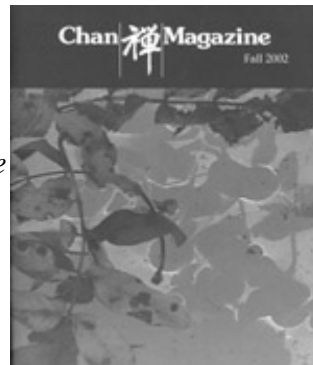


A Prayer on the Anniversary of the September 11th Tragedy

The tragic events of September 11th mark the first anguish of the twenty-first century. This tragedy arose from humankind ignorance.

Due to ignorance, people regard those who are different as evil. As a result, antagonism

and mutual animosity evolve among different nations, races, religious faiths and political systems, leading to warfare, massacres and terrorist attacks. Alas, the victims of this bloodshed are all innocent people!



To commemorate the first anniversary of the September 11th tragedy, we, on behalf of the Chinese Buddhist community, would like to offer the following prayer:

The tragedy of September 11th serves as an alarm to trigger wisdom in humankind. It marks the milestone to end all conflicts and bloodshed, and it is a signpost that points to the path of world peace. We hope that through the lessons learned from this tragedy, people will no longer ignorantly regard their own brothers and sisters as enemies. Only then will we be able to console the departed souls of the victims of September 11th; only then will humanity be able to enjoy a future of everlasting peace.

Bhikshu Sheng Yen
Dharma Drum Mountain

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Email the Center at ddmbaus@yahoo.com, or the Magazine at chanmagazine@yahoo.com, or visit us online at <http://www.chancenter.org/>

Chan Meditation Center

Founder/Teacher: Shi-fu (Master) Ven. Dr. Sheng Yen

Publisher: Guo Chen Shi

Editor in Chief: David Berman

Coordinator: Virginia Tan

Design and Production: David Berman

Photography: David Kabacinski

Contributing Editors: Ernie Heau, Chris Marano, Virginia Tan

Correspondants: Jeffrey Kung, Charlotte Mansfield, Wei Tan, Tan Yee Wong

Contributors: Ricky Asher, Berle Driscoll, Rebecca Li, Mike Morical, Robert Weick

From the Editor

It's Labor Day weekend as I write, which this year, more than anything, means that the anniversary of September 11th is approaching. Americans have been busy planning solemn observances and making security arrangements, both of which are entirely appropriate. But I have been struck by the news from halfway around the world, from the United Nations' World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, and by the opportunity it presents to memorialize the tragedy of September 11th in the most potentially fruitful of ways.

Tens of thousands of government officials, environmentalists and advocates for the poor have gathered in Johannesburg to do nothing less than save the planet from mankind's greed, hatred and ignorance. It won't be easy-at a time in our history when we are capable of medical and technological miracles, we are destroying forests at a rate of 32 million acres per year, causing the extinction of dozens of plant and animal species every day, continuing to burn fossil fuels and to increase the levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. But while global warming and the mismanagement of resources certainly threaten our long-term survival, the threat to our immediate future comes from how we care for our fellow humans-thirty per cent of the world's population now suffers from malnutrition, twenty per cent has no access to potable water, urban population is growing by 60 million people per year, and by 2050 two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities that will be unable to house or feed them.

Do we in the industrialized world really imagine a twenty-first century in which billions of people in Africa, Asia and South America will die quietly of starvation and preventable disease, leaving us to enjoy the lives of material comfort we have wrested from the nearly exhausted earth? Do we not now know that the suffering of others will eventually be visited upon us all? What could pay better tribute to the victims of September 11th than to seize the opportunity Johannesburg presents, and to set aside our greed, our hatred, and our national interests, in favor of a future for everyone.

The Editor

What Is It?

***What Is It?** it's our invitation for you to participate in the ongoing dialogue here at the Chan Center. Do you have any questions about the Dharma? About something you read in the last issue? About experiences you've had in practice, or in daily life? Send them to us, and, calling on the Centers staff of Dharma lecturers, meditation teachers, scholars, and the resident Sangha, we'll publish them along with the best answer we can come up with. Send your questions to Chan Magazine, 90-56 Corona Avenue, Elmhurst, NY 11373, or better yet, email them to chanmagazine@yahoo.com.*

Question: If there is no soul/no self, why should I care about what I do? In the next life, whoever is reborn and suffers as a result is another being. Since there will be no memory from one life to the next, who cares? Why shouldn't I let that new being suffer and do whatever I like now?

Answer: This is indeed a difficult question. As I understand the Dharma, you are literally correct-those things that I regard (incorrectly) as "myself" do not re-incarnate (the consciousnesses of the six senses, personality, memory, sense of identity, any of the five skandhas, etc.) and it is literally incorrect to refer to future beings who might inherit karmic burdens from me as "my future lives." They are only mine in the sense that I contribute the karmic burden-I don't contribute anything else, and the "I" that says this is illusory in the first place...

I'm not surprised that you find the teaching of no-self confusing-it cannot be satisfactorily understood. It can only be realized, and in the absence of realization, the conundrums it raises cannot be solved. It is possible to logically demonstrate the non-existence of a fundamental self, or for that matter of any permanent, independent entity (see Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika*), but that demonstration is not coherent with ordinary experience. It may be intellectually satisfying (for those who can follow it), but it doesn't help solve ethical questions, like the one being posed here, and it doesn't address the problem of suffering, which is the problem the Buddha set out to solve.

If we think of Buddhism as a path, suffering is where we begin-both as a condition in which we find ourselves, and as the Buddha's first teaching-and no-self is where we end up-both as an abstruse and difficult teaching, and as the realization that resolves

our suffering. Your question is the result of putting the cart before the horse-it's an attempt to understand the teaching of no-self without first having understood the teachings on suffering, and more importantly, without having walked the path. Suffering, in Buddhism, is our experience of the dissonance between what is fundamentally true and our unenlightened view of things. If you understand the teachings on suffering (the First Noble Truth), and karma, and conditioned arising, you will know that there is no such thing as "I'll do whatever I want; you can suffer"-not in the long run. All sentient beings-all phenomena, for that matter-are too interconnected for that kind of self-centeredness to really work. If you understand both the nature and the cause (Second Noble Truth) of suffering, you will realize that when you do whatever you want, regardless of the consequences for others, **YOU ARE ALREADY SUFFERING**, and any happiness you receive from this behavior will only temporarily mask that fact. If you then gain some experience of the path (Fourth Noble Truth), your practice will demonstrate to you that unselfish behavior reduces your own suffering, as well as that of others-in other words you'll gain some experience of cessation (Third Noble Truth). And once you have an experience of the cessation of your own suffering, you will have your answer to the question, "Why should I care about what I do?"

Anyway, that's my experience.

The Fifth Paramitas: Meditation

Commentary by Master Sheng Yen

This is a talk on the fifth paramita, meditation (dhyana), given by Chan Master Sheng Yen at the Chan Meditation Center in Elmhurst, New York, on May 13, 2001. It was translated orally by Rebecca Li, transcribed by Stacey Polacco, and edited by Ernest Heau.

"...ONE SHOULD NOT ABIDE IN ANY DHARMA, BUT SHOULD ABIDE IN NON-SCATTERED MIND, A STATE OF MIND THAT HAS NO TASTE."

"ENJOYMENT, BLISS, AND ONENESS ARE STATES ONE MAY EXPERIENCE DURING DHYANA THAT ONE SHOULD NOT ATTACH TO, THAT ONE SHOULD PUT DOWN."

The fifth of the Six Paramitas is dhyana, meditation. In the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, there is the phrase, "Don't abide in dharmas, abide in prajnaparamita." This means that one should not abide in any dharma (phenomenon), but should abide in non-scattered mind, a state of mind that has no taste. A non-scattered mind does not abide in samadhi (deep meditative concentration), nor does it crave the bliss of samadhi. This is what having no taste means. It is important to understand that dhyana is not necessarily the same as samadhi, although it includes samadhi. Master Zong Mi talks about five levels of dhyana, including the dhyana practices of both the Indian and Chinese traditions. We will briefly describe the five levels without going into great detail.

First Dhyana Level

First there is the outer path dhyana, practiced by non-Buddhist schools and religions, wherein the most important goal is to attain samadhi. In this state one avoids influences and conflicts within one's body, mind, and the environment, to abide in the bliss of samadhi. The highest aspiration is to attain some kind of heaven. One could say that the Indian yoga and Chinese Daoist practices belong to this category.

Second Dhyana Level

The second dhyana is the dhyana of ordinary beings who have learned about the Buddhadharma and the laws of cause and effect (karma). People practicing at this

level place great emphasis on samadhi and abide in it, taking it to be liberation. Often what they experience is the unity of body and mind, of the inner and outer environments, of previous and following thoughts. This is often described as being one with the universe. In their samadhi they experience the four dhyana heavens of form, formlessness, and the heavens of thought and no-thought. They experience a kind of emptiness, but cannot realize the true emptiness of wisdom. Thus they will often mistake the four dhyana heavens as the four fruition levels of the arhat [1], and think they are liberated.

While experiencing samadhi, they will have no greed, no doubt, no burden of body and mind, and they will think they've been liberated. But once they come out of samadhi and deal with loved ones, family, property and wealth, their vexations return. When this happens they will want to enter samadhi and experience bliss again. The main difference between the first two kinds of dhyana is whether or not they have been exposed to the teachings of Buddhadharma.

Third Dhyana Level

The third dhyana is that of the Hinayana (Small Vehicle), also called the dhyana of liberation. This dhyana is guided by the teachings of karma (cause and effect), and the teachings of emptiness, but still requires the practice of the four dhyanas [2] and the eight samadhis [3].

In this dhyana one practices according to the four fruition levels of the arhat. So one can apply the gradual practice of the four dhyanas of the realm of form, plus the four dhyanas of the realm of no form, together with the four dhyanas and the eight samadhis. Attaining the level of the eight samadhis in the realm of no form, one will be able to enter the ninth samadhi which is the dhyana of cessation (of sensation and thought), and thus attain arhatship and liberation.

To get to the dhyana of cessation requires the practice of the four dhyana heavens which I won't explain, but I will explain how to practice in accordance with the four dhyana heavens. This means using the seven expedient means.

The Seven Expedient Means

The first expedient means are the basic practices of the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind. The second expedient means are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The third are the four mindfulnesses practiced together, as described below. The fourth through sixth expedient means are warmth, summit, and forbearance. I will not discuss these but go straight to the seventh, supreme in the world.

As we said, the first expedient means correspond to the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind. The remaining six means are actually based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the stages from one to the next being manifestations of one's level of practice.

Among the Five Methods the most commonly used are the first two: contemplation on the breath, and contemplation of the impurity of the body. The remaining methods are supplementary: third is contemplation of causes and conditions, fourth is contemplation of the four boundless mentalities (including compassion). Depending on your source, the fifth method will be either the contemplation of mindfulness of the Buddha, or the contemplation of the kinds of dharmas.

Of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the first is mindfulness of the body, the second is the mindfulness of sensation, the third is the mindfulness of the mind, and fourth is the mindfulness of dharmas (phenomena).

Now looking at the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind, the first is contemplation of breath. It is the body that breathes. The second method is contemplation of the impurity of the body. So the first two of the Five Methods are definitely related to the first of the Four Foundations, having to do with the body. When we contemplate impurity, it is the mind that contemplates. And when we're using the method of breathing one is really contemplating the sensation in the nostrils. When a thought arises in one's mind that is a dharma, and mindfulness of dharmas is the fourth foundation practice.

So the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are really a continuation of the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind, and practicing them as a whole can actually lead to liberation. Very often people think mindfulness is a simple, low level practice but being related to the seven expedient methods, it can lead to liberation.

The seventh stage, supreme in the world, is the first fruition level of Buddhist sainthood, that of the arhat. The distinction between the dhyana of ordinary beings and the dhyana of the Hinayana is this: the dhyana of ordinary beings uses the four dhyanas and eight samadhis, while the dhyana of the Hinayana uses the seven expedient means.

Dhyana Practice

The basics of dhyana practice can be summarized in six aspects: seeking, waiting,

enjoyment, bliss, oneness, and putting down.

Seeking is the starting point of practice wherein one actually engages in contemplation. For example, if we are practicing counting the breath, the mind is aware of, and focused on, counting the breath. This is seeking.

Waiting is the state of stillness when one stays on the focus of the meditation, for example the breath. This is not the literal meaning of "waiting." Moment after moment one is clear that one is on the method. Having the same thought after thought after thought is waiting.

Enjoyment, bliss, and oneness are states one may experience during dhyana that one should not attach to, that one should put down. Whatever one experiences at this stage should be let go. So these six aspects are the entry to practicing the four dhyanas and eight samadhis. When you get to the sixth stage, continue putting down until there's nothing left, and then one enters into the seventh and last stage, supreme in the world.

Before entering the first dhyana, one must use the Five Methods of Stilling the Mind and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Seeking and waiting are present during the first dhyana, and persist after leaving the first dhyana. In the second dhyana there is neither seeking nor waiting. Only enjoyment, bliss, oneness, and putting down remain. One lets go of everything, including ideas of existence and emptiness, and continues practicing to attain enlightenment.

The Fourth Dhyana Level

The fourth dhyana is the dhyana of the Mahayana (Great Vehicle) also known as the dhyana of the bodhisattva. The main difference between the dhyana of the Hinayana and the Mahayana lies in the meaning of liberation. Hinayana practice is for the sake of liberation from samsara -- the three realms of existence [4]. While sitting meditation is one of the practices in the dhyana of Mahayana, it is only one gate of entry. In fact, one can be practicing in any situation-reading and reciting sutras, prostrating, walking meditation, or engaging in any task or work as long as one's mind is concentrated on the task at hand. One can be doing anything and still be practicing.

According to the dhyana of the Mahayana, transcendence means neither attaching to nor fearing the cycle of birth and death, and this distinguishes it from the Hinayana. Not attached to birth and death, one does not fear birth and death, and one will have the compassion to return to the world to deliver sentient beings. Could one at this stage be practicing the four dhyanas and eight samadhis? Of course one could, as those are among many methods for attaining transcendence.

In The Great Cessation-Contemplation (shamata-vipassana) Master Zhizhe talked about four kinds of samadhi: the samadhi of always sitting, the samadhi of always walking or standing, the samadhi of half walking half sitting, and the samadhi of neither walking nor sitting. The first samadhi is always cultivation through sitting meditation, specifically the cultivation of the four dhyanas and eight samadhis. The second samadhi of always walking or standing is rarely practiced because it involves the practitioner to always be standing-one cannot lie, sit or sleep, but only move around or stand. The third samadhi of half walking half sitting allows sitting, standing and moving, and that is largely the practice in Chan. In the fourth samadhi of neither walking or sitting, any posture or situation is appropriate so long as one is applying the principle of Chan.

Fifth Dhyana Level

The fifth dhyana is the dhyana of the Supreme Vehicle, also called the dhyana of the Tathagata [5]. It is also called the dhyana of the Patriarch because it refers to Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chan. This is the dhyana of sudden enlightenment and does not require the four dhyanas and eight samadhis. In fact, it is basically the method of no method. When there is no wandering thought in the mind, that is the wisdom of Chan. Though originally transmitted by Bodhidharma, it underwent further development within the Chan School. The dhyana transmitted by Bodhidharma has two aspects: entry by practice, and entry by principle [6].

The Sixth Patriarch Huineng, on the other hand, describes the fifth dhyana level in this way: as long as there is no attachment or self-centered thought in the mind, that is liberation, or sudden enlightenment. In Huineng's Platform Sutra, there is this very important sentence: "Prajna and dhyana are the same. Where there is prajna there is dhyana, where there is dhyana there is prajna." This view characterizes the school of sudden enlightenment.

In the gradual enlightenment school, one must sequentially cultivate dhyana for prajna to arise. On the other hand, the Sixth Patriarch talks about dhyana and prajna arising simultaneously, and importantly, says that sitting meditation is not necessary as long as one's mind and body are not in conflict or contradiction. When that happens, that is the dhyana of the Patriarch. Such a person is always in dhyana-while eating, sleeping, working. The idea is that life itself is dhyana.

Notes:

[1] Four levels of the arhat: 1) stream-enterer; 2) once-returner; 3) non-returner; 4) arhat.

[2] Four dhyana stages: 1) relinquishing desire; 2) joy and one-pointedness; 3) equanimity; 4) equanimity and wakefulness.

[3] There are nine levels of samadhi, of which the ninth is the experience of emptiness.

[4] Samsara -- the realm of desire, the realm of form, the realm of formlessness.

[5] Tathagata, "thus come," epithet for Buddha.

[6] Entry by practice is cultivation of the methods of enlightenment; entry by principle is direct perception of emptiness.

No Mind, No Enlightenment

by Chan Master Sheng Yen

"...ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS KEEP GOING, KEEP GOING.."

"...WHEN PEOPLE COME TO ME AND SAY THAT I HAVE A LOT OF WISDOM,
IT MAKES ME VERY ASHAMED..."

Usually at the Dharma gathering I tell some stories about what I've been doing. Today there are not many stories to tell, so I'm going to use this time to give a Dharma talk. Throughout the history of Chinese Chan, there were only a few Chan masters who have had a profound influence on me. One of them was Master Bai Zhang's disciple Master Wei Shan Ling You, who lived from 771 to 853 AD. This was a very interesting person. He became a monk when he was fifteen. Me, I became a monk when I was thirteen, so he left home a little later than I myself. This master Wei Shan, when he was about twenty years old, he traveled to Mount Tian Tai. And during his journey to Mount Tian Tai he ran into two people, actually two legendary figures in Chan history. One of them was Master Han Shan, often known as Cold Mountain, and the other was Master Shi De. (Actually, it isn't correct to call him a master -- he was a monk, he never became a master.)

Nobody really knows the true names of these two people -- Han Shan and Shi De were not their real names. Han Shan lived in this place in the mountain called Cold Rock, so that's where his name came from -- Han Shan means "Cold Mountain." And with Shi De, when he was asked what his name was, he would answer that he didn't know because he was an orphan. Then when his master found him and brought him back to the monastery, he said, "Look what I 'shi de'," which literally means "picked up", I picked up something, so that's why his name was Shi De.

So, these two people never knew their own names, and they never lived in any monasteries, they lived in the wilderness, so they never had any disciples and never had any followers. Whenever anybody asked them to teach the Dharma, they would always just say some crazy words in some nutty way.

Today there is a book of poems called Cold Mountain. What happened was that when Han Shan lived in the mountains he wrote poems all over the place, on the rocks.

After a while he just disappeared -- no one knew what happened, if he left the place or if he died. But there was one person who really missed him and went to his place, Cold Rock, and copied down all the poems he had written all over the place and compiled them into this book of poems by Han Shan. It's actually been translated into English -- has anyone seen it? One or two people -- did you like it? Compared to my poems, which ones are better? Can't really compare because I've never written any poems.

Back to the story of Wei Shan Ling You. Wei Shan was traveling to this mountain, and he ran into Han Shan, and Han Shan told him, here in this mountain all you have to do is keep going, keep going until you run into a pond, and you will become enlightened. So Wei Shan kept going, but before he ran into any pond of water, he ran into Shi De, and he asked, "I heard there is a pond of water here, where is this pond of water?" And Shi De said, "Yes, yes, just keep going, you'll run into this pond of water." Well, Wei Shan finally ran into a pond, but he didn't get enlightened, then he ran into another pond, but he didn't get enlightened, and he kept running into one pond after another, but he never got enlightened. Finally he ran into yet another person, whose name was Zhou Tan, and Tan means "pond." So the pond they were referring to was actually the second character of this person's name. Wei Shan thought, "This must be an enlightened monk; he'll help me become enlightened." But Zhou Tan only directed him to yet another person -- he told him to go look for someone called Bai Zhang.

Have you heard of Master Bai Zhang? How many people have heard of him?

How about Master Ma Zu? Master Bai Zhang was Master Ma Zu's disciple.

Has anyone heard of Rebecca? She is my disciple. [Laughter]

At the time Wei Shan met Master Bai Zhang, he was already 23 years old, and he was not yet enlightened, but when Bai Zhang saw him he said, "Okay, why don't you become my attendant?" So wherever Master Bai Zhang went, Wei Shan Ling You followed.

One day Master Bai Zhang asked him, "Who are you?" and he answered, "I am Ling You." At this moment there was some doubt arising in Wei Shan's mind, and he thought, "That's strange, Master knows who I am, why is he asking me who I am?" Master Bai Zhang then told Wei Shan to go and check the fire, to see if it was still burning. Wei Shan looked and saw only ash, so he told Master Bai Zhang that there was no fire, just ash. Master Bai Zhang himself went to look and he dug deeper beneath the ashes and found there were traces of fire there, and so he said to Wei Shan,

"Isn't this fire here?" Wei Shan Ling You saw the fire and at that moment, he was enlightened. Now, I'd like to ask you, how did he become enlightened? You've heard this pretty long story -- Wei Shan traveling to the mountain, and hearing about the pond, and expecting to become enlightened, and finally meeting Master Bai Zhang... Then Bai Zhang's question "Who are you?" kind of shook him up a little bit. And then he was asked to look at the fire, and he said there was no fire, and then Master Bai Zhang asked, "Isn't there fire here?" That's when he got enlightened. What happened was that the whole time he wasn't paying attention to the wisdom he already possessed. He wasn't paying attention to the wisdom within himself. It was only when Master Bai Zhang showed him the fire hidden in the ashes that he began to see that he had always possessed this buddha nature hidden within himself.

Actually it's not so rare or so surprising that he got enlightened in this way. However, if you go to look for the fire in the ashes, you're not going to get enlightened, because the most important part here is the process itself. The whole time that he was looking for enlightenment, how could he become enlightened? He was looking for the path, looking for the path, and he couldn't find the path because he wasn't paying attention. The moment that he was paying attention, in that moment, he found that his mind was the path.

So Wei Shan was very happy and very grateful to Master Bai Zhang, and he described his experience to him. And Master Bai Zhang responded, "Oh, you have wondered off the road here." This is strange -- Wei Shan experiences enlightenment, yet Master Bai Zhang responds that he's gone off the road. Do you understand why Master Bai Zhang responded that way, why he had gone off track? Smart people, please tell me.

[Responses by listeners: "There is nothing to attain"; "Bodhisattvas have no obstructions..."]

Master Bai Zhang told Wei Shan these two things. First he told him that in order for enlightenment to happen, it has to be the right time, when all the causes and conditions have ripened. Without this, no matter what you do, you will not experience enlightenment. So enlightenment is really nothing to be excited or overjoyed about, because you haven't really achieved it, and you haven't gained anything. And Master Bai Zhang went on to say that actually there's no difference in a person before and after enlightenment, it's just that before enlightenment they do not know, and after enlightenment they know, that actually there is no such thing as an enlightened mind, and no such thing as the phenomenon of enlightenment. Why did he say that? And why did he say that a person is no different before and after enlightenment, why did

he say that? Peter, maybe you can answer that question. Does anyone want to guess?

I believe with 100 people there will be 100 different answers. And I myself don't know which answer would be correct. Maybe, however, I can tell you a story, which is actually a koan in the Chan tradition. There was a monk who left home, who became a monk when he was very young, and who after many years decided to go back to his hometown to see what was going on. When he got there, the people actually recognized him. They saw him and said, "Oh, you're that little kid, you haven't changed at all, you look exactly as you did before." And this old monk thought this was quite strange. "How can I be the same, I'm much older than before?" What had actually happened was that everyone had aged -- the monk had aged, and the other people in town had aged as well. The old monk said, "I'm actually the same as before, however I'm not the same either." Do you understand this? I'm still the same me as the old me but I'm not the same as the old me. Is this a contradiction? Why isn't it a contradiction?

When we talk about the person being no different before and after enlightenment, we mean that the self before enlightenment is no different from the self after enlightenment. What is different is that before enlightenment one sees vexation as wisdom, and afterwards one sees wisdom as vexation. Let me repeat. Before enlightenment one sees vexation as wisdom; after enlightenment one sees wisdom as vexation. Do you understand? No, you don't understand?

What is wisdom? Smart people take vexation as wisdom; dull people see wisdom as vexation. Smart people, before enlightenment, have a mind of discrimination, a mind that is constantly discriminating, picking and choosing. This mind of discrimination sees vexation as wisdom. Without this mind of discrimination, however dull one is, whatever one knows is wisdom. And once one has understood that there is no such thing as an enlightened mind, and no such thing as enlightenment, one will see that holding on to the idea of wisdom is vexation. Why do we say that, that enlightened people see wisdom as vexation? Because when they give rise to the thought, "I have wisdom," they are aware that they have vexation in that moment. When there's no idea, "I have wisdom," then there's no problem, no vexation in that moment. Therefore, when people come to me and say that I have a lot of wisdom, it makes me very ashamed, because they are actually criticizing me, saying a bad thing about me.

So Master Bai Zhang went on, telling Wei Shan that there is no difference between ordinary beings and saints, and no difference between liberation and samsara. Liberation, and the cycle of birth and death, they are no different, they are the same.

They are only different when you yourself start discriminating between the two, vexing yourself with the idea that you have to become a saint, you have to escape from samsara, you have to become liberated. Again, it's very important to understand that there's no such thing as an enlightened mind, and there is no such phenomenon as enlightenment, please remember this. So as long as you see your experience as something special, as long as you use your mind to attain this experience of enlightenment, then you still have a vexed mind. It's very important to understand that having experienced enlightenment doesn't make you a special person, you're still the same person. If you think, "I have experienced enlightenment... I'm special now... I'm different," then you're in trouble.

When one who has experienced enlightenment feels liberated from the cycle of samsara, and clearly sees that this is distinctly different from before, this is merely small liberation. In the truly great liberation, that of maha nirvana, one would see no difference between nirvana and samsara. One would no longer be attached to the idea that there is a samsara and a nirvana, so one would see no distinction between the two, and thus would have no sense of being completely different from before.

So Master Bai Zhang was trying to help Wei Shan turn his small enlightenment into a complete enlightenment. When he brushed the ash and showed his disciple the fire, and Wei Shan saw it and became so overjoyed, Master Bai Zhang could see that this was just a little tiny enlightenment, and therefore he continued his teaching.

And now our time is up this evening, so if you'd like to experience complete enlightenment you'll have to come next time. Goodnight, and thank you everybody.

The First Noble Truth

After nodding vigorously at Dharma talks,
after prostrating myself dizzy for the girls at retreat,
after imagining I was aware of everything,
after imagining nothing affected me,
after imagining I was free of imaginings,
after despising non-Buddhists and non-practitioners,
after forgetting that every human being and animal can be a Buddha,
after badgering myself black and blue,
after sitting-twisted as a pretzel - and thinking that alone would break my chain of suffering,
after slouching or hurrying through work to sit some more,
after focusing my monkey mind on myself alone,
after believing I was only a sack of pain,
after relieving that pain with joints, six-packs and sardonic self-presentation,
after feeling the fire burn deeper every morning,
after burning through the bottom,
after flaming through every pore;
I crawled back to the temple and cried by the Buddha statue.
It was indifferent - a painted hunk of stone.
My head aflame, I was ready to begin my practice.

--Mike Morical

Hang The Word "Death" From Your Eyelash

Retreat Report by N.M.

I hadn't realized going into this retreat that it was number 77 for Shifu and the Center, and number 40 for me. Additionally, it was an unusual eight-day retreat, with seven full days of practice, as opposed to six. That one more day made an enormous difference. For years I had been waiting for the day when I would not feel fear and dread about attending a retreat, and this time, because we were on retreat longer, it naturally came about. I was so pleased to feel very settled-in, relaxed and stable, instead of just hoping to get through those 6 fleeting days.

One of the tremendous benefits I see from this practice is that despite a coarse, clinging mind, I am willing to accept my "stage", and I am very willing to take responsibility for working on changing it. For instance, I was horrified, some retreats back, by the number of "I's". This time around I saw the depth of the pride-filled scenarios I cast myself in. I also realized how much I justified my behavior. I had to constantly drop such thoughts in order to return to the method, hundreds and hundreds of times of beginning again. For years I had seen myself as the karmic victim, tossed by uncontrollable problems and circumstances. Now I saw to what extent I was the creator.

What also worked well was when Shifu told us, "Why feel bothered by pain in the legs? It is an illusory pain because it is not permanent." When I felt uncomfortable, I reminded myself of these words, and I was able to sit longer without fidgeting, and without feeling overwhelmed by thinking, "Is this pain really what practice is about?" Another time Shifu and the monks led us in repentance prostrations. Shifu told us that when we are using our methods and we realize our minds are wandering we should tell ourselves, "I feel shame for these thoughts. The fact that I choose discursive thoughts over the method is shameful." As a variation, I tried to practice, "One, I promise; two, I promise; three, I promise," and so on. In this way I attempted to keep my vow of working hard. I succeeded to some extent, but as before, I was able to see to what extent I chose to work hard or not, to be self-centered or not.

Among the evening lectures, the one that stands out is when Shifu told us that a practitioner hangs the word "death" from his eyelash, keeping the concept constantly in front of him so that he values the precious work and maintains his determination and effort. One way to support this: when we are going through such-and-such, ask,

"Who is going through such-and-such?" This minimizes self-attachments. I find it very useful in everyday life - to see the illusory pain or pleasure of the moment. On this retreat we were blessed by wonderful breezes, by outdoor methods of contemplation (which led to stronger sitting practice), and by the lovely family of mother cat and kittens in the backyard. We were also taught a lesson in giving up our attachment to Shifu. He needed to leave on the sixth night, so we gave our oral reports that afternoon, and practiced again that evening after dinner. We could hear the commotion in the lobby as Shifu and his entourage left, and at 10pm, when we prostrated for the evening, we did one more for Shifu. His image was so vivid, but also so illusory. That was one of my hardest moments.

The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

Donation for Rebuilding Educational Facilities in the Wake of the Earthquake in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is a country stricken by a daunting array of difficulties and calamities. Although the Taliban's terrorist regime has been ousted, years of continuous warfare have made life grim for the Afghan people. Recently, a powerful earthquake struck Afghanistan, causing almost 5,000 deaths. This is truly a human catastrophe. Hearing such news, one finds it hard not to weep.

Three years ago, after the powerful earthquake of September 21st, we in Taiwan experienced the warmth and generosity of the members of the international community who came to our aid. Now, when Afghanistan is struck with a similar disaster, we must extend a helping hand to them.

Disaster relief recognizes neither borders nor distinctions between races or religions. We are brothers and sisters living together in the same global village. Therefore, we should recognize that we are all in the same boat, and support and help each other in the spirit of brotherhood.

The Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association has donated one million NT dollars in the hope of drawing forth greater philanthropists than ourselves. We are grateful to the Chinese Muslim Association who accepted our donation on behalf of Afghanistan, to be used for the rebuilding of their educational facilities in the aftermath of this disaster. It is hoped that by taking this initiative, we will inspire virtuous people from all walks of life, in Taiwan and abroad, to contribute to this great undertaking.

For the sake of the harmony of the people of the world, I would like to take this opportunity to implore everyone to cease all suspicion, discrimination, enmity, conflict, violent struggle, and slaughter. Natural disasters already inflict enough suffering; how can we bear to see the

world subjected to more disasters because of humanity's ignorance?

--Chan Master Sheng Yen

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association
Taiwan, March 30, 2002

China Airline Flight Crashes; DDM Aids Rescue and Relief

China Airline Flight CI-611, bound for Hong Kong, broke up over the Penghu Islands shortly after take-off on May 25, killing all 225 passengers and crew on board. Immediately after learning the news, Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) organized an "Emergency Task Force" and sent an End-of-Life Chanting Group to the transit hotel at CKS Memorial Airport to participate in the rehabilitation and relief efforts.

In the early morning of May 26, DDM's Ven. Guodong led a group of volunteers to Penghu. They went immediately to the Air Force gym, where the victim's bodies were placed, to give consolation to the living and chanting assistance for the deceased. A "DDM Service Center" was established and groups of DDM volunteers flew from Taiwan to Penghu every day to assist the families in rehabilitation and relief of grief, providing manuals with advice, ritual Pure Land shrouds, Dharma-talk cassettes, and counseling advice.

On May 27, DDM established the "DDM Service Counter" at the Second Municipal Funeral Parlor in Taipei to provide end-of-life chanting services for the victims. In the meantime, DDM and other Buddhist groups took turns reciting the name of Amitabha Buddha, with the hope that the dignified recitation was able to comfort the family members.

In addition, DDM also opened a "Sending Blessings for the China Airlines Air Crash Victims" column on its website (www.ddm.org.tw). Internet users and victims' families can send their prayers and blessings for the victims to the web site. All these blessings and prayers were sent to the victims in the Buddhist recitation rituals held simultaneously in six DDM branches on June 1.

Master Sheng Yen sent a fax from New York on the evening of May 25 asking that in addition to providing chanting assistance for the victims, DDM followers should be mindful of the suffering of the victims' families, in accordance with DDM's commitment to "building a pure land on earth".

Inter-religious Dialogue at Gethsemani Abbey

Guo Yuan Fa Shi represented the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association at an inter-religious dialogue at Gethsemani Abbey near Louisville, Kentucky, April 13--18, 2002. Gethsemani is a Trappist Cistercian Abbey and is the former home of the late Thomas Merton. Representatives from American Buddhist and Christian organizations came together to share their ideas.

More than seventy participants, including over twenty clergy from the Chinese, Theravadan, Japanese, Korean, Tibetan, and American Buddhist communities, arrived at the Abbey for the purpose of fostering a dialogue about spiritual practice and experience between American monastics and contemplative practitioners.

The main theme of the conference was suffering and the transformation of suffering. Specific aspects of the topic were addressed each day, including suffering caused by a sense of unworthiness and alienation, suffering caused by greed and consumerism, suffering caused by personal and structural violence, and suffering caused by sickness and aging. Each session was opened with statements from a Buddhist and a Christian representative to initiate the dialogue, which were then followed by questions and commentary. Guo Yuan Fa Shi presented Shifu's ideas of the four blessings and the bodhisattva spirit, and outlined the methods of Chan and Pure Land practice.

At the end of the conference both sides felt that there was much more to discuss and many more profound ideas to pursue. The conference had helped to reveal the strengths and limitations of each tradition and assisted everyone in gaining a better mutual understanding, thereby enriching and uplifting everyone's religious awareness.

Buddha's Birthday Celebrated at Chan Center

Master Sheng Yen and Master Jen Chun welcomed all to the 2626th Birthday of the Buddha on May 19, 2002, at the Chan Meditation Center in Elmhurst. They were joined by a number of the monks and nuns from Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey who had accompanied Master Jen Chun to the celebration. The celebration began with a short history of the Buddha's life, followed by prayer, the traditional bathing of the baby Buddha, chanting of the Heart Sutra and receiving the blessing of the Three Jewels.

Master Jen Chun then offered a short talk reminding us of the importance of applying the teachings of the Buddha in our daily lives. We then made the offering to the sangha and midday offering before proceeding to lunch. As usual, the chefs and kitchen volunteers put forth their best efforts and provided us with a delicious variety of vegetarian dishes and a special birthday cake.

After lunch, Master Sheng Yen gave a Dharma talk, continuing his series of lectures on the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. He cautioned us that the enthusiastic and diligent practice of the beginning Chan student is frequently replaced with laziness and complacency after a few months or years. He emphasized that the practice of Chan should become like a continuous stream of water, ceaselessly flowing until it reaches the ocean. Gradually, our experience of the Dharma strengthens and we experience a great joy. Shifu reminded us that Dharma joy arises from two sources--application of correct view with regard to the Buddhist concepts, and application of our method of practice in the cultivation of samadhi. This samadhi, or concentration, overflows into daily life, and we learn to act with mindfulness and peace.

The Chan Hall was beautifully decorated by designer Susanna Wong, with floral arrangements, flower photographs, and a very special collection of pictures by artist Lawrence Waldron. Mr. Waldron's artworks, based on lotus leaves, will be offered for sale at the Chan Center Auction in the Fall.

The afternoon's entertainment, introduced by emcee Bob Weick, included a very professional sampling of Peking Opera performed by

the China Opera Group, followed by a humorous silent drama, Fresh Snow in August, directed by Renee Su, illustrating the distractions encountered when meditating amidst the clamor of daily life. Gao Xing Jian designed a clever backdrop for the performances by Susan Chen, Bob Weick, Linda Tao, David Kabacinski, and Sylvie Sun. Zhou Ping provided the lively musical accompaniment on the erhu.

Julie and Sandy Kai, in brilliantly colored costumes, performed a fascinating Chopstick Dance using the chopsticks as percussion instruments. Yilien Hsu then conducted the Dharma Drum Mountain Choir with piano accompaniment by Ya Ping Chou, which included two pieces written by Master Sheng Yen. The "hills came alive with the sound of music" with their rendition of Edelweiss.

A graceful Yuan Ji Dance was performed by Jacklyn Tung, Lucy Chang and Lily Yung, followed by a modern Chinese dance by Shen Hwa Cheng and Shi Yuen Chow. Tenor Huo Lei sang operatic arias, and the afternoon's entertainment drew to a close with the good humor and magic tricks of Robert Lapidés.

Warmest thanks to all of the volunteers and participants who made the 2626th birthday celebration the wonderful day that it was.

Shifu Lectures in Chicago

On May 3, 2002, Master Sheng Yen made his first trip to Chicago to give a public lecture. The Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) established a Chicago Chapter in 1994, and its relatively small membership has often invited Shifu to come and speak, so his appearance caused quite a stir in the Chicago Buddhist community. Iris Wang, the first chapter president, and an indispensable volunteer with Dharma Drum Publishing, and Isabel Huang, the current chapter president, led a group of over 20 members who greeted Shifu and his entourage at the airport with banners and flowers.

The next morning started with a workshop for the training of DDMBA chapter presidents and officers. More than 40 members from as far away as Vancouver, Toronto, Florida, North Carolina, Vermont and Michigan attended the workshop. Shifu reported the latest news from

DDMBA headquarters in Taiwan, and reemphasized the mission of DDMBA, i.e., educating Buddhists in the Chinese Chan tradition and promoting Shifu's "spiritual environmentalism." Guo Yuan Fa Shi reported on the activities at Dharma Drum Retreat Center and Chan Meditation Center in NY, and we went over the activities and plans for our DDMBA chapters in the USA and Canada.

The evening, May 4, at a colorfully decorated auditorium at the Regina Dominican High School in a Chicago suburb, more than 600 people waited anxiously for Shifu's arrival, and burst into spontaneous applause when Shifu finally appeared. He began his talk, "Chan and Life," by defining the meaning of Chan in our daily life. He said that Chan is nothing but our normal life in mindfulness. Chan is not only in sitting meditation, but also in walking, working, sleeping and in our daily relationships with others. As long as we are mindful and equanimious, we are in the state of Chan. At the end of the lecture, inspired by Shifu's words, more than 80 members of the audience remained and took refuge in the Three Jewels.

The next day, May 5, Guo Yuan Fa Shi conducted a beginners' meditation class for more than 70 people. Our deepest gratitude goes out to the members of DDMBA Chicago who worked so hard to make Shifu's first trip to Chicago such a rousing success.

Zen Camp 2002

The drive to the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Ridge, NY, normally takes about two hours from the Chan Meditation Center in Queens, but on Friday, August 2, heavy rains made it a five-hour trip. Nevertheless, Zen Camp 2002 began as scheduled, with plenty of time for the more than 60 participants to get settled in and prepared for a busy weekend of educational, spiritual, physical and just plain enjoyable activities.

The weekend was organized and led by Dr. Les Cole, a psychologist and Buddhist practitioner based in Atlanta, Georgia. Instead of separating teenagers and adults, as in past years, Dr. Cole had everybody work together on a series of exercises designed to improve mutual understanding within families by teaching about differing

personality types.

On the first evening everyone filled out a questionnaire called the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Survey. From the results of this survey, participants were divided into two groups, extroverts and introverts. Within those two categories, there were six other personality types identified, with sixteen possible combinations of ways to deal with the world.

The next day, Dr. Cole organized the first in a series of five workshops designed to illustrate how we look at the world. What would your ideal vacation be? How do you cooperate physically with others? How would you lay off an employee, or move objects to create a circle? Through this hands-on approach, Dr. Cole illustrated how we interact with others and approach problems in personal ways based on our personality types. No approaches were considered right or wrong, although it was emphasized that everyone could benefit from strengthening weaknesses.

Guo Yuan Fa Shi led the morning exercises, and gave Dharma lessons by leading group activities. He divided participants into groups and had each group choose an everyday natural object, such as a pair of seed pods, to present a lesson on the inter-connectedness of all phenomena. Later, he led a walking meditation around the lake, with everyone holding full bowls of water, trying not to spill a single drop-another ingenious way of teaching the Dharma through doing rather than just listening.

The physical part of the weekend had participants learning both yoga and gongfu. Rikki Asher had us on the mats doing yoga, twisting and stretching our bodies and bringing them in tune with our minds. To do these exercises correctly, we had to be mindful of our bodies. (It is not a coincidence that we do the same thing in sitting meditation.) David Berman gave us a wonderful introduction to Wu Mei Gongfu, which he teaches in New York City. With his wife Kimberly assisting him, Mr. Berman taught some of the basic movements, movements that required that the mind pay careful attention to the body.

In addition to educational activities and Dharma practice, there were sports and games, the delicious vegetarian food, and a campfire under

the stars, all contributing to a very successful Zen Camp 2002.

Shifu Inaugurates New Jersey Center

On Saturday, May 11, the New Jersey chapter of DDMBA inaugurated its new center at 789 Jersey Ave, New Brunswick, with a purification ceremony led by Master Sheng Yen, and a "Zen/Chan Cultural Awareness Bazaar." Over 400 people turned out to join in the celebration.

The bazaar featured 13 booths housed in a 1200 square foot tent erected especially for the occasion, and included demonstrations of relaxation techniques, calligraphy, and flower arranging, as well as free consultations with a Chinese herbal doctor. In a separate, smaller tent, exhibits introduced Chan Master Sheng Yen and the work of his Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association, including future projects in the US and Taiwan, all presented in Chinese and English. For more information about the new center, or to volunteer, please contact Mr. Jau-Fang Wu at jf53wu@yahoo.com.tw.

Huatou Retreat

From May 23 to June 2 Chan Master Sheng Yen led his 97th retreat in the US at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, New York. The 47 participants included quite a number of young people in their 20s and 30s. Master Sheng Yen explains that this is a time of life when one can easily generate power in one's practice. This was a huatou retreat; daily Dharma talks were devoted to instructions on using the huatou method.

One notable event during this retreat: Master Sheng Yen has formally acknowledged Gilbert Gutierrez as his Dharma heir, making a total of five Westerners who have received Dharma transmission from Shifu.

During the discussion period at the end of the retreat, Gilbert shared an experience that led him to a deeper understanding of the verse, "to know all the Buddhas, of the past, present and future, see that dharmadhatu nature is all created by the mind." There was a very small

insect flitting about in the interview room where Master Sheng Yen was conducting interviews, and Shifu asked Gilbert to catch the insect and take it outside so that it could fly away safely. So, between groups, Gilbert attempted to catch it, but the insect was so tiny, and its wings and legs were so fragile, that he was afraid of harming it. The more he tried to catch it, the more agitated it became. Gilbert finally gave up and told Shifu that he couldn't catch the insect without doing it harm. He turned to the insect and implored it quietly, "I am not trying to harm you-if you could only stop for a moment, and let me take you to safety." Amazingly, the insect stopped flying and slowly climbed onto Gilbert's outstretched fingers and allowed Gilbert to take it to safety outdoors. "We are all like the insect, flying about rapidly in our lives, unaware of the imminent danger we are in," Gilbert said. "If we only could stop and climb onto Master Sheng Yen's outstretched palm, he could show us to safety."

Silent Illumination Retreat

Chan Master Sheng Yen led his 98th Chan retreat in the United States, a silent illumination retreat, from June 27th to July 7th at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Upstate New York. This was the largest retreat Shifu has ever held in the West, with 105 participants from nine different countries, including three of Shifu's Dharma heirs (Ven. Ji Cheng Bikshu from Malaysia, Max Kalin of Zurich, Switzerland, and Zarko Andricevic from Croatia), and two Dharma teachers from the Insight Meditation Center, Michael Grady and Narayan Grady.

Throughout the retreat, Master Sheng Yen's Dharma talks referred to the method of silent illumination: "Without encountering, it knows; not opposing conditions, it illumines." He emphasized that once perception and method are unified, Chan concepts like impermanence, no-self, and no-form become methods in themselves, and he gave specific instructions in the use of these methods.

News From Dharma Drum Publications

The last year has been a busy one at DDP. In addition to the release of *There Is No Suffering*, Master Sheng Yen's commentary on the Heart Sutra, and *Chan Comes West*, essays on the path of practice and the practice of transmission by Master Sheng Yen and his four Western Dharma heirs, a number of Master Sheng Yen's books have been translated and released in new editions worldwide.

In the U.S.A., due to popular demand, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, published by Oxford University Press, has been made available in paperback. The following four books have been translated into Indonesian: *Oxherding at Morgan's Bay* and *Sword of Wisdom*, published by Yayansan Penerbit Karaniya Press; *Faith in Mind* and *In the Spirit of Chan*, published by Suwung Press.

Subtle Wisdom has been translated into Italian and released in Italy by Oscar Mondadori Press.

An excerpt from *Subtle Wisdom* was published in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, Summer 2002 in the article, "Loving the Enemy", teachings by Jeffrey Hoplins, the Dalai Lama, Master Sheng Yen, Pema Chodron and Thich Nhat Hanh.
