

Four Tranquilities:



Making **the mind** tranquil: *To lead a content life with few desires.*

Making **the body** tranquil: *To lead a diligent life with frugality.*

Making **the family** tranquil: *To foster mutual love and assistance in family.*

Making **actions** tranquil: *To cultivate purity and vigor of mind, speech and action.*

Chan Master Sheng Yen

<p>Song of Mind of Niu-t'ou Fa-jung Commentary by Master Sheng Yen on a seventh-century poem expressing the Chan understanding of mind. This article is the 30th from a series of lectures given during retreats at the Chan Center in Elmhurst, New York. These talks were given on December 1st and 26th, 1987 and were edited by Chris Marano.</p>	<p>Master Sheng Yen</p>	<p>3</p>
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Song of Mind of Niu-t'ou Fa-jung

Commentary by Master Sheng Yen

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Use mind to stop activity

And it becomes even more erratic.

The ten-thousand dharmas are everywhere, yet there is only one door.

It is important that we understand and accept the advice given by the first two lines of the verse: "Use mind to stop activity and it becomes even more erratic." If you use the mind to seek enlightenment, it will only become more confused. If you use the mind to stop vexations and wandering thoughts, it will also become more confused. You will be unable to develop any power in your practice.

There is no question that the ultimate goal of practice is to gain enlightenment. There is also no question that the purpose of all methods is to stop the mind from moving. It does not seem to make sense. It seems that I am contradicting myself. First I say that seeking enlightenment or trying to stop the mind will only cause confusion, and then I say that the goals of practice are to stop the mind and attain enlightenment. How can Chan claim to be clear and direct and yet be so confusing?

People who have been practicing for a while know that there is a good explanation. Simply, before we begin to practice, we know the purpose of meditation; but when we begin to meditate, all ideas and goals are put down. All you should concern yourself with is the method. Your mind is on the present moment, and not comparing experiences to the past or speculating about the future. Yet, this is a big obstacle for many people. They cannot help but use their minds to prevent thoughts from arising, and then they get frustrated when it does not work.

The Chinese have many sayings to describe such confusion and misdirected intention. One saying describes an impatient farmer who pulls on rice stalks to make them grow faster. The result: In his impatience, he uproots the plant before its time and loses the crop altogether. Another saying speaks of the man who puts one head on top of another in order to keep the first one in line. In this case, two heads are definitely not better than one. Another maxim speaks of trying to stop water from boiling by pouring hot water into the pot.

The theme that runs through these three sayings is similar: meddling and misdirected intention only serves to complicate problems. When it comes to stopping wandering thoughts, we must first remember that mind is an illusion, albeit a deeply rooted one. It is this mind of illusion that we must use in order to transcend the mind of illusion. It is a tricky business. If you **try** to use your mind to stop your mind from moving, it will not work. On the other hand, if you **allow** your mind to stop moving, it will happen. Every time you try to force your mind to do your bidding, you only serve to create another "head" with which you must contend. If you seek enlightenment in such a manner, you are walking down the wrong path.

Using the mind of vexation to help or cure the mind of vexation does not work. Yet, people try all the time. In fact, psychologists and other therapists make good money attempting to do so. I am not saying that psychological counseling is useless, but its success is usually temporary. The best it can do is to replace or cover one illusion with another. It is like trying to stop water from boiling with more hot water. The best thing to do would be to put out the fire below the pot. Chan methods are devised to help one transcend the mind of vexation. The strategy is simple: practitioners are directed to place all energy on the method and disregard the mind altogether. The mind is illusory, so there is nothing to worry about. You may not solve your problems, but with meditation, your mind will become clearer and more stable. You will begin to recognize yourself better — your moods, your patterns, the way your thought process works — and in so doing you may eventually discover that your so-called problems have disappeared.

Chan methods seem easy and direct, yet I notice that there are far fewer Chan teachers than there are psychologists. I also hear psychologists make a lot of money. Maybe I am in the wrong business. Or, perhaps I should pretend to be a psychologist and teach people Chan Method. *[laughter]* At one time, I did a series of radio shows in New York, and at the end of each show, people would call in with questions. My advice seemed to be useful, but the truth is, none of the answers came from me. I just passed along information that I received from Chan masters of the past. You are probably thinking, "It's easier to be a Chan master than it is to be a Chan student."

Students must work hard all the time, but all masters have to do is quote words of the Buddha and past patriarchs." Well, if I ever shift careers and become a therapist, maybe you can take my place as a Chan teacher. In the meantime, it would be best to stick to your method and continue to work hard.

In our practice, we do not want our minds to be moved by the environment, whether the thought or feeling is pleasant or unpleasant. Most people are in no hurry to ignore pleasant states of mind. They perceive them to be a beneficial result of practice and attempt to hold on to them. I am sure this has happened to all of you. You will notice, however, that the pleasant condition will slip away as soon as you begin to cling to it. Usually, what follows then is a feeling of regret, and then a search for a series of steps that will bring you back to that feeling. Before you know it, you are lost in a tangle of wandering thoughts, which leads one to feel frustrated, angry, depressed or self-doubting. After a few moments, minutes, or hours of this, you become fed up and yell, "Stop it!" That technique, however, does not work. The only thing that works is allowing your mind to return to the method to begin anew.

Telling yourself, "Don't think, don't think!" does not work. Working hard on the method does, but working hard does not mean tensing every muscle, constricting the brain and expending enormous amounts of energy wrapping your mind around the method. I always say, "Relax your body, relax your mind, and work hard." It is not contradictory. Relaxation is extremely important. If you are tense or are expending a lot of energy, you will eventually run out of energy, become fatigued, and be open to a new flood of wandering thoughts. Working hard means patiently and persistently staying on the method, and immediately returning to the method if you find that you have left it. It takes vigilance and will power, but it does not require excessive energy.

When meditating, you should also not be concerned with what you may have experienced previously. If you experienced something pleasant, even a period of clarity, do not try to repeat steps that you think got you there. If you experienced something unpleasant, do not try to avoid what you think placed you in that position. The past is gone. The future has not arrived. All you have is the present moment, which can never be the same as any other moments from the past or future. Therefore, it is pointless to return to what you think was a favorable state of mind. You are different, the environment is different, the moment is different, everything is different. Even if you experience something similar to what you experienced earlier, it is not the same, and is a product of new, interacting causes and conditions. Every moment, your mind should reaffirm the present moment, and the way to do this is to

remain on your method of practice. Any thoughts of the past or future will only cause you to stir up more wandering thoughts.

The next two lines: "The ten-thousand dharmas are everywhere, yet there is only one door." Most practitioners wish to feel that they are progressing in their practice. They want to know if they can move on to a new, different, or better method of practice. Perhaps they think that a method contains a certain amount of benefit, and once it is used up, it can be discarded in favor of a new and better method. It reminds me of the person who stands at the top of a beautiful mountain in the distance, and wishing he or she were there instead. Someone else may tell you, "Mountains in the distance will always seem better than the one on which you are standing. This mountain is as beautiful as any other." No matter. Off you go, running down one mountain and scaling another. At the top, you feel temporarily satisfied, but, again, off in the distance are even taller mountains. So off you go again, thinking the next one will be the best and last one, because it looked so beautiful from the previous mountain top; and when you arrive, you realize that it is cold, windy, devoid of life and vegetation. There is nothing to drink and eat, and you are cold, hungry and thirsty.

Practitioners can often be like a frustrated mountain climber. They think that the method they currently use is inferior and cannot wait to try another. People who count their breaths wish to work on a *hua-t'ou*; people reciting mantras wish to practice silent illumination; people working on one *hua-t'ou* feel that another one might be better. Once, while lecturing in Iowa, I mentioned that the method for early Chan masters was no method, and that, for those who are ready, no method is the best method. At the end of the lecture, a man approached me and said, "I agree with you that no method is the best method. Would you teach me the "no method" so I can use it?" People never cease to amaze me.

The best approach is to choose one method and stick with it. Derive as much flavor from it as you can. In switching from one method to another all the time, you will never penetrate any of them deeply enough to derive good benefits. Stay with one method and get to the heart of it.

Several people on this retreat who are using the method of counting breaths are anxious to move on to a *hua-t'ou* or silent illumination. For some reason, they feel that counting breaths is a basic, introductory method, whereas *hua-t'ou* and silent illumination are advanced methods. There are many paths to the experience of no-self, and counting breaths is one of them. It can take you to enlightenment, but that should not be your concern. If, instead of concentrating on your method, you are

wondering why you are using one method and not another, then you are not in a position to be requesting advanced meditation methods.

If you truly concentrate on counting breaths, the method will eventually disappear. At that point, your method will naturally change to silent illumination. Therefore, do not worry that you may be missing out on something because you are counting your breaths. Besides, there are many variations of and approaches to counting breaths. As people continue to practice, they discover that their understanding of the method and of their minds changes, or evolves. This is one of the qualities of a good, vital meditation method. If you feel that your method has become stale, come to me and I will help you. The truth is, methods cannot become stale, but people can.

If you are having recognizable problems with your method, I consider it a sign of progress. It means that you are working. I am more worried about the people who never seem to have problems. Such people sit on their cushions in a happy fog and think it is a clear, enlightened state of mind. Whenever I ask them how they are doing, they look at me with a dreamy smile and say, "Fine." That concerns me. Other people say, "I don't know. I'm not sure if I'm practicing right or not." When I ask them how they are using the method, they respond, "Oh, the way you taught me." I am not a mind reader. I cannot help people if they cannot tell me what they are experiencing. If you have problems or concerns about your practice and you want my help, you must at least meet me half way. Come with specific questions that I can address.

Most of all, do not be lured by stagnant states of mind where nothing is happening and everything seems to be okay. For instance, someone yesterday told me that every time she meditates, she reaches a point where wandering thoughts invade her mind and it disrupts her concentration. It happens at the same point every time. She decided that such an occurrence must be a normal phenomenon and was content to experience it over and over again. Yes, it is normal for wandering thoughts to arise when you practice, but when the same thing happens every time at the same point in your practice, then there is a problem that needs to be investigated. At least this woman was able to recognize it and come to me for guidance. I would not have known otherwise.

Her problem reminds me of a story when I was younger and in the army. One of the men was designated to go out every morning to buy food for the troops. With an empty sack slung over his shoulder, he would head out before dawn and walk down the road to get the food. One morning, he decided to take a short cut through a cemetery. He walked and walked for quite some time, and he began to wonder if this

were a short-cut after all. Still, he walked and walked, passing gravestone after gravestone, and dawn arrived and it became light enough for him to see. It was only then that he realized he had been walking in circles around the cemetery. I hope none of you are turning in circles inside your mind. If so, you already know the solution to your problem. Return to the method and leave your mind alone.



The Four Noble Truths

by Master Sheng Yen

This is the third of four Sunday afternoon talks by Master Sheng Yen on the Four Noble Truths, at the Chan Meditation Center, New York, between November 1 and November 22, 1998. The talks were translated live by Ven. Guo-gu Shi, transcribed from tape by Bruce Rickenbacher, and edited by Ernest Heau, with assistance from Lindley Hanlon. Endnotes were added by Ernest Heau.

Chapter Three: The Origin of Suffering

In the first of these talks, we gave a general explanation of the Four Noble Truths. In the second talk, we examined in depth the first noble truth – the truth of suffering. Today, I want to talk about the second noble truth, the truth of the origin of suffering.

Very often we find ourselves in difficult situations and blame others for our problems. Sometimes we even blame God or other deities for our difficulties. There is a Chinese saying, "The heavens are without an eye," meaning that the deities are not looking out for us. Some Buddhists may even blame the Buddha in whom they have taken refuge. So, unless we pay very close attention to what is happening in our own lives, it can be very easy to blame others for our tribulations. In particular we should pay close attention to suffering in our own lives, and how that suffering originates. We need to understand the true origin of our suffering.

By the origin of suffering we mean that which is causing our life experiences in the present. Whatever we experience at this very moment is the result of karma. In its simplest sense, karma means action; therefore, karma is the result of what we have done in the past. So when we speak of karma, we are talking about causes and consequences.

The effects of karma pertain not only to this present life, which is very short, but also to countless past and future lives. So when we truly understand suffering as the result of causes laid down in previous lives, we will acquire a broader view of where we stand in relation to our experiences. We will also understand how the actions in this life will influence future suffering.

The workings of karma may not always cause obvious suffering. We can testify in our own lives to numerous occasions of happiness or good fortune. We can even feel blessed at times. However, when we are feeling blessed, when we are successful, when all things are going our way, we can become arrogant and conceited. We may think, "I worked hard to bring about my own success. I should be proud and feel good about it." Yet when things turn against us, when good fortune departs, we may start to blame others or external events for our misfortune.

This kind of mindset shows that we really do not truly understand the workings of karma. If we did our view of our situation in the world would be less myopic and would extend beyond this present life. We would see that success, blessings, and good fortune are due to the karma that has been created over immeasurable time in the past. We would understand that we are not the sole factor, but only one among many that are responsible for our good luck. We would also realize that the difficulties and tribulation in our lives are also due to actions in past lives.

Someone who has this wider view of the world will be less subject to suffering, freer from conceit, arrogance, and complaints. They will understand that whatever they experience in this moment is the result of deeds occurring in this and past lives. When we understand this, there is no need to be so proud or so despairing whatever our situation. This kind of understanding is useful as it frees us from negative attitudes that can be the cause of further creation of karma and suffering.

The Workings of Karma

How does karma come into being and manifest in our life? The Chinese character *chi* meaning 'origin of suffering' also has the nuance of 'accumulation.' Origin then means 'source' and 'accumulation.' We already understand that the source is karma, but what is accumulation? In order for karma to manifest, other factors must come into play. These factors are 'causes and conditions' that are created by our vexations (*klesas* [3.1]), thus leading to accumulation. So accumulation refers to the vexations and the karma that the vexations generate. The main cause of suffering is karma, but it must come together with accumulated causes and conditions to manifest in the present

moment. The factors that make karma ripen or manifest are vexations, our emotional afflictions. With the accumulation of the cause (karma), and the conditions (*klesas*) working together, we have a more complete view of the origin of suffering. These two mutually include and enhance each other, creating repercussions that eventually come into being. This is a subtler, closer view of the origin of suffering.

I will defer till later a detailed discussion of the *klesas*. First let us make sure we understand the origin of our suffering. We have two interrelated causes of suffering: one is karma, the other is the *klesas* -- the one rising to an effect when ripened by a multitude of vexations. Our experience in the present is not void of cause; it has its origins and is now made manifest through conditioning. Why do these two come together in the first place to cause all our suffering? To answer this question, we need to talk about intention.

Karma and Intention

With a general understanding of karma, we can now reveal another more subtle level of karma. When we act, that action is usually accompanied by intention. According to the Buddhist sutras, karma is in fact intention in the sense of momentum that propels the effects of a particular action to ripen in the future.

There is karma-as-intention and karma-as-intention-manifested. Karma-as-intention is the workings of our mind before we engage in an action. For example it is karma-as-intention when we think of doing something good or bad, but stop short of acting on it. Karma-as-intention-manifested means that after you have a good or bad intention, you act on it. People often seem not to be clearly aware when they are doing something good or bad. They cannot even distinguish between good and bad, let alone realize they are actually doing it. But when we talk about karma-as-intention-manifested, we mean that one clearly comprehends what they are doing, whether good or bad.

How Karma Manifests

With respect to how it manifests in our lives, there are four kinds of karma. First is ripening or fruition karma; next is resultant karma; then there is remaining karma or karma that has not come to a conclusion yet; and finally there is simultaneous karma, in which the result immediately occurs with the action. Where do we stand in relationship to these dimensions of karma? At any given moment in our life we are really not sure for example, whether we are experiencing resultant karma. We are not sure to what extent we are creating new karma, whether our actions have any lasting

results or residues, nor do we understand simultaneous karma. I will not try to go into all of the four kinds of karma, but for our purpose today fruition karma is most important.

Now we will talk about fruition karma, or the ripening of karma. With karma-as-intention the karma created is not as great as the karma from actually doing it. On the other hand once our thought turns into karma-as-intention-manifested, the real world repercussions will be greater and karmic retribution from that action will also be greater. 'Retribution' in relation to karma carries a neutral meaning, as it depends on the kinds of causes and the kind of results.

Karma can ripen in a three ways: through thought, through speech, and through action. Karma-as-intention that does not ripen into karma-as-intention-manifested is 'concealed karma,' since it only exists in one's mind. Opposed to this is 'manifest karma,' which refers to karma-as-intention plus speech and/or action. Relating this to intention, we see that karma can ripen as intention only; intention plus speech, and intention plus action.

Does just thinking about killing someone create bad karma? When you understand karma as cause and effect, you will see that even thoughts indeed accumulate karma. Merely by dwelling on the idea of killing someone, you put into motion a causal relation with repercussions. These kinds of thoughts constitute one's mental life, and if there is sufficient accumulation they can manifest in speech or action. In the sutras the Buddha says that in the world of samsara there is not a single action or even giving rise to thought that is excluded from creating karma. Whatever sentient beings do or think is centered on attachment to self and because of this they continue to create karma. Therefore, when we even have thoughts of killing, as Buddhist practitioners we should give rise to a sense of contrition and practice repentance.

Generally speaking, when one engages in negative actions (the cause), one will reap negative results (the effect). This is the causal result of bad karma. Correspondingly, when one engages in virtuous actions, one will reap virtuous results. This is the causal result of virtuous karma. There is another kind of karma that is neither good nor bad, and I'll get to that later. Speaking generally however, karma can be good, bad, or neutral.

With karma that is neutral the determining factor is the state of mind while engaging in such actions, whether there are subtle leanings towards wholesome or unwholesome. There will still be retribution tilted towards good or bad, but it will be mild. However,

there are genuinely neutral karmic actions, with neither wholesome nor unwholesome overtones, and the retribution that results will be neither good nor bad.

Depending on their karma sentient beings can be reborn in one of six modes or realms [3.2] of existence. A sentient being that engages in wholesome actions will receive retribution by being reborn in one of the three upper realms--the human realm, or one of the two heavenly realms. A sentient being that engages in unwholesome actions will receive retribution by being reborn in one of the three lower realms--the animal realm, the realm of angry spirits, or most severely the hell realm. Thus one's accumulated karma determines where among the six realms, and what form they will take at the next rebirth.

Still another twofold division is made according to the practice of the path: karma with vexations and pure karma. Karma with vexations includes good, bad, and neutral karma, and is the origin of suffering. Pure karma is created by the practice of Buddhadharma, the path leading out of suffering. Engaging in pure karma, one can become free from the origin of suffering.

The Klesas

Earlier we talked about karma and vexations accumulating as causes and conditions to causing our suffering. This is what the Buddha meant by the origin of suffering. Our emotional afflictions are really the ripening agents for karma, whether it be good, bad, or neutral karma. Whatever propels us to continue the cycle of existence is considered the origin of suffering. A sentient being completely free of emotional afflictions or vexations will not originate suffering. Thus, the way out of the suffering is the termination of the *klesas*.

It is crucial to understand the role emotional of afflictions in creating karma. Of these, the most important is *avidya*, or fundamental ignorance. In the Chinese *avidya* is translated as two characters to mean 'not bright' or 'not clear,' referring to the brightness and clarity of the mind of wisdom. Without this mind of wisdom, one remains in darkness--a kind of innate or fundamental ignorance that governs our way of being. Once we truly understand how the auxiliary forces of the *klesas* ripen our karma, it becomes possible to change these conditions to end suffering. Then, karma is less likely to ripen into effects.

There are six root vexations, or *klesas*, which branch out into innumerable other negative mental factors. Two of the most pervasive are greed and hatred. From greed

grows desire, covetousness, clinging, and attachment. Hatred has innumerable descendents such as aversion, anger, and jealousy. Greed and hatred are like master criminals with their gangsters. To break up the gang it is better to go right to the top. Once you get rid of the boss the underlings will disperse and scatter. Once we cut away the roots, the branches will wither away.

The six root vexations divide into the five emotional afflictions: ignorance, greed, hatred, pride, and doubt, with the sixth being the affliction of wrong views. Wrong views are views of the world that we have held since time without beginning. In fact you could even say that all six vexations are wrong view. All six are the byproducts of what we have done in the past with one difference. Emotional affliction is the accumulation of all our past actions, emotions, and so on, while affliction of views includes all of the karma we have created plus what we have learned in this present life--the different views and perspectives that we hold.

Four Paths to Actualization

Related to emotional vexations and vexations of view are the four paths to actualization. There is the path of accumulation, the path of seeing, the path of practice, and the path of actualization. The path of accumulation is in recognizing vexations; that is to say, understanding the truth of the origin of suffering.

The path of seeing is realizing that causes and conditions are empty of self -- seeing the truth of emptiness for the first time. At the moment one realizes the path of seeing, one's vexations of view are terminated and the correct view of reality is gained. Such a person has seen the truth, but has not yet attained perfection. He or she will continue to practice so that remaining deep-rooted emotional vexations can be subdued on the path of practice. Seeing the nature of reality is just the beginning of practice, which consists in subduing one's emotional vexations, one by one, until the path of actualization is reached. At that point the whole being is in harmony and accord with the nature of reality, free from all of the six types of vexations.

So the order is that we start on the path of accumulation as ordinary people with vexations. When we gain realization and see emptiness, we are on the path of seeing. Entering the path of practice we subdue and terminate vexations one by one. When our practice culminates in full realization, this is the path of actualization as an arhat. In the Mahayana school, the full realization of the Buddha means that all vexations are terminated.

Unless we take the path of practice and cut off the six root vexations we will be propelled into future cycles of suffering. To understand the challenge, let's talk about the secondary vexations that grow out wildly like branches from the root vexations. The Buddha talked about the 84,000 vexations and correspondingly, 84,000 Dharma practices to cut them off. As long as these 84,000 vexations exist, we have 84,000 obstructions to overcome before we perceive the true nature of reality. How to terminate these 84,000 vexations? Frankly, that would be just an enormous, huge endeavor. But as I said before we should not worry about the branches. Just get to the roots. Cut off the root vexations and the other 83,994 will eventually wither and die off by themselves.

Previously we said that karma-as-intention was less severe than the karma-as-intention-manifested. If we think something but don't act on it, that is less consequential for retribution. As an analogy think of a pot of water on the stove, and imagine that the water consists of karma-as-intention. Now imagine that we light a flame under the pot. Think of the flame as our countless vexations. Eventually the hot flame of our vexations will cause the water (karma-as-intention) to boil over into speech or action (karma-as-intention-manifested) with future consequences. You can see from this analogy that if we put out the flame of vexation to begin with, we will remove the means by which future cycles of karma and suffering are created. With this understanding, we can see that the purpose of practicing Buddhadharma is to cut off vexation, and thereby terminate suffering.

In our first talk on the Four Noble Truths, we discussed the twelve links of conditioned arising. The twelve links are stages in the birth and death cycle (samsara), that determine conditioned arising, one stage leading to the next. One of those links is existence--the coming into being of the individual. In the twelve-linked chain the first link, fundamental ignorance, leads to attachment and so on. Eventually this occasions the eleventh link, our coming into existence as a new round of birth and death. Existence, or the existence of future lives, has two qualities: that of 'flowing with vexation' and 'accumulation of suffering.' Through these two forces we propel our own being into the future cycles of birth and death.

First there is flowing and accumulation in accordance with our mind--the internal realm. The internal workings of our own mind propel us into our future suffering and the continuous arousal of vexations. There is also flowing and accumulation in accordance with the world--the external realm. In the previous lecture we talked about primary mind [3.3] and its mental objects--the mind-emperor and all its subordinates which carry out its bidding. These mental factors refer to greed, hatred, ignorance,

and all the other root-and-branch vexations. When these vexations come in contact with the external realm through the primary mind, this also gives rise to further vexations and suffering. Flow and accumulation can take place both internally, through our own emotional afflictions, and externally, by our mind coming into contact with, and responding to the external world. This is the origin of suffering.

Summary

The Four Noble Truths are very complex, difficult to understand, and difficult to talk about. For three consecutive Sundays we have talked only about suffering and the origin of suffering. We have yet to cover the third truth, cessation of suffering, and the fourth truth, the way out of suffering. When I am finished I believe that you should have a full understanding of the core of Buddhadharma, because the Four Noble Truths incorporate all aspects of the Dharma. We can use them as a foundation for understanding what the Buddha taught, and we can use them in our practice.

Even though they deal with suffering I am always happy to speak on the Four Noble Truths because they also show us the way out of suffering. If you all are still interested in the way out of suffering, we will continue next week. Thank you for coming.

(Applause)

Notes

[3.1] The Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification) by Buddhagosa (5th century C.E.) enumerates ten klesas (variously translated as 'defilements,' 'passions,' 'impurities,' 'vexations,' 'delusions'): desire, hate, delusion, pride, wrong views, doubt, rigidity, excitability, shamelessness, and no conscience. Some analyses limit the number to the first six, regarding them as root vexations from which all other vexations derive.

[3.2] The six realms (or modes) of existence are the three upper realms and three lower realms. The realm one is reborn in results from one's guiding and completion karma. The three upper realms are the human, the lower gods (asuras), and the celestial beings (devas). The three lower realms are the animal, the angry spirits (pretas), and the hell beings (naraka). The inhabitants of all six realms inhabit samsara and are therefore subject to rebirth.

[3.3] 'Primary mind' here refers collectively to the six sense consciousnesses, which are the six sense faculties interacting with their corresponding sense objects. The sense faculties are sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and cognition.

The Swastika (Part 2 of 2)

by Lawrence Waldron

Lawrence Waldron is an Adjunct Professor of Fine Arts and Art History at St. John's University in Jamaica, New York. He holds an MFA from School of Visual Arts, New York City.

This is the second part of a two-part article on the symbolic meanings of the swastika in world culture and the Buddhist religion.

The Buddhist Swastika

In one scene from the Lankavatara Sutra, the Buddha is intriguingly described as "laughing loudly" and vigorously "like a king of lions" whilst "Emitting rays of light from the tuft of hair between the eyebrows, from the ribs, from the loins, from the *Srivatsa* on the breast and from every pore of the skin," light which "shone like the flames at the end of a kalpa". Except for the unusual description of the Buddha roaring with laughter, these are somewhat typical attributes of the Buddha in Mahayana literature. The emission of bodily light and the circle of hair between the eyebrows, as well as the characteristic "vigor like an elephant" (as described in the *Buddha Karita* of *Asvaghosa*) are among these 'Signs of a Buddha'. The "srivatsa" on the Buddha's breast is the swastika, by a less common name, and numbers among these 132 signs.

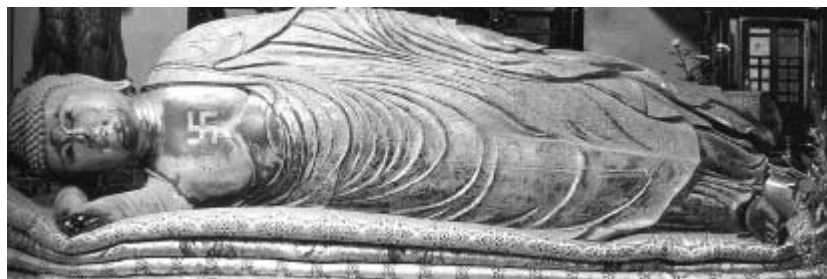


Figure 6

The Swastika on the Buddha's Chest

Only Buddhas and their highest disciples are ever adorned with the swastika, so in Buddhist art, the symbol can be taken as a mark of spiritual achievement. The placement of the swastika, dead center on the Buddha's breast is also quite significant and is a popular image seen, even today, in Tibetan and Chinese Buddhist images (see Figure 6).

In such an image, the swastika is as much a focal point as the Buddha himself. In fact, the symbol becomes loaded with profound and subtle meanings, marking 'the heart of' the Buddha like the 'X' on a treasure map. One might then ask the question: "What

is at the heart of the Buddha?" Various Buddhist schools of thought would rush to answer this question. Indeed, the question necessarily references the deepest, most engaging Buddhist philosophies. Tathagatagarbha theory figures highly among these possible keys to the "heart of the Buddha".

In the Vijnanavadin theory of Tathagatagarbha, or "womb of the Thus Gone Ones", all buddhas in all the worlds and galaxies originate from the clear, essential womb or storehouse of Mind. The Tathagatagarbha is the clear, luminous, undifferentiated essence of buddha nature. It is the source of all buddhas and is at the core of any one buddha, including the historical Buddha of our world, Shakyamuni. It is extant not only in buddhas but at the core of all beings, regardless of the circumstances or conditions to which they are born. It is because great spiritual beings achieve union with this transcendent core of Buddha Mind that *they* are called 'buddha' per se and the rest of us are not. It is a matter of attaining a seamless confluence with this Tathagatagarbha that earns one the lofty title, but to the entitled, "buddha" is just a word. All beings are buddhas, though presently clouded from their own buddha nature by ignorance, desire and aversion.

Another school of Buddhist philosophy has a divergent, if not opposing view of what lies at the crux of the Buddha. Nagarjuna's Madyamaka school also believes that we are all buddhas without truly knowing it. But the Madyamaka school posits that sunyata, or emptiness, is the core of the Buddha and indeed of all things. For the Madyamaka, all things are contingent upon other things (dependent origination) and are therefore "empty" of self nature. If nothing is self-existent then there is no place for us to hang our philosophical hats in existence. Even the profoundest truths held by other religions and even other Buddhist philosophical schools are devoid of concrete truth. Even the philosophy of the Madyamaka itself is believed by Madyamakans not to be an ultimate, unchanging truth. If it were concretely true, it would refute itself. If it refuted itself, it could not be true. Arguments against the Madyamaka position are likewise devoid of ultimate truth. This is why Nagarjuna resorted to no 'theory' of existence in favor of a completely empirical approach to life. Life is experienced only directly, through observation, through the unbiased clarity of meditation and action is taken directly upon these observations and insights, not from any theoretical position. "Luminous, unspoiled buddha nature," or Tathagatagarbha would seem too much like a theory of concreteness to students of the Madyamaka.

In its position at the center of the Buddha's body, the swastika can reference either of these philosophies. The meaning ascribed to the symbol depends on the denomination of the artist drawing it, and of course, the requirements of his patron.

If the swastika, at the center of the Buddha's chest, symbolically represents the pure empirical sunyata or the eternal, profound Tathagatgarbha, what might the swastika's visual characteristics mean? After all, it may symbolize indescribable states of mind but as a symbol, it does have a physical presence, with shape, line and even color.

Firstly, four cardinal spokes (the arms of the swastika) sprout from a central axis. The importance of direction in Buddhist diagrams (yantras and mandalas) cannot be emphasized enough. The swastika has directional and even barometric meanings in many of the cultures where it occurs. In Buddhism, certain deities, colors, minerals and implements are associated with certain cardinal directions of east, west, north and south, and zenith and nadir too. Certain emotions, virtues and vices are also associated with the cardinal directions and so a cardinal figure like the swastika is rich with graphic and symbolic possibilities for Buddhist artists.

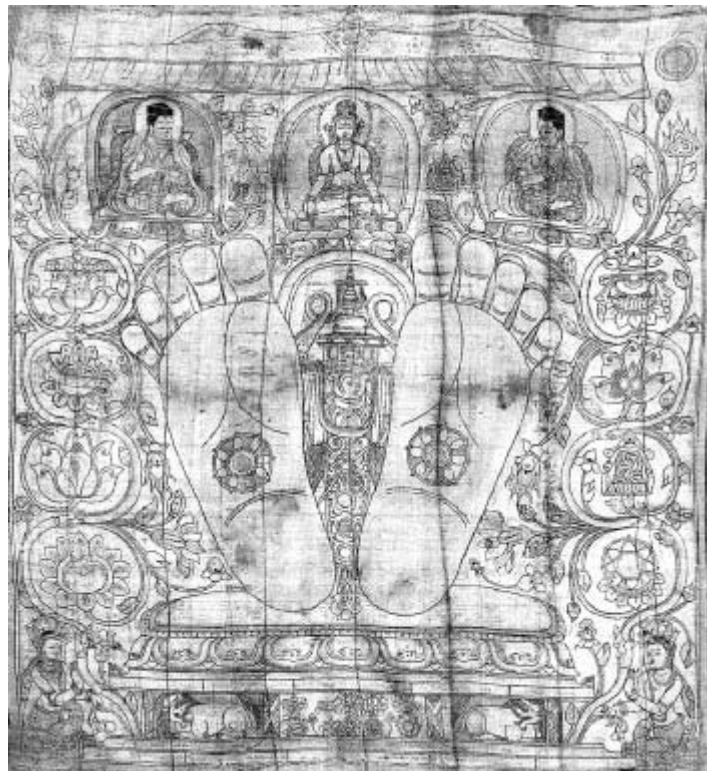


Figure 7

The symbol often functions as a marker, implying philosophical meanings purely because of its position. But just for the purpose of marking a significant spot, a dot (urna) or a swirl (like on the Buddha's forehead) would have sufficed? Why not a Dharma Wheel (Dharmachakra) as is commonly depicted in the palms and on the foot soles of the World Honored One? (see Figure 7). Therefore, we must ask whether the visual characteristics of the swastika itself are significant in some way of the Buddhist ethos.

The Swastika in the Buddha's Hand

Swastika shapes and designs abound in Buddhist architecture, sculpture, painting and jewelry. The symbol doesn't necessarily mean the same thing in every context, but what is obvious at once is that the swastika is a four-armed figure with an additional four perpendicular extensions. The numerological implications are many, most of these stemming from the significance, in Buddhism, of the numbers 4 and 8.

The most obvious association with the number 4 is that of the Four Noble Truths (Suffering, the Root of Suffering, the Possibility of Ending Suffering and The Path that Ends Suffering). The Four Noble Truths are a meaning we can assume to be commonly implied in all images of the Buddha in seated meditation or in a posture of teaching. But there are other possible references to the number 4 that might co-exist with the Four Noble Truths. If the Buddha is seen in the enlightenment posture, his right hand in bhumisparsha mudra ("earth-touching" hand gesture), the swastika on his chest referencing the number 4, both the Four Noble Truths and The Four Merits/Fruits would be implied. The Four Merits are becoming a Stream Entrant, becoming a Once Returner, becoming a Non-Returner, and attaining Arhatship. The Buddha would embody all these stages of spiritual achievement, the culmination of which is his Nirvana. The most obvious association with the number 4 is that of the Four Noble Truths (Suffering, the Root of Suffering, the Possibility of Ending Suffering and The Path that Ends Suffering). The Four Noble Truths are a meaning we can assume to be commonly implied in all images of the Buddha in seated meditation or in a posture of teaching. But there are other possible references to the number 4 that might co-exist with the Four Noble Truths. If the Buddha is seen in the enlightenment posture, his right hand in bhumisparsha mudra ("earth-touching" hand gesture), the swastika on his chest referencing the number 4, both the Four Noble Truths and The Four Merits/Fruits would be implied. The Four Merits are becoming a Stream Entrant, becoming a Once Returner, becoming a Non-Returner, and attaining Arhatship. The Buddha would embody all these stages of spiritual achievement, the culmination of which is his Nirvana. The Buddha in a teaching gesture involving a swastika, his hands in Dharmachakra mudra ("Dharma-Wheel Turning" hand gesture) would represent the Four Fearlessnesses of a Buddha, especially if he is surrounded by disciples. The Four Fearlessnesses have to do with proclaiming truths to students of Dharma and are: to fearlessly Proclaim All Truth; fearlessly Proclaim the Truth of Perfection/Faultlessness; fearlessly Expose Obstacles to Truth; fearlessly Proclaim the Way to End All Suffering.

In its four-pronged aspect, the swastika would also make references to The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, The Four Great Vows of a Bodhisattva, The Four Classes of Buddhist Disciples and The Four Holy States. The symbol may mean any of these things when adorning a senior disciple of the Buddha. The mahasattva, Avalokiteshvara, is often depicted holding the emblem among many others in his one thousand hands (see Figure 8). In such a case, Avalokiteshvara can be understood as teaching the four-fold Dharmas (Four Noble Truths etc.) in the Buddha's stead, possessing the accomplishments of a buddha as are symbolized by a swastika, or simply conferring long life upon his devotees.

The Swastika in Buddhist Architecture

The swastika functions as more than a superstitious or decorative element on the edges of sand mandalas and along the lintels of Buddhist temples. The symbol



Figure 8

carries deep philosophical and historical clues on Buddhist thought in its architectural context. The number four again figures more highly than any other in the configuration of Buddhist mandalas and monumental structures (stupas).

The mandala is a symmetrical, psycho-architectural model of the quest for enlightenment. Imagined in 3 dimensions from its more common 2-dimensional depictions in colored sand or paint, the center of the mandala is seen as the pinnacle of spiritual achievement. This central area of the architectural layout is represented in mandala art as a sort of palace with four gates. The graduated outer (or lower) levels of the mandala are rungs of lower spiritual accomplishment leading up to the `palace

of enlightenment' at the center-top of the diagram. Stupas are the three-dimensional cousins of mandalas, used as monuments to the Buddha's life on earth. They usually contain some relic of the Buddha. Both stupas and mandalas have four symbolic gates in the four cardinal directions. This gives their floor plan the appearance of a square with four protruding openings or a cross (see Figure 9).

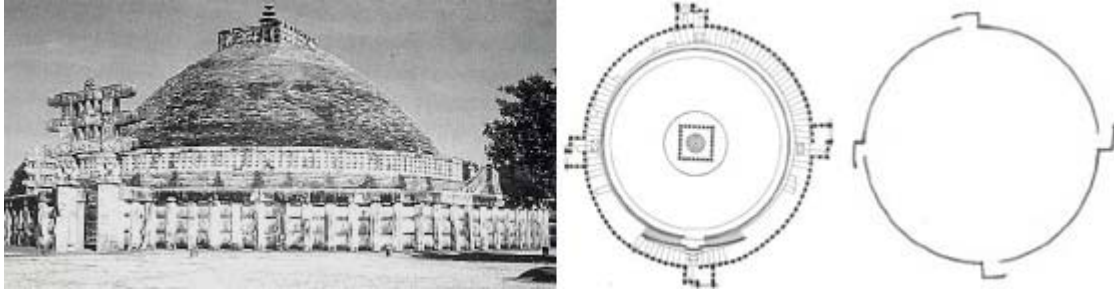


Figure 9

These elaborate gates (especially in the case of stupas) are meant to be entered by Buddhist practitioners entering from the left on their clockwise circumambulations around the structure. Therefore, they usually open towards the right, perpendicular to the actual entryway of the structure. This right-angled turn in the entryway can be seen in the floor plan of Sanchi stupa in Northern India, one of the oldest monuments to the life of the Buddha (see Figure 9). Observe that the right-angled gateways by themselves form a swastika. This is no accident. A monument this old definitely shows pre-Buddhist and even pre-Hindu influences in its orientation to the sun and its use of the swastika (a sun symbol) as the key to its structure. Even the Buddhist tradition of clockwise devotional circumambulation, observed strictly at Sanchi Stupa to this day, copies the sun's seeming clockwise path across the sky. The old pagan sun-symbol swastika thus reasserts itself on many levels at Sanchi Stupa, a Buddhist monument.

The Number Eight

Any associations the swastika might have with the number 8 would be most likely subsumed by the more common use of the eight-spoked Dharma wheel. The Dharmachakra is favored for almost all symbolic treatments of the number 8. The Eight-fold Path, for instance, is almost always represented in Buddhist images by a wheel symbol either in the Buddha's preaching hand or somewhere in his immediate surroundings. The Dharma wheel is an even more common symbol in Buddhism than the swastika and for many years after the Buddha's parinirvana, was the only way the Buddha himself was represented. It is therefore, not necessary to discuss the swastika in any depth as a numerological symbol for the Eight fold Path, especially since the Four Noble Truths, which *are* represented by the swastika include the

Eightfold Path. However, it is possible to extract the meaning of the Eightfold Path from a preaching image of the Buddha in which no Dharma wheel is featured but only a swastika in the Jina's hand or on his chest.

The Number Five

An unlikely number can be appreciated in the configuration of the swastika, the number five. The swastika has four cardinal branches corresponding to north, east, south and west. Many Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhists begin their daily meditations or longer prayers, not just with a salutation to the Three Jewels but with an invocation of the buddhas "in the Ten Directions, Past Present and Future".

A buddha of great significance is ascribed to each of the cardinal directions with a fifth buddha at the center of the Buddhist universe. These five buddhas represent the Five Primordial Buddhas, the Five Great Families of buddhas or the five symbolic prototypes of buddhas. (See Figure 11)

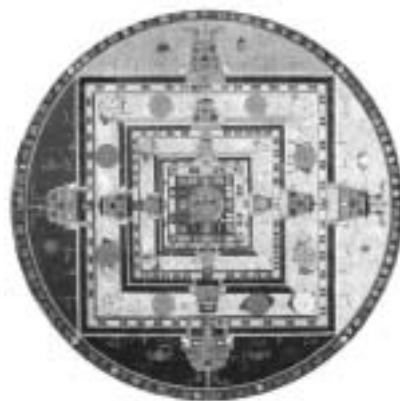


Figure 10

Conclusion

As Westerners, we may question the necessity of employing this 'double-edged' symbol in our practice and our devotional art. We may choose to never use it again in deference to the heinous events that took place, supposedly under its auspices in the early part of the twentieth century. However, we cannot ignore that the symbol is still in popular usage throughout a great part of the Buddhist world and that we will continue to have to deal with it. As Buddhists, we are among a handful of peaceful, law-abiding Westerners who have some measure of positive associations for the symbol. Are we content to leave it so or should we effect a change in how the Western world sees this symbol? We can be sure that the swastika will keep popping up, sometimes embarrassingly so, on Buddhist statues from China and Japan in

museums, antique shops and reprinted sutras and pamphlets. We are perhaps best advised to get the issue in the open, rather than leave the non-Buddhist West's discovery of Buddhists using swastikas to chance, misinterpretation and rumor. It is fairly certain that only one society in the whole history of the human race ever gave negative meanings to this sacred symbol. It is left to be seen whether the powerful, millennia-old swastika is so worthy as to be reclaimed, not just by Buddhists but by the world.

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Speech at The Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders

by Master Sheng Yen

This is a transcription of the speech given by Shi-fu at the World Peace Summit which took place at the United Nations on the 29th of August 2000. The purpose of the Summit was to forge a cooperative effort among world religions towards achieving peace, improving the state of the environment and helping end world poverty. Over 1,000 religious leaders were in attendance at the Summit.

08/29/2000, World Peace Summit, United Nation

Most honored religious and spiritual leaders of the world, dear brothers and sisters:

Thanks to the joint efforts of humankind on earth, the movement toward world peace has been promoted extensively. Today, however, in the year 2000, we are still gathering here at the United Nations for a meeting to discuss how to achieve world

peace. This signifies that there are still conflicts in the world which are waiting for us to find solutions.

I believe no one could doubt that we, the religious and spiritual leaders, are all peace-loving people. However, there still exists the fact that different religions clash or even provoke wars against each other. When people maintain what they believe in is the best religion in the world, they should not forget that others also have the right to say that their faith is the best. When people strive to survive and develop, they should not forget that others also have the right to survive and develop.

Therefore, I would like to make a sincere proposal: If you find that the doctrines of your faith contain something that is intolerant of the other groups, or in contradiction with the promotion of world peace, then you should make new interpretations of these relevant doctrines. Why? Because every wholesome religion should get along peacefully with other groups so that it can, step by step, influence humankind on earth to stay far away from the causes of war.

When speaking of the problem of humankind's poverty on earth, everyone will think of the regions that are ravaged by natural disasters and wars. So we should offer assistance to those regions and appeal for peace. But as you may also know, even the United States is not free from the problem of poverty. So I wish to point out a fact: poverty of material things threatens the lives of people, whereas poverty of the spirit and heart deprives people's living environment of security and happiness. Therefore, our organization, Dharma Drum Mountain, is promoting a movement called "spiritual environmentalism", where individuals start by purifying their mind, filling it with gratitude, kindness and compassion for life. In this way, they will devote the fruit of their efforts to others. As long as one continuously works hard to improve one's living conditions, one will be able to overcome material poverty; as long as one feels grateful and compassionate, one will be able to enrich oneself spiritually and mentally.

Enrichment of the spirit is a more precious wealth than material possessions. Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism is characterized by a simple way of life. Chan practitioners can gain freedom and peace of mind because they have little desire for material things in their lives. When one's spirit is calm and stable, one will not be stimulated and tempted by the external material environment, neither will one harm others and damage the natural environment. Therefore, the Treatise on the Generation of Faith in Mahayana Buddhism says, "when the mind arises, all things arise; when the mind perishes, all things perish." Peace and war reflect the harmony or conflict contained in the human mind; likewise, paradise and hell are not separate from the human mind's inclination toward virtue or evil.

Poverty or wealth is mostly determined by the ignorance or wisdom of the human mind. If people are greedy and insatiable because of their ignorance, they will cause destruction and conflicts and end up poor. Even though some people possess enormous material wealth, they might lose all of it overnight if they are ignorant and unable to put it to good use. Indeed, the Buddha said: "One's material property is commonly owned by the five enemies, namely, flood, fire, bandits, tyranny, and prodigal sons." If you possess wisdom, you can transform the corruptible into something wonderful, turn discarded junk into treasure; you can also change few into many, make ugly things beautiful, turn disappointment into hopefulness, and transform hell into paradise.

Humankind's ignorance is caused by its deluded views. The Complete Enlightenment Sutra says, "Since beginningless time, all sentient beings have had all sorts of delusions, like a disoriented person who has lost his sense of direction. They mistake the gathering and dispersing of the four elements, (namely, earth, water, fire, and air) for their physiological selves, and the six conditioned impressions of the six sense objects, (namely, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, mental objects) for their psychological selves. They are like a man with an illness of the eyes who sees an illusory flower in the sky, or a second moon." Therefore, sentient beings vex themselves and others. If the concepts of the Buddhist scriptures can be used to guide humankind's life, and its methods of meditation can be applied to help people become aware of their weaknesses, then humankind can hope to achieve everlasting peace.

On the basis of "spiritual environmentalism," our organization is also advocating and carrying out social etiquette environmentalism, lifestyle environmentalism, and natural and ecological environmentalism. Together they are called the "Four Kinds of Environmentalism". This is because we believe that, if we wish to pursue world peace, if we wish to solve the problems of humankind's poverty and the environment, then we should review and examine the thinking of humankind, and start by purifying the mind and uplifting the spirit. I would like to offer everyone two sentences: "With true wisdom one will not have any vexations. With true kindness and compassion one will not encounter any enemies."

Moreover, I believe that every religion cherishes an ever-lasting hope that God's paradise or the Buddha's pure land will be established for the sake of humankind. Although Buddhism maintains that all sentient beings are equal, only human beings on earth can put the Buddha's teachings into practice. Therefore, our organization is also promoting a movement: initially, to build God's paradise and the Buddha's pure

land on earth. If we could endeavor to carry out the construction of the earthly paradise or earthly pure land, then no matter when we die, we would surely be blessed by the grace of God and be taken by the Buddha into his embrace.

Whatever name it may be given, whether paradise or pure land, we are good neighbors in the global village. Indeed, we are all sons and daughters born of the same Mother Universe. We are not just good friends to one another, but basically brothers and sisters in a great cosmic family.

Therefore, we have no other choice but to employ all kinds of methods to protect the living environment of this earth. We have no other choice but to remove all the mental barriers between people and to love one another. Thank you!

Master Sheng Yen
Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association of United States

Environmental Protection

by Master Sheng Yen

This is a transcription of a speech given by Shi-fu at the Waldorf Astoria on the topic of environmental protection from a religious perspective. One leader from each major world religion was chosen to speak on this topic as part of the World Peace Summit, hosted by the United Nations.

08/31/2000, working session on environmental protection at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel

Buddhism is a religion that places great emphasis on environmental protection. Sakyamuni Buddha was born at Lumbini Garden. He engaged in spiritual practice in the forest, attained Buddhahood under a tree, and first began preaching at Deer Park. The major monasteries where he taught his disciples were all gardens or woods, such as Jeta Grove, Bamboo Grove, Amravana Garden, and he passed into pari-nirvana between two Sal trees near Kusinagara. He exhorted his monastic disciples, when spending the night under a tree, to regard that place as his home and take loving care of it.

The Buddha told us in the sutras and precepts that we should take loving care of animals, and that we should not harm the grass and trees, but regard them as the home where sentient beings lead their lives. In the stories of the Buddha's past lives,

when he was following the Bodhisattva path, he was once reborn as a bird. During a forest fire, he tried fearlessly to put out the fire, disregarding his own safety by bringing water with his feathers. In the Avatamsaka Sutra it is said that mountains, waters, grass, and trees are all the manifestation of the great bodhisattvas. So, Buddhists believe that both sentient beings and non-sentient things are all the Dharma-body of the buddhas. Not only do the yellow flowers and green bamboo preach Buddhist teachings, but rocks can also understand Buddhist doctrines. Therefore, Buddhists regard our living environment as their own bodies. The Buddhists' life of spiritual practice is by all means very simple, frugal, and pure.

Unfortunately, the immoderate development and the excessive use of chemicals in the world have led to the rapid consumption of natural resources, the speedy deterioration of the natural environment, and the extinction of a variety of species. The collective result speeds the earth towards doomsday. Although no human being hopes for the early arrival of doomsday, few are willing to strive together to take action to salvage the destiny of the earth, despite the fact that most are conscious of the crisis. Day in and day out everyone still consumes even larger amounts of natural resources, produces more refuse to pollute the earth, the air, and rivers and oceans. The remaining tracts of tropical rain forest become smaller and smaller; the number of species likewise decreases, and desertification of the land expands at a faster rate. If this situation is not placed in check and reversed, then humankind will have become extinct even before the earth is destroyed.

In the modern world, everybody knows that we should protect our living environment, reduce the amount of garbage we produce, classify our refuse, and recycle as much as possible. Nevertheless, we are still consuming substantial amounts of energy resources every day, and producing tremendous amounts of refuse and pollution. In the former agricultural and pastoral ages, garbage could become the fertilizer and soil, returning to nature; in contrast, the natural resources consumed by the modern industrial and commercial sector are non-renewable. Contemporary civilization produces a huge amount of pollution, and this act is as horrible as generating a tremendous quantity of cancer cells in the body of Nature.

We do not curse modern industry and commerce; neither do we denounce the rapid development of technological production. Therefore, we are forced to appeal to the religious and spiritual leaders of the world to advise all humankind that it must take responsibility to protect the environment while engaged in industrial, commercial, and technological activities. Human beings should not, just because of their curiosity for technological innovations and the competition of industrial and commercial wealth,

keep on destroying the environment on which we rely for our survival; otherwise, humankind's history will not endure another thousand years!

The wasteful consumption of natural resources and destruction of ecology are caused by humankind's psychological craving for convenience and wealth. If we can practice the Buddha's teaching of "leading a contented life with few desires" and "being satisfied and therefore always happy", and if we are willing to use our intelligence to deal with problems and engage diligently in productive work, then, without having to contend with one another or fight with nature, we can lead very happy lives. Therefore, the members of our organization use the following four sentences to encourage one another:

Our needs are little;

Our wants are great.

Pursue only what we really need;

What we want is unimportant.

If, for the sake of satisfying our wants, humankind consumes natural resources and devastates the ecological environment, then we repeatedly borrow to repay what we already owe. By borrowing to cover old debts, one's debts will grow increasingly heavy; by cutting out one's flesh to appease one's hunger, one is slowly committing suicide. Unfortunately, humankind loses its head for the sake of temporary convenience and selfish gains. Some say that future technology will be able to rectify the errors caused by modern people. Supposedly, this future technology will be able to solve the problems resulting from contemporary technology. Further, they say if one group of people causes problems, another group of people will manage to deal with them. They imply that the act of destruction should come first before humankind achieves more advanced insight. These are extremely irresponsible concepts. While engaging in various kinds of production and manufacturing, if modern people do not at the same time pay close attention to measures for protecting the environment and cherishing their resources, this amounts to burying mines everywhere in the environment to menace future generations of humankind. So, we have to appeal to the religious and spiritual leaders of the whole world not only to pray for the success of environmental work, but also to get involved personally in the all-encompassing movement of environmental protection.

As I said, the environmental protection movement should be all-encompassing. In addition to cherishing natural resources, protecting the ecological environment, and lifestyle choices such as reducing the amount of garbage, recycling, living a pure, simple, and, frugal life, and minimizing the pollution we produce, we should further learn to respect lives and others, always reminding ourselves of this thought: apart from ourselves, there are innumerable other people; apart from our one generation, there are our innumerable descendants in future generations.

Therefore, Dharma Drum Mountain, our small Buddhist community of only about one million members, has in the last ten years promoted four major principles of environmental protection:

- 1) The cherishing of natural resources and the protection of the ecological environment;
- 2) Maintaining cleanliness in family life and using daily necessities simply and frugally;
- 3) Improving interpersonal politeness and social etiquette; and,
- 4) Instead of considering everything from the standpoint of one person, one race, one time-period, and one place, we should consider it from the standpoint that all humankind of all time and space should be protected in their existence, possess the right to live, and feel the dignity of life.

In brief, the above-mentioned four kinds of environmentalism can be restated as natural environmentalism, lifestyle environmentalism, social etiquette environmentalism, and spiritual environmentalism. The environmental tasks of general people are mostly restricted to the material aspects, namely, the first and second items. The environmental tasks we carry out have to go deeper from the material level to the spiritual level of society and thinking. Environmental protection must be combined with our respective religious beliefs and philosophical thinking into an earnest mission, so that environmentalism will not become mere slogans. So, strictly speaking, the purification of humankind's mind and heart is more important than the purification of the environment. If our mind is free from evil intentions and is not polluted by the surroundings, our living environment will also not be spoilt and polluted by us. However, for ordinary people, it is advisable to set out by cultivating the habit of protecting the material environment, and go deeper step by step until at last they can cultivate environmentalism on the spiritual level.

NEWS

Zen Camp 2000 at DDRC

by Lindley Hanlon

Forty children and thirty adults attended Zen Camp 2000 at Dharma Drum Retreat Center from August 18th to 20th, 2000. The weekend was focused on family dynamics and harmony in a well-planned series of enjoyable educational activities. Guo-yuan Fa Shi presided over the weekend's activities, leading morning and evening services, exercises and meditation, a water carrier meditation, the family circle meditation, the campfire, and midday offerings. Sylvie Sung coordinated all the arrangements for the weekend, oversaw a large team of twenty-four volunteers, and assisted Yan Pei in the adult activities. The Parent Coordinator was Agnes Wu, Youth Coordinator Jane Chen, and Assistant Youth Coordinator Joyce Li.

Under the direction of Lindley Hanlon, leader of the Buddhist Youth Group, the teen campers engaged in: meditation classes, walking meditation, a group family drama competition, a silent contemplation nature walk, and a natural treasure hunt for craft materials. At the rotating craft workshops they made Zen Fountains, beaded jewelry, hand-painted T-shirts, and pasta pictures. In these activities she was ably assisted by: Rebecca Li and David Slaymaker, as well as Joyce Li, Jane Chen, and Guo-zhen. Group Leaders were David Slaymaker, Tan May Wong, Joyce Li, Jane Chen and Carol Yuen, assisted by Counselors Annie Ho, Robert Yuen, Andy Ni, Cheung Li and BaiRen Wong.

Meanwhile the parents were led by Yang Pei (visiting psychologist and instructor from Taiwan) in creative workshops and dramas focused on understanding the complexities of parental roles and family relationships. Campers and parents reunited for the lake-side picnic lunch, drama competition, campfire, family meeting workshop, group sharing, family circle meditation, meals and final sharing session. Winner of the Drama Competition was the play "Stanley Family Show," written by Joyce Li's teen group and featuring an hilarious send-up of a TV game show performed by Stanley Fang.

The warm feelings, communication, and sense of community fostered by these events were evident throughout the weekend. The cool weather and beautiful environment of

the Retreat Center were an ideal setting for the camp. We look forward to the completion of the Retreat Center facilities during the year.

Dharma seeds growing in the West

Master Sheng Yen is pleased to announce that he has granted Mr. Gilbert Gutierrez of California, and Dr. Max Kalin of Switzerland to organize practice groups, teach meditation, give Dharma lectures, and lead retreats.

This brings to three the number of Western lay disciples granted permission to teach Chan, by Master Sheng Yen. Dr. John Crook of Wales, England, has already enjoyed this distinction for several years.

Three-Day Retreat

Thirty-three practitioners attended the Three-Day Retreat from September 1st to 4th, 2000. Several of them were first timers attending this type of intensive retreat. Guo-yuan Fa Shi lead all practioners through a poetic concentration practice: practitioners carried bowls and gathered water at the nearby lake. Slowly, they brought the water back to the Chan Hall in walking meditation. The bowls of water were then arranged on the altar and offered to the Buddha.

Passing away of Heng-yen Shi

With deep sadness, we announce that Heng-yen Shi (former CMC member Avy Wu-Kennedy) passed away in an unfortunate car accident on August 11th, 2000. Heng-yen Shi was the mother of Guo-gu, former director of Dharma Drum Publications and Chan Magazine.

Shi-fu speaks at the UN Millennium Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders

By Carolyn Hansen

With the objective of furthering world peace, over 1,000 leaders of the earth's religions and spiritual practices gathered from August 28th to 31st in the first UN Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. The United Nations and the gathering were first called by the drumming of the Shumei Taiko Ensemble, and then blessed by prayers from various Native peoples and representatives of many organized faiths during the opening ceremony on August 28th. It was hoped the sacred space created would

benefit the Millennium Summit of Heads of State scheduled to gather here the following week.

The leaders wore colorful and diverse gowns, robes or religious attire from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, India and the homelands of various Native people. The thoughtfulness and reverence they demonstrated became a powerful backdrop for the conference.

On August 29th, Shi-fu was a keynote speaker in the UN General Assembly Hall. He proposed to those gathered at the UN that "If you find that the doctrines of your faith contain something that is intolerant of the other groups, or in contradiction with the promotion of world peace, that you should make new interpretations of these relevant doctrines... Because every wholesome religion should get along peacefully with other groups so that it can step by step influence humankind on earth to stay far away from the causes of war." His speech is feathered in this issue. Other speakers that day included Goenka; leaders of the Tibetan Schools; the Shinto High Priest, the Most Reverend Kuni Kuniaki; leaders of the Jainist; Zoroastrian; Hindu; Christian; Jewish; Muslim; and Native faiths; Jane Goodall; as well as Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan; Maurice Strong, Chair of the International Advisory Board of the Millennium World Peace Summit, Chair of the Earth Charter Council and organizer of the 1992 Earth Summit; and Ted Turner, founder of CNN and sponsor of the Summit.

The following two days were spent in plenary sessions or working groups at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. The working groups focused on Conflict Transformation, Poverty, the Environment, and Reconciliation and Forgiveness. Ven. Sheng Yen also was a main speaker in one of the workshop sessions on the environment. Shi-fu and his delegation were also invited to the Thomas Berry Award dinner. Father Thomas Berry wrote *Dreams of the Earth* and spoke at the banquet, which honored Tu Weiming, a friend of Shi-fu's and professor of Chinese history, philosophy and Confucian studies at Harvard. The Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association sponsored the closing reception on the 31st. During the conference Shi-fu was invited to serve on the advisory committee that will plan the mechanism to connect the UN Secretary General to spiritual leaders in areas of conflict. It is intended that this will allow the spiritual leaders to help the UN further world peace.