

Chan | 禪 | Magazine

Summer 2006



Chan Meditation Center

Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture

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“How do we contemplate ultimate nirvana? In daily life, we must understand that avoiding vexing situations is not appropriate – running away does no good. Neither does self-deception, or pretending that the situation doesn’t exist. It is best to accept situations without vexation, and deal with them calmly. Of course, this is difficult to do. But even though we are nowhere near ultimate nirvana, we can still adopt the ways and attitudes of a Buddha .”

– Chan Master Sheng Yen, from his commentary on the Heart Sutra, *There Is No Suffering*.

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From The Editor

It's the middle of May – I'll send this issue to the printer later today – and there was big news in the world of science this week.

A new genetic analysis of humans and chimpanzees, by the Broad Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, suggests that the two lineages may have diverged more recently than previously thought, and that the chimp ancestors and human ancestors may have cross-bred – that is, had sex with each other – and produced a hybrid, from which we descend.

The logic is a little complicated, but the key finding that led to these conclusions was that our X chromosome – the one that determines that a child will be female – is a million years younger than the others. We and chimps inherited the female sex chromosome from a common ancestor a million years more recently than our other common chromosomes.

“Took a rib from Adam's side,
Made Miss Eve for to be his bride,
Dem bones gonna rise again.”

The news is still fresh – the internet is not yet abuzz with reaction from the anti-evolution crowd – but it makes little difference to Buddhists, right? Buddhism does distinguish between humans and animals, in terms of what's considered a favorable rebirth, and especially in terms of the potential to practice and achieve buddhahood, but the primary distinction Buddhism makes is between sentient beings and non-sentient phenomena, and in that regard, humans and chimps are family.

I wasn't even thinking of writing about this until I read the following on the editorial page of the New York Times: “We will need to learn a certain agnosticism about the nature of our origins, a willingness to face up to the best analysis of who we really are.”

“Who we really are,” indeed.

Is an understanding of our evolutionary history informative, even relevant, to who we really are? For most of us, who we are is a matter of psychological self-image more than of genomic fact, so the first question is: When you read this news, and you picture the courtship between that proto-chimp and that first-generation slightly human mutant (if you do), and you think of yourself as the long-term result of that unholy union, does your self-image shift? I, being a big fan of Darwin, and a big fan of chimps for that matter, am unbothered. (If anything it cheers me up a little bit.) But if you think of the importance of ancestry, of heritage, of lineage in some families, and in some cultures – if you consider the devastation that has been wrought by the revelation that such-and-such a forebear was of the wrong color, for example...you can see how the chimp-sex thing could be a big challenge to some people's notion of “who we really are.”

Then there's the everyday Buddhist view of “who we really are,” a body and mind held together by *alaya-vijnana*, the storehouse consciousness, which still presumably contains some dim karmic vestige of cause and

consequence all the way back to the days of simian romance and beyond, back to the bog, back to beginninglessness.

And from that point of view we might even run into a little doctrinal problem. We don't have a creation story that collides headlong with Darwinism as the monotheistic religions do, but how coherent does our account of the inherent buddhanature remain as we move back in evolutionary time? Does a chimp have the buddhanature? "Wu." What about a tubeworm? What about the first paramecium motating in the primordial ooze? I wonder how many generations I'll have to spend as a paramecium just for asking the question?

And then there's the Buddha's transcendent view – "who we really are" is no-one at all. If

identity as a single, separate, permanent phenomenon cannot be established, then there is nothing there to be altered by anything the chimps might or might not have done.

And still, despite my "agnosticism about the nature of our origins," and despite my Buddhism about the nature of identity, I find the chimp story to be a compelling story – I like it. Maybe it's just perverse pleasure at the challenge it will undoubtedly present to dogma; maybe it's my enjoyment of science and its way of constantly revising itself. Maybe it's my delight in the memory of a three-year-old chimp I saw on television who, having just discovered that the image in the mirror was him, took the opportunity to see for the first time what was under his tongue.



The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

This is the second of two lectures given by Master Sheng Yen on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in 1999 at the Chan Meditation Center. These lectures will be part of a forthcoming book on the 37 aids to enlightenment. This lecture was orally translated by Guo Gu Bhikshu and edited by Ernest Heau.

Part Two: May 16, 1999

Mindfulness of Mind

The third of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is mindfulness of mind, in other words, contemplation of the impermanence of mental states. Though complex, Buddhist psychology has three main aspects relating to the phenomena of the mind.

The first is the consciousness arising out of the activities of the sense faculties. Through contact of the sense faculties with objects in the external environment, there arise mental phenomena associated with these faculties. Through the faculty of sight, we see things, through the faculty of sound, we hear things, and so on. All these mental phenomena are kinds of cognitive consciousness.

The second aspect of mind refers to reflection, which does not have to rely on the sense

faculties. It is the mind itself thinking and reflecting in isolation from sensations. This also occurs in sleep, where the mind can dream without relying on the sense faculties.

The third aspect of the mind is the most imperceptible and most subtle; it is the underlying substratum of our very existence and continues from one life to the next. This is the mind that links the previous life to the present one, and will continue to exist in future lives.

With regard to contemplating the mind as impermanent, the first level of sensation is the coarsest and most easily perceived as transient. As one progresses in mindfulness practice, the mind becomes increasingly subtle in its perceptions; one becomes aware of the second level, that of the mind reflecting on its own phenomena, independent of the sense faculties. One becomes keenly aware of the transient nature of one's thoughts in isolation from the environment,



just rising and falling, and the mindfulness of that happening. The third and most subtle level of mind also arises in meditation, where the mind is refined to the point where it can perceive countless past lives, and countless futures lives. The mind is also aware of itself becoming clearer and clearer. When we can personally experience this ongoing, impermanent nature of our own mind, that itself is wisdom, and with wisdom we are liberated from suffering. This is the purpose of contemplating mind as impermanent.

How is experiencing the impermanence of one's mind liberation? Why is that wisdom? We ordinarily identify the mind as "my" mind, the body as "my" body. When you have a haircut, the hair that ends up on the floor, is that "you?" After you take a bath, what's left in the bathwater, is that "you?" You may not so willingly admit that these things are you, but they come from your body. Common sense says that we don't identify these things as "me." Well, then, who are you? Some people may think "I am my mind," and this is the crux of contemplating mind as impermanent. Mind is "me" as a sense of self. Identifying the thinking process as oneself is the source of vexations and suffering. For example, when we identify with

the thought of arrogance, this leads to suffering. When we identify with the feelings of jealousy and hatred, these mental states will lead to suffering.

When we examine our thoughts very closely, we see that we are taking those mental states as marks of a permanent self. We believe that

there is an "I" behind arrogance, hatred, jealousy, and so on. It is the constant self-referencing, the very subtle identifying the mind with a sense of self that is suffering. When someone truly understands and perceives that the mind is constantly in flux, that it is just a mirror of impermanence, then one will stop seeing the thought-stream as the self, and suffering will not follow.

You may think, "Oh, this is a very lofty practice, a very high attainment." That is not necessarily so. One does not need to engage in deep meditative absorption, or deep samadhi, to attain this.

The question is how deeply we can integrate this idea into our attitudes, and do that wherever we are and whenever we can. If in our lives we can be mindful of our thinking process, and become familiar with the idea of observing impermanence, we will gradually lessen our identification of these thoughts as "me,"

"THE QUESTION IS HOW DEEPLY WE CAN INTEGRATE THIS IDEA [THAT THE THOUGHT-STREAM IS NOT THE SELF] INTO OUR ATTITUDES. IF IN OUR LIVES WE CAN BE MINDFUL OF OUR THINKING PROCESS, AND BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE IDEA OF OBSERVING IMPERMANENCE, WE WILL GRADUALLY LESSEN OUR IDENTIFICATION OF THESE THOUGHTS AS "ME," "MINE" OR "I.""

“mine” or “I.” The more profound our understanding, the more profound will be our experience of what “no-self” means. And this reality of selflessness is wisdom, and that is freedom from suffering.

Understanding impermanence need not mean seeing life as dreadful. On the contrary, if we do not end our vexations and do not give rise to genuine insight and wisdom, then indeed one’s suffering can seem very real and very permanent. Buddhist practitioners who contemplate the impurity of the body and contemplate impermanence will not be pessimistic. Rather, they will very actively engage in practice in order to sever vexations and give rise to insight and wisdom. Only then will one be released from suffering.

This means using one’s body to help others while benefiting oneself; this also means using the mind to contemplate, to benefit self and others, and to embrace wholesome attitudes and views. This is Buddhist practice. When we actively engage our body and mind in a wholesome way, treading the path of Dharma, then and only then will we actualize impermanence, and experience the nature of emptiness and selflessness. However, we must remember that, while realizing emptiness is liberation, other sentient beings still need liberating themselves. At that stage, one can wholeheartedly use one’s body and mind to benefit others.

Mindfulness of Dharmas

The fourth foundation is mindfulness of dharmas. “Dharma” in Buddhism can be understood in two ways. The first meaning refers to all mental as well as physical phenomena. (By convention, we use a lower-case ‘d’ when

we have this meaning in mind.) The second meaning of Dharma refers to the teachings of Buddhism. But mindfulness of dharmas as selfless refers to the first type of dharma, that is, phenomena. To be more specific, not just the material phenomena, but the phenomena of mind itself – mental events, mental processes, thought objects.

In Buddhism, thoughts are considered objects that exist in the mind. Some Buddhist texts contain very detailed elaborations of this idea: we have the text from the Yogacara, the Mind-Only School, which gives a comprehensive understanding of mind, dividing all states into different dharmas; another text, the Abhidharmakosha, gives a very detailed elaboration of dharmas, particularly of mental dharmas.

Being mindful of dharmas means not only being aware of dharmas arising in our minds, but also how they cause affliction. This is because dharmas and their afflictions are constituents of our sense of self. When we can see that our sense of self comes from these negative mental states, then we are practicing mindfulness of dharmas. The Abhidharma and other texts go into elaborate detail on the different types of dharmas, but for the sake of simplicity, I want to just talk about dharmas with outflows and dharmas without outflows.

Dharmas without outflows are dharmas that liberate. Mainly it refers to the mind of wisdom, one that is not conditioned by phenomena. This is also the realization of selflessness. Dharmas with outflows are dharmas that are conditioned, including physical and mental dharmas. They are mental states arising out of causes and conditions that are subject to

change, deterioration, and impermanence. The outflows from the arising of these dharmas are vexations.

Ordinary sentient beings only relate to dharmas with outflows, because this is a fact of existence, the way we think, the way we reflect on things, what we experience. All the objects of our experiences are subject to deterioration, change, and impermanence. Because they are conditioned, everything we experience constitutes dharmas with outflows.

You may have seen people who are laughing one minute and crying the next. Children are often like this, and so are people on meditation retreats. One time I brought a box of chocolates to some people I was visiting. The little girl in the family was very happy, thinking the chocolates were for her. When I told her it was not just for her, the next instant she was crying. Can adults be like this too? Yes, we can.

So, which mind is the “you,” the happy one or the sad one? If “you” are the happy one, how come “you” are sometimes sad? If “you” is a permanent entity and it is sad, why is it sometimes happy? In fact, our sense of self constantly changes according to our mental states. There is no permanent, abiding self anywhere to be found. This can easily be realized by an ordinary person’s examination of the workings of the mind. One can come to understand that all phenomena are without a permanent, abiding self. Through mindfulness of mind, we can also understand the workings of mind. Through examination of our daily experiences, we will understand that all dharmas are conditional and transient, lacking fixity or permanent identity.

This is the meaning of realizing the selflessness of dharmas. The important point is to integrate your understandings of these four kinds of contemplation into your daily life.

Question: When we contemplate impermanence, do we use our intellect, or just our awareness?

Master Sheng Yen: Really understanding impermanence is not intellectual; it is experiential. It is not something to ponder; it is something to be known. If you try to understand impermanence intellectually, you are more likely to get tired before any true wisdom arises. Impermanence is something one must personally experience. For example, in the immediacy of feeling pain, you know and you experience it. This is different from thinking, “Ok, this pain is impermanent; it will go away.” It’s a process of filtering the experience of pain through understanding its impermanence. This involves cognition, but it is not thinking, “This pain will go away.” It is, rather, understanding with your whole being that the reality you are experiencing is fundamentally impermanent.



quiet (is)

quiet (is) peaceful (is)

brush of incense smoke past paper lantern wave

breath through Indian bamboo

drop of

amber ash on tatami

blink of lash

the night.

– Adam Pergament

Life Koans and Retreat Experience

by
Dr. John Crook

The following is Part 1 of a Dharma talk given by Dr. John Crook at the Chan Meditation Center in Elmhurst, NY, on March 9, 2006. The talk was transcribed by Sheila Sussman and edited for the magazine by David Berman with the assistance of Dr. Crook. Part 2 will appear in the next issue of Chan Magazine.

Dr. John Crook was Master Sheng Yen's first European Dharma heir. He is a biologist, a pioneer in the behavioural evolutionary ecology of birds, primates and man, and is the Teacher of the Western Chan Fellowship in the United Kingdom.

The first thing I should say is that it's quite an awe-inspiring experience for me to be giving this talk here. I'm very familiar with this room: I'm particularly familiar with a certain patch of wall over there, another one down there, and at least two patches up there, which I remember in vivid detail. I've sat quite a number of retreats in this room with Shifu: all of them extremely difficult and inspiring. So it's quite strange to be here in this room and recalling the clarity of mind and the work which was done by all of us who attended those retreats with Shifu.

This evening I want to explore some themes in Chan. And when I say explore, I mean explore. When you explore something there's always a risk. An exploration is an adventure. I'm exploring some ideas, not teaching you some fixed rule about them. So it might be that I may say some things that might be different from what you've been taught elsewhere or before. That's fine, because what we're doing

together is an exploration of ideas, which are fairly flexible anyway. If you find what I'm saying to be useful for you, well, that's good. If what I'm saying is a load of rubbish for you and you don't believe it, well, forget it. That's OK, too.

I want to begin with some very simple questions, and of course they won't be so simple when we start looking at them. What is Chan for? Why are you doing Chan? Why do you sit? Why did you come on this early spring evening, maybe from some quite a long way away, to hear a talk about Chan? What is your motivation? These are all questions that form the basis of koans. Of course, there is a history of koans, how they began in what are called "encounter-dialogues" between masters and monks many, many years ago. That's the history. But koans are not only a matter of history – they are right here and right now, all the time.

Shifu used to say to me that the most important koans are life koans – that’s to say, the koans of our life, which are present with us yesterday, today and tomorrow. These life koans are made up from the patterns of our lives and the fact that those patterns of life are often not at all easy to live with. We have to remember that the Buddha himself is often called the Great Doctor. Why a great doctor? Because he heals. You may remember that the First Noble Truth says that life is suffering, not that there is suffering in life, but life is suffering. You cannot have life without suffering, and maybe you cannot have suffering without life, either – which is an interesting reversal.

So we must begin by asking what suffering is. Why do we suffer? It’s absolutely fundamental. It begins very early. You see, we’re all born as babies completely dependent upon Mother. This is very different from many other mammals: cows; donkeys; monkeys; chimpanzees. All of their babies are born pretty active, moving in the world. We are born totally, one

hundred percent dependent upon Mum, and a little bit later, less dependent on Dad, and then teachers, then spiritual teachers, then friends, and so on. We are deeply dependent on other people for learning how to live. Yet, right from the beginning, other people have limited time for us. Those of you who are mums I think will agree that one can’t give the whole of one’s time to this baby, who of course wants you the whole of the time. There may be other children around who are to be looked after, as well. So of course, immediately there’s a clash of wants: baby wants Mum, Mum is too busy for baby and says, wait. Baby doesn’t want to wait. Other children have to be attended to. So, right from the beginning, there’s the problem of how do I get what I want?

And what is it that’s wanting something? What is it that wants the breast? What is it that wants to be cuddled? Well - it must be – me! And “me” becomes really rather important because everything depends upon “me.” And as you grow up, as we all grow



up, we learn that some things are gratifying, and that's nice! And some things are very far from gratifying. They may be very punishing. And when those things happen, of course, we don't want them. And so, we come, of course, immediately to the Buddha's Second Noble Truth, life is suffering because of desire. Desire is one of those rather big words. What it simply means is that we want things that we haven't got, and we don't want things that we have got.

So there is an endless oscillation between wanting this and not wanting that, a whole pattern of wantings and not wantings and, of course, these patterns begin to form shapes so that by the time we are nine or ten years old there's already a personality developing there, full of responses, often very skilled responses, for getting what one wants and not getting what one doesn't want. A lot of the time we fail and that gets worrying, sometimes so deeply worrying that the issues get suppressed and buried – the roots of later neuroses. These things are well known, they lead to the problems that may have to be dealt with in psychotherapy – they are also the spiritual sickness with which we have to deal.

In Buddhism, we talk about it in a rather different way from within the psychological disciplines. We say that by the time we are eighteen, nineteen, or twenty, we've inherited something which we can call "karmic retribution." Shifu's talks on karmic retribution are extremely illuminating. Briefly, karmic retribution arises because as we struggle with these difficulties in life, we make mistakes. Some mistakes are very small; some mistakes may be very big. And when we make mistakes, there's always a price to pay. That's to

say, mistakes have consequences. Of course, when we do helpful, good things to other people, those also have beneficial consequences. But the difficult ones are when we make serious mistakes, which many years later begin to have an effect.

All of us suffer from karmic retribution. Although this is quite a severe way of speaking, we are looking at something very real. We need to think about it. It's worthwhile spending some time on one's own, thinking about the difficult things in one's life and where they have come from, how they originated. Did one make a mistake?

Of course, other people may be involved as well. Some of the things that happen to one involve other people. For example, I didn't choose to be born to a particular Mum, she was not my choice. Things that arise out of my relationship with my mother, say, are not one hundred percent due to me. Even so, you will still find that, even in a difficult relationship with a parent or teacher, you could have behaved your-self differently. If you had chosen to go down one path rather than another, things might have been different. Maybe you know that wonderful poem by Robert Frost, isn't it, American poet, where he talks about walking on a path through a forest, through a wood, and the path divides, and you go one way and it leads to a whole story – what if you'd gone the other way? What might have happened if you'd gone the other way? Of course, one doesn't know but all of this leads to a certain kind of uncertainty in one's adult life. There's always some karmic retribution hanging around. There are always things that one could have done better. And this we can call, to use the Sanskrit word, dukkha. Dukkha is translated in English as suffering but

the actual meaning of the word is something more subtle than that. It means something like, oh, let us say, unsatisfactoriness. It means that some part one's life is not satisfactory, and that might be serious, it might be real suffering, or it might be something that one can put up with and get along with so long as one does one's best.

So, by the time we've reached maturity, we have our life koan. My life koan is, what to do with the puzzling aspects of my life? How can I live a good life? Or how can I at least do less harm than I am doing? What can I do? What can I do in a world in such extraordinary political turmoil? I'm just a small citizen, maybe of a small country. The world is falling apart. What can I do? The public karma, the public retribution is very large, and it's coming about only too clearly from the gross errors that have been made. We needn't go further into that, yet it is perfectly clear that the mistakes which humanity's been making over the last hundred years are now coming home to roost.

This issue of life koans, how to work with a life koan, is actually a very important issue. So let's look at a few guidelines to the way in which life koans can be worked upon in retreats. I want to talk about two particular kinds of retreat that we've been developing in the Western Chan Fellowship.

First of all, it is essential to see that we live our lives most of the time in the three times; that's to say, the past, the present, and the future. We spend our time playing past, present and future. Why do I suffer now? It's because of something in the past. What about what should I do in the future? Well, I should plan to do something in the future. The odd fact is, that the past actually is dead. There are memories of it, but everything in the past is actually gone, and everything in the future has not yet arisen.

“THERE WE HAVE A KOAN, YOU SEE, A REAL PARADOX, BECAUSE WE'VE JUST SAID, THE ONLY PLACE WHERE YOU CAN BE IS NOW, BUT THEN WHEN YOU GO INTO IT YOU FIND THAT NOW HAS ALREADY GONE. SO WHERE CAN YOU BE? THAT'S THE KOAN.”

There's only one place where you can actually be, and that is now. This needs thinking about, because it's very easy to say that's a lot of nonsense - of course there's past, present, and future. But actually, the only place where there is something, is-ness, is only now. How could there be anything else? Anything else is was-ness or will-be. Is-ness is only now. And you, therefore, can only be now. You cannot be

in the past. That's dead. You cannot be in the future. It hasn't come. You can only be now.

And here comes the koan: where is now? When I said now, just now, it's already gone! So, you haven't even got a now. The now that I say now in is already past, it's dead. There we have a koan, you see, a real paradox, because we've just said, the only place where you can be is now, but then when you go into it you find that now has already gone. So where can you be? That's the koan. It's a

koan you uncovered by thinking about karmic retribution. You start thinking about your life and the problems with your life, but then you realize that all that stuff, all that worry actually was past. Does it affect me now? Yes, but only insofar as I bring it up again, and again, and again, and fuss about it. If I can genuinely step out of that anxiety, I find myself in the now... or do I? There's the paradox. There's the problem. And that's what koans are all about. They're all about paradox. Life is full of it !

Let's let ourselves off the hook a little bit, even though we may not go the whole way. This "now" we're talking about, which is always gone, is actually moving, so if I am to stay with the now I have to move, I have to move with the now as it moves. It's like surfing on a giant wave. The wave is just part of the ocean, it's moving, moving, moving, moving: so long as I stay on the top of the surfboard, on the top of the moving wave of now, I'm in the continuous present. As soon as I fall off, the wave goes on and I'm in the past. As for the future, this ocean has no shore, so if you stay on the board you go on and on and on forever. Inevitably, we fall off sooner or later of course. And then we are back in the three times. And we're back with the koan. What was it I saw when I was riding in the continuous present? There was the wave, there was the smell of sea, there was the wind, and where was I? Hmm, we're beginning to enter the landscape of the koan.

So, our life koans, as we go into them, begin to uncover deep mystery. Other religions tend to stop the investigation at that point by saying, oh, God's in his heaven, all's right with

the world. God's doing it all. In the Abrahamic religions, the whole thing is solved relatively easily by saying, God's the mystery. But, of course, "God" is just a word. The actual mystery is open! We don't know the mystery. If we knew what it was, it wouldn't be a mystery.

So: what about the methods of Chan, the methods that Shifu often so fondly talks about with us?

In the method of Silent Illumination, one of the things that happens is that as we sit there's this enormous noise in the head that all of us have struggled with – the noise of our karmic retribution repeating itself over and over again. The three times are rattling away in our skulls. Yet, as we continue sitting, samatha, calming the mind, begins to happen, and the mind begins to get calmer and calmer. And as the mind becomes calmer, so also the way in which we categorize our world begins to change. For example, space: normally, sitting in this room on a Silent Illumination retreat there are these four walls, there is this shape. But, as one begins to enter into the further reaches of Silent Illumination, one finds it's almost as if one can see through the walls. One's feeling of space is enormous. Or time: one suddenly finds that one thinks one's been on one's cushion for half a minute and the bell goes and you realize you've been there for half an hour. Something very strange has happened to one's sense of time. So, actually, in the practice of meditation itself, we discover the mysteries, and the mysteries are quite clearly of the mind. Vastness, spaciousness, timelessness are things which are discovered in the method of Silent Illumination.

However, often, we are then bothered by questions which arise from that: how can that be? What is this? We are beset by questions, and these questions become the material of the classical koans. The classical koans are the ways in which masters and monks in ancient times talked about these very same problems: Why is life only seventy years? Why is death? What is life? What should I do? Who am I? These fundamental questions have not changed since the time of the Buddha.

As you know, one way of working is through the method known in Chan as the huatou, that is to say, a short, sharp question like, "Who is repeating Buddha's name?" upon which one meditates. When one looks at such a question for a very long period of time in meditation, some of the changes I referred to in Silent Illumination eventually also begin to happen.

In the Western Chan Fellowship we also use a rather different method, the heart of which was created by an American called Charles Berner. Like many Americans, he was in a great hurry. He was so hurried, in fact, that he called it an "Enlightenment Intensive," as if by being intense for three days you might get enlightened! A little unlikely, one might say. But still, this was the idea. And indeed, the method is very intense and very useful.

It takes the form of what he called a Communication Exercise, and the question used in communication is a huatou.

I want to describe this method briefly to you, even though some of you know about it already. It's a very important and useful method to illustrate how one can work with a huatou or with a koan in a simple direct manner. Let's take, for example, the fundamental question with which we always start

these retreats. "Who am I?" If you came on a retreat with us, the first thing you would be asked to do, is, OK, discover who you are. Within a retreat based in zazen we make use of the Communication Exercise.

It's like this. We all pair up in couples. Each one of us will ask the partner the question in alternation, each one has five minutes to respond over a period of thirty or forty minutes – that

is three or six goes each. Suppose this gentleman (points to participant) and I are working together on this question: the session begins, the bell goes ping! I turn to my colleague and I say, "Robert (or whatever your name is), tell me who you are." He has five minutes to answer, which of course isn't enough, but he's going to have another go later. After five minutes, the bell will go again, and he now will say to me, "OK, John, tell me who you

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AS WE BEGIN TO LET IT GO
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EMPTY THE BARREL...”

are.” Then I’ve got five minutes. And then ping! Tell me who you are. ping! Tell me who you are – for thirty minutes, or even forty minutes.

What’s very interesting about this exercise is that you begin quite normally. For example, I might say, well, first of all I’m a father, and what’s more than that, I’m a grandfather, I’ve got six grandchildren. Then I might divert and spend two or three minutes talking about my grandchildren. I like them very much, etc., etc. I might come back to: I’m also an academic, I studied psychology in the university, I’ve been to the Himalayas, and studied with the lamas, blah blah blah. So, all about my roles in life, the things I’ve done. But two days later I might start wondering a bit about that. Instead, I might say something like, well, when I think about some aspects of my life, I really feel a bit sad. Or, it could be something like, I wasn’t really as kind to my mother as I might have been. Or, it might be, every time I hear the news I want to weep. One’s partner might come up with, hmm, news-hearing makes me angry. Of course, feelings are beginning to be expressed, first of all indirectly. But then the question is – who are you? And the truest expression of somebody who’s weeping is to weep, not to say, I’m weeping, but actually to do it. Many people express themselves, finally, by allowing emotion to appear – opening themselves so much to the exercise that they allow the feelings of distress to actually appear. Yet there’s only five minutes. After five minutes, ping! Tell me who you are. So there’s a tight discipline in this, you see, I can’t indulge myself. I can have a big weep about, well, the day’s news or whatever, but then, ping! Oh dear! Right, OK, tell me who you are. And off we go again.

Now the beauty of this is that when one person is open enough to show what’s really in their heart – the actual emotion – the other person knows that it’s safe for him or for her to do the same. Trust begins to develop. Naturally, not everybody can be so free with feelings as that. Some people find it very difficult. The British find it rather difficult, particularly British men, to express their feelings immediately and openly. And I’m not sure about Chinese, but I think they have some difficulties with certain feelings as well. There are similarities between the British and the Chinese when it comes to reticence about our feelings, whereas Indians and Arabs love to leap into their emotions at the first possible opportunity! Either way, if one is more reticent about one’s feelings one can at least say, you know, there really is great sadness in my heart when I think about Iraq, say. Great sadness. And of course that is a very genuine heartfelt statement, and it will do. You don’t have to weep. You merely have to show the reality of your feeling.

The really interesting thing about this exercise is that Charles Berner called it “emptying the barrel.” It’s as if we have a huge barrel in our minds and bodies full of all this karmic retribution stuff, all these worries, all this karma. As we begin to let it go to our partner in these exercises, so we begin to empty the barrel until we really begin to free ourselves from it. Strangely, rather strangely – the themes that appear, once fully expressed, do not have to be repeated, at least, not within the retreat. After the half an hour, we change partners, so that you work with him, and she works with me. So there’s constant change around the group, all the time. You are not just working with one partner, you’re working with all the group. If there are twenty people in the group, there are nineteen others

to work with, through the week, or the four days, or however long it takes.

As the time goes along, one is beginning to empty oneself of all this stuff. Some of it is heavy stuff. Berner, in his Californian style, used to refer to that as “elephant shit” – an expression I think he got from Fritz Perls. Then this other stuff that is not quite so heavy – Berner described that as “chicken shit.” Whatever it is, there’s a lot of shit in this barrel and it needs to be emptied out. Berner was a very earthy West Coast character, as perhaps you realize. So, we empty ourselves of all this nonsense.

But what’s happening? The mind may become very still in rather the same way as it would do in a Silent Illumination retreat. There’s a master present, and you can go at any time and have an interview to ask a question or to say how you’ve got on. Somebody might come to the master, the master might look at him and say to himself, aha, there’s a change here because signs of worry have gone, the eye energy is bright, the person sits down and says, “I’m me, and it’s great!” How many of you can say, “I’m me and it’s great,” straight off? Not so easy, is it? We usually hesitate about saying, I’m great, and it’s all right. Yet, actually, if you go into it, it’s true, because as you empty your self of all the painful stuff, so you can feel confident in yourself because you’re not avoiding that stuff, you’re not denying it, not suppressing it so that it wells up again and again. You’ve shared it, you’ve acknowledged it, you’ve pointed out what a crappy person you are, and you’ve said, “Yes, it’s me, I’m



like that.” But still, for some curious reason, because it is being emptied out and shared, there’s a feeling that, well, after all, it’s OK to be me. There’s a sort of humility here.

And this is the beginning of Dharma confidence, too. If one is OK with oneself, one begins to understand the Dharma far more deeply. You can then start turning towards other people. If you're not fussing about yourself because you're OK, nothing special, but OK, you can then start turning, asking, "Who are you?" to another.

Other questions follow, questions like, OK, so you know who you are now. Well, tell me, how is life fulfilled? Hmm, how is life fulfilled? And off we go again, with that question. Or, it could be something like, tell me, what is love? Hmm, What is love? Or "What are you?" What is the who-person made of? What is the mind before the person existed? Have you heard that one before? We're getting close to the "real" koans.

What happens on these retreats? Statistically speaking, about forty-five percent of people actually get to the point of feeling it's OK to be themselves, and will then continue to work further. And some, very rarely, may actually have a kensho experience, not usually on retreat, but separately after retreat. A kensho experience by definition is simply one in which all self concern drops away: a definition of an enlightenment experience. Such an experience can arise, but it's rare, very rare. The best result in a Western Zen retreat is usually what Shifu would call a "one-mind" experience: a feeling of oneness with everybody, love of everybody on the retreat, love of everybody outside, and a feeling of really positive affirmation about the world, a feeling of oneness with it. And that can be a very strange and wonderful experience because when you meditate a lot, as we have said, the boundaries of time and space dissolve. So you may, as it were, come out of the Chan

hall and look at the hills, and suddenly the hills and everything around you appears to be part of you – there's no difference. That is a yogic experience, which is a consequence of the practice of the meditation.

So we're talking here not simply about the answering of a question, we're talking about a transformation in the very psyche itself, in which the yogic process of meditation plus the intellectual endeavor of working with a question combine to produce what in Sanskrit is called paravritti, a turning around within consciousness itself. You've dropped out of the three times. For a brief while you are totally there in the moving present: in the presence of the present.

Well, that's the Western Zen Retreat and many people have benefited from it. Many people find it a very useful introduction to the Dharma. Personally, I think it's an exceptionally good introduction to the Dharma for the following reason: it is perfectly possible to do a lot of mind-calming without actually asking who you are. Often meditators get into the habit of doing a lot of samatha, or a lot of vipassana, sitting on their backsides, calming the mind, but actually, none of their difficulties are being resolved because none of them are coming up. And as soon as you get into an argument with somebody, up it will all come! So actually, you may not be learning Dharma just by sitting. There has to be more to it than that. You have to confront yourself. And I put it to you, that in Zen, in Chan, the number one thing we all have to do is to confront ourselves. It is not only the opening gambit, but perhaps the most important gambit of all in the practice of Chan.

WHO AM I?

2006 Western Zen Retreat Report

Who am I?

It can't be described who "I" am any longer. All labels have dropped as they are all illusions. Formally, I was Asian-American, creative-type and female. Seeing for the first time who "I" was made me crack up. The labels which were once accepted meant nothing. In fact, "I" have belonged to affinity groups whether it was Asian or female-supported groups and on a very deep level, they are based on falsehoods. It is support but it is also based on an "us" against "them" mentality which is illusory.

What am I?

For the first time in a quiet and relaxed atmosphere I was able to address the internal self. During the first communication exercise, I was crying over some painful point in my life. The next moment I felt fine. The moment after that there were more upsetting things and then so on. This happened continuously until the constant recurring stories fell away. First it came as fear; then there was nothing.

The retreat was a scientific experiment and the constants were meditating, eating, working, sleeping, waking, meditating. The repetition of the same actions over time showed the illusions of the mind and how untrustworthy the mind is. After the turmoil came a calm and then an essence appeared.

What is love?

My heart sank slightly when I learned I would be cleaning the bathrooms. I had read about work practice and but I still couldn't help feeling a slight twinge of heavy-heartedness. There are nine sinks and about six or seven toilets and showers. Who knew that a few days later while mopping the expansive floor compassion would begin flowing? The people who had appeared to be strangers in the beginning were no different from myself. Wiping the sinks until they shined brightly, making sure there was not a drop or smudge left on them because suddenly all of the people on the retreat had become dear to me. It wasn't a clinging affection, but the purest compassion for people, so vulnerable and fragile yet having all the answers within themselves.

How is life fulfilled?

Before the retreat I spent most of my time worrying and being stressed out. I had everything I could ever want: a wonderful soul mate, a terrific family, good health, a good job, yet I was still not fulfilled because I felt something was missing. The retreat illustrated what true fulfillment was. It was opening a door and taking care that it didn't slam shut. It was standing in line and allowing the person in front of me to have space so they did not feel rushed. It was pushing a chair in. It was walking slowly on the sidewalk from the dorms after the rain and making sure not to step on the earthworms.

What is it?

Simon asked this and no answer came.

An answer came through meditation as a forest. The forest is made up of trees, but how many trees does it take to make up a forest? "It" can not be grasped. When this was relayed to John in interview, he said yes, one could take apart anything with that thinking (parts of a chariot, is this the chariot?) He also mentioned Spring which could not be grasped.

But he pushed further and said that the answer, while correct, was still too technical. Through a gentle verbal pushing from John, where there was no intellect, the comfortable footing of ego slipped even more and uncertainty came in. Then he asked: "What is it?" and the answer came. Blank. It was hilarious. Then the ego came in and "I" felt disappointed because "I" felt John had handed "me" the answer. He said to think about it a bit more. The realization was that if one was explaining to someone what "it" is, it might need to have that little push from someone who knows better. Answers are not gotten in a way that one expects them to come, they arise in different formats and methods.

It is not you; you are everything.

"It" was understood or experienced so on a level it was apparent what this meant. When asked about what the next step was after having a bit of an understanding or a new awareness, he replied to keep practicing. This phrase would help at challenging times when the "I" reappeared. On one level it means that the ego is not part of "it". "You are everything" means that when the ego

is present, you create your happiness, you create your suffering. As long as there is a "you" present, one does not have a true understanding.

On a more ego-driven level, this is a helpful phrase because it reminds one that whatever the situation, say for example, I feel lonely because of no friends or no boyfriend, then this reminds me that the bad situation is not me and I am actually the universe. The problem with it is that there is still an ego present. So while comforting, one still needs to practice more.

Conclusion.

Upon returning home, all areas of my life have greatly improved. I thought I had become enlightened or had "seen something." However, John and Simon wisely and gently told me that it was not Kensho and to not worry about it and continue practicing. They are correct in this assessment because if there is an ego present to desire confirmation, then more practice needs to be done. In the Chan Magazine of Winter 2006 Master Sheng Yen talked about the dangers of claiming to be "enlightened" when one really isn't and then misrepresent Buddhism. This is very dangerous because if the ego reappears and "I" lost my temper or said something foolish, another person may think: "THAT'S how a Buddhist person is?" This is very detrimental to everything that Master Sheng Yen, John, Simon, Hilary and all Buddhists are working very hard to cultivate. I'm not very familiar with Buddhist history/texts and I am learning more about it now by reading and asking questions.

– N.K.

The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

DDM Sponsors Lecture Program at Taiwan's Asia University

Asia University, a prestigious private college in Taiwan's Taichung County, has announced it will be conducting a three-year program of lectures in humanism, sponsored by DDM's World Center for Buddhist Education, which will be donating NT\$1.2 million a year to support the project. The two institutions celebrated the signing of the contract to formalize the undertaking at a joint press conference last March 2nd. The DDM program is the third of its kind to date, following successful efforts at National Taiwan University and National Cheng Kung University.

"The lecture program will invite well-known scholars to lecture on various topics such as the dialogue between society and religion, the spirit of humanism and the relationship between the mind and body in the East Asian – Pacific cultural tradition," said University Director Dr. Tsai Wen-Hsiang. "Students here will be required to attend at least eight lectures on different topics before graduation, emphasizing in particular the promotion of spiritual environmentalism, which the Venerable Sheng Yen has done so much to cultivate in our society. We are hoping to plant a good seed in the minds of the students."

Asia University founder Dr. Tsai Chang-Hai was in attendance to donate NT\$1 million to DDM in support of its initiative, in the hope that spiritual environmentalism will flourish in the future.

Following the signing ceremony, Venerable Sheng Yen and Dharma Drum Mountain guides led their university guests on a tour of the Center, visiting the Library and Information Center, the Great Buddha Hall, the statue of Kuan Yin, the Wish-Granting Kuan Yin Hall, and the Meditation Center.

Master Sheng Yen noted that in our cyber-technological society, humanism must be taught to develop individual ethics and character. "This is why we are signing the contract today with Asia University," he said. "By enhancing ethics and character, the goal of building a pure land may be achieved here on this earth."

DDM Leads Relief Efforts to Help Mudslide Victims in Philippines

Last February 17th, following 10 days of heavy rain, the village of Guinsagon on Leyte island in the Philippines was drowned in a torrent of mud and boulders as catastrophic mudslides came crashing down into the valley, burying

hundreds of houses and an elementary school in mud up to 30 feet deep. Some six thousand people were displaced and more than a thousand are thought to have lost their lives. More than a hundred dead have been found, and 57 villagers were rescued alive.

The international relief effort started immediately, with the the Dharma Drum Mountain rescue team taking a leading role. "They were the first to arrive in the Philippines bringing humanitarian assistance," said Ambassador Antonio I. Bacilio, chief executive officer of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO).

A team of 31 rescue workers led by Li Hao-Zuo, head of DDM relief programs, including members of DDM and SAR Taiwan arrived at the scene on February 19th bringing mineral water, canned food, medicines, tents, and other supplies, as well as a fund for the victims.

In appreciation of these efforts, MECO – the Philippine's representative agency in Taiwan – held a tea party March 10th attended by some 55 people, where Ambassador Bacilio expressed his gratitude for "the assistance given to us by American soldiers, Malaysian rescue teams and the Spanish K-9 units," emphasizing that "special thanks must go to Taiwan's SAR and DDM," who were "generous, selfless and brave."

Hearing such praise, SAR Board chairwoman Wang Mei-Chen demurred, noting that DDM and SAR are duty-bound to answer calls for help anywhere in the world, and expressed special appreciation to "SAR members who

sacrificed family time and leisure time to help out." She hopes the encounter will lead to closer Philippine-Taiwan cooperation in matters of common interest, as well as consultation to facilitate future emergency response operations.

Landmark Digitization of Buddhist Scriptures

On February 18th the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) held a press conference at the Hui-Jyh Buddhist Hall in Taipei to announce the completion of the newest edition of the Chinese Electronic Tripitaka Collection, which coincides with CBETA's 8th anniversary.

DDM Provost and Rector, the Ven. Hui Min, who is also CBETA Director, said the new version will help readers conduct research on Buddhist texts far more easily on line. Moreover, he said, this latest edition constitutes the largest database in the world of Chinese Buddhist scriptures, containing more than 100 million Chinese characters from vols. 1-55 of the Taisho Tripitaka, and vols. 54-88 of the Shinsan Zokuzokyo (Xuzangjing).

To date, the CBETA has issued over 100,000 discs of its electronic Tripitaka, with a correspondingly large number of file downloads on the internet.

The project has drawn on the support of a wide array of collaborators including Hsuan Chuang University, the National Central University, the Chuang Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, the Luminary Buddhist Institute, the Yuan Kuang Buddhist Institute, the Fu Yan

Buddhist Institute, and the Hua Yen Lotus Society. It is hoped that even more will sign on in the future.

Tu Chang Ming, Curator of the DDM Library and Information Center, noted that, "CBETA's work is now fully available to anyone in the online environment. Thanks to computer technology, not only are we able to digitize these materials and share them widely, but we can also invite the collaboration of scholars in the international community. It is all quite unprecedented."

The Ven. Hui Min envisions the possibility that through the use of open platform architecture, digitization efforts can be expanded internationally; CBETA might then mark its 10th anniversary with a major international conference of scholars heralding further advances in the electronic dissemination of Buddhist texts.

2000 Take Refuge at 2006 Lantern Festival

On the occasion of the traditional Chinese New Year's Lantern Festival, some two thousand people in Taiwan formally took refuge in the Three Jewels at a ceremony conducted personally by Master Sheng Yen in the Dharma Drum World Center for Buddhist Education. The event was coordinated through video-conferencing technology to include participants at the Ziyun Monastery in Kaohsiung and the DDM practice center in Taichung. It was the first Refuge-Taking ceremony held at the World Center since its opening last October.

In his blessing, Master Sheng Yen said that taking refuge is only the first step in the path towards spiritual development. To cultivate wisdom and compassion, we should practice daily at home and come to DDM often. He noted that, compared to other places in the world, Taiwan is indeed a place of wealth, peace and happiness; yet many people still do not have a feeling of safety. After taking refuge, we should treat others with compassion, thereby allaying our fears of enemies and suffering. If we feel helpless when faced with natural disasters, chanting the name of Kuan Yin can bring feelings of inner peace.

Those taking refuge were full of reverence and joy. One aged couple who have been devotees of Kuan Yin for almost half a century had finally managed to come to DDM for the first time to commit themselves formally as Buddhists. Another Refuge-taker, Mrs. Tu, accompanied by numerous grandchildren, voiced satisfaction with her children and the harmony of her family after a lifetime of Buddhist practice.

At night the pilgrims sat in the Great Buddha Hall and learned from monastics how to light the Red Lantern of Peace and Auspiciousness. Then everyone chanted sutras together. The high point of the ceremony was the lighting of the Blessing Lantern by Master Sheng Yen, to the accompaniment of deep and solemn chanting, followed by tolling the bell and beating the drum, and concluding with the New Year's of the monks.

Venerable Hui Min wished for peace to come soon in the Middle East, an end to the Avian flu, peace in domestic politics, peace between

Taiwan and Mainland China, and happiness to everyone in Taiwan and everyone throughout the world.

Venerable Walpola Piyananda Visits DDM in Taiwan

On February 3rd, in the midst of Chinese lunar New Year festivities, the Ven. Walpola Piyananda, founder of the Dharma Vijaya Buddhist Vihara in Los Angeles, where he has taught Theravada Dharma for over 30 years, came to visit Dharma Drum Mountain's World Center for Buddhist Education. Venerable Piyananda is both nephew and student of the renowned Theravada monk, Venerable Walpola Rahula.

He was enthusiastically greeted by monks acting on behalf of Master Sheng Yen, notably Venerable Guo Hui, Venerable Chang Du, Venerable Chang Wen and Venerable Chang Sui.

Venerable Piyananda presented them with a Card of Wishes for Peace, and offered high praise for DDM's efforts at tsunami relief in Sri Lanka, which have won international recognition. He noted that after reading Sheng Yen's writings he was deeply impressed by this community's commitment to promote the wisdom and compassion of Mahayana Buddhism and Chan, and said he was thinking of sending some of his own students to study Mahayana Buddhism at DDM's Sangha University. In subsequent remarks, he availed himself of the opportunity to express his profound respect for the Linji and Caodong Lineages, to which Dharma Drum Mountain is heir. He singled out for special praise exhibitions of Venerable Master Xu Yun and Venerable Master Tai Xu, who have done so

much for Buddhist education in Taiwan. In closing, he said he would share DDM's noble example with others upon his return to the United States, and departed with the blessings of Master Sheng Yen.

CMC Sunday School Grows

Article contributed by Leonard Cheng

The Sunday School program at the Chan Meditation Center is growing. This school gives the younger generation a chance to understand the main concepts of Buddhism and the practice of the teachings in their lives.

Under the guidance of Guo Ming Fashi, the Sunday school was officially established by Tiffany Taulton. She started many fun activities for the center's youth. She started with basic lessons for children to understand the principal teachings of the Buddha. She also included many field trips for the kids including kayaking, a visit to the Metropolitan Museum and going to Long Beach.

I myself have been participating in this program since it was first established. We had few kids in the class, and we got to know each other very well. These classes usually take place on Open House Sundays directly after lunch at 2 pm. The teacher comes and starts off with a prayer, and then begins the hour-long lesson. The topics usually covered are basic teachings of Buddhism like the Four Noble Truths and the Wheel of Life. We occasionally do art projects like a collage.

Tiffany has moved to Taiwan in recent months to fulfill her teaching career, and has been replaced by another teacher, Kalimah

Priforce. Kalimah has started to change the format of the Sunday school. There was a recent election of students to form a student body government. The Sunday School has divided the students between the younger kids and the adolescents. This provided more organization in the teaching methods. There are more arts and crafts for the younger kids and a more descriptive outlook on Buddhism for the adolescents. There are also monthly guest speakers and projects such as community service activities.

The activities include replanting and redesigning the backyard garden behind the nun's quarters, and concert performance during the Buddha's Birthday celebration.

The Sunday School Program is looking forward to much more improvement and new ways to spread the teachings of the Buddha to the younger generation. The student population is growing and we hope to learn new ways to explore the practice and the meaning of the teachings in our lives including many fun trips and activities. We hope that many more kids can come and join us to learn the Dharma and participate in our activities.

Amitufo!

Youth Group Goes to Long Island for Art Project

Article contributed by Kevin Wu

On Sunday, the 26th of March, the youth group from Chan Meditation Center went to a Jewish synagogue on Long Island. A renowned artist and the rabbi of the temple, Rabbi Brown, invited us to attend a project in which kids

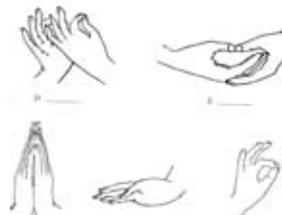
of different religions would gather at their temple to draw religious symbols on a collage. The program went like this: each member of our group, which consisted of Wendy, Judy, Sammy, Dora, Leonard, Krishna, Gloria, Susan, and me, was split up into different groups, and we, along with the members of a Christian group, Jewish group, and Islamic group, thought about religious symbols that were common throughout all the religions.

We had a great time at the synagogue, especially because there was pizza and soda, and we all met many new people there. We hope to be able to visit the temple again for the finale of the project.

Rikki Asher Presents in Chicago

Longtime Chan Center member Dr. Rikki Asher presented *What's a Mudra? Understanding Buddhist Art* at the annual National Art Educators Association conference in Chicago in March.

Asher, director of Art Education at City University of New York Queens College, talked about the mudra as a language and as a way to connect the almost universal practice of hand-gesturing with Buddhist imagery, philosophy and culture. The presentation included both traditional and contemporary examples and raised questions such as: Can these images serve to convey meaning in today's classrooms?



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 either at the Chan Meditation Center in Queens (CMC) or at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) in Pine Ridge, New York.

One-day Chan Recitation Retreat

Saturday, July 22, 9 am – 5 pm

One-day Meditation Retreat

Saturday, August 19, 9 am – 5 pm

Ten-day Silent Illumination Retreat

Saturday, June 24, 5 pm –

Monday, July 3, 5 pm

Five-day Meditation Retreat

Friday, July 7, 6 pm –

Wednesday, July 12, 10 am

Three-day Introductory Chan Retreat:

Mindfulness Practice

Friday, July 28 – Sunday, July 30

Seven-day Introduction to Intensive Chan Retreat: Mindfulness, Silent Illumination and Huatou Practice

Thursday, August 24 –

Wednesday, August 30

Three-day Recitation/Chanting Retreat

Friday, September 1, 9 pm –

Monday, September 4, 5 pm

Three-day Introductory Chan Retreat:

Mindfulness Practice

Friday, September 8 –

Sunday, September 10

Four-day Introductory Chan Retreat:

Mindfulness Practice

Thursday, September 14 –

Sunday, September 17

Seven-day Introduction to Intensive Chan Retreat: Mindfulness, Silent Illumination and Huatou Practice

Thursday, September 21–

Wednesday, September 27

Three-day Introductory Chan Retreat:

Mindfulness Practice

Friday, October 6 –

Sunday, October 8

Four-day Introductory Chan Retreat:

Mindfulness Practice

Thursday, October 12 –

Sunday, October 15

Seven-day Introduction to Intensive Chan Retreat: Mindfulness, Silent Illumination and Huatou Practice

Thursday, October 17–

Wednesday, October 23

NOTE: To register and for more information about retreats please contact the Chan Meditation Center.

Chan Practice

Monday Night Chanting

Every Monday, 7 – 9:15 pm
Devotional chanting of Amitabha Buddha;
88 Buddhas Repentance on last Monday of
each month.

Tuesday Night Sitting Group

Every Tuesday, 7 – 9:45 pm
Periods of sitting meditation alternating with
yoga, walking meditation, readings, discus-
sion, and chanting the Heart Sutra.

Saturday Sitting Group

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

Sunday Open House

Every Sunday (except May 15 for Buddha's
Birthday Celebration)

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

Classes at CMC

Taijiquan Classes

Thursdays, 7:30 – 9:00 pm, ongoing
with instructor David Ngo, \$80 for a session
of 16 classes, or \$25/month.

Yoga

Saturdays, 4 – 5:30 pm, with instructor Rikki
Asher. \$10/class. Call CMC for dates.

Beginners Meditation Classes and Beginners Dharma Classes

Call CMC for schedule.

Events at DDRC

Free Introduction to Meditation Workshop

Sunday, June 18, 2 – 5 pm

Free Introduction to Meditation Workshop

Sunday, August 20, 2 – 5 pm

Public Lecture by Bikkhu Bodhi

Sunday, September 17, 10 am – noon

Zen Summer Camps

Three-day Family Zen Camp (DDRC)

Thursday, July 13 – Sunday, July 16

Five-day College Zen Camp (DDRC)

Monday, July 31, 8:30 pm –
Sunday, August 6, 5 pm

Special Events

Earth Store Bodhisattva Recitation

Sunday, August 13, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

"Zen an Inner Peace"

Chan Master Sheng Yen's weekly television
program on WNYE 25, Friday, 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.

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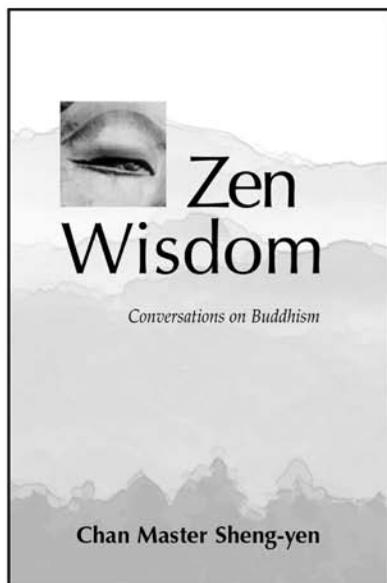
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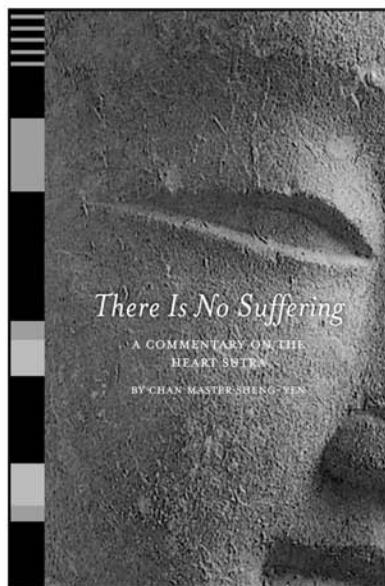


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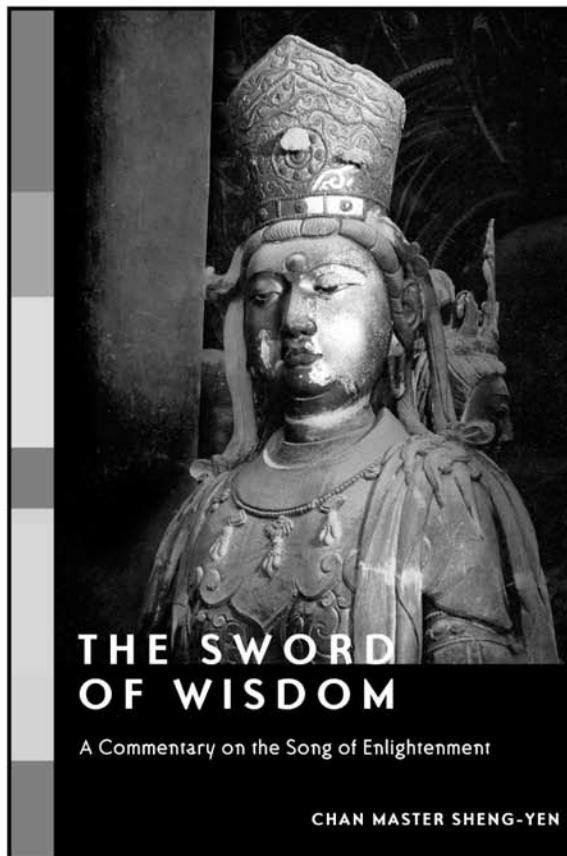


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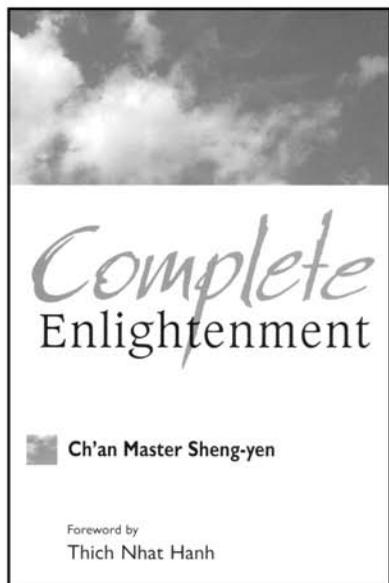
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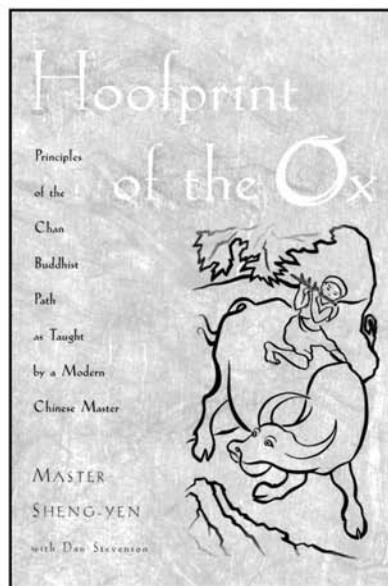
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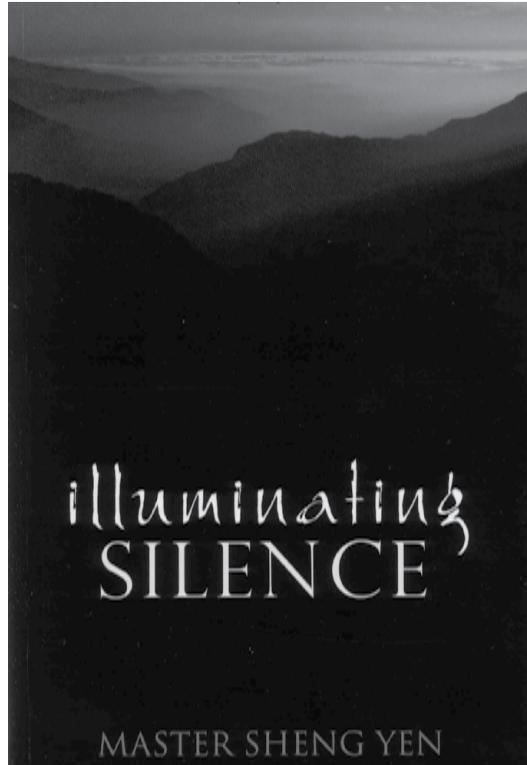
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