

Chan 禪 Magazine

Spring 2008

30th Anniversary Issue



Chan Meditation Center

Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture

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“**T**he best, the genuine Dharma, is unspoken. We may talk about mind, about Buddha, about things, but these are not genuine Dharma. They are just like a finger pointing to the moon. We cannot take the moon from the sky and show it to you, so we use our finger to point to it. The aim is to see the moon and not the finger. So whatever we talk about — Buddha, mind, things — these are not what we are really looking for. And what is it that we are looking for? We can say it is our ‘original nature’ but this again is just like a finger pointing at the moon. But after you have actually seen your original nature, there is nothing to say, no need to say anything, and no way to say anything.

“This original nature of yours actually has never left you and you have never been apart from it. At this very moment, you are already there. If you have not yet discovered it, it is only because you are confused. To be enlightened means to see your original nature at this very moment.

“But it is not that simple to say that you are ‘already there,’ that not even a single step is needed, especially if you have never practiced. By practice we do not mean taking one step or even many steps. Practice is really the process in which the illusory ‘you’ of this moment becomes the genuine ‘you.’”

From a Dharma talk given by Chan Master Sheng Yen
at the original home of the Chan Meditation Center
at 90-33 Corona Avenue in the Winter of 1980.

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Cover photo by John Feng

From The Editor

This year, 2008, we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Chan Meditation Center by our spiritual leader and teacher, Chan Master Sheng Yen.

It was actually in 1976 that Master Sheng Yen first came to New York, having been invited to teach at the Temple of Great Enlightenment in the Bronx by Dr. C. T. Shen of the Buddhist Association of the United States. The death of his teacher Master Dong Chu forced him to give up his position as Abbot of the temple and go back to Taiwan, but with the encouragement and support of Dr. Shen, Ven. Ren Jun and a small group of American disciples, Master Sheng Yen was able to return to New York in 1978 and found the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture, known today as the Chan Meditation Center.

One of his first American students, Nancy Bonardi, remembers: “Shifu and his disciple Guo Ren (Paul Kennedy) moved into the first Chan Meditation Center at 90-33 Corona Avenue in late 1978. They lived in one apartment in the back until the building was bought. The meditation students at the time took up hammer and nail, paint brush and broom. Shifu finally had a place for his four yearly retreats. The early rosters list 8 people, then 12, then 30, and when that space became too small, the current Center at 90-56 was bought in 1987.

“Shifu expressed his vision for the space to serve more (month by month that happened). During those years, he led retreats, taught classes and gave lectures. He was available as spiritual father, counselor, community leader.

“The tree in front was a sapling when it was planted. Now it’s strong and straight. If you walk down there, you’ll sense Shifu’s vows, his students’ cultivation, and the roots of the Dharma in the West.”

Guogu, aka Jimmy Yu, who was Master Sheng Yen’s personal monastic attendant for nine years and is now a senior lay teacher at the Center, commemorates the anniversary: “Some places change our lives in subtle ways—in ways that are profound but hard to express. The Chan Center is one of those rare places. It is a meditation center where busy people like us come to learn, relax, concentrate, and wake from the deep sleep of ignorance. Friends meet here, discuss life over a cup of tea and taste exquisite homemade Chinese vegetarian cuisine; kids join the Sunday playground while their parents pray in the main hall. The Center even publishes important Dharma books, many by our founder, Shifu Sheng Yen. Most of all, the Center is a home away from home, a refuge from the hard edge of life. The Center spans over thirty years and has witnessed the personal stories of thousands of people who have sat in its halls. It has been part of my life for twenty-five years. In its confines I have grown from boy to man to teacher. I bow in gratitude to Shifu Sheng Yen who set the course for The Chan Center to be a Pure Land on Earth. May his vision inspire the lives of those who continue to come here, generation after generation.”

I myself first arrived at the new Chan Center, the one at 90-56, the one we’re now hoping to replace, in the early nineties. I sat my first

Chan retreat there, just across the Buddha Hall from where Nancy sat, over the Christmas break of '95, using the method, Silent Illumination, I had learned in that same hall from Guogu. I only sat three retreats in that building before the Dharma Drum Retreat Center was opened in upstate New York, with its rolling hills, silent woods, magnificent Buddha Hall, modern dormitories...and thinking back, I find myself oddly nostalgic for the inconveniences of intensive practice in the middle of Queens. We slept on the floor of the basement dining hall or third-floor library, no more than about thirty of us; we meditated in our tiny sanctuary barely separated from the surrounding Colombian/Korean/East Indian community, with the constant police action out front, the barking dog out back, and the *salsa* and *cumbia* playing on all sides and at all times of the day and night.

But mostly I remember Shifu—we gathered round his evening Dharma talks in an in-

formal clutch, in a space smaller than some people's living rooms, and rarely thought of what an extraordinary privilege it was to be receiving his compassion and clarity so directly, so intimately. Most of the students in the entire history of Chan Buddhism had never been so close to whomever they called Teacher; Shifu himself had been a monk for over fifteen years before ever having such an intimate conversation with a Master of Chan.

In this issue of Chan Magazine we commemorate this 30th anniversary of Chan in America by publishing a selection of the Dharma talks Shifu gave his first Western students during those earliest years, followed by his "State of the Sangha" address for 2007, and, less happily, with Guogu's eulogy for Dr. Shen, whose patronage made all the rest possible, and who passed away at the age of 93 in November.

As Shifu has always said of his teachings, I hope you find it useful.



Photo: Jerry Roach

Chan Comes West

A Selection of Chan Master Sheng Yen's Earliest Teachings in America

Chan Meditation Center Opening Ceremony May 10, 1981

Sunday, May 10, 1981, was a memorable date for the history of the Chan Meditation Center, for on this auspicious day we celebrated three joyous events: the birthday of Shakymuni Buddha, the official opening of the Chan Center, and the leaving home ceremony of one Chan Center member. The event, attended by well over one hundred people and receiving newspaper and television coverage, was the result of the careful planning and hard work of everyone at the Center during the few weeks preceding the day.

The day's activities started at 10 A.M. with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking the official opening of the Chan Meditation Center. Following this, Shifu (Teacher) Sheng Yen conducted the ceremony for enshrining the statues of Shakymuni Buddha, Manjusri Bodhisattva and Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva which had arrived from Taiwan. The beginning of the ceremony consisted of lifting the veils covering the statues. Those who participated were Mr. Lex Hixon, host of the WBAI radio program "In The Spirit"; Upasika Kuo-fu (Mrs. Chen), who came from Taiwan just to attend this opening ceremony, and Upasika Mrs. Yu, who is a disciple of Shifu's own late Master.

Shifu remarked: "At the Chan Center the main emphasis is on the spirit. But just as artists need paint and musicians need instruments, so practitioners need physical tools which represent the spirit of the Buddha, such as statues and scriptures, to support their practice. Before they are enshrined, the statues are mere objects. But after the enshrinement we will consider them as living tools to help us in our practice. During the ceremony, we use three objects: first, the towel to purify the image, second, the brush, symbolizing wisdom, to open the Buddha's eyes. After the eyes are opened the mirror is employed to bestow blessings on the statues so that, possessing the merit and wisdom of all Buddhas, they are able to receive the respect of all sentient beings."

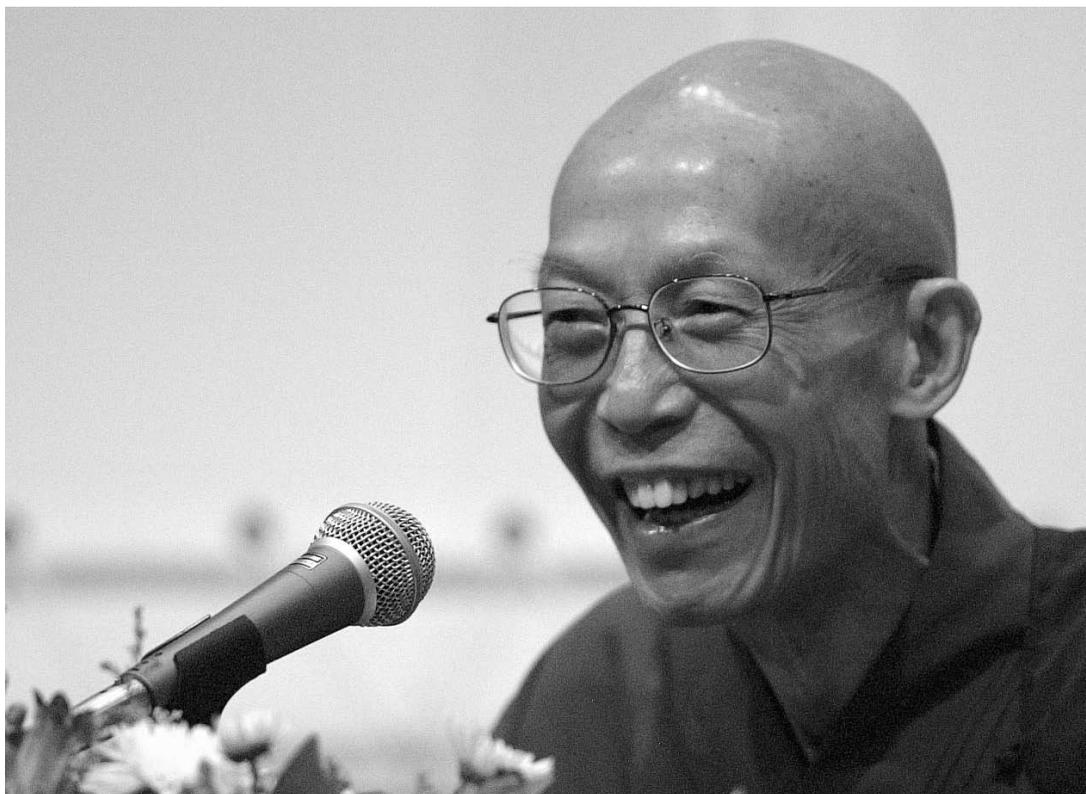
Following the enshrinement ceremony, we celebrated the Buddha's birthday. While slowly chanting Shakymuni Buddha's name, everyone present took turns in sprinkling fragrant water over a statue of the baby Buddha. Shifu remarked: "When Shakymuni Buddha was born, about 2500 years ago, beautiful flowers blossomed and scented rain fell out of season. It is said that the nagas (serpent deities) sent down the rain and the heavenly beings spread the flowers to celebrate the birth of the Buddha. We, in celebrating the Buddha's birthday, are also celebrating our coming into contact with Buddha Dharma. The water represents the purity of our mind. We should

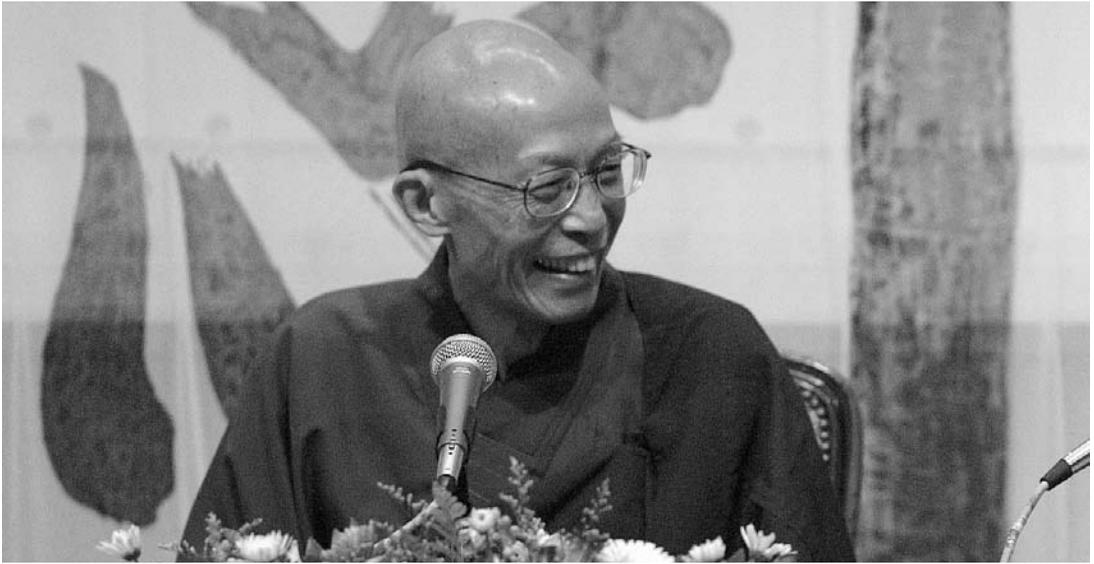
participate in this ceremony with the idea of progressing towards the goal of cleansing our minds.”

After the ceremony of Midday Offering, Shifu said these words: “Although we offer food to the Buddhas, they never touch those offerings. It is we who consume the food. So what is the purpose of making offerings? As for the flower arrangements, the beautiful side is actually facing the people in the temple and not the statues. After all, are we making offerings to the Buddha or to ourselves? The Buddha statues are gilded and very colorful. But are the adornments of the Buddhas for themselves or for sentient beings? Natural-

ly, the answer is for sentient beings, not for themselves. Actually, we beautify the temple in order to enhance our own wisdom, and the offerings we make express our merit.”

Next, Shifu invited our good friend and honored guest Lex Hixon to say a few words. Lex expressed the feeling of everyone present that the beauty and power of the Center, the images, and the people here all come through the karmic channel of Shifu. For this we offer bows of gratitude knowing that he will make a tremendous impact on our culture and our world. Shifu is standing in the condition which is beyond conditions, and calling us to join him in that ultimate place. Shifu then ex-





pressed his gratitude for Lex's blessings and gave his blessings to Lex, especially for the work he is doing in furthering the spiritual pursuit of people in this country.

At noon, a beautiful vegetarian lunch was served in the center's newly renovated basement. After lunch there was a recess period during which visitors were invited to observe a special exhibition of Buddhist scriptures and ritual implements set up just for this occasion.

At 2 P.M. there was held a ceremony of leaving home and transmission of the ten *sramaneri*-ka precepts to Karen Swaine, who formally became a Buddhist nun, taking the Dharma name Kuo-Hsien. She is the second of Shifu's American disciples to leave home, the first being Bhiksu Kuo-Jen, who became a monk in 1978. The ceremony was conducted by three eminent Dharma Masters : Master Shengyen as the Precepts Master, Master Fayun (abbot of Grace Gratitude Temple in Chinatown) as

the Teaching Master (or *acarya*), and Master Weiting (an elder *bhiksuni* who first left home in 1941 and recently arrived here from Hong Kong) who represented Shifu as the head-shaving Master. Both Fayun and Weiting are Dharma Masters of very high standing, and were both disciples of Venerable Chan Master Xuyun in mainland China.

Also present at the ceremony were members of Karen's family — her mother, brother, uncle and aunt. As she was taking leave of her family, Shifu remarked that originally the child belongs to the family, but after leaving home she dedicates her life for the good of all sentient beings. In this process unlimited merit is accomplished. Therefore Shifu congratulated her parents for the great merit they have achieved in bringing Karen up and in allowing her to leave home to follow the Buddha.

Everyone present found the day's events, with alternating moments of seriousness and relaxation, a moving and joyful experience.

Emptiness and Existence

June 3, 1979

How we perceive “existence” and “emptiness” can reveal how shallow or deep our practice is. We need to understand this to avoid getting stuck, and to be able to make progress. Before we have gained some real benefit from practice, we perceive phenomena as real and existent. In this ordinary state of mind, the “self” is still deeply embedded in things: “my” body, “my” house, “my” friends, and so on. After practicing well, we may reach a state of concentration where there are only a few thoughts in our mind. At this time, the sense of self is lessened, and we may feel that we have finally cast away the world and everything in it. “I have thrown off all thinking.” “I am enjoying the bliss of liberation.” “I feel so carefree and light.” Dwelling on feelings of liberation and happiness like this only means that one’s perception of “emptiness” is false and one still sees phenomena as existent.

When one reaches the state of only one thought, or one-mind, one may feel unified with the universe and that one’s powers are unlimited. One also feels great sympathy and compassion for all sentient beings. At this point one is at the stage of “double affirmation,” or a deeper level of existence. Although there is an expanded sense of self, this sense is not “selfish” but rather, one feels a sense of energy and responsibility. The degree of mental power depends on the strength of one’s previous practice. One who is not backed up by a strong practice can still reach one-mind but will not have as great a sense of energy and responsibility — will not likely give rise to the feeling of being a savior. Therefore great religious leaders are a rare occurrence in human history.

At the next stage of no-thought, or no-mind, one is said to be in the state of “double negation” in that one takes emptiness itself as empty. If a person is attached to emptiness (as in stage two), it is called “stubborn emptiness” or “illusory emptiness.” But at the stage of no-mind one actually recognizes that even this emptiness is empty. Since one has emptied out emptiness, then existence is re-asserted, but it is an existence of non-attachment. One will definitely not feel that his world is meaningless, nor, if asked “How is your practice doing?” will one give a reply like “Oh, It doesn’t really matter if I practice or not.”

We usually feel something “exists” when we have strong feelings about it. If emptiness is also based on feelings and emotions, then it is not true emptiness. It is only when, not bound by feelings and emotional attachments, one genuinely experiences things as existing just as they are, that is, at the same time genuinely existent and also genuinely empty. For practitioners, only this can be considered the first level of entering the door of Chan.



Question: Can progress in practice be described as a series of negating one's previous stage of attainment and affirming something new?

Sheng Yen: In actual fact the previous stage and what you are affirming now are not two different things. We say that vexations are just bodhi — that is, they are not two separate things. So “negation” is not saying that you have to detest or get rid of vexations before you give rise to wisdom. Nor can you achieve nirvana by negating samsara — they are one thing. It is only that in the process of the practice one's perception of it varies [according to one's experience].

Tea Words July 13, 1980

Some people like strong tea, some like weak tea and some prefer water. Strong tea stimulates and excites; weak tea quenches thirst, and water replenishes the body's fluids. Strong tea is like the scorching summer sun and loud thunder at the same time; weak tea is like the autumn moon; water is neither sun, nor moon, nor rain but it has extreme clarity and brightness. Some people drink strong tea to combat sleepiness or tiredness, most people prefer weak tea, and those who drink only water are few.

Drinking tea in the meditation hall can be a ritual, but it is most important to listen to the master's words. In fact, a talk like this is called “tea words.” These words are like different strengths of tea, as the methods we teach vary according to a student's level of experience. Some methods are poisonously strong, some are lighter, and some have no particular meaning.

Strong tea is called “bitter tea.” Those who have just begun to practice are not ready to drink this tea. After they have gained some benefit from practice but are still not clear how to settle their mind, they should drink bitter tea. Like being baked by a hot sun or startled by thunder, this bitter tea gives them no chance to get lazy. They wouldn't dare fall asleep or indulge in scattered mind. This bitter tea will arouse them to “angry determination” to practice hard. This is why masters of the Linji sect used to beat and shout. Such meth-



ods are bitter tea to be given only to people who are already practicing hard. If a master beats or shouts at students who are not diligent, they may think it is very strange or even get scared away.

One type of student who may be given weak tea is a beginner who thirsts for practice but is not ready for bitter tea. To him or her I will speak words of comfort and encouragement to make them feel happy to practice. The other type is those who have drunk bitter tea but are in danger of losing their resolve to practice. To them I will give weak tea as an expedient means. It's like telling someone just setting out on a journey, "There s a place over the horizon that is really idyllic, with trees, birds, and a beautiful landscape. If you just keep on going you will definitely get there."

One of the sutras tells about a man who yells at his ox, saying, "You are stupid and useless! Why can't you go faster with such a light load? Don't you see all the other oxen in front of us speeding along?" Whereupon the ox stopped dead in its tracks and refused to move, thinking, "Since I am useless, why should I move?" So the man, very upset, asked the other men in front, "How do you get your ox to go so fast?" They replied that they deceived their animals, saying sweet words to them, like, "You are so good and energetic. Without you, I would be nowhere. A while back you climbed that hill like it was nothing. Now that the road is flat, you should really be able to speed along." So the oxen are very happy to go fast. Like humans, animals also need to be comforted and encouraged.

Water has "tasteless" taste; it should be given only to those who have practiced extremely well but have not yet entered the door of

Chan, that is to say, have not had some realization. They have already drunk bitter and weak tea and are attached to the flavor, meaning they tend to think too much and cannot stop their minds. They also cannot put their method down and may be attached to a goal of getting enlightened. They are burdened by their experience and intellect. To them I will give a flavorless method. For example, Master Zhaozhou of the Tang dynasty used phrases that seemed to have no meaning, such as: "The 10,000 dharmas return to one; where does the one return to?" Or, "When I was in Qingzhou I made a robe weighing seven pounds." Or, "What did Bodhidharma bring from the West?" Or, "In the garden there are cypress trees." These are examples of "water" words that can induce a practitioner to give up all attachments, throw everything away, and reach the highest goal of enlightenment. But there are also people who can suddenly put down all their attachments with bitter tea. It works by giving them a shock. One can even attain this by drinking weak tea, but in that case, it can only be a very gradual enlightenment.

Who here has had the taste of water, where there is no sun, no moon and no rain, neither night nor day? Yes, but was it crystal-clear? When it is crystal-clear it has brightness in which all things all exist, but there is no discriminating mind, no taste. So subjectively, in this state, the person does not exist. If a person in this state is out in the burning sun, he wouldn't consider that he is in the sun, but everything is still very clear. With bitter or weak tea, the mind is still there, but crystal-clear water is like the state of no-mind. Bitter and weak tea can help you towards no-mind, but eventually one needs to drink clear water.

Bitter Practice

July 20, 1980

Many of the names by which we know Chan masters are not their family names, but Dharma names, bestowed often by followers. Often they were names of mountains where the master settled. These names often reflect the wintry environment of the places where they practiced. Very rarely do we find names associated with summer. Winter, symbolized by falling snow, represents the spirit of Chan, whereas the spirit of summer is quite different. In hot weather it is very easy to feel sleepy and dull-minded, while cold weather, especially in the mountains, is very good for meditation. To give a few examples, one master's name was "Snowy Peak," another was named "Snow Cave," then there was "Snow Ravine," and "Snow Cliff." These Chan masters sought out places where there was a lot of snow.

Perhaps someone practicing on a mountain may be sitting poorly and think, "Maybe I will take a break and stroll down the mountain for awhile." But when there is a heavy snowfall, all the roads are blocked off and if you were to venture out you might end up falling off the mountain to your death. At times like that, even if you don't want to meditate you still have to meditate. And with snow in every direction not only can't you go anywhere else but there is nothing to eat except snow.

Once when Master Ouyi was practicing at Chiu-hwa Mountain there was a tremendous snowstorm. There wasn't much around to eat and having very few clothes on, he was freezing. He noticed a pine tree that had a few nuts on it, but after eating the nuts he was still cold. So he made a fire with the nut

shells. Then he started wondering when the snow would stop falling. The prospects didn't look very good and the things available to eat would only keep him alive for another day at most, so he thought: "This is it for me; it's probably my fate to die here." Originally he hoped to get some food into his belly and find some more clothing to relieve the cold, but as soon as he accepted the fact that he would die, he didn't feel like eating anymore and his body no longer felt cold. He just sat there waiting to freeze to death.

After a number of days some people passed by and saw him sitting there, and said, "Hey! What are you doing here? We haven't seen you for a long time!" When he heard the sound of voices, he opened his eyes and said, "That is strange. I haven't died yet!"

Another case of bitter practice was Master Xuyun. One time he ran into a blizzard on the road. He had nothing to eat and his body was sick. Then he came upon a small shack on the side of the road. It had walls, but no roof. Nevertheless, he went inside and sat down leaning against the wall where there was a little pile of snow. Like Master Ouyi he sat down preparing to die. The snow piled up higher and higher until he was surrounded completely by snow. But at this point he had already entered into samadhi. Several days later a beggar came by and, brushing the snow out of the way, saw there was someone sitting there. Thereupon he pulled some straw off the walls and made a fire. Then he took out a pot, melted some snow in it and cooked up gruel out of some millet he was carrying. When Xuyun felt that sensation of heat, he revived. He saw somebody making porridge for him to eat, and he did not die after all.

At the Chan Center here we have heat in the winter, fans in the summer, and plenty of food in the refrigerator. Nobody need feel that they are about to die here. That kind of feeling would never come up here. In fact, there is no example in the history of the Chan sect of a patriarch who practiced in such comfortable surroundings as we have. If every one of us takes this spirit of patriarchs as a standard, we will always feel ashamed. We would constantly be aware that we are not practicing

hard enough and that our resolve is not sufficiently firm.

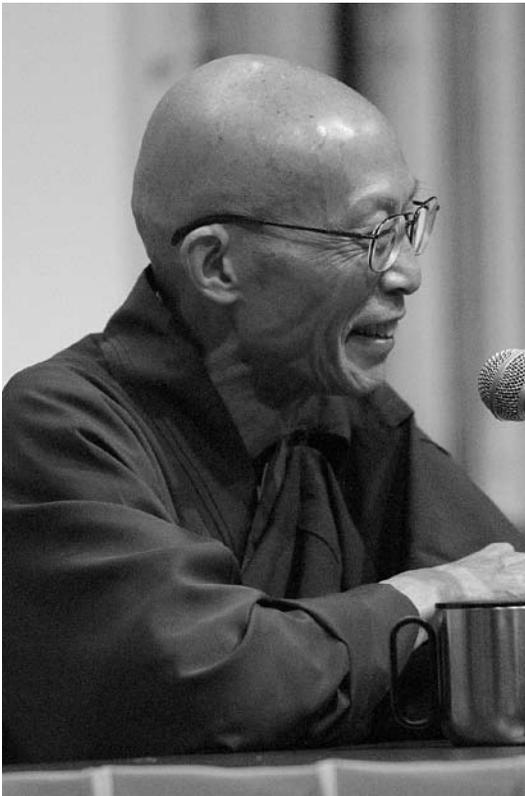
Some people have to suffer before they can really begin to work. Without suffering they cannot arouse any strength from the practice. These people have a very intimate relationship to pain and suffering. And the thing that is most difficult to accept is death. A practitioner who suffers to the point where he is ready to die is very likely to get power from the practice.



Emptiness and Loneliness

January 4, 1981

Do mind and matter genuinely exist? If we were to analyze them thoroughly, we would see that their existence is only temporary. But does this mean that mind and matter do not actually exist? If we were to break time down into all its separate moments, we would see that actually time does not exist. This is also true of space. If we kept cutting it up into smaller and smaller parts, we would not find the actual existence of space. But on the other hand, the connection between different moments in time does exist and spatial relationships between objects also exist.



Therefore, people who do not understand Buddhadharma may have one of two false ideas about emptiness. The first, emptiness from a temporal point of view, is called “the emptiness of termination and extinction.” Those who hold this view think that things just arise and vanish spontaneously, without events in the past causing results in the present and without events in the present causing results in the future. This is emptiness of temporal relationship. The other kind of false idea of emptiness can be called “the weird sense of emptiness.” This is emptiness from a spatial point of view: one sees the phenomena as completely illusory, therefore not to be taken seriously. It is very likely that people who hold either of these two false conceptions will have moral or ethical problems, and may lack a central focus in their lives.

From the point of view of Buddhadharma, emptiness is much different. Buddhism believes that whatever was done in the past caused a result in the present, and whatever is done in the present will cause a result in the future. But if we split time into its many segments, then existence can only be true for that segment. It is not real in that sense. And since time is constantly changing, causes are changing, and the effects are also changing. There isn't any certain unchanging consequence, nor is there any certain unchanging cause. Therefore it is void, but cause and effect are still there.

Question: In Buddhist works they say that nirvana is not an effect that can be attained through some kind of cause. If nirvana is supposed to be the state of true reality, it seems that someone who reaches this state is exempt from cause and effect. Is this so?

Sheng Yen: Nirvana is not a thing; nirvana is when you personally experience, and understand, and recognize that everything is void, or empty. Through the practice, you gradually come to experience that there is no real space or time that you can hold on to. So you can say that nirvana is the result of practice, but it is not a result of something changing into something else. If certain things happen, we cannot say that these things didn't happen. If we simply ignore the fact that these things happened, then we fall into the view called "the weird sense of emptiness." But on the other hand we also realize that whatever happens is not something eternal or unchanging. So there is no need to take it too seriously or to be attached to it. If we are attached to it, that is a vexation.

If you hold on to the false views of emptiness and if you deny the law of cause and effect (karma), then you are in a very dangerous position. You may think that all phenomena are unreal and you don't have to practice morality. With this lack of responsibility, you will create a lot of evil karma and you will suffer the consequences. Being attached to existence will give you vexations, but being attached to the false views of emptiness will give you even greater problems. If, seeking to avoid the attachment to existence, you fall into the trap of the false views of emptiness, then that is like being afraid of getting drowned and jumping into the fire. From the Buddhist point of view, we take the Middle Way, that is, in emptiness there is existence and existence itself is empty.

Question: Does a practitioner necessarily have to go through times when he has the two false conceptions of emptiness?

Shengyen: Not necessarily. It depends on whether he or she gets proper guidance. It may happen, especially to people without a good foundation in Buddhism. One student, after returning home after her first retreat, felt that life was very gloomy and meaningless. She felt like giving away everything, breaking all contacts with the world, and just practicing by herself. Later, she borrowed and read many books from the Center, and by the third retreat, her attitude changed and she really opened up to life and the world. Others have gone through a similar stage. The reason is that through hard practice these people experienced a deep feeling of emptiness without, however, having enough understanding of Buddhism as a basis.

Question: Where does the feeling of a deep sense of loneliness come from?

Shengyen: People who cannot connect themselves with the outside world in terms of space and time, who do not understand cause and effect, and causes and conditions, will feel lonely. When I was in solitary retreat, I knew that I was together with all sentient beings in innumerable worlds. Even though I seemed to be alone in a small, enclosed room, actually I was in company with many ants who found their way inside, and insects outside of the hut created all kinds of sounds in the evening. When I opened the sutras, people thousands of years in the past were talking to me. How could I feel lonely? Some people think that I must feel lonely being a monk without any wife or children. Not at all. I have the five precepts and the ten virtuous deeds as my wife and my children and all the people with whom I have developed a karmic affinity, and who call me Shifu (Teacher). It is only people

who isolate themselves and cannot establish a relationship with the outside world who feel lonely. If you keep yourself enclosed, even if you live among thousands of people you will still feel very lonely. However, if you keep yourself open, then even if you are living alone, you will still have a very full life. So, open your mind and treat everyone you meet as your intimate, virtuous friend.

Hot and Cold July 12, 1981

Everyone is most comfortable in cool or moderate temperatures, neither extremely hot nor extremely cold. Our practice should be the same; not too hot and not too cold. That is, you shouldn't be overanxious to get rid of vexations or to seek wisdom, and on the other hand, you shouldn't take it easy and be lax in the practice. This is called the Middle Way.

In the Buddhist sutras, coolness corresponds to wisdom and heat to vexations. However, extreme cold also represents vexations. There are two categories of hells — some are boiling hot and some are freezing cold. What is hell? Hell is the place of suffering and suffering means vexations. Our objective is to replace vexations (caused either by over-anxiety or laxity) with the cool refreshment of wisdom.

Do hot and cold really exist? Depending on our mental state, you could say that they really do, and you could also say they really don't. When you feel subject to vexations then hot and cold are very real. When you don't feel any vexations then hot and cold simply disappear, along with the hells. Most people are afraid to fall into hell and desire to go up to heaven. But in reality both of them are vexations, just as dreading cold or heat amounts

to the same thing. So if you get to heaven out of a desire for happiness, that happiness will also be a vexation. Therefore, we can't have one without the other. If hell exists, heaven also exists. But when your mind is free of vexations both the hells and the heavens would cease to exist. Thus from the standpoint of Chan, there is no heaven, no hell, no Buddha, and no sentient beings. That is to say, there are no vexations.

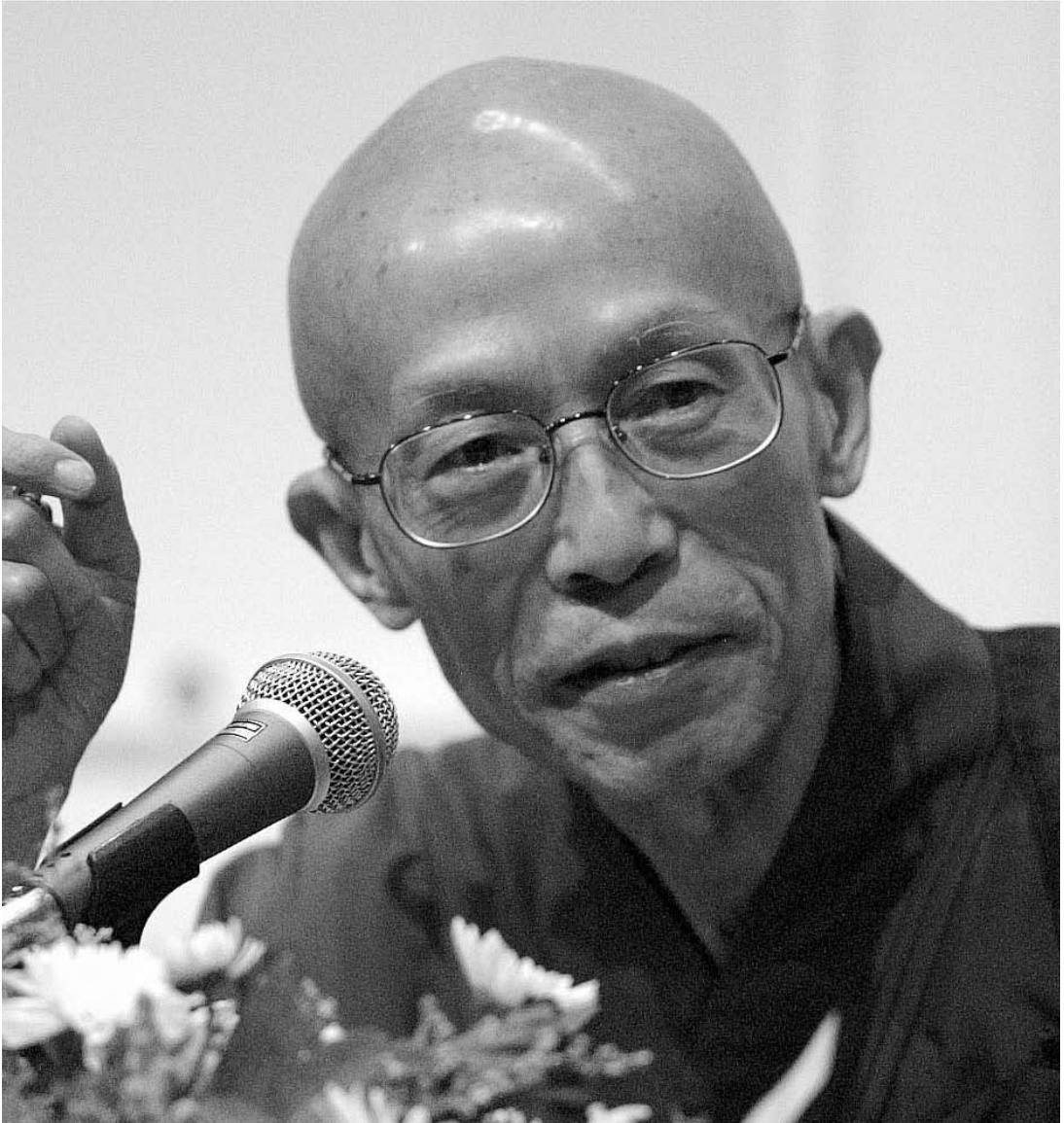
But, based on this view that there is no hell and no heaven, if you say you don't have any vexations, that is also a vexation! Any person who feels the presence or absence of vexations is not qualified to say there is no heaven or hell, nor is he or she qualified to say there are no sentient beings and no Buddha. In the *Vimalakirti Sutra* we find that if your mind is pure, and without vexations, the land you are living in would also be pure, and absent of vexations. Then would there be any heat or cold in that land? At that time, cold is just heat, heat is just cold, vexations are just wisdom, and sentient beings are just the Buddha.

But now, no matter what I may say, it's obviously very hot in this meditation hall. Should we deceive ourselves by saying it's not hot while we're sweating and fainting from the heat? And in the winter, when this place becomes very drafty, should we deny that it's freezing cold? Heat is just heat and cold is just cold. How can we say that there is no such thing? Are the sutras trying to deceive people by saying that cold is hot and hot is cold?

No, the sutras are not deceiving us. It is only when our mind is scattered and hasn't settled down yet that we feel the changes in tempera-

ture. When our mind is in a unified state and does not wander outwards, we have already forgotten the existence of our body and bodily sensations, that is, we don't feel environmental factors such as temperature impinging on

our body; at that point we could be naturally qualified to say that there is no such thing as hot or cold. It would not even occur in our minds.



“Rising Compassion”

The Chan Meditation Center’s 30th Anniversary Celebration

The Chan Meditation Center (CMC) was founded in 1978 by The Most Venerable Master Sheng Yen with the simple purpose of sharing Chinese Chan (Zen) Buddhism with the western world. The center was launched with a simple program of beginner’s meditation classes, and has now expanded its programs to offer classes, services, retreats, workshops, outreach activities and a weekly TV program that has been broadcasting in the tri-state area for almost a decade. In 30 years, it has evolved from a handful of local members under a guiding teacher to a multi-cultural community, made up of monastic members and lay followers, engaging in Buddhist practice not only to change our minds, but to bring real change to the world through communal practice, peace-building work and interfaith dialogues.

2008 marks an important milestone for the Center. The theme of this milestone celebration is “Rising Compassion.” The Buddha said, *“Compassion is that which makes the heart of the good move at the pain of others. It alleviates the pain of others; thus, it is called compassion. It is called compassion because it shelters and embraces the distressed.”* Master Sheng Yen also said that when you see the vexation and suffering that torment others, and through helping them resolve their problems and end their suffering, you become less self-centered and less vexed with your own problems. Throughout the process, our innate

compassion and wisdom gradually develop. With great compassion, we can treat and care for our family, friends, society and all ethnic groups equitably. If we can achieve this, the world will be at peace.

In this whole-day event, we would like to use an innovative approach – *World Café: Conversations that Matter* – to aid us in building the center’s future together. *World Café* is a process that applies a focused use of dialogue to foster productive relationships, collaborative learning, and collective insight. Rather than playing the role of a spectator, everyone participates and contributes in an open and sincere way through deep listening and exploring questions that matter. As we engage in small group conversations, we draw closer to each other and a sense of heartfelt connection will emerge. This connection becomes more solid as different views are accepted and interwoven into a meaningful whole. In this dynamic and interactive process, a momentum will build up to bring forth a strong group spirit and coherence. We hope this activity will breathe new life and hope into the center and continue to honor the spirit of Master Sheng Yen’s teachings and vision. Drawing from this synergy of collective creativity, we can shape the future of CMC together.

Moreover, we would like this celebration to be an earnest invitation to everyone who shares our vision to join us in the cultivation of inner peace and bringing harmony to the world.

Compassion Rising

Chan Meditation Center



30th Anniversary

Celebration of

Chan in America

May 18, 2008

Come join the transformation
and celebrate our vision!

A call for photographs to
showcase CMC in the past
30 years.

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For more information:
www.chancenter.org or chancenter@gmail.com

Walking With the Buddha

A photo essay

by

Rikki Asher



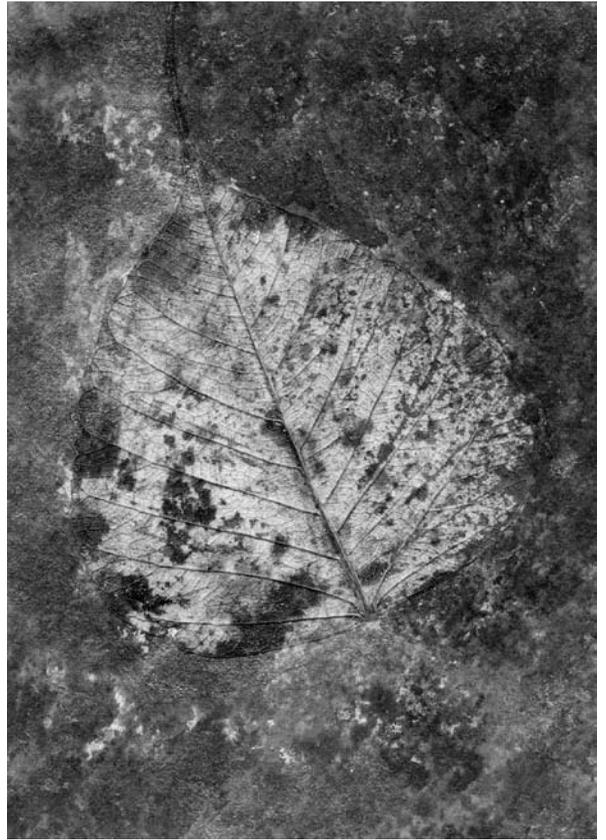
A pilgrimage is a journey made to sacred places as an act of devotion. In January 2007, I had an opportunity to travel in the company of Shantum Seth, an experienced guide, who has led pilgrimages since 1988, and a Dharma teacher ordained by the Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. Twenty pilgrims and I visited sacred Buddhist places in India and Nepal. I had never traveled with a group before and was not sure what to expect, so before I left I emailed Shifu to ask him how one prepares for a pilgrimage. He wrote, "Just keep your heart open." I needn't have worried, because once I got there I realized that Shifu's teachings over the years had been so clear and thorough, I was already prepared.



Siddhartha Shakyamuni abandoned palace life in search of a way to alleviate human suffering. Through the practice of meditation he achieved supreme prajna, or wisdom, and became an enlightened being, or Buddha. For the rest of his life Shakyamuni taught others how to reach this goal. Before he died, the Buddha suggested that it would be of great benefit to those interested in his teachings to make a pilgrimage to the places associated with his life.

In LUMBINI, just outside of Kapilavastu, Queen Maya gave birth to Siddhartha Gautama by holding onto a tree. When he was born, Asita, a respected sage, was invited to do a reading of the baby. He said that he would be either a great warrior, or if he witnessed suffering, would become a universal teacher. This photo shows the place where Queen Maya bathed the baby Buddha.

RAJGIR -During the lifetime of the Buddha, the hills and caves surrounding Rajgir were home to spiritual teachers. It was at Rajgir that Siddhartha came to seek the path of liberation. It was also here, after 6 years of ascetic life, that the Buddha decided to leave ascetic life. His five friends, who were on the same spiritual path, abandoned him since they felt spiritual salvation was not possible through any other means.



BODH GAYA - Here the Tathagata attained enlightenment. Tathagatha means; One who has thus come, thus gone. The story goes that he spread kusha grass beneath the tree – vowed not to get up until he attained supreme knowledge. For 49 days Mara assaulted him in vain. On the full moon in April-May he attained Samma Sambodhi – the Enlightenment that he was looking for. Here he became the Buddha or the Awakened one.

The SACRED BODHI TREE at the Mahabodhi Temple. The tree is a UNESCO World Heritage Site – The original tree was destroyed and replanted at least 5 times. The present tree grew from a sapling brought from the tree in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka. It is believed to be a sixth generation descendent of the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment 2,500 years ago. Shantum led a mindfulness exercise with a group of us sitting under the tree. Tears fell from my eyes that had nothing to do with “I, me, mine.”



VULTURE PEAK (Griddhakuta Hill) – In cut caves the Buddha spent many rainy seasons meditating and teaching. It was here that he delivered the Lotus Sutra and the Prajnaparamita of Perfect Wisdom Sutra. At the heart of the Lotus Sutra are three major concepts: 1) That everyone can attain Enlightenment; 2) that the Buddha is eternal, having existed from the infinite past and appearing in many forms throughout the ages to guide and teach the Law, and; 3) the noblest path is that of the Bodhisattva, one who de-

votes himself to attaining enlightenment not only for himself but for all sentient beings.

Devadatta was one of Shakyamuni's cousins, but he became his rival and enemy. It was here that the Buddha was first brought when he was wounded by a rock thrown by Devadatta. By the time the rock came close enough, only a shard touched the Buddha's foot. In the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha predicts that Devadatta will become a Buddha, which indicates that all beings, no matter how evil, can become Buddhas.





VARANASI - is located on the West bank of the Ganga River and flows through the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Buddha traveled 200 kms from Bodh Gaya to the ghats of Varanasi or Kashi (City of Light) looking for the five Hindu saddhu ascetics, old friends of his on the path.

Varanasi, Benares, or Kashi, is a place of spiritual pilgrimage. Hindus believe that bathing in the Ganga washes away sins. Nearby there is also Avimukta, the city that is never forsaken by Lord Shiva, and the Mahashamshana, the great cremation ground.

SARNATH DEER PARK – DHAMEKH STUPA – Here the Buddha found his five friends, at Rishipatta, the Deer Park near Kashi, and gave the first teaching. The turning of the Dharma Wheel. Possibly built 500 AD. A 33-meter high solid cylindrical tower. Borders have geometrical and floral patterns and figures of humans and birds. Base is stone; upper areas are brick.



NALANDA, in Bihar, has the ruins of one of the world's oldest monastic universities, founded in the 5th century AD. In the 7th century Hiuen Tsang spent 12 years there as a student and teacher. Once had 3,000 students from Java, Sumatra, Korea, Japan and China. The Buddha came here often. Sariputra came from the area and attained Nirvana here. The arts of debate and public speaking, math and medicine were taught here. Nagarjuna and Padmasambavha went to Tibet from Nalanda to spread the teachings of Shakyamuni. A fire and schisms between Buddhist sects and the resurgence of devotional Hinduism almost destroyed Nalanda. Now a World Heritage Site, it is open to the public.



SRAVASTI was the town where the Buddha held retreats for 25 years during the rainy season when the Sangha stayed in one place. This place is called Jeta Grove or Jetavana Vihara.



JETA GROVE – A wealthy merchant, Sudatta, invited the Buddha to Sravasti and looked for a suitable place to build a retreat center. There was a beautiful park in the south edge of Sravasti that belonged to Jeta, son of the King of Sravasti. Jeta demanded that Sudatta cover the entire park with gold coins. Sudatta painstakingly paved every inch of the land with gold. Then Jeta said that since the trees were left uncovered they belonged to him. Finally he changed his mind and donated valuable wood to build the center. The park became known as the Jetavana Vihara after Prince Jeta's donation to the Sangha.

KUSHINAGAR is the place the Buddha chose for his Mahaparinirvana, or final exit from earth. In 543 BC on the full moon night, the Buddha lectured to the Sangha on the impermanence of all living things, and said that his own life would end soon. In this town, a metalsmith, Chunda, invited the Sangha for a meal. When he tasted the food, the Buddha immediately realized there was something wrong with it and asked Chunda to bury the rest so the others would not be harmed by it.

Chunda was overwhelmed with grief and guilt knowing that his meal was the cause of a fatal illness for the Buddha. The Buddha consoled him saying that the one who donates the Buddha's last meal acquires great merit.

The **MAHAPARINIRVANA TEMPLE** enshrines a six-meter long statue of the Buddha in the Paranirvana posture. Carved from black stone, the statue now looks metallic gold because of the application of gold leaf by pilgrims.



The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

In this 30th anniversary issue of Chan Magazine, the news section includes three special items: Master Sheng Yen's "State of the Sangha 2007" address, the launch of the new DDMBA website, and news of the passing of Dr. C. T. Shen, the patron who supported Shifu's doctoral studies in Japan, and who invited him to come to the United States thirty years ago.

Words of Blessing

Master Sheng Yen's 2007 "State of the Sangha" Address

Translated by Guogu

Homage to Avalokiteshvara! Homage to Amitabha!

My prayers go out to you all: To all of humanity, to Taiwan, to the United States, especially to all the Dharma Drum Mountain bodhisattvas. I pray that all of you have physical health, prosperous careers, successful endeavors, peaceful families, and harmony in whatever society in which we live.

As a prelude to the New Year, I will first report to you the various changes that took place over the past year in human resources at DDM. As all of you know, I have retired as the person in charge of DDM. I am now only the founder of DDM. We have six or seven foundations operating under DDM's auspices; I only serve as the chairperson for these foundations. Other than these obligations I

no longer involve myself with the daily operation of DDM; both human resources and the overseeing of the various sub-institutions are now handled by our new Abbot.

There have been several new appointments at DDM. In terms of educational organizations, the first change is that Venerable Huimin is now the president of DDM *yanxiu xueyuan*. He is also the head monk of the DDM monastic sangha. The second change is that Dr. Liu Anzhi is now the first president of Dharma Drum University. In terms of our sangha, the Vice Abbots are Ven. Guohui and Ven. Guoping. The First Prior is now Ven. Guoguang. These are the most important personnel changes at DDM. All these posts have been filled appropriately and are occupied by very capable people. Therefore, please do not bring your questions to me, thinking that only Shifu can resolve these issues. Since my retirement, we

have not decreased any of our activities and they are moving ahead very smoothly.

In terms of the construction at DDM, last year we completed the Dharma Lotus garden and the lighting and sound systems on the entire mountain. In progress is the pilgrimage path, which is located to the left of the stream that connects our campus and the public road. The path starts at the Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva statue park and goes through the Dharma Lotus garden pathway and bridge, which have already been completed.

Our next big building project is the Dharma Drum University. For the purposes of constructing the university our vice chairman, Mr. Liu Weigang, proposed a “5475 Fundraising Campaign,” to be completed within three years by one million people. The idea is to encourage people to donate NTD \$5 a day for three years, which equals NTD \$5475. If we can have one million people engage in this campaign, then within three years DD University can be established.

We have accomplished many tasks and conducted many events over the last year. Our priority (for the future) is to construct the DD University. Within a year, it is hoped that the physical foundations of the university will be established. We hope to solicit students beginning in 2009. Before the actual campus is completed, we will temporarily use a facility in Taipei City to hold our classes.

There is also much progress in our monastic sangha – one can even say that our monastic community broke new ground in this past year. For example, our first monastery in Beitou Taipei, Nongchan Monastery, is currently undergoing renovations. But before that we

held various large events, one of which was the “Ritual Repentance of Emperor Liang,” which is one of the most famous Buddhist rituals for the deceased, created for Emperor Liang (464-549) of the Southern Dynasties to commemorate his wife. On the last day of this 7-day ritual practice, 10,000 people came to Nongchan Monastery! Even though Nongchan Monastery is small, its Dharma activities are quite popular. Also, in terms of the number of sangha members, we’ve always had only 20-30 monastics. Since the founding of the Sangha College at DDM six years ago, we have increased to over 200 monastics, over 90 of which were graduates of the College last year. This is a big increase; from the Sangha’s perspective, this is really a breakthrough.

Also, for the maintenance of DDM we decided to perform a “Great Compassionate Heart Water-land Ritual,” which is another repentance ritual associated with Emperor Liang but modified in the Tang Dynasty in conjunction with esoteric rites. However, our design and performance of this ritual, incorporating new digital technology, is really a new creation. In 1997 we performed this rite to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the death of my master, Dongchu. Last year we performed this rite again to commemorate the 30th anniversary. Besides repaying our gratitude to him, this event also helped us in raising funds to continue our efforts in Buddhist college education and popular educational programs.

Another new creation of DDM occurred last November. This is the “Jinshan Environmental Protection Program for Life,” a collaborative program with the Jinshan County government. This is a new program for the benefit of Taiwan and for the world, where families bury the ashes of their deceased relatives

in designated spots in DDM gardens. On the inauguration day of December 24th ten families participated in this event, including that of my own master Dongchu. A portion of his ashes was used for this event. Now the ashes of these deceased people can continue to exist in nature, alongside the sun and the moon and the trees. Last year we also held a conference on preserving life and preventing suicides. In conjunction with this event we also began a campaign called "Six Ethics for the Heart." These are the various events promoted last year.

What are our plans for this year? We will continue our efforts to accomplish whatever needs to be done. For example, we plan to transcend the boundaries of traditional ritual norms and continue to design creative rituals that are relevant to modern-day people. The "Six Ethics for the Heart" campaign that began last year will also continue. The suicide prevention campaign that began the year before that called, "Suicide is Not Your Last Resort," will also continue. These two campaigns were very influential in Taiwan and received much positive feedback from society at large. They were both carried out by the Dharma Drum Foundation for Humanities and Social Science, which needs our full support. We also plan to continuing our various international academic events this year.

Next I would like to inform all of you of my current health condition, about which I believe many of you are curious. I have spent my whole life being sick and those around me have always thought that I would not live long, that I might die any day. Still, year after year, I seem to get by and now I'm in my 79th year. There is no doubt that my physical body is failing after having lived to this age.

However, I believe that I will continue to live at least until my last vow to build the DD University is completed.

Exactly what is my current sickness? I'll announce publicly now that it is kidney failure. I had cancerous tumors in my left kidney and so my left kidney was removed. The remaining right kidney is not strong enough to filter all the toxins of my body, so for the past two years I have been receiving regular dialysis. During this time even when I was in the States I continued my dialysis there. Dialysis has not prevented me from doing things, but this kidney failure is not completely curable; life can only be extended by regular dialysis, which I go to three times a week. After each session I am able to function like a normal person doing various things. It's not like I'm incapable of doing work.

Ever since I started dialysis some people have suggested that I get a kidney transplant. Others even gossiped that I'd already had a transplant. Well, I did not get a kidney transplant. If I had, I would not be going to the hospital for dialysis three times a week. Why don't I get a transplant? Because I am already old. If a good kidney is transplanted in a young man or even a middle-aged man, it has the potential to last a long time. I am already 79 and my time here will not be long. Using a good kidney on an old man would be a waste; it also would not be compassionate. Therefore I refuse to get a kidney transplant. I have asked various doctors how long a patient might live after he or she has begun dialysis. They have said that it all depends on the patient. Some live as short as several months while others can live on to twenty years. I don't know how long I will live, but I will see the day my last vow to build the DD University is fulfilled.

This year the theme of my blessing is “Good Vows Light Up the World,” which is connected to our “5475 Campaign” from last year. I hope that more people will join this campaign this year. This is easy to do for everyone. It takes each person NTD \$5 a day for three years, totalling NTD \$5475, which will be used to help complete the University. Your good vow to join this campaign will be for the benefit of humanity. If we don’t have vows in our lives then difficulties will come unexpectedly. If we have good vows, then we will definitely realize them. For example, I made a vow to-

wards the end of 2006 that I would use my calligraphy to raise enough funds for future education projects. Last year, in poor health, I was able to write 500 Chinese scrolls and have five traveling calligraphy exhibitions called, “Chan Happiness of Roaming the Heart.” At the end of these exhibitions all the calligraphies were sold and I was able to raise enough funds for future educational projects. Therefore I encourage all of you to generate a benevolent vow. My blessings go out to you all. Amitabha!



The complex at Dharma Drum Mountain in Taipei County, Taiwan

DDMBA Launches New Website

The Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) is pleased to announce that its new website is now online at: <http://www.ddmba.org>.

DDMBA is a U.S. based non-profit organization committed to serving humanity by working to relieve human suffering. Its founder and spiritual leader is the renowned teacher of Chan Buddhism, Master Sheng Yen.

When you visit us at <http://www.ddmba.org> we hope you will find ways to connect with a community seeking spiritual fulfillment in the Buddha's message of instilling wisdom in one's own life and acting with compassion for others. Our hope is not only to establish an online resource of teachings and information, but also to provide entry points for live participation at our practice and meditation retreat centers.

While our spiritual starting point is in the teachings of the historical Buddha, our vision is to become a resource of hope and help for all humanity regardless of ethnicity, national origin, or religious affiliation. We welcome all who find fulfillment in benefiting others while cultivating their own wisdom and compassion.

Our Mission

Our mission is to reach out and connect with people worldwide through:

- Promoting Chan practice as a way to nurture wisdom and compassion

- Learning and spreading Buddhist teaching through online resources

- Engaging in peace-work starting with attaining peace within oneself, to create harmonious and beneficial relations with people and the environment.

Our programs range from presenting dialogues on peace-building in regions of conflict, to classes on cultivating peace within oneself. Among DDMBA's primary functions are:

- Supporting scholarly research in Buddhism, particularly the Chan tradition

- Teaching and encouraging practitioners through its centers in the West

- Organizing seminars and conferences to enhance understanding and respect between different cultures and religions

- Promoting protection of the environment

- Providing leadership training for young adults

Ways to Participate

DDMBA relies on the volunteer efforts of many to share in the tasks and responsibilities of sustaining it. Volunteering provides an excellent opportunity to strengthen our practice outside the meditation hall, cultivate loving kindness toward others, further one's connection to the community, and make the Center one's true refuge (home).

If you would like to volunteer to help with website design and development, content creation and editing for the website, program development, legal consultation, transcribing and translating lectures in English, photography and graphic arts, or other skills you may want to share with us, please email us at volunteer@ddmba.org. Thank you very much!

DDMBA: The Making of a Website

From original concept to launching online, it has taken a year and a half of work on the part of volunteers to create DDMBA's new website (<http://www.ddmba.org>). Shortly after finishing the website for Dharma Drum for Young People (<http://www.ddyp.org>) this same group of volunteers began work on the DDMBA site. During the course of development the efforts of some members were interrupted for personal reasons, including school and having a baby, but new members joined to fill the gaps, and everyone gave their best effort. There were many days and nights that team members sacrificed sleep and leisure to complete their part of the work. There were times when we got stuck in the doldrums, but there were also moments when we were able to gather new strength and energy to move the project forward. Upon seeing the final results we experienced a joy similar to giving birth to a baby.

There are many people to thank and memories to cherish. Sheila Sussman diligently edited the news items, gathering information from many sources and verifying the times and places. Enna Chiang conceived the artistic design and worked hard to finish the final

version even after the early arrival of her first baby. (Daughter Haley is now 5 months old, healthy and energetic.) While Enna tended to her new baby, Chih-ching Lee came to the rescue, taking days off from his regular job to work days and nights to design and finish the rest of the pages. Koonseng Lim and his wife Lai-tee Cheok did the technical work of making the website function as designed. (After a long drive from New York, Koon once worked through the night in a hotel in Washington, DC.) After Koon relocated due to a job change, Lai-tee picked up where he left off. Ernie Heau retrieved and edited some precious teachings from Master Sheng Yen's early days in America. Ven. Guo Yi, Ven. Chang Ji, and Kristine Mayo provided their valuable opinions and experience. Wonderful photos were provided by Ven. Guo Yuan, Ven. Guo Chan, Ven. Chang Wu, Frog (pseudonym), Jerry Roach, and Kevin Wo. Other valuable support was provided by David Berman, Albert Chiang, Guo Gu (Jimmy Yu), Kay Hu, Patricia Ramirez, David Slaymaker, Ayn Steele, and Jin Yang. I apologize to any one I may have inadvertently not mentioned.

We learned many lessons along the way, experienced downtime, hopelessness, frustration, unexpected changes along with cheer, excitement and a sense of fulfillment. It was like a prolonged retreat, even though it was not silent at all. Along the way we witnessed the strengthening of mind power, dedication, commitment, endurance, and the belief that we were doing something meaningful and of benefit to others. The compassion of the members nourished each other; the acts of many bodhisattvas completed this work.

— Chang Wu

In Memoriam: Dr. C.T. Shen, 1914–2007

by Guogu (Jimmy Yu)



On November 27, at 8:05 am, Dr. C. T. Shen passed away peacefully in upstate New York at the age of 93. When the news reached Shifu in Taiwan, he immediately asked the abbot of Dharma Drum Mountain, Venerable Guo Dong, to come to the United States to attend Dr. Shen's funeral ceremony and pay Shifu's respects, since Shifu was not permitted by his doctors to travel. The funeral took place on December 1st at Chuang Yen Monastery in Carmel, NY. It was well-attended by all the Chinese monastic community in Northeast America, as by the numerous lay Buddhists whose lives were touched by Dr. Shen. About 1000 people attended.

Dr. C. T. Shen was not only a devout Buddhist practitioner and a successful businessman,

but also one of the greatest patrons of Chinese Buddhism in Northeast American. His benevolence affected a great number of Buddhist clerics in the United States. Shifu was one of them, and always refers to him with gratitude. His karmic connection with Shifu is deep. Specifically, his impact on Shifu is threefold: his financial support for Shifu's doctorate in Japan; his invitation to Shifu to teach in the United States; and his strong administrative skills, which were exemplary for Shifu when he first became an abbot. It is hard to imagine what Shifu would have become without having received these three benefits.

When Shifu was in Japan studying, he faced much opposition from traditional Buddhist clerics. They believed that "Buddhist education" was useless. Even Shifu's own master, Dongchu, wanted him to return home to Taiwan after receiving his master's degree, fearing that he would eventually return to lay life if he continued to stay in Japan. Shifu persisted in the face of difficulties. He believed that in order to elevate the educational level of Buddhist clerics, he had to obtain an advanced degree, after which he would have the skills and training to build Buddhist seminaries and universities. This was his vow: to revitalize and strengthen the Chinese sangha. But after obtaining his master's degree, Shifu ran out of money; he had no way to continue his education. It was at this juncture that Dr. Shen appeared and anonymously supported Shifu so that he was able to complete his doc-

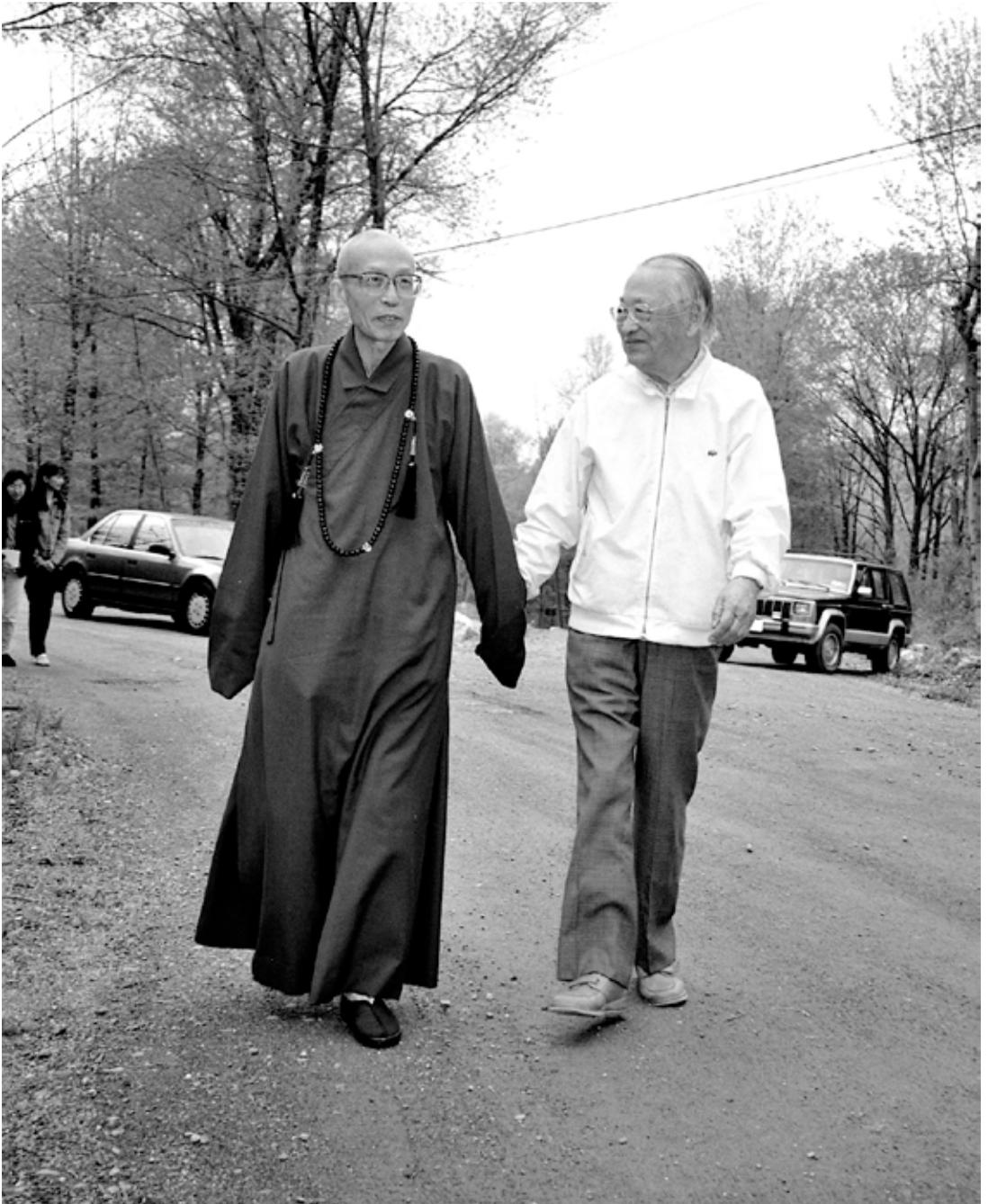
torate. As Shifu says, he was at the end of his rope and a bodhisattva came to his rescue. It was only many years later that Shifu found out this bodhisattva had been Dr. Shen.

In the West, Shifu is known as a Chan master. But the causes and conditions of how this came about are not known. When Shifu returned to Taiwan with his doctorate, he continued to receive the ridicule of other Buddhist clerics. Shifu is the first Buddhist cleric to have received a doctorate degree in Chinese Buddhist history, but in his own words, "It was like obtaining a driver's license when there were no cars to drive." He stayed in Taiwan for only a short time because no-one supported him in his wish to build a Buddhist college or seminary for monastics. It was at this time, in 1976, that he received the invitation to come to the United States. Dr. Shen was the one who invited Shifu to teach at the Temple of Great Enlightenment in the Bronx, which he had built and financed. This was the first time Shifu held the post of abbot. He began to teach meditation and lead retreats and started on the path as a Chan master.

Shifu's strong administrative skills can be traced to Dr. Shen. As the abbot of the Temple of Enlightenment, Shifu learned many things. At first he was young and inexperienced. It is true that he had Chan experiences and attracted dedicated Western students, but he had no idea of how to run a temple. Shifu made numerous mistakes. He related to me a number of bad administrative decisions that caused havoc at the temple. It was always Dr. Shen who cleaned up the mess. Directly and indirectly, Shifu learned from Dr. Shen, who patiently taught him how to take care of the temple and its people.

Shifu once said to me: "If you learn to take care of one person, you can take care of a sangha; if you learn to take care of a sangha, you can take care of a society." It was because of Dr. Shen that Shifu had the opportunity to teach Chan in the West, and it was through his example that Shifu became an able administrator – to the point that he later managed the Chan Meditation Center, the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, and eventually the whole of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan. The impact of Dr. Shen on Shifu's life cannot be underestimated. He was a friend, a patron, and, in a way, a teacher. It is not an exaggeration to say that without Dr. Shen, Shifu would not be who he is now. Perhaps there would be no Dharma Drum Mountain and perhaps Shifu would not have come to the West to teach. All things come together because of causes and conditions. Dr. Shen was and continues to be one of the major causes and conditions that made Shifu who he is. Because of this, as students of Shifu, we must also express our gratitude to Dr. Shen. In Shifu's words, "When we drink water, we must know where it comes from."

Shifu always teaches the importance of gratitude. It is important to appreciate and be grateful for the opportunities given us in life. Those who helped us along the way, whether we know it or not, are innumerable. Dr. Shen was perhaps one of Shifu's greatest benefactors. Dr. Shen will be missed, but his impact on Shifu and many other Chinese Buddhist masters whom he helped will continue. We will be eternally grateful to Dr. C. T. Shen. His wish to spread the benefits of Buddhism to people will live on in the lives of those he helped and in generations to come.



The Future

*Retreats, classes and
other upcoming events.*

*To subscribe to our new e-bulletin of Chan
Center activities, please send an email to:
chanmeditation@gmail.com*

At Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY

Phone: (845) 744-8114
E-mail: ddrcc@dharmadrumretreat.org
Website: www.dharmadrumretreat.org

Chan Retreats

*Intensive Chan retreats are opportunities
for serious practitioners to deepen their
practice and receive guidance from resi-
dent teachers.*

*Schedule is subject to change. Please check
the website for updated information.*

**Three-day Wellness Retreat with Vivekan,
Nancy Bonardi**
Friday, April 18 to Sunday, April 20

Free Introductory Meditation Workshop
Sunday, April 27

Three-, Five-, and Seven-day Introductory Retreats

Friday, May 2 to Friday, May 9
Flexible choices: a three-, five- or seven-day
retreat within the period.

**Ten-day Intensive Silent Illumination Re-
treat at DDRC with Zarko Andricevic**
Friday, May 23 to Sunday, June 1

**Five-day Beginner's Mind Retreat with
Guo Gu**
Friday, June 6 to Tuesday, June 10

Dharma Sharing

Sundays, 9:30-12:00
April 27, May 11, May 18, June 15

Special Event

Spring Festival and Open House
Sunday, April 13

Regular Activity

Thursday Night meditation
7:00-9:00 pm, led by experienced teachers
Includes sitting/walking meditation, stretch-
ing exercises, Dharma discussion, and chant-
ing of the Heart Sutra

At Chan Meditation Center in Elmhurst, Queens, NY

Phone: (718) 592-6593
E-mail: ddmbaus@yahoo.com
Website: www.chancenter.org or
www.ddmba.org

Weekly Activities

Monday Night Chanting
7:00 – 9:15 pm Last Monday of the month:
Recitation of the Eighty-eight Buddhas'
names and repentance

Tuesday Night Sitting Group

7:00 – 9:45 pm: Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, Dharma discussions, recitation of the Heart Sutra and social hour

Saturday Sitting Group

9:00 am – 3:00 pm: Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation

Sunday Open House

10:00 - 11:00 am: meditation

11:00 am - 12:30 pm: Dharma lectures

12:30 - 1:00 pm: lunch offerings

1:00 - 2:00 pm: lunch

2:00 - 3:00 pm: Q & A for English-speaking practitioners & chanting (the second Sunday of the month devoted to the chanting of The Great Compassion Dharani Sutra, 2:00 – 4:00)

Retreats

One-day Meditation Retreat with Rebecca Li

Saturday, May 10

Seven-day Recitation and Chan Retreat with Guo Min Fashi at DDRC

Sunday, June 28, 5:00 pm to Saturday, July 5; 5:00 pm

Classes

Beginner's Meditation Classes with Rebecca Li

Saturdays, April 19 & 26; 9:30 am – 12 noon
Two sessions for a total of five hours

Intermediate Meditation Class with Rebecca Li

Saturday, May 3; 9:30 – 12 noon

Taijiquan with Instructor David Ngo

Thursdays, 7:30-9:00 pm, ongoing
\$25 per month, \$80 for 16 classes
First Thursday of the month is free for newcomers

Yoga Classes

Yoga instructor Rikki Asher is on sabbatical leave; classes will resume upon her return.

Special Events

Three-day Recitation of the Sutra of Earth Store Bodhisattva's Fundamental Vows

Sunday, April 13; 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Sunday, May 4; 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Dharma Gathering, Attended by the Abbot President

Friday Night, May 16. Please check DDMBA/CMC website for details.

CMC Annual Membership Meeting, Attended by the Abbot President

Saturday, May 17; 9:30 am – 12:00 noon

Thirtieth Anniversary Celebration, Presided By the Abbot President

Sunday, May 18. No details at press time. Please check DDMBA/CMC website for updated information.

“Zen & Inner Peace”

Chan Master Sheng Yen's weekly television program, Sunday, 7:00 a.m., WNYE (Channel 25)

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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USA

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Fax: 604-277-1352
Email: info@ddmba.ca
<http://www.ddmba.ca>

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Mar de Jade Oceanfront Retreat Center

Chacala, Nayarit, Mexico
Contact: Laura del Valle MD
USA phone 800-257-0532
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Email: info@mardejade.com
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2005 residential period

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Dharmaaloka Buddhist Center

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<http://www.dharmaloka.org>
Teacher: Zarko Andricevic
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Email: contact@ddm.org.tw
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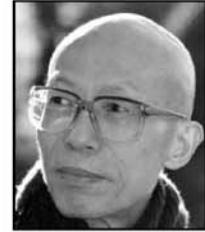
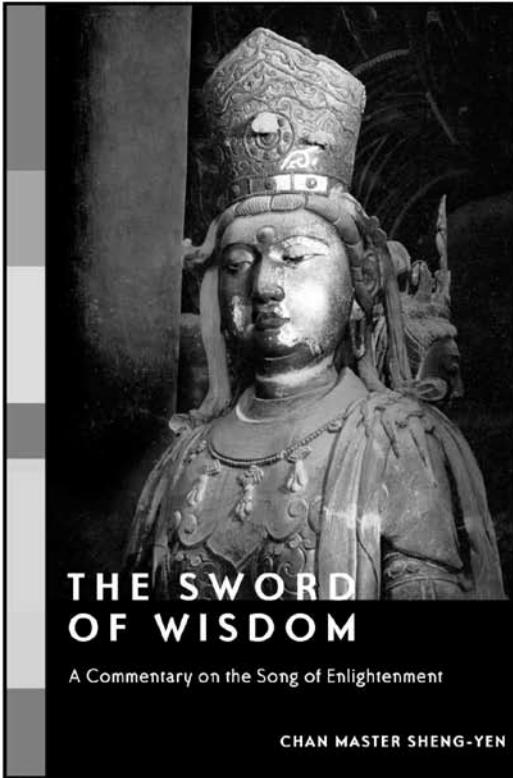
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Follow Master Sheng-yen through the Powerful World of Ch'an



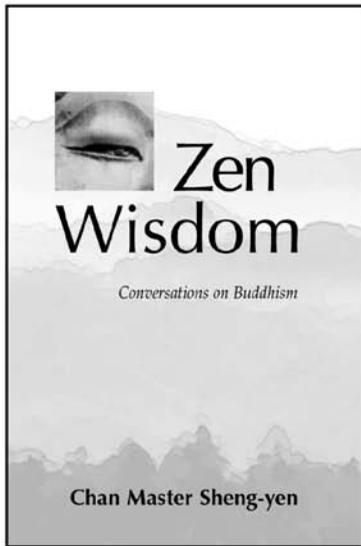
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The Sword of Wisdom is a penetrating commentary on the Song of Enlightenment, a famous Chan text that speaks of proper methods and attitudes for practice. In this book, compiled from a series of lectures delivered during intensive meditation retreats, Master Sheng-yen gives valuable advice and guidance to those who are practicing Chan meditation. His lucid words offer fresh insight into a timeless philosophy that will be beneficial and inspiring to anyone who is interested in Buddhism.

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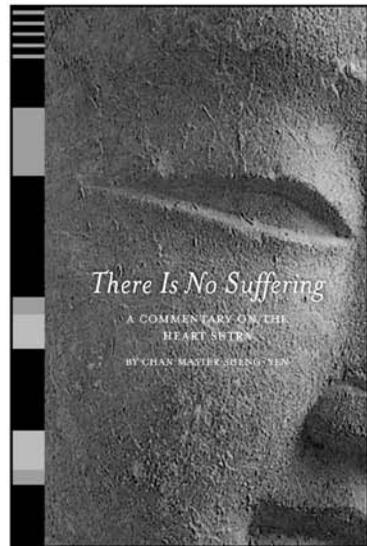


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There Is No Suffering is Chan Master Sheng-yen's commentary on the *Heart Sutra*. He speaks on the sutra from the Chan point of view, and presents it as a series of contemplation methods, encouraging readers to experience it directly through meditation and daily life. In this way, reading the *Heart Sutra* becomes more than just an intellectual exercise; it becomes a method of practice by which one can awaken to the fundamental wisdom inherent within each of us.



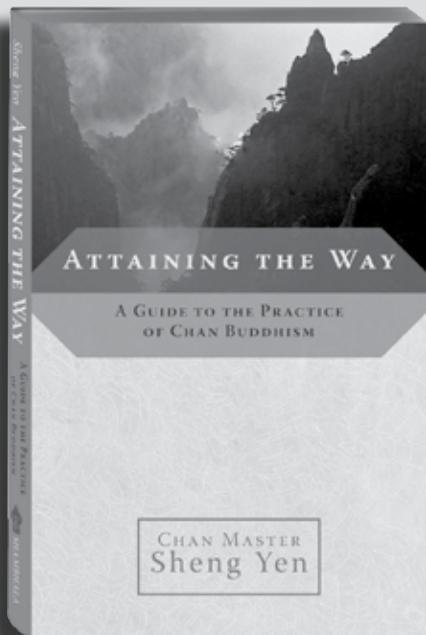
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Shambhala

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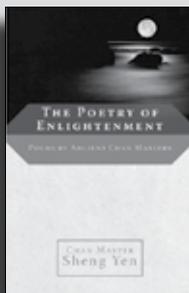


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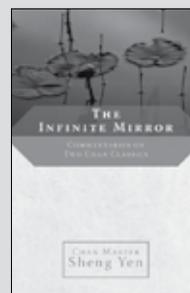
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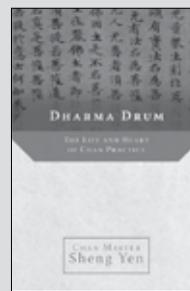
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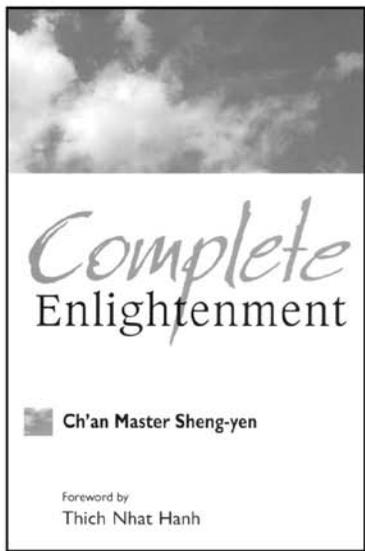
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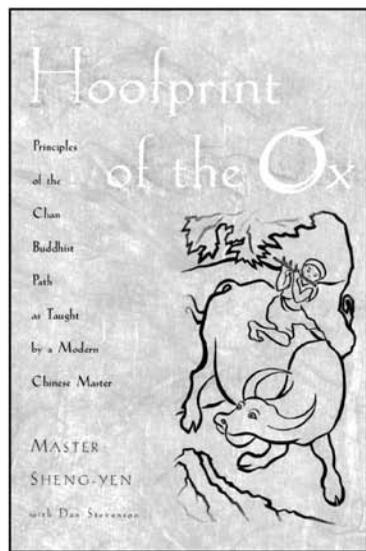
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An authoritative translation and commentary on The Sutra of Complete Enlightenment, a text that shaped the development of East Asian Buddhism and Chan (Zen). Please enjoy this beautiful translation of the sutra and also the valuable commentaries and instructions offered by this great and rare teacher.

Published by Dharma Drum Publications

Hoofprint of the Ox

Revered by Buddhists in the United States and China, Master Sheng-yen shares his wisdom and teachings in this first comprehensive English primer of Chan, the Chinese tradition of Buddhism that inspired Japanese Zen. Often misunderstood as a system of mind games, the Chan path leads to enlightenment through apparent contradiction. While demanding the mental and physical discipline of traditional Buddhist doctrine, it asserts that wisdom (Buddha-nature) is innate and immediate in all living beings, and thus not to be achieved through devotion to the strictures of religious practice. You arrive without departing.



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