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– Chan Master Sheng Yen,
from his new pamphlet,
*Why Take Refuge in the
Three Jewels.*

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From The Editor

“In any one human, there are a hundred times as many microbial genes as there are human genes.” So says David Relman, an infectious disease investigator at Stanford University. Relman studies the human body’s microbiota, the population of microbes that live in us, on us, with us, as us. He sees disease not as an invasion of us by them, but as a shift in the balance of the whole cell population of the body, a population in which human cells make up only about ten per cent. The gastrointestinal tract alone contains 100 trillion microbes from 1000 different species, and the health, the very life of the system depends as much on those microbial cells as it does on the cells that make up the actual organs, the cells formerly known as me.

In other words, I am a village, and complete strangers live in 90 per cent of the houses.

For those of us contemplating the impurity of the body, this proposes some more work to do. The Buddha tells Ananda to “contemplate this body...as being full of many impurities... head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin...liver, pleura, spleen...feces, bile, phlegm...” but his exhaustive list of unsavory stuff isn’t the half of it. Today we could well add, “Bacteria, proto-bacteria, archaea, methanogens, treponemes, viruses, retro-viruses, fungi, mildews, slime-molds...” If the idea is to break the attachment to the contents of the skin-bag, this is working for me already.

For those of us contemplating the absence of self, there would seem to be that much less work to do. Most of what I consider me is in fact not—it’s no more me than the neighbors, the tenants upstairs, the bugs in the basement. Buddhist logic demonstrates that there



is no self that can be found in any of my various parts, but there is no need to demonstrate that my self cannot be found in the germs colonizing my gut—it is, pardon the expression, self-evident.

Or is it? For what Relman and his colleagues are suggesting is a new understanding of ourselves as a life form, one that sees us as a composite of many different species. In fact, the National Institutes of Health is considering initiating a genetic inventory of the body's microbial communities—a Human Microbiome Project as adjunct to the recently completed Human Genome Project—that would extend by several orders of magnitude the genetic definition of what it is to be human.

And if such an extension—which might be a while in coming, given the thirteen years it took to document the genome—were to redefine human life, how might it change our

understanding of human death? When I die—that is, when my human cells die—what will happen to the other 90 per cent of me? And if 90 per cent of me were still alive, could we really say that I'd died? My sense of self would be gone (presumably), but since we agree that my sense of self is an incorrect view, wouldn't it make sense to determine life and death by majority rule?

The Dalai Lama, a fan of science, has famously said that if science were to prove Buddhism wrong, Buddhism would have to change. It was a unique statement for a religious leader—an enlightened statement, in the Western meaning of the term—but it was an easy promise. Science rarely proves anything, and even if it manages to sequence the DNA of every micro-organism in every crevice of the human body, it still won't be able to demonstrate that any of them are me, or that every one of them isn't inherently a buddha.



Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

The following is an excerpt from the pamphlet Why Take Refuge in the Three Jewels? by Venerable Chan Master Sheng Yen, to be published by the Sheng Yen Education Foundation later this year. The pamphlet, which will be for free distribution, was translated by Larry Liang and Guogu, edited by Harry Miller with the assistance of Ayn Steele, and excerpted for Chan Magazine by David Berman.

What is Taking Refuge in the Three Jewels?

Taking refuge means returning, taking shelter, relying on, trusting. Any action that involves returning, depending, taking shelter, and trusting is considered taking refuge. This phrase is not exclusive to Buddhism.

Children take refuge in their mothers' embrace; they rely on and trust their mothers, and, as a result, gain a sense of security. This sense of security arises from the power of taking refuge. Any such action that involves trust and a sense of security can be considered taking refuge, whether it is a secular relationship or a religious belief.

However, objects that are temporary, unstable, and unreliable cannot be true objects of refuge. People may climb a tree or a rooftop for safety in a huge flood, but rising water and strong winds may destroy their sanctuary. A mountain would be a far better haven. Who wouldn't choose this option over a house or a tree? Refuge in the Three Jewels is stronger than any of these. When you see that nothing is permanent and that everything is contingent and interdependent, you come to realize that there is little security in parents, teachers, plans, bosses, fate, strength, wealth—in all the things we take for granted. As objects of refuge they are highly unreliable. Parents pass away, teachings become outdated, plans are thwarted, bosses come and go, and fate is unpredictable. Strength, schemes, and



wealth are even more illusory and ephemeral. Today's king is tomorrow's prisoner; today's millionaire tomorrow's pauper.

A path that leads you home is a genuine refuge. Places where you can put up your feet and relax are not worthy refuges. A practice like this would be no different from using a clay ox to cross a river. You may have a sense of security when you first enter the river, but the clay will crumble and you will sink.

Why are the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha called Jewels? It is because they generate an inexhaustible amount of merit and wisdom that they are considered genuine "jewels." Gold, silver, and precious gems are rare and valuable. That is why they are called "treasures"; the merit and wisdom of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha can bring us benefits in the world and beyond it. They are more precious than ordinary jewels because they bring peace to the world and help us thoroughly transcend our negative emotions and sufferings, and achieve awakening. The Three Jewels are the best of all jewels.

We are originally buddhas, and we are intrinsically connected with the Three Jewels. Because we misunderstand our original nature, we wander the cycle of birth and death without finding the way home. Taking refuge is starting the journey homeward.

Different Levels of the Three Jewels

The Three Jewels may be understood on different levels and in many ways. We will first divide them into two groups, that of the Phenomenal and the Fundamental. These two groupings can be understood in the context

of the teachings of "two truths" in Buddhism. These refer to the "absolute" truth and the "conventional" truth. The absolute or fundamental truth is the view of reality as experienced by the enlightened. Since it transcends dualistic logic, it cannot exactly be expressed in words and conceptual constructs. The relative truth is reality on a phenomenal level; it is what ordinary people experience, and is expressed readily in dualistic concepts and words. For a deeply enlightened person who has realized the absolute truth, the two truths are inseparable. But for a person who only understands the conventional truth, absolute truth remains an abstract concept.

These two truths provide a framework to understanding the different levels of taking refuge in the Three Jewels. We start by taking refuge in the Phenomenal Three Jewels, that is, a true refuge in this world that provides insight and guidance toward awakening and liberation. The Phenomenal Three Jewels are tangible, so they are easily understood by ordinary people. Once nirvana is realized—that is, you are fully awakened to the inseparability of the two truths—you embody the Fundamental Three Jewels. At this point, to speak of a refuge outside of you becomes irrelevant; the Fundamental Three Jewels are inseparable from you. This is abstract to most people, but quite clear to someone who has already actualized the true suchness of self-nature. We will return to this issue below. For now, it is important to know that all sentient beings have buddha-nature, the potentiality for buddhahood. It is only because of the vexations and confusion of karma that we cannot perceive this truth. The reason we take refuge in the Phenomenal Three Jewels is to find and manifest our buddha-nature in the Fundamental Three Jewels.

The Phenomenal Three Jewels can be divided into the Abiding Three Jewels and the Manifested Three Jewels.

The Fundamental Three Jewels can be divided into the Three Jewels of One Essence and the Three Jewels of Principle.

The Phenomenal

The Abiding Three Jewels

The Abiding Three Jewels describe aspects of the Three Jewels that are directly perceivable in the ordinary, phenomenal world: 1) The Buddha Jewel—statues of the Buddha made of jade, stone, gold, bronze, clay, and wood or images of the Buddha in oil paint, ink, silk embroidery, and drawings. 2) The Dharma Jewel—the three collections of scriptures that include the sutras (recorded words of the Buddha), the shastras (treatises and teachings by eminent practitioners), and the vinaya (the body of texts containing the precepts, which serve as a guide for the behavior of Buddhist practitioners). 3) The Sangha Jewel—Buddhist monastics that shave their heads and wear the prescribed robes. Their work is to perpetuate Buddhism in the world.

The Manifested Three Jewels

The Manifested Three Jewels refer to what brought Buddhism into the world: The Buddha Jewel here is the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni, who attained enlightenment and entered nirvana; the Dharma Jewel constitutes the teachings he gave during that time—the Four Noble Truths, the Six Perfections, the Eightfold Path, the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination—important teachings that all Buddhists should know; the Sangha

Jewel are those who followed him during that time. Thus, the Buddha appeared in the world, gave teachings, and formed a community of monastic practitioners. (For those of you who wish to learn more about the teachings that constitute the Dharma Jewel, please refer to my book, *There is No Suffering: A Commentary on the Heart Sutra*, for a full explanation of these teachings.)

The Fundamental

The Three Jewels of One Essence

Each of the Three Jewels contains the virtue and merit of all of the Three Jewels. First, the Buddha illuminates and enlightens, so he is the Buddha Jewel. He gives Dharma teachings, is free from the bounds of all phenomenal reality, and has the ability to preserve and maintain the purity of the teachings. Hence he is also the Dharma Jewel. The Buddha is free from transgression and contention, so he is also the embodiment of harmony, which represents the Sangha Jewel. Second, the Dharma awakens beings to Buddhahood, so it is the Buddha Jewel. It has the function of preserving itself, so it is the Dharma Jewel. Because all Dharmas are equal and mutually non-obstructive, it is equanimous and harmonious. Therefore, the Dharma is also the Sangha Jewel. Third, the Sangha Jewel includes those who are wise and luminous, so it includes the Buddha Jewel. Because its purpose is to preserve the Dharma, it is also the Dharma Jewel. Moreover, it is harmonious, so it is the Sangha Jewel as well.

The Three Jewels of Principle

The Three Jewels of Principle refer to ultimate reality or the absolute truth in the two truths

paradigm. It is the world as experienced by someone who is enlightened. For this reason, it is the ultimate place of refuge.

Venerable Master Yinshun (1906-2005) explains the Three Jewels of Principle from two perspectives: that of Hinayana, personal liberation, and of Mahayana, universal liberation. The Hinayana and Mahayana are two main paths of Buddhism. The former focuses on the awakening of oneself; the latter on the awakening of all beings. Both paths identify the Three Jewels in terms of their intrinsic virtue. This virtue has many names, as seen above, but the essence is the same—the state of liberation and full awakening itself. Master Yinshun states:

“The real object of refuge lies in the actual virtues of the Three Jewels. These virtues have been discussed in many ways; two points of view will be introduced here. The first sees the Buddha Jewel as identical with the Buddha’s faultless virtues. According to the teachings of individual liberation, the Buddha’s faultless virtues are the five attributes of the Dharmakaya (or “true body of reality”), although in the Mahayana teachings they are embraced by perfect enlightenment (the fourfold wisdom). The Dharma Jewel is the true Dharma—that is, nirvana itself. The Sangha Jewel is identical with the faultless virtues of those who are still learners and those who are not. According to the individual

liberation path, the faultless virtues are those of the four stages and four grades of sainthood; but according to the Mahayana path of universal liberation, they are the faultless virtues of the Bodhisattva Way (or the ‘universal liberation way,’ which includes those who gained individual liberation upon hearing the Buddha’s teachings and those who gained liberation without a teacher by contemplating dependent origination).

“The second view of the real virtue of the Three Jewels draws from the Mahayana teachings of universal liberation, according to which the Buddha treasure is identical to the pure realm of ultimate reality—revealed ultimately, completely, and perfectly (in essence, form, action, and function). The Sangha treasure is the pure realm of ultimate reality that is partially revealed. That is, it refers to those who have reached profound states of realization of the teachings. The

Dharma Jewel is the universal realm of ultimate reality—without increase or decrease, neither dualistic nor discriminating (and called suchness, reality, and so on). The other standard terms for the Three Jewels—the Three Jewels in One Essence, the Three Jewels of Principle, and the Abiding Three Jewels – all refer to the same Three Jewels discussed above, but they are explained in different ways.”(The Way to Buddhahood, pp. 23-24; translation slightly modified)

“THE FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF THE DHARMAKAYA REFER TO THE VIRTUES OF A FULLY AWAKENED BEING: MORAL PERFECTION, CESSATION OF DELUDED IDEAS, THE WISDOM OF OMNISCIENCE, ATTAINMENT OF NIRVANA, AND THE PERFECT KNOWLEDGE OF LIBERATION.”

The five attributes of the Dharmakaya refer to the virtues of a fully awakened being. They are: moral perfection, cessation of deluded ideas, the wisdom of omniscience, attainment of nirvana, and the perfect knowledge of the state of liberation. Nirvana here means the cessation of greed, aversion, and ignorance and the perfection of awakening. This relates to perfect enlightenment, the content of which is known as the four wisdoms. Each of these four wisdoms describes a function of a buddha's insight. They are: the "great mirror wisdom," which reflects all forms exactly as they are; the "wisdom of equality," which is the result of being free from self-grasping; the "wisdom of wondrous observation," which is the ability to discern with precision the various workings of the phenomenal world; and lastly the "wisdom of unrestricted activity," which is the ability to save sentient beings according to their spiritual capacities. We all have these perfect virtues within us—all of the qualities of the buddhas are ours if only we can free ourselves from the bondage of karma, vexations, and self-referential clinging. It is in this way that the virtues function: when we take refuge in them, we take refuge in what is most intrinsic in ourselves, our potential to be awakened and to perfect that awakening.

Just as conventional truth is inseparable from absolute truth, we must realize that without the Abiding Three Jewels, the Three Jewels of Principle will not manifest. Without the Three Jewels of Principle, the Abiding Three Jewels could not exist. The Abiding Three Jewels are the great function of the Three Jewels of Principle. The Three Jewels of Principle are the whole of the Abiding Three Jewels. Faith in Buddhism should begin with believing in the Three Jewels. The reason for believing in the

Abiding Three Jewels is to facilitate understanding of the Three Jewels of Principle.

There are some Buddhist devotees who, without having any real understanding of the true meaning of the Three Jewels of Principle, claim that they only believe in the Three Jewels of Principle. In other words, they disregard the significance of the Abiding Three Jewels. This is not only an upside down view, but a position that is completely contrary to the Buddhist path.

Ordinary people can only perceive the phenomenal Three Jewels, and of these, the Manifested Three Jewels only existed when Sakyamuni Buddha lived. After the passing of the historical Buddha, only the Abiding Three Jewels are left. Within the Three Jewels, the Buddha is most precious, the Dharma is most rare, and the Sangha is most holy. After the passing of the Buddha, it is the Sangha that safeguards Buddhist monasteries, preserves collections of Dharma teachings, and maintains Buddhist culture. The Sangha also transmits Buddhist culture and teaches Dharma to the laity.

When the Buddha was in the world, he was the center. After his passing, the Sangha became the center, so we must take the Sangha as our refuge, and we must take the Sangha Jewel as the object of our veneration. But we must remember that within the Sangha Jewel, there is a mixture of "dragons and snakes," a Chinese term meaning virtuous and non-virtuous people. We should choose teachers who are virtuous, but we should respect all Sangha members. It is said in the sutras that even though a monk has transgressed the precepts, he is still the teacher of men and gods. In our hearts, we should not entertain



ideas of the virtuous and the non-virtuous, and criticize others, let alone criticize the Sangha Jewel.

Once we take the Three Refuges, we have a strong platform of faith on which to begin our practice. There are five stages to building one's practice:

1. The Three refuges of turning away from heterodoxy—the initial entering of the door of Buddhism.
2. The Three refuges of five precepts—when one receives the five precepts after having developed confidence in the Three Jewels.
3. The Three refuges of eight precepts—the traditional ritual days when one maintains

eight precepts for the duration of twenty-four hours.

4. The Three refuges of ten precepts—the precepts one receives when one enters the monastery as a novice.
5. The Three refuges of complete precepts—the full precepts of monks and nuns.

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is always a part of all ceremonies involving the receiving of precepts. This is also true for the higher precept ordinations of monks and nuns, when the precept essence is conferred. Taking refuge is also necessary after repentance and making vows during the ceremony of receiving the bodhisattva precepts. The ceremonies

of taking refuge and receiving precepts are mutually supportive.

Taking refuge is the basis of daily practice for all Buddhists. It is included in the daily liturgy in monasteries as well as at the conclusion of every Buddhist event. South Asian Buddhists consider this ceremony to be of highest importance and they chant the refuge as a blessing to the laity.

The Benefits of Taking Refuge

There are numerous benefits from taking refuge in the Three Jewels which can be reaped in present and future lives and can ultimately lead to the happiness of full liberation. These benefits can be divided into eight categories:

1. Becoming a follower of the Buddhas.
2. Establishing a firm basis for receiving precepts.
3. Diminishing karmic obstacles.
4. Potential to accumulate a vast amount of merit.
5. Avoiding rebirth in lower forms of existence.
6. The quality of not being disturbed by humans and non-humans.
7. The ability to accomplish all virtuous deeds.
8. Ability to become a buddha.

There are also many stories and parables in Buddhist scriptures that detail these benefits. For example, it is said that if you take refuge in the Three Jewels, you will acquire an inexhaustible amount of merit in the future. It is like a great repository of wealth. Even if everyone in a nation were to make withdrawals for seven consecutive years, there would still be considerable wealth left. The merit de-

rived from taking refuge in the Three Jewels is thousands and millions of times greater than all the wealth in such a repository. (From the Scripture of Lay Bodhisattva Precepts)

There was once a celestial being in the Indra heaven whose lifespan was approaching its end. His celestial body began to deteriorate and he had only seven days to live. He had a vision that he would be reborn as a boar and he became distressed. Then he asked Indra, the celestial king, to help him, but even Indra could not do anything. Indra asked him to seek out the Buddha for help. The Buddha bestowed the refuges upon him. He was reborn as a human and later met and received teachings from Shariputra (one of Buddha's principle disciples, renowned for his wisdom), and, consequently, reached full enlightenment.

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is something precious. The buddhas have stated that once you take refuge in the Three Jewels, you will be protected by the four guardian gods who protect the four quarters of the universe: In the east, Dhrtarashtra; in the south, Virudhaka; in the west, Virupaksha, and in the north Vaishravana. These four guardian gods send thirty-six guardian angels to protect the recipient from harm. Each prevents different kinds of harm. Some prevent sickness, hunger, delusion, aversion, greed, thievery, fear, and so on.

Lastly, I must stress that taking refuge in the Three Jewels is only the first step in becoming a Buddhist. Once we have taken refuge, we must embark on the path of spiritual cultivation, which involves finding a teacher and developing a regular practice. Doing so will decisively set you on the Buddhist path of awakening to wisdom and compassion.

Hongzhi Zhengjue on Silent Illumination Chan

Excerpts from Hongzhi chanshi guanglu
(Extensive records of Chan Master Hongzhi)

© Translation and forward by Guogu

Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091-1156) was one of the most illustrious Chan masters of the Song dynasty who revived the Caodong tradition. Even though his collected works include Dharma discourses and comments to hundreds of gong'an, modern Buddhists and scholars tend to focus on his eloquent presentation of mozhao chan or "silent illumination Chan."

The word "silent illumination" was not the creation of Hongzhi; the coinage can be traced back even before the founding of the Caodong tradition to the early Chinese Madhyamaka monk, Sengzhao (378-413), but it became prominent in the Caodong tradition as one of the central metaphors for the awakened mind.

Silence refers to the state of no-mind, the nature of emptiness; illumination points to the dynamic functioning of this unobstructed, enlightened mind. Inseparable, these two aspects are what is known as the buddha-nature, our true nature. As a path, silent illumination refers to the simultaneous practice of stillness and insight (or samatha and vipashyana), which cultivate the two dimensions of our ordinary mind: the ability to focus and the ability to be aware.

Guogu is one of Master Sheng Yen's main translators and he is a senior lay teacher at the Chan Meditation Center and Dharma Drum Mountain. He was the personal monastic attendant and assistant to master Sheng Yen for close to nine years. In May 1995 he received the seal of approval from Master Sheng Yen. Guogu is now the guiding teacher for future Western Dharma and meditation teachers at the Chan Meditation Center. He is currently finishing his Ph.D. in the Department of Religion at Princeton University. The first part of his translation of Hongzhi chanshi guanglu appeared in the previous issue of Chan Magazine.

Admonition on Chan Practice, Part 2

VIII.

Being empty, it leaves no trace; in illumination there are no dusts of emotion. When the light penetrates, stillness is profound; mysteriously it severs all defects and defilement. When you can thus understand your “self,” you can thus resolve your “self.” Clear and pure, wondrous and bright—this field is intrinsically yours. Many lifetimes of inability to resolve [this matter of self-grasping] only come from obscuring doubts and hovering delusions. All these are but self-created obstructions and blocks. Openly, wisdom freely roams; internally, one forgets merits and rewards. Just directly relinquish this burden [the self]. Turn around, and resume your position! Put your feet firmly on the Path. In this spontaneous responsiveness and wondrous function, all things encountered are Reality. Here, there is not a single thing from the tiniest hair to a speck of dust outside yourself!

IX.

The field of illumination in silence is likened to the clear autumn sky, where illumination is without effort and where [the duality of] light and shadow are severed—this is the time when the whole truth is transcended. The source is pure; the essence is potent. When the pivotal axis is open, its mobility is lively. Clear and brilliant, it is intrinsically radiant. When this center is discovered, one will be able to bring [its potency] forth and utilize it in manifold situations with full appropriateness. This is like the meeting of sky and earth, where the ten thousand appearances harmonize. Contented and composed, [one is] self-

possessed and can roam about without any opposition. Responding to celestial beings in a heavenly appearance, delivering human beings in a human form, whatever the situation calls for one manifests the appropriate body and appearance to expound the Dharma. If you can effectively experience thus, you will be vast and open and defeat all obstacles.

X.

Profound and transparent, still and silent, illumination thoroughly penetrates everywhere. This place is vacant yet potent, vast and resplendent. Even though there is the appearance of self-luminosity, there are no echoing shadows. If at this time it is disclosed and pierced through, then even though there are merits for taking up this burden to distinguish it clearly, it is all the more necessary that you take the backward step and reach the middle of the circle. [Only at such time,] luminosity will issue forth from its center. Astonishing and amazing, it is solitary and independent. When such merit [of taking up this burden] is understood and utilized, then will you comprehend what is called birth. Such is the obscure and subtle reality of the emerging and sinking away [of sentient being]. You must carefully discern this. Then, you can emanate different bodies and steer various affairs.

XI.

The seal of ten thousand forms is a seal that leaves no impressions. Roaming the world responding to conditions, naturally one enjoys the function of being able to enter samadhis

by way of every single dharma; such function is for one's own use, and one cannot be self-satisfied. The empty valley receives clouds; the cold stream cleanses the moon. Not departing and not remaining, one is able to transcend ordinary circumstances and transform external conditions, and expound the doctrine without attainment or expectation. Present everywhere, yet always it remains at the same old field as if not a single hair had been moved. [Despite being] crippled and needing assistance, or being ugly and stupid, one will naturally thrive in perfect accordance. Zhaozhou's responses "Go wash your bowl" and "Drink your tea" are not premeditated acts. From the very beginning it is already present. When your insight can be like this, from one instant to the next thorough and complete, then your conduct can be considered that of a patched-robed monk.

XII.

Where the field is secure and concealed, when the activities are like a frozen pond, the empty kalpa is perceived. [In such a state,] there is not a single breadth of condition that can become a burden, no single mote that can be an obstacle. Utterly empty, it is bright. Perfectly pure, it is resplendent. Existing in utter clarity, the mind extends throughout ten thousand eras without ever being hazy. With regard to this matter, if you can be convinced with a nod of your head, you will neither conform to birth and death, nor will you abide in nihilism or permanence. In motion, you transform along with with the ten thousand, myriad [sentient beings]. In stillness, you are enduring like the way heaven covers and the way earth supports. Emerging and sinking away, rolling and unrolling, everything is up to you. You fellows of "original being!" You

must learn to bring it forth and let it go like this.

XIII.

To contemplate the true characteristic of the body is to contemplate the Buddha. If you are able to directly experience the realm where nothing exists outside of your *being*, then all opposites will appropriately be extinguished, transcending all conceptions. Buddha and mind are refined to their non-dual [nature]. The patched-robed monk silently roams about and abides nowhere. Vacant and potent, miraculous and penetrating, [his realization is identical] to the great space that surpasses this dusty kalpa. Brilliant and profound, addictions cease; luminous and bright, it is non-conceptual. When the mechanism turns, it transforms and emanates, responding to situations while passing through the world. Illumination is without effort; its function is without traces. Clouds leisurely drift, streams flow—there have never been any residual obstacles since the beginning. This direct teaching is pure and secure—nothing can budge it. There is no need to follow favorable conditions. This is where you gain genuine experience.

XIV.

The path is not [something] transmittable by patriarchs. Before the arrival of patriarchs, the "imperial edict" had already pervaded and encompassed the whole [world]. Naturally empty without any traces, it is potent and spiritual—where opposites have terminated.

Photo: Jerry Roach



Solitary and luminous, it transcends causes and conditions; eternally dynamic, it is separate from appearances. This is called becoming a Patriarch. Only through mutual authentication [can that which is transmitted be

obtained, so it cannot be called existence; grinded, it cannot be removed, so it cannot be called non-existence. It is utterly beyond the domain of the conceptual mind and it is separated from any traces of shadows and forms—wondrous, it is empty of its own being. This miraculous place can be experienced as spiritual potency; when potency is reached, it is evoked. Mind like moon, body like clouds, it is disclosed according to wherever one may be. Straightforward, it leaves no trace. Yet, it is able to issue forth light and luminosity. Responding to objects without refusal, it can enter the dusty [world] and not be mired. Breaking through all obstructing states; shining through all phenomena as devoid of selfhood. Why can it, through diverse conditions, enter the pure [realm of] wisdom and roam and play in samadhi? You should thus genuinely experience and investigate it!



known]—the patriarch cannot hand it to you. All Buddhas arrive here and take this to be the ultimate, and utilize it to respond, transform, and disseminate their [emanation] bodies like [a multitude of] flowers and leaves. Sense faculties and objects are [employed] to enter the three times [of past, present and future]. The ten thousand opportunities do not disturb you; not a single mote of dust is outside your being. Its marvel is beyond the great thousands of scriptures. Where can [illusory] shadows be obtained?

XV.

In utter clarity, wonder exists. Potent and solitary, it illumines. Grasped, it cannot be

Vast—it is intrinsically potent; pure—it is intrinsically bright. It is universal and does not grasp the merit of its own illumination; it is able to discern without being burdened by conditioned thinking. It appears without form; it transcends emotions of thought and imagination. You can only accord with it through actualization. It is not something obtained from someone else. All Buddhas and patriarchs, [in multitudes] like leaves and flowers, continue this business. When responding, they do not grasp appearances; in illuminating, they are not ensnared by conditions. Dignified and impressive, nothing is concealed. This family style teaches that everywhere everything is already, of its own accord, replete. It is up to you to take charge of it.

XVI.

Haiku

by frank crazy cloud

rain bobbing brollies;
do not climb on the lions, says
sign at museum



Photo: Jerry Roach

Western Zen Retreat: For Beginners and Adepts Alike

by Rebecca Li and David Slaymaker

Rebecca Li, PhD, is Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at The College of New Jersey. She has been a student of Chan Master Sheng Yen since 1996 and regularly acts as his translator at retreats and public events; she is on the Board of Directors of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center. David Slaymaker, PhD, is Professor of Biology at William Paterson University in New Jersey, and has also been practicing under the guidance of Chan Master Sheng Yen for ten years. Rebecca and David were married in 1999.

We had been curious about the Western Zen Retreat after hearing about it—it was a process that had been developed by Dr. John Crook, Master Sheng Yen's (Shifu's) first Western Dharma heir. At first we thought the retreat was for beginners, only because we had been told that the retreat was a good way for those new to Chan to start their practice. But after taking part in a number of Western Zen Retreats, we have now come to realize that non-beginners can receive significant benefits from the retreats as well.

We have both been practicing Chan consistently and sincerely for a number of years—attending classes, teachers' training, and Shifu's intensive retreats. While we do not feel particularly “experienced,” we also were not entirely new to the practice when we joined our first Western Zen Retreat a few years ago. For both of us the retreat was a life-changing experience, deeply affecting our practice. The integration of “communication exercises,” sitting meditation, Dharma talks geared toward the Western mind, and person-

al interviews brings about the state of “self at ease” so effectively, and so naturally, that one almost feels it is too easy. In particular, the communication exercises combined with the interviews by the teachers helped us deal very effectively with longstanding karmic obstructions, what we in the West call emotional and psychological blockages. The process allowed us to see what had been missing in our practice for many years, which is the ability to know our selves clearly and accept them as they are. We subsequently attended a few more Western Zen Retreats, each time learning more about different facets of our selves, and learning to be at peace with them. At first glance, this sounds like nothing more than a good psychological exercise—working out one's issues. One might ask, “So what if one now feels at peace with oneself? What does it have to do with Chan?” As we came to find out, it has everything to do with Chan. Although it has taken some time for us to realize it, the experience of “self at ease” has been crucial for our Chan practice.

Before we elaborate, it is useful to explain a little bit what happens in the Western Zen Retreat (WZR). All first-timers on the WZR will begin with the question, “Who am I?” One asks oneself this question at all times, just like a traditional huatou, initially allowing answers to arise and drop away. In the communication exercise, however, one works the question verbally with a partner who will ask, for example, “Mary, tell me who you are.” The receiver of the question, in this case Mary, will have five minutes to tell her partner “who she is.” Mary says whatever arises in her mind—essentially free association. But one remains mindfully aware of what it is that comes up. Such mindful awareness is also important to maintain a free flow, and not get tricked by one’s self into avoiding certain issues or ideas. For many of us this takes substantial courage—to share one’s honest thoughts and self-images and self-assessments with another human being. Of course, everyone has also agreed to a strict confidentiality in order to support the trust and openness required. In the example here, while Mary talks for five minutes, her partner sits facing her, and listens attentively, without showing or vocalizing any response whatsoever. Thus, the person is heard, but has the absolute freedom to let flow those thoughts that arise. After the five minutes are up, it is the partner’s turn to be asked, and Mary’s to listen. This is repeated three times in one session.

“IN THE PROCESS CALLED ‘EMPTYING THE BARREL’, ONE GIVES RISE TO, BECOMES AWARE OF, ACKNOWLEDGES, AND LETS GO OF THE WHOLE ACCUMULATION OF SELF-DIRECTED VIEWS AND CONCEPTIONS, BIASES AND HOPES, REGRETS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS”

John Crook calls the communication exercise process “emptying the barrel.” It is an apt description. In the process, one gives rise to, becomes aware of, acknowledges, and lets go of the whole accumulation of self-directed views and conceptions, biases and hopes, regrets and accomplishments. Some of it has been suppressed in the mind out of fear; some of it we flaunt daily out of pride. But there it all is. If one engages in this exercise as one would any other method, with sincerity and earnestness, allowing everything good and bad, pretty and ugly, hoped for and terrifying to see, to come up, be shared, and let go of, one eventually runs out of things to say. Then the question—which continues growing in strength—becomes no longer conceptual, but experiential. And ultimately, when the question drops, one realizes with clarity that one is just oneself, a perfect product of one’s own self-nature—of unique, infinitely complex, and infallible causes and conditions. Self-concern has dropped away, and the self is truly, and completely, at ease. This “self at ease” is an experience of genuine happiness and joy as one discovers that everything is fine as it is. No problem, no flaw—all is right in its place. For some it lasts just an hour or so; for others it may last many days, weeks, or longer.

“Self at ease” is not the limit of the WZR; the “unified mind” state occurs relatively frequently as well. But “self at ease” is so of-

ten the result of work on the entry question, “Who am I?” that we want to make note of why this experience is of use to both novices and more experienced practitioners.

Master Sheng Yen emphasizes in his intensive retreats that one must have confidence in the teacher, in the method, and in one’s ability to practice in order to engage in Chan practice effectively. This last point, confidence in one’s ability to practice, seems straightforward but is often the weakest point in one’s practice. The experience of “self at ease” generates this kind of confidence. That nagging doubt of whether one is practicing correctly, and the sense that one may not be good enough or capable enough to practice correctly is broken at its core. This confidence comes from the experience of “self at ease” in which one sees one’s neuroses, anxieties, doubts and insecurities for what they are and stops believing in them. Thus, “self at ease” helps cut away a level of self-doubt that otherwise obstructs the practice, both on and off the cushion. Of course, we are not saying that the WZR and the “self at ease” experiences it generates so readily are the only ways to attain this confidence in one’s ability to practice. We would however say that the WZR is a very effective way to get there.

More recently, we participated in a short Metta retreat, where we practiced meditation on loving-kindness. The practice, as traditionally laid out in *The Path of Purification* by Buddhaghosa, begins with generating Metta for oneself. In our retreat, this was done through the words, “May I be safe; may I be healthy; may I be happy; may I be at peace.” For many people, generating Metta for themselves is

not as easy as one might think. The practice calls for reciting the lines during meditation and invoking the associated state of mind—that of goodwill toward oneself filled with the sense of acceptance and contentment—based on actual experiences of such feelings in the past. We found that the experience of “self at ease” allowed us to draw on and generate a deeper and more peaceful practice of loving-kindness than we could have otherwise. Later on, when we practiced sending loving-kindness to others—people we revere, love, feel neutral about or dislike—we needed to invoke similar feelings of goodwill, again, based on actual experiences. Here we found the “self at ease” experience very helpful again, since it seems futile to try to cultivate loving-kindness for others without having accepted oneself.

We feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to take part in a number of Western Zen Retreats, and for the push they have given us along the Path. These retreats allowed us to see that experiencing “self at ease” is not very difficult, under the right conditions, with many people on each retreat having such experiences. Yet it is powerfully transformative, and an extremely valuable building block in the practice. Clearly, the WZR is not the only way to gain these benefits, but it is a uniquely effective one for both beginners and non-beginners alike. We both feel that obstructions of self-doubt that could have taken us years to see through otherwise were greatly reduced in five days. Since our last WZR, the effects of the retreat have continued to deepen and to benefit our practice. Like all others, the experiences are temporary, but if one chooses to use them, the effect on one’s practice is not.

The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

Sounding the Lotus Bell

For the first time on Chinese New Year's Eve, the Lotus Bell was sounded at DDM World Center for Buddhist Education to bring blessings and peace.

Nearly 3,000 people had gathered after family dinners at home. Honored guests including Executive Council Premier, Su Zhenchang,

Taipei County Magistrate, Zhou Hsiwei, and DDM followers sat attentively around the Lotus Bell at Lotus Park waiting for the program to begin at 10:00 pm.

The Venerable Guo Pin of DDM extended a warm welcome to all present, noting that it is a traditional practice in Buddhist countries to sound the bell 108 times on the eve of the New Year to bring peace and harmony.



“What we have witnessed here tonight is the striking of the unique Lotus Bell, the only bell in the world inscribed with the Lotus Sutra. The bell encompasses the great wisdom and compassion of the Lotus Sutra, and its sound generates infinite light and hope to all people. It is a treasured feature of Dharma Drum Mountain, and radiates the wisdom of Buddhism throughout the generations.”

Venerable Master Sheng Yen also explained, “We are gathered here tonight at DDM to bestow blessings on all the people of Taiwan, to pray for harmony in our society, a co-operative cross-strait relationship and peace to the world.”

The ceremony concluded at 1:00 a.m. on New Year’s Day as participants formed a line and walked around the Lotus Bell one last time before heading home.

The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra (Lotus Sutra) says: “Upon hearing the bell, I shall eliminate my own mental afflictions, grow in wisdom, increase in the Bodhi Mind, escape hell, climb out of the fiery pit, vow to attain Buddhahood and save all sentient beings.”

Buddhist College Inaugurated After 30-Year Wait

Dharma Drum Buddhist College (DDBC) was officially inaugurated on the morning of April 8, 2007 at Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education in Jinshan Township, Taipei, following approval of its application by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education (MOE) in August 2006.

In his opening address, Master Sheng Yen emphasized that “Buddhist education is essential to our society today, and I have waited for this moment for almost thirty years...because the future of Buddhism would not be bright if there were no commitment to further Buddhist education.”

“With the establishment and legal authorization of Dharma Drum Buddhist College, we can now focus on cultivating talented Buddhist students who possess aptitude in both academic research and moral practice.”

DDBC is Taiwan’s first religious college to offer post-graduate education in Buddhist studies, with a Master’s Degree program that is fully recognized by the Ministry of Education, the first of its kind.

In the past, for those passionate about Buddhist studies, university departments of Chinese Literature and Chinese Philosophy were the only avenues through which they could pursue their interests. In 1987, the Ministry approved the establishment of departments of religion and graduate programs in religious studies for both private and public universities. Subsequently, Huafan College of Humanities and Technology, founded by Venerable Master Hui Wan in 1990, and the College of Medicine founded by Venerable Master Cheng Yen in 1994 offered programs of Buddhist studies.

Venerable Hui Min, Principal of DDBC and Rector of Dharma Drum Mountain, said, “In Taiwan, Buddhist education in the past focused solely on academic research, due to the authorities’ suspicions regarding the ‘amalgamated education’ model combining theory and practice. But in reality, religious

studies can only be successful through such a model, where neither theory nor practice can be ignored.”

The Graduate School of Buddhism has four departments in Buddhist studies based on the structure of the Chung Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies. They are Chinese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Indian Buddhism and Buddhist Informatics—a section specifically concerned with the digitization of Buddhist scriptures. The international faculty includes professors from Japan, Germany, India, the United States and elsewhere. In addition, students may avail themselves of training in English, Japanese, Indian, Sanskrit and Pali.

DDBC’s website: www.ddbc.edu.tw

Buddhist “Google” Unveiled

On March 10, 2007, the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) hosted a conference in celebration of its 9th anniversary at the Light of Wisdom Dharma Hall in Taipei, and to release the latest version of the Chinese Electronic Tripitaka.

The conference was presided over by Venerable Hui Min, Rector of Dharma Drum Mountain Sangha Community and CBETA Director, with nearly 100 Buddhist scholars in attendance.

The 2007 edition contains more than 150 million Chinese characters in XML format of the Taisho Tripitaka (Vols.1 – 55 & 85), and the Shinsan Zokuzokyo (Xuzangjing) (Vols.1-88), encompassing nearly 80% of the Buddhist sutras. As Ven. Hui Min observed, it “can be looked upon as a ‘Buddhist Google’ for sutra studies.”

Since its founding in February 1998, the CBETA has been engaged in the digitization of Buddhist scriptures with support from the Yinshun Foundation of North America, the Bodhi Foundation and the Seedland Education Foundation in Taipei, and in co-operation with the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies. Its purpose is to provide scholars and lay people with convenient access to Buddhist studies resources, free of charge.

For further information on the CBETA, please go to: www.cbeta.org

Master Sheng Yen meets Dr. Wade Davis

The National Geographic Society in Taipei invited Master Sheng Yen for a dialogue with internationally renowned explorer, Dr. Wade Davis, on April 28.

Wade Davis has been described as “a rare combination of scientist, scholar, poet and passionate defender of all of life’s diversity.” Ethnographer, writer, photographer, and filmmaker, he holds degrees from Harvard University in anthropology and biology, as well as a Ph.D. in ethno-botany. In recent years his research has taken him to East Africa, Tibet, Polynesia, Mali, Equatorial West Africa, New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Canadian Arctic Nunavut and Greenland. He is the author of ten books, including *The Serpent and the Rainbow*, *One River and Light at the Edge of the World*.

The three-hour dialogue took place before a packed hall at the main outlet of Elitebooks in downtown Taipei. Global warming, culture loss, conflict prevention and Buddhist

religious practice were among the issues discussed.

Professor Davis surprised the audience by divulging that he was a Buddhist, and noted that although he had traveled all over the world, this was his first visit to Taiwan. He also expressed his delight at the opportunity to meet Chan master Sheng Yen. He went on to point out that models for economic progress promoted by Western society are not only problematic for the ways that they ravage the environment, but also because they leave a sense of sadness in people's minds.

In the course of three years' research on the culture of indigenous tribes in Peru, he discovered how important it was for them to live in harmony with nature. Their philosophy inspired him to reflect on the relationship between the environment and so-called economic development, as well as the meaning of happiness.

With regard to global warming, Master Sheng Yen observed that its effects are associated closely with people's lifestyle as well as their minds. For instance, many agree on the importance of environmental protection and recognize that we have a responsibility to protect the earth. However, the problem is, what would most people choose if protection of the environment went against their personal interests? "I am afraid that personal interests would take priority for most people. Protecting the environment is more than an action, it is an attitude and a lifestyle." If we adjust our attitude, we can live a simpler life and treat others and the earth with compassion and gratitude. If we cultivate peace and stabilize the mind, we can discover "the light at the edge of the world."

During the Q&A session, people asked, "What can we do?" and, "Can we make a difference?" Dr. Davis replied that "change" always starts from a small place, and therefore, if everyone makes a small change, a "real" change will appear in the end. "It's up to you," he concluded.

Taking Refuge at Nung Chan

On the morning of 15 April, 2007, Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) hosted its Refuge-Taking Ceremony at Nung Chan Monastery. Nearly 1800 people took refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, under Venerable Master Sheng Yen, formally becoming Buddhist followers. It is an annual event customarily attended by many people.

The Master encouraged everyone to treat others with compassion and to develop wisdom by applying the teachings of the Dharma in their daily lives, to "protect the spiritual environment." He emphasized that a person who takes refuge must then put these teachings into practice, ceaselessly striving to cultivate a Buddhist mind: to liberate all beings from suffering, to let go of vexations and to study the Dharma for the benefit of all beings.

English Publications in India

Two of Venerable Master Sheng Yen's English publications, "The 108 Adages of Wisdom" and "The Bodhisattva Precepts" are to be published by the Trailokya Buddha Ma-hasangha Shayak Gana (TBMSG) in India.

In January, Venerable Guo Xiang, Shih Jianchang, President of the Sheng Yen Education Foundation, and Professor Zhang Wenzheng

from Fu-Jen Catholic University went to Nagpur City in central India to discuss the matter with Mr. Dharmachari Lokamitra, founder of TBMSG, who has been actively engaged in projects involving education, healing and the teaching of Dharma to revive Buddhism in India.

In conjunction with this trip, the DDM representatives presented introductory sessions on Dharma Drum Mountain and Venerable Master Sheng Yen's teachings at the South Jambu-dvīpa Foundation in Mumbai, and at Nagarjuna Institute in Nagpur City, which was attended by some 150 students.

Sudan Youth Conference

Making Peace in Africa's Great Rift Valley reported by Chang Wen

From March 1 - 6, in the beautiful, pristine environment of the Gallmann Africa Conservancy in the Laikipia District of northern Kenya, DDM monastics and youth delegates attended a ground-breaking peace conference for the youth of Sudan and other international delegates from the Young Leaders Peace Council. The Global Peace Initiative of Women, along with the Ruder Finn Foundation and DDM, co-sponsored this "Sudan Youth Dialogue" to create a forum for the youth of Sudan, a



country that has for decades been afflicted by civil war, ethnic conflict, poverty, and much suffering. The forum provided a neutral and safe place where diverse young people from different backgrounds could discuss ways to improve the state of their country, and establish peace and stability against the backdrop of Sudan's civil war. The event also focused on the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which target issues like poverty, gender, AIDS, and environmental concerns.

DDM delegates included Venerables Guo Guang, Guo Chan, and Chang Wen (DDM Taiwan) as well as Venerables Chang Ji and Chang Wu (DDM USA), with youth delegates Andres Chang (Vancouver), Byron Wong (Toronto), Belinda Li (Chicago), and Lys Lin, Phoebe Wang, and Sophie Hsieh (Taiwan). Altogether there were 45 participants from Sudan, Japan, Nigeria, the United States, Uganda and Lebanon, as well as professionals and doctors, members of NGOs and other youth organizations, and five members of the Young Leaders Peace Council, who were also present at last year's Compassionate Youth Retreat at DDRC.

Participants spent 6 days in the beautiful conservancy, surrounded by 100,000 acres of pristine savannah—grassy fields and groves of olive trees, sage, and acacia, sharing space with elephants, lions, zebra, impala, buffalo and other wildlife. They lived in two person tents, as well as cottages made of clay, painted in stripes in the traditional pattern of African homes.

The meeting place was generously provided by Kuki Gallmann, owner of the conservancy, whose life story inspired everyone. After the death of her husband and son, she found her-

self alone on a huge plot of land to care for her baby daughter, manage the cattle and fend off poachers. With the support of neighbors and friends, she resolved to use the land as a way to make a difference in the world and to help build peace. (For more on the story of the Conservancy, visit: www.gallmannkenya.org.)

In addition to discussing the MDGs, participants shared their stories of tribulation and success throughout Sudan's years of conflict. Workshops were also provided by Jackie Wilson of the US Institute for Peace, who conducted problem solving exercises and other activities. In between, participants shared delicious meals and talked freely, sharing ideas, while making friends and connections. DDM delegates availed themselves of the opportunity briefly to practice meditation, and finding themselves in such a beautiful environment, applied the method of direct contemplation. Forgetting labels and subjective discriminations that usually clutter everyday experience, delegates practiced letting go of these filters and just observed directly the wonder of being in the present together with nature, in one continuous moment. This brought them an even greater sense of calm and peace, which they endeavored to share with the other participants—peace-building with their silence. Evenings were spent around the fire, dancing to the rhythms of Africa, folk songs from Japan, and pop songs and nursery rhymes from Taiwan, forging additional bonds among the participants while reviving their spirits through the language of music and dance. In the dark the wild animals hovered nearby, and after bedtime, the night was alive with the sounds of grazing elephants grunting and animals galloping past.



After six days of peace-building, problem solving, sharing, and bonding, the participants headed home having made new friends and found new resolve. On the final day, the group gathered at a vantage point overlooking the valley, its forests and hills glowing with a serene green, still pristine and untouched by human activity—in a landscape that many claim is the “birthplace of humanity.” Here they sat together and shared prayers from various traditions—Shinto, Christian, Muslim, with Buddhist chanting by the DDM team, and a Christian hymn sung by friends from southern Sudan. Many were moved to tears. The final night consisted of a talk by GPIW team leader Dena Merriam, who brought the event to a close speaking of the inner peace and compassion that she has learned of from Shifu, and expressing her appreciation for the

diligence and kindness of all the members involved in making this rare event possible. Final closing prayers were said, and a section of Shifu’s message to the assembly was read aloud:

“Dharma Drum Mountain promotes the movement of ‘Protecting the Spiritual Environment.’ This refers to protecting our minds from the influences posed by the external environment. These influences include all kinds of stimulation, enticement, torment, etc. When the mind is not influenced by the environment, it can confront all problems and seek to resolve conflict calmly and peacefully. But if our minds are full of discontent, anger or desire for revenge as we interact with any ethnic or religious group, conflicts will easily arise. If our inner minds are at peace

and without prejudice, then we can maintain true objectivity. When we interact with others, even if they are hostile or unfriendly, we can still extend a sincere and friendly hand to them. At least there will not be instant conflict upon meeting. As long as one party is willing to extend a peaceful and friendly attitude, then two can sit down to talk things over slowly.”

With regard to concrete outcomes, an action plan has been drafted to foster networking and cooperation among participants. An unofficial organization has been formed, tentatively called the Sudan Youth for Dialogue and Development, SYDD, which will be a network of young people in the different regions of Sudan, who plan to share their difficulties and successes as they rebuild and stabilize their communities by implementing the MDGs. By keeping in contact, they can share the precious resources of information and experience, while maintaining a link with the international community and other NGOs. They have also started planning next year's conference.

Beyond bringing Sudanese youth from various regions together in a setting of mutual

understanding, friendship, and cooperation—a groundbreaking event in itself—DDM participants remarked that they found the experience life-changing. By living so close to nature in such a fresh and beautiful environment in the heart of Africa, and after seeing the strength of the Sudanese youth, the DDM youths' perspective on life has changed. One remarked that his own individual survival no longer seemed so overwhelmingly important, compared to the survival and peace of the whole world. DDM youth have kept in touch with their Sudanese and other counterparts, sharing their vision and offering encouragement through email. They hope to continue their involvement in DDM's International Development team, headed by Venerable Chang Ji and Guo Chan. There are also plans to continue to cooperate with Ms. Gallmann and hold more peace-building events at the Conservancy.

All in all, this event wrought great change in all who took part, planting the seeds of peace in the field of mind.

May peace come quickly to Sudan, and may this tree of peace spread its seeds to all corners of the world!



DDM Sends Flood Relief to Jakarta

In late January, Jakarta was hit with its worst flooding in five years after days of heavy rains inundated rivers in surrounding areas. The flood cost many lives and damage to as much as 75% of the urban area of the city of 14 million.

As events unfolded, the DDM Social Welfare and Charity Foundation dispatched its emergency relief team, bringing bamboo mats, medical aid and other material assistance to people in the affected areas. In addition to material relief, DDM also deemed it essential to provide spiritual counseling to help people maintain peace of mind.

DDM Portland Finds a Home

Dharma Drum Mountain in Portland, Oregon started six years ago. Since then it has grown steadily with the active engagement of Li Guocun, convener of the community. She has devoted herself to introducing younger generations to the teachings of Sheng Yen, founding study groups and meditation classes. Recently the community acquired a permanent homestead with the generous donation of a house by Li Guocun.

The Purification Ceremony for the new premises held in February was attended by the Venerable Guo Qian who flew in from New York, as well as the Venerable Guo Shu who flew in from Vancouver, to provide guidance in furthering programs of study and meditation instruction, in keeping with DDM's mission of "uplifting the character of humanity to build a pure land on Earth."

DDM Seattle

Dharma Drum Mountain in Seattle invited the Venerable Ji Cheng from Malaysia to host a three-day dharma talk from April 12 to 14.

The teaching focused on the practice of Chan and the concepts of "self," "true self," and "no self." Ji Cheng encouraged his listeners to relax the mind and body to sense the true self. In abandoning attachments to self, he explained, every day can be a good day, and the "pure land" that DDM strives to attain can come into being everywhere on earth.

DDM Singapore

In March, DDM Singapore hosted Dharma talks over two days, drawing crowds approaching 700 on each day. It was the biggest Dharma event since Venerable Master Sheng Yen's visit in 2004.

On the topics of "Happy Life" and "Chan and Love," the Venerable Ji Cheng expressed his hope the participants would fully understand the reasons for learning the Dharma, and come to recognize it as an integral part of life in distinguishing right from wrong. As an introduction to the second talk he led a group of some 50 participants in a Chan meditation session.

DDM Welcomes Monks from Sri Lanka

On March 24, eight Bhikshus from Sri Lanka paid their first visit to DDM World Center for Buddhist Education in Taiwan led by the Most Ven. Tibbatuwawe Sri Siddhartha Sumangala Maha Nayaka Thero.

DDM Abbot Ven. Guo Dong greeted them warmly on behalf of Master Sheng Yen, noting that DDM dedicates itself to “uplifting the character of humanity and building a pure land on earth,” and that he was happy to share this vision with his honored guests.

After screening two films, talk turned to ongoing DDM volunteer activities in Sri Lanka, notably the recent completion there of the DDM Health Care Center to attend to the local population.

Speaking through an interpreter, the Most Venerable Tibbatuwawe Sri Siddhartha Sumangala Maha Nayaka Thero said that he was deeply impressed and pleased at what DDM had accomplished, as well as grateful. “We could not have done this by ourselves,” he said, and looked forward to future opportunities together to spread the joy of the Dharma among the people.

The meeting ended with an exchange of gifts, followed by a tour of the DDM facilities led personally by Ven. Guo Dong.



The Future

*Retreats, classes and
other upcoming events.*

Chan Retreats

Chan retreats are opportunities for serious practitioners to deepen their practice and receive guidance from resident teachers. Retreats are held at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) in Pine Ridge, New York, unless specified at the Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in Elmhurst, Queens.

Two-part 10-day Huatou Retreat at DDRC:
Two successive 10-day retreats conducted by Ven. Guo Jun and Ven. Ji Chun.
Attend one or both.

First 10-day retreat: Wednesday, July 25,
5:00 pm to Friday, August 3, 10:00 am.
Second 10-day retreat: Saturday, August 4,
5:00 pm to Monday, August 13, 10:00 am

Five-day Recitation Retreat at DDRC:
Devotional chanting and Chan practice
Thursday, August 30, 6:00 pm to Monday,
September 3, 10:00 am
E-mail: ddmbaus@yahoo.com
Website: www.chancenter.org or www.ddmba.org

Summer Zen Camps at DDRC

Three-day Family Zen Camp
Thursday, July 20 to Sunday, July 22
E-mail: ddmbaus@yahoo.com
Website: www.chancenter.org or www.ddmba.org

Three-day College Zen Camp
Wednesday, August 15, 8:30 pm to Tuesday,
August 21, 5:00 pm
E-mail: wemeditate@gmail.com
Website: www.ddyp.org

Chan Practice

Monday Night Chanting (CMC)
Every Monday, 7:30 – 9 pm
Devotional chanting of Amitabha Buddha;
88 Buddhas Repentance on last Monday of
each month.

Tuesday Night Sitting Group (CMC)
Every Tuesday, 7 – 9:30 pm
Periods of sitting meditation alternating with
yoga, walking meditation, readings, discus-
sion, and chanting the Heart Sutra.

Saturday Sitting Group (CMC)
Every Saturday, 9 am – 3 pm
Half-hour periods of sitting meditation alter-
nating with yoga or walking meditation.

Sunday Open House (CMC)
Every Sunday 10:00 am – 11:00 am Group
Meditation
11:00 am – 12:30 pm Dharma Talk
12:30 - 1:00 pm: lunch offerings
1:00 - 2:00 pm: lunch
2:00 - 3:00 pm: chanting; Q & A for
English-speaking practitioners
2:00 – 4:30 pm: July 8, August 12, Septem-
ber 9: Great Dharani chanting

**One-day Bodhisattva Ksitigarbharaja
(Earth-Store) Sutra Recitation**
Sunday, August 26, 9:30 - 3:30

Classes at CMC

New Meditation Class Series:

Beginners' Meditation

Two Saturdays, 9:30 am – 12 noon, \$40

Intermediate Meditation

Two Saturdays, 9:30 am – 12 noon, \$40

Please call for summer dates.

Pre-registration required.

Beginners' Dharma Class

Please call for summer dates.

Taijiquan Classes

Thursdays, 7:30 – 9:00 pm,

with instructor David Ngo, \$80 for a session of 16 classes, or \$25/month. First Thursday of every month free for newcomers.

Yoga

Saturdays, 4 – 5:30 pm,

with instructor Rikki Asher.

\$10/class; please call for dates.

Special Events

"Zen and Inner Peace"

Chan Master Sheng Yen on WNYE (25)

every Friday at midnight.



Chan Center Affiliates

Local organizations affiliated with the Chan Meditation Center and the Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association provide a way to practice with and to learn from other Chan practitioners. Affiliates also provide information about Chan Center schedules and activities, and Dharma Drum publications. If you have questions about Chan, about practice, or about intensive Chan retreats, you may find useful information at an affiliate near you.

NORTH AMERICA

USA:

USA Headquarters

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA); Dharma Drum Publications; Chan Meditation Center:
90-56 Corona Avenue
Elmhurst, NY 11373
Tel: 718-592-6593
Fax: 718-592-0717
Email: ddmbaus@yahoo.com
<http://www.chancenter.org>

Dharma Drum Retreat Center
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Pine Bush, NY 12566
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<http://www.chancenter.org>

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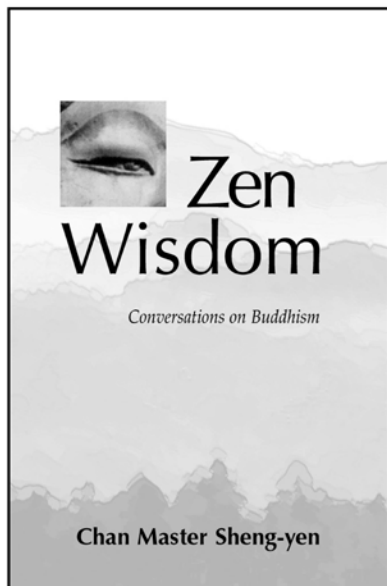
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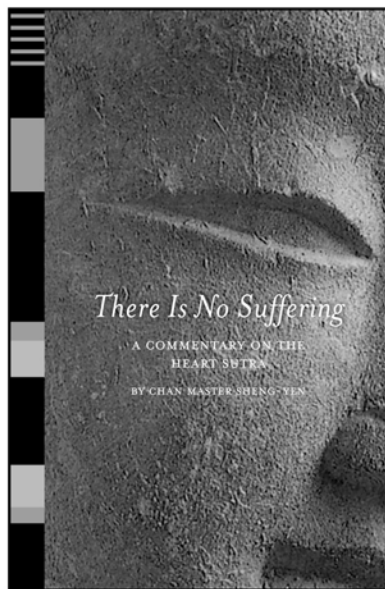


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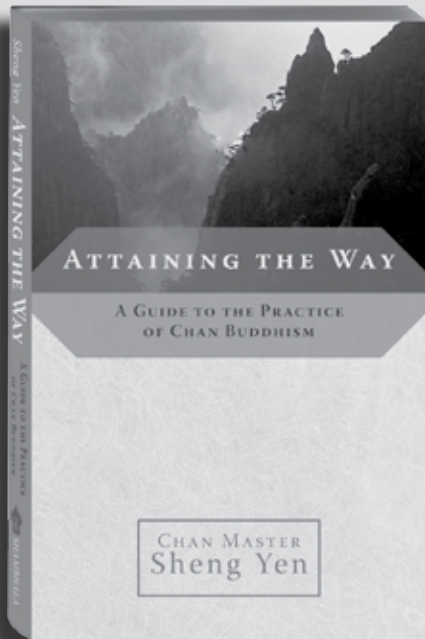
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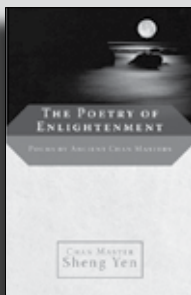


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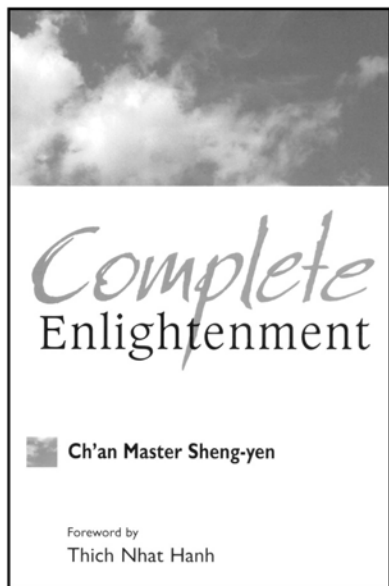
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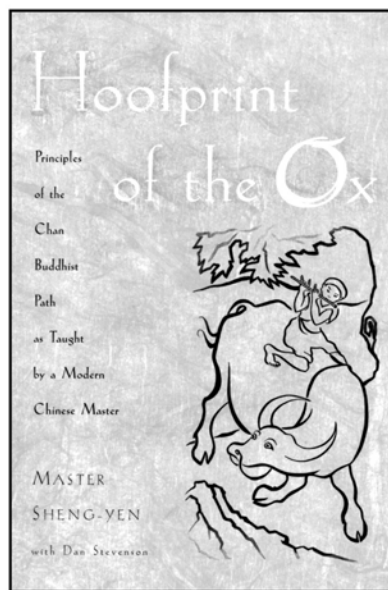
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