of Venerable Thích Mãn Giác. And the constructions of these facilities began on January 4, 1991 and finished on June 31, 1992 by two companies HTB and Pendulum. The cost for these constructions was \$400,000.00. The new facilities were opened for all Buddhists on July 1992.

Viên Giác Temple located on 5101 Northeast 36th, about 5 miles to Northeast from downtown. Since the opening, many well known Buddhist monks in The United State and other countries have come to the Temple to teach Buddhism. Viên Giác Temple is also a very convenient place where many training camps and conferences of the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association at central region were held.

There is a meditation program opened for all Buddhist on a bi-monthly basis.

Viên Giác Temple is a very special facility of the Vietnamese Buddhist in the United States.

THE LAW OF CAUSALITY

I. DEFINITION:

Cause: Anything that is capable of producing/ happening/ forming. It's the main factor of the result.
Supporting Factor / constituent: Any factor that contributes to the cause to produce result.

II. DEFINITION OF THE LAW OF CAUSALITY:

Everything happening or created or formed result from the interaction between the cause and supporting factors. Examples:

1. A table is composed of wood (main cause) and labor to build it (supporting factors / components).
2. A temple is composed of bricks, cement, wood, nails, etc..., (main causes) and labor to build it (supporting factors/ components).

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAW OF CAUSALITY:

1. All existence in the Universe can be explained in terms of the Law of Causality.
2. All existence is formed differently due to different causes and supporting factors. The Law of Causality engages in every single element being formed.
3. The Law of Causality is a true principle. Buddha was just a person who cited it.

IV. THE APPLICATION OF THE LAW OF CAUSALITY IN DAILY LIFE:

1. The Law of Causality helps one understand every existence depending upon the main cause and supporting factors. In the absence of one or the other, that existence will be changed accordingly; therefore one should not feel too pampered over any existence. One should neither be too happy nor too sad when having or losing such existence. One should not base affections on the temporary existence of anything.
2. The Law of Causality helps one understand that different causes and different supporting factors can yield different results. One should neither be too happy nor too sad when one encounters it. Practicing the Law of Causality will eliminate the sadness in one's life.
3. Practicing the Law of Causality will help one feel pleased and delighted for what one is presently experiencing. Do not follow the material influence of the society which may bring misery to one's life.

4. The Law of Causality helps one understand that nothing exists without the correlation between cause and supporting factors. Therefore, all existences result from the correlation between cause and constituents. God does not create them.
5. The Law of Causality helps one understand that one's future is in one's hands. How one chooses one's destination depends upon one's daily activities.

V. CONCLUSION:

The correlation between different causes and factors can yield different results. The existence of any form depends upon the constant changing of interactions between causes and constituents; nothing last forever. A full understanding and practicing of the Law of Causality will help one stays happy in one's life.

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT

I. DEFINITION:

Cause: Anything that generates a result

Effect: Anything produced by a cause.

II. DEFINITION OF THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:

The Law of Cause and Effect is an axiom which cites the relationship between an action and its corresponding result. An effect cannot be produced without cause.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:

1. ***Cause and Effect is a universal law:*** Buddha did not invent the Law of Cause and Effect; however, He was the person who fully understood the relationship between cause and effect. Buddha taught this law based upon real-life experience.
2. ***The Law of Cause and Effect controls all entities:*** Every existence varies due to different causes. The Law of Cause and Effect governs all existence. This Law is impartial, meaning that it takes no sides. No one can deny or change the inevitable Law of Cause and Effect.
3. ***Cause and Effect is a complex law:*** The Law of Cause and Effect is not easy to understand. The close connections and domino-relationships between cause and effect are what make the law difficult to understand. Anyone who uses simple knowledge to make a judgement on the Law of Cause and Effect usually ends up with a misconception of what the Law really is.

IV. THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:

Buddha used this Law to explain the association between cause and effect. This close collaboration is very hard to perceive because of its complexity.

1. ***A cause by itself can not generate an effect:*** All existence on the universe is composed of cause and other contributed factors to form an effect. A cause by itself can not form an effect. Example: A wheat grain itself can not grow if it lacks of other supporting factors (sun, water, etc.).
2. ***It is what it is:*** Whatever the characteristics of the cause are, its effect will have the corresponding characteristics. For example, a guitar learner will only know how to play guitar and will not know how to play the drums.

3. ***Cause and effect are interrelated:*** The present cause itself is generated from the effect the previous causes. The effect itself can be the cause for future effect. For example: a college degree is the result (effect) of many years in school (cause) and the degree brings about employment or advanced degree.

V. THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF CAUSE AND EFFECT THROUGH TIME:

1. ***Cause and Effect happening at the same time:*** Cause and effect follow each other, meaning that an effect is immediately resulted from the cause. For example, sound is produced after the bell is rung. The effect immediately follows the cause; there is no waiting for the effect to be produced.
2. ***Cause and Effect in same life cycle:*** The cause that is created in this lifetime will have an effect in this lifetime. For example, wheat cultivation requires only about six months to yield wheat grains.
3. ***Cause and Effect in two consecutive lives:*** The effect in this life is brought about by the cause from previous life. The cause in this life will effect the next life. This means that there is a waiting period for the effect to take place. For example, if one make meaningful contribution in this life, one will be successful in one's next life.
4. ***Cause and Effect resulted within many lives to come:*** The cause that is created in one of the past lives is taking the effect in this life. The cause that is created in this life will take effect in many of the subsequent (not preferring to the next life time but to those after) lives to come. For example, to be free from the cycle of reincarnation it takes many life times of practicing Buddhism.

VI. SEVERAL EXAMPLES OF THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:

1. ***Cause and effect in nature :*** A forest is the result (effect) from many trees (cause).
2. ***Cause and effect within oneself:*** A physically fit body (effect) is the result of formed tissues (cause).
3. ***Cause and effect within one's mind:*** The personality, the thoughts are influenced by the Law of Cause and Effect. Evil actions eventually lead to immoral thinking. Having high morals will make a person well mannered. The knowledge will expand due to studying diligently.

VII. THE APPLICATIONS OF THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT:

1. ***The Law of Cause and Effect helps us understand the truth:*** Once we understood what the Law of Cause and Effect is all about, we are then capable of understanding the characteristics of all matters correctly, not absurdly.

2. ***Reject the idea that "God creates everything":*** Based on the Law of Cause and Effect, Buddhism denies the idea that God created the universe, and is opposed to the idea of punishment and reward from God. A Buddhist understanding The Law of Cause and Effect should not be superstitious and should not depend on the authority of others.
3. ***A person who understands the Law of Cause and Effect believes and trust in himself:*** Knowing that a person's life depends upon his own actions and decisions, he is his own king in making decisions that affect his own life in the present time.
4. ***A person who understands the Law of Cause and Effect will not be pessimistic and reproached:*** Knowing the effect is germinated from the cause that we created, a person with an understanding of the Law of Cause and Effect should not be discouraged and blamed himself or others for the adversity. Instead he should improve his behavior in order to attain good results.
5. ***A person who understands the Law of Cause and Effect should create good effects and think of the results before committing actions:*** We know that how we are today is the result from past actions. Therefore, to have good results, we need to have perseverance in committing actions that benefit not only ourselves but also other beings. These actions need to be in compliance with Buddha's teachings.

VIII. CONCLUSION:

The Law of Cause and Effect is a natural theory. Based on it, we understand the following: Anything one received, either good or bad in the present life, is the results from the past lives. One is in control of oneself. No one has any rights to interfere with the results that one receives. The Law of Cause and Effect helps one to have faith in whatever one does. Practicing the Law of Cause and Effect in one's daily life will help one to eliminate pessimission and misfortunes in one's life. The Law of Cause and Effect in Buddhism provides courage, endurance, and understanding about the true characteristic of existence which opens up the road to enlightenment for all beings.

THE RE-BIRTH

I. FOREWORDS:

Where do people come from? What are their missions? Where will they end? These questions are often asked by people. Many religions and societies sought answers to these questions. Different religions and societies had different answers to these questions, yet none of the answers satisfied human curiosities. Human relations still play an important role in human's mind. Buddhism carefully explains the questions above using the Law of Reincarnation and also clearly defines human position with respect to all other beings in the universe.

II. MISCONCEPTION ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONSHIP:

Four misconception about human relationship:

1. ***Life is short:*** Belief that humans only exist in the present life, live for a lifespan, and everything will disappear after death.
2. ***Eternity:*** Belief that the physical form will deteriorate and there is an everlasting spirit. The spirit of a person will be either in the Heaven or Hell depending on the actions of that person committed in one life.
3. ***No relationship between lives:*** Belief that there is a life after death, yet there is no relationship between the previous life and the next.
4. ***Upward-reincarnation:*** Belief that everything reincarnates upward.

III. DEFINITION OF RE-BIRTH:

It's the evolution composed of six eras in which beings naturally evolve.

IV. THE RE-BIRTH OF EVERY EXISTENCE:

The Law of Reincarnation is a law that applies to all existences.

1. ***Ecology:*** For example: oranges, the orange tree germinates from the seed and then produces oranges. The same process repeats itself.
2. ***Rain:*** Rain is the result of the evaporation of water and the encounter with cold air; together they form clouds; the clouds are melted when encountered with hot air.

3. **Heat:** Heat is hidden in the trees, it is not recognizable by sight, but it can only be seen when friction takes place. The trees breathe CO2 for heat restoration.

V. THE CAUSE OF RE-BIRTH:

The re-birth of the human is based on the following factors:

1. **Strength of the action:** Humans cause action through their body, speech, thought. These karmas eventually accumulate and become a major factor which leads to the next life of a person. This factor keeps building through life cycles, therefore humans can hardly escape the life cycle. There are 4 kinds of karma that usually guide the human loop through the life cycle.
 - a. Accumulation of Karma: Karma committed in many former births.
 - b. Habits Karma: Karma created bases upon habits and tradition.
 - c. Most Dominate Karma: This Karma has stronger effect than the previous two.
 - d. New Ending of Life Karma: Karma created when a person approaches death.
2. **Life and Desire:** Nobody wants to die, therefore they will try to do anything to save themselves from death. In addition, their mind are not fully satisfied with desires and this will force a person to reincarnate to satisfy his/her desires.
3. **Ignorance:** We see ourselves as permanent, and have misconceptions about things. Therefore, we, as humans are willing to do anything for ourselves without consideration of the end-effect. This is why humans can not escape the cycle of re-birth.

VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF RE-BIRTH:

Depending on one's karma in the past, it decides where one ends up in the next life. If one's karma in the past was good then one will end up in a happy situation or otherwise one will end up with a life of difficulty.

VII. FACTS ABOUT RE-BIRTH:

1. ***We can be at a different place in the reincarnation cycle at any moment depending on our thought:*** If we are thinking about good deeds then we are on the bright side but if we are thinking about wrong-deeds then we are on the dark side.
2. ***There are six different levels of re-birth cycle can be seen in this world:*** The prison, punishment, war, etc..., are the scenes that represent Hell.
3. ***Prodigies:*** Pascal famous in astronomy at the age of eight. Bạch Cư Di knew how to make poems at the age of five. These evidences did not occur by coincidence, but they are the karmas from many former births.

4. ***Stories of many former births:*** There are stories of former births told by Buddha, the Bhoddisatta, and a few came from people who remembered about their past lives.
5. ***Relationship among people:*** There are occasions where one can easily make an acquaintance with a new person who one has not meet previous. However, there are times that one hates a person when one sees him/her one has never met. These occurrences prove there are connections in which two people have met in a past life and there is a like or dislike between the two. Therefore, in this life there is a strong effect from the past acquaintances.

VIII. CONCLUSION:

Based on The Law of Reincarnation, Buddha has taught:

1. The main origin of suffering is ignorance. Because of ignorance, many bad karmas had been created and these lead human to the cycle of reincarnation.
2. People evolve in the re-birth cycle, and depending upon their actions they will know where they will end up. The value of a person depends on his/her thought at any moment.
3. Because humans evolve in the re-birth cycle, everyone can be a relative of the other.

Buddhism introduces the Law of Reincarnation to help humans escape the cycle of reincarnation.

TEN GOOD DEEDS (TEN VIRTUOUS ACTS)

I. DEFINITION:

The ten good deeds are the ten virtuous acts caused by the body (Body Karma), the speech (Speech Karma), and the mind (Mental Karma) benefiting oneself and others in the present as well as in the future. These virtuous acts are the foundation to becoming a good, beneficial person and are the first steps towards enlightenment.

II. THE TEN VIRTUOUS ACTS HAVE THREE MAIN PARTS:

1. ***Body Karma:*** The actions concerning or in connection with the body include these: Not killing, even the tiniest creature which crawls at one's feet, not stealing, and not committing any improper sexual acts.
2. ***Oral Karma:*** The good spoken words consist of: Do not be lie, do not say harmful things, do not distort the truth, and do not set someone against someone else.
3. ***Mental Karma:*** The right, conscious thoughts consist of: Do not be greedy, do not be angry, do not be ignorant.

III. THE BENEFITS OF PRACTICING THE TEN VIRTUOUS ACTS:

When practicing the ten virtuous acts, the benefits gained are as follows: One will not endure much illness, will enjoy longevity, have no nightmares, and will exterminate all past hatreds and animosities. Such person would be born into "cõi trời" after death, would enjoy all good things in life, gain respect from everyone, not be victimized by tricksters, and will not be frightened by anything or anyone. In practicing these good deeds, one matures spiritually to where one's mind is purified and wisdom is expanded to all levels. Due to one's integrity one will make good friends and people will listen to one. Anything one wishes will come true. Such person will have attractive physical features. One will not experience disasters. By practicing these ten virtuous acts with all sincerity and honesty, one is a step closer to attaining enlightenment.

IV. THE POWER OF THE TEN VIRTUOUS ACTS:

1. ***Self-improvement:*** The personality and the intellect of a person are controlled by the karmas. Practicing the ten virtuous acts will completely improve one's intelligence, personality behaviors, and characters. For example, when one does not kill but instead pardon the living being, one's nature will become compassionate and wisdom is broadened.

2. ***Changes in Situation:*** Practicing these ten virtuous acts can change completely all bad situations. For example, if people do not hold grudges or stay angry at one another or anything, but instead always patiently practice good deeds, the environment around them will be peaceful. Thus, wars would not be started and people will not be killed. Therefore, the world is joyous, people live in harmony, and society is filled with love and security.
3. ***Re-birth Will Be in "Coi Troi":*** When these ten virtuous acts are practice frequently, a person will be born into "coi troi" where it is more peaceful and happier than life on earth. One will also enjoy such things as longevity, pure life, and etc...
4. ***The Basics to Reach Enlightenment:*** In the past, all Buddhas and future Buddhas, who had transcended the reincarnation cycle, practiced and used the ten virtuous acts as the foundation of their actions. These acts have the power to prevent evil actions or thoughts and to suppress any wrong doings. These acts also have the power to purify the three karmas. When the three karmas are purified, the reincarnation cycle will end and enlightenment is reached.

V. CONCLUSION:

The Principle of the ten virtuous acts introduces clearly and realistically the good deeds one needs to follow and practice. These principles point out that only actions--not words of the mouth --have value. These principles help a person improve his life and the lives of all beings. Therefore, the morality is increased and the society will be beautiful. Hence, a true Buddhist needs to start practicing in accordance with the principles of the ten virtuous acts to realize the true advantages of Buddhism.

THE SUMMER RETREAT

I. FOREWORD:

The summer retreat is a method for Buddhist monks to practice during the three months in the summer. During this period, the Sangha gather at a pagoda or in an undisturbed forest to study Buddhism in solitude.

II. REASONS TO PRACTICE THE SUMMER RETREAT:

1. Summer is a rainy season in India. It is also a time when many different kinds of insects give birth. Therefore, to avoid stepping on the insects, the Buddhist preachers stay inside throughout these summer months.
2. Besides preaching the religion, Buddhist monks must also practice Buddhism themselves. Especially when practicing meditation, Buddhist monks need a quiet place in order to fully achieve this goal. The Buddhist monks spend 9 months out of a year travelling to different places propagating and preaching Buddhism, and spend the other three months concentrating only on their studies.
3. The summer retreat provides an occasion for the Sangha to join at a quiet place to practice together and review their actions and behavior within the Buddhist regulations. It is a time of self-correction.

III. THE MEANINGS AND BENEFITS OF THE SUMMER RETREAT:

1. ***Respect the lives of all beings:*** Everyone presently has only one life; therefore, one should not violate others' right to live (even that of a bacteria). Buddha sets up the Peaceful-Summer-Religious Life session to allow His followers to be aware of all beings and not overlook the chances of stepping on insects during the summer season.
2. ***Love His disciples:*** In loving His disciples, the Buddha helps them build up good deeds and wisdom by encouraging them to take advantage of the summer retreat to purely concentrate on their studies and practices.
3. ***Apply and Maintain the Precepts:*** Practicing Buddhism is the best way to truly understand and attain the enlightenment. Throughout the summer retreat, the Shangas strictly obey the precepts. Every behavior and action carried out must be in accordance to Buddha's teachings.

IV. THE SUMMER RETREAT: AN OCCASION FOR THE BUDDHIST MONKS TO EARN THEIR RELIGIOUS AGE:

A person gains another "life" age on his birthday, while all Buddhist monks earn another "religious" age during the summer retreat. A Buddhist monk who has not attended any summer retreat is considered religiously ageless. Anyone who attends a summer retreat will earn one religious year of age, and so on. On the Veska day of every year (July 15th on Lunar calendar), the monks are determined to earn their religious age. Whoever attended many summer retreat will be presented the highest rank entitled as the Master of Dharma in the Shangas, and greatly respected by all. He also gains the right to accept disciples.

V. CONCLUSION:

According to Buddha's teachings, the Buddhist monk should live in the summer retreat every year. Even at the age of sixty, he still has to do so. This shows that Buddha greatly emphasizes the importance of a purified life and the maintaining of the precepts of His disciples.

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

(5 SKANDHAS)

I. WHAT MAKES A HUMAN BEING?

There are many angles to look while attempting to answer this question:

1. Human being is comprised of 5 skandhas or aggregates or heaps.
2. Human being is comprised of 6 components: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.
3. Human being is comprised of 4 elements: earth, water, wind/breath, fire
4. Human being comes from 12 causes.
5. Human being is comprised of lungs, heart, nervous system, kidneys, stomach, and blood.

Our focus of this lesson is to answer the previous question using the first angle.

II. WHAT ARE THE FIVE AGGREGATES?

The 5 skandhas/aggregates are: form, feelings, perception, mental formation, and consciousness.

1. **FORM:** This is the physical component or the body. Form consists of 4 elements:
 - a. Earth: hard/solid components such as flesh, bone, teeth, hair ...
 - b. Water: liquid components such as sweat, tear, blood, saliva ...
 - c. Wind: breath, air, gas
 - d. Fire: the body heat or temperature.
2. **FEELINGS:** these are feelings or sensations we have while in contact with the world: pain, itch, joy, sadness... There are 3 kinds: feelings of happiness, feelings of suffering, and feelings of neither happiness nor suffering.
3. **PERCEPTION:** This is an ability to associate the current sensations with past experiences which is accompanied by feelings of happiness or sufferings.
4. **MENTAL FORMATION:** these are intentions of the body, mouth (words), and mind. Whether actions are taken or words spoken, mental formation may already be formed.
5. **CONSCIOUSNESS:** this is the ability to acknowledge the sensations behind our 6 senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Consciousness turns what we look at into what we see; what we listen to into what we hear

Human being comprises of 5 skandhas. These 5 are not independent but are interdependent on each other. Their coexistence gives rise to the human experience: praise makes us happy, disapproval makes us sad.

The 5 skandhas combine then separate then combine in unpredictable ways and give us seas of sensations which are endless. What we call "*the human being*" or "*individuality*" or "*self*" is actually a temporary instance of these 5 skandhas; it is being different from the immediately previous one and also the next one.

(The whole process of these psycho-physical phenomena which are constantly becoming and passing away, is at times called, in conventional terms, the self or attā by the Buddha; but it is a process and not an identity that is thus termed).

III. WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE 5 SKANDHAS:

1. Mankind consists of 5 skandhas. Everyone is alike in physical characteristic which go through cycle: birth, aging, sickness, death and in mental characteristics with love, joy, fear, suffering and hold on to life, fear death. Knowing this, we should learn to practice compassion and forgiveness: love people as we love our family. Don't do unto others what we don't want done to ourselves.
2. The 5 skandha life is impermanent. But we don't have to be depressed about life. On the contrary, we should persevere with our training in compassion and wisdom to help both ourselves and others to live each moment fully and with complete awareness. This makes us deserve to be disciples of the Buddha.
3. The Buddha said: When the 5 skandhas combine, suffering exists. By preventing the skandhas from combining we reduce sufferings and enjoy more peace. For example we should control our perceptions so as not to relive past sufferings.
4. When filled with feelings of happiness or sufferings, we should act responsibly and refrain from making promises or statements which cause sufferings for ourselves or others.
5. Practice meditation and breathing exercise and apply control to reactions to stimulus.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are the 5 skandhas/aggregates?
2. Define: 5 skandhas, form, feelings, perception, mental formation, consciousness; 6 components: eyes/sight, ear/hearing, nose/smelling, tongue/taste, body, mind.
3. Explain: "eyes are sea of man, ears are seas of man ...whoever reaches the other shore of the "6 seas of suffering" is called the man of highness
4. The lessons learned from the 5 skandhas.
5. Explain: "The 5 skandhas are empty of a separate self".

THE HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN VIETNAM FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE LY DYNASTY

I. THE FIRST ERA OF BUDDHISM IN VIETNAM:

1. ***The paths that Buddhism entered Vietnam:*** Buddhism was originated in India (Ấn Độ) and then spread to neighbor countries by two paths: land and sea. By land, Buddhism entered to the mid-Asian countries such as Tibet (Tây Tạng), Mongolia (Mông Cổ), China (Trung Hoa). From China, it spread to Korea (Cao Ly), Japan (Nhật Bản) and finally Vietnam. From Sir Lanka, Buddhism entered to Malaysia (Mã Lai), Indonesia (Nam Dương) then Vietnam by the sea path.
2. ***The cultural influence on Vietnam due to its geographical location:*** Vietnam lies between India and China; therefore, it was influenced by the cultures of these two countries. On the historical aspect, Vietnam was ruled by the Chinese at the time; therefore, Vietnam was more influenced by the Chinese civilization.
3. ***The introduction period of Buddhism:*** The following historical documents showed the Beginning Era of Buddhism:
 - a. In the biographies which were written by Vietnamese Buddhist monks in 13th and 14th centuries: "During the Han dynasty (Chinese) in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, several famous Buddhist monks came to introduce Buddhism in North Vietnam using sea and land routes. The Venerables Ma-Ha-Kỳ-Vực (Marijivaka), Khương-Tăng-Hội (K'and Seng Houci), Mâu Bác (Méou Pô), and The Venerable Chi-Cương-Lương.
 - b. According to the lectures of Đàm Thuýên: During the reign of King Cao Tổ of Tùy Dynasty (Chinese), 20 Buddhist towers were built, and more than 500 Buddhist monks practiced and preached Buddhism in Vietnam. At the same time, 15 sets of sutras were translated.
 - c. According to the documents of Pháp Vũ Thích Lục: In the 3rd century, a man named Kaudra from India came to Vietnam at the same time as the Venerable Ma-Ha-Kỳ-Vực to preach Buddhism.
 - d. By the historical sources mentioned above, we understand that: Buddhism entered in Vietnam during the Han Dynasty, at the end of 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century. The first Buddhist preachers in Vietnam were the Venerables: Ma-Ha-Kỳ-Vực, Khương-Tăng-Hội, Chi-Cương-Lương and Mâu-Bác. Among these preachers, only Mâu-Bác was Chinese, the others were Indians. The Venerable Mâu-Bác was the first to preach Buddhism in Giao Châu Province (North Vietnam), 189 A.D. Therefore, we can conclude that Buddhism entered Vietnam at the end of the 2nd century.
4. ***Buddhist branches entering Vietnam:*** The most favored branch at the time was Thuyền Tôn Branch (emphasizing meditation). This was the first branch to enter Vietnam by The Venerable

Tỳ-Ni-Đa-Lưu-Chi (Vinitaruci) in 580 A.D. He was the first ancestor, and it was succeeded by Venerable Pháp Hiền.

During the Duong's dynasty (820 A.D.), The Venerable Vô-Ngôn-Thông came to Vietnam from China to preach Buddhism and formed a second meditation branch. Later, other branches such as Thảo-Đường, Tào-Động, Lâm-Tế v.v. consecutively entered Vietnam. However, the Thuyền Tôn branch had the most influence on the people.

II. THE REVOLUTION OF BUDDHISM:

1. ***During the Last Ly-Nam-De's Dynasty (571-602) and The third Chinese dominations (602-939):*** Although Buddhism had been practiced in Vietnam for more than 300 years (189-548) from the time it first entered to the beginning of Lý-Nam-Đế Dynasty, the religion was still in its embryonical period, not yet well-known. Buddhism started to gain its popularity in the last Ly-Nam-De's ruling and the beginning of the third Chinese domination. At this time, The Venerable Ty-Ni-Da-Luu-Chi from China (580), brought in the Thuyền Tôn branch, which was most favored by the Vietnamese people, and Buddhism was widely spread throughout the country. Note that first two groups of Buddhist preachers were Chinese; whereas the third group consisted of all 6 Vietnamese preachers. Four of them were from Giao-Chau Province: Vân-Ký Thuyền sư, Mộc-Xoa-Đề-Bà, Khuy-Sung Pháp sư and Huệ-Diệm Pháp sư, and the other two were from Ai-Chau province: Trí-Hành Thuyền sư and Đại-Thặng-Đặng Thuyền sư.
2. ***Buddhism During Dinh's Dynasty (968-980) and First Le's Dynasty (980-1009):*** During Dinh dynasty, Buddhism became a major religion. Most government affairs were guided by Buddhist monks; therefore, Buddhism was easily publicized even though Taoism (Lão giáo) and Confucianism (Nho Giáo) had been practiced long before it. In the National Board of Affairs, The Venerable Ngô-Chân-Luu held a position as National Advisor, and Venerable Trương-Ma-Ni and Dharma Master Đặng-Huyền-Quang held other important positions.

When Dinh dynasty ended, the first Le (Lê Đại Hành) Dynasty took over the ruling and fought against the invasion of Tong (980).

In this period, Buddhist monks were in favor, and King Lê-Đại-Hành frequently invited the highly honored monks to the his palace for advice and to discuss ways of Buddhism preachings.

Note that when Vietnam and China (Tong dynasty) had signed the Peace Treaty, King Lê-Đại-Hành sent ministers to China requesting for Buddhist sutras such as "Đại Tạng" and "Cửu Kinh" for followers. This was a first request of Buddhist sutras in Vietnam.

3. ***Buddhism During The Ly Dynasty (1010-1225):***
 - a. ***Lý-Thái-Tổ*** (1010-1028) - His true name was Lý-Công-Uẩn, who was adopted by a Buddhist monk named Lý-Khánh-Vân. As a child, he lived at the Cổ-Tháp Pagoda and learned from the teachings of The Venerable Vạn-Hạnh Thuyền sư. After the death of King Lê-Ngọa-Triều, Lý-Thái-Tổ inherited the throne and named his term as "Thuận Thiên", and lived at Thăng-Long citadel (Hà-Nội today). Lý-Thái-Tổ was a true Buddhist, therefore, during his

reign, he emphasized the spreading of Buddhism. He built many temples and strongly supported monks in their studies and practices. One remarkable note was that in his 9th year (1019), he sent several ministers to China to request for Buddhist sutras.

This dynasty was described as Vietnam's most peaceful period. Many well known Buddhist monks such as Vạn-Hạnh Thuyền sư, Đa-Bảo Thuyền sư, and Sùng-Phạm Thuyền sư were highly respected by the King and citizens; therefore, Buddhism was easily and quickly spread. These monks studied and practiced Buddhism from the two branches of Meditation: Tỳ-Ni-Đa-Lưu-Chi and Vô-Ngôn-Thông.

- b. Lý-Thái-Tôn (1028-1054) - Lý-Thái-Tôn was the successor of Lý-Thái-Tổ. He named his term as "Thuận Thành". He was also a devoted Buddhist. After defeating the Chiêm's invasion at Hoan-Châu province (Nghệ-An today), he built 95 Buddhist temples and during the opening ceremony of the temples, he proclaimed a one year tax-free bill for all citizens throughout the country.

In 1034, he renamed his term as "Thông Thụy". In this period, the Chinese (Tong dynasty) granted major volumes of Buddhist sutras (Đại Tạng Kinh), which were carried to Vietnam by the Chinese messengers. This was a favorable occasion for Buddhism in Vietnam. And it was also an honor to the Ly's dynasty at that time.

In this Dynasty, many well known Buddhist monks such as Huệ-Sinh Thuyền sư, Định-Hương elderly and Thuyền-Lão Thuyền sư had made valuable contributions in spreading Buddhism.

- b. Lý-Thánh-Tôn (1054-1072) - Lý-Thánh-Tôn was the successor of Lý-Thái-Tôn. In his reign, he changed the name of the country from Giao-Châu to Đại-Việt (which is known as Vietnam today) and named his term as "Long Thụy Thái Bình". He was also a devoted Buddhist. In his fifth year of ruling, he built several Buddhist temples and towers and molded a 12 thousand kilogram brass bell at Bả-Thiên village in Hà-Nội Province. This bell is still existing today.

In 1069, a branch of Meditation was brought into Vietnam from China by Venerable Thảo-Đường, a disciple of Tuyết-Đậu-Minh-Giác. Thereafter, King Lý-Thánh-Tôn learned from his teachings and became the first disciple of this branch of Meditation. Thảo-Đường was a third branch of meditation.

- c. Lý-Nhân-Tôn (1072-1127) - Lý-Nhân-Tôn was the successor of Lý-Thánh-Tôn. Even though he was reigned such a young age, he was very intelligent and brave. Being impressed with Buddhism, he set aside from ruling, and spent most of his leisure time on spreading Buddhism. During this dynasty, there were many outstanding Buddhist monks such as Viên-Chiếu Thuyền sư who had written several valuable books called "Được Sư Thập Nhị Nguyên Văn", "Tân Viên Giác Kinh", etc... Whereas, Ngô-Ấn Thuyền sư concentrated on preaching the Buddha's Teachings. Therefore, Buddhism at this time was widely spread and mostly honor by the citizens.

- d. Lý-Thần-Tôn (1128-1138), Lý-Anh-Tôn (1138-1175), Lý-Cao-Tôn (1176-1210) and Lý-Huê-Tôn (1211-1225): During these four dynasties, Buddhism remained popular, but nothing was notable. In each of the first three dynasties there were several well known Buddhist monks such as Minh-Không and Thông-Biện Thuyền sư in Lý-Thần-Tôn's reign, Bảo-Giám and Viên-Thông Thuyền sư in Lý-Anh-Tôn's reign, and Trương-Tam-Tạng in Lý-Cao-Tôn's reign. But during Lý-Huê-Tôn's reign, the country was in a state of declining, the kingdom was corrupted, and the citizens were living in an unsafe environment. Because of these corruptions, the King was very discouraged; therefore, during his 14th year, he passed down the throne to his daughter, Lý-Chiêu-Hoàng, who was known as Chúa-Phật-Kim princess, and then left the palace to become a Buddhist monk at Chân-Giáo Pagoda. He named himself as Huệ-Quang Đại sư.

In summary, Buddhism was the most popular religion in Vietnam during the Ly dynasty. Throughout 215 years of ruling, all the kings honored Buddhism. Besides, they were helped by many well known Buddhist monks; therefore, the influence of Buddhism was widely spread and had brought many benefits to the country.