

Chan 禪 Magazine

Spring 2009



Chan Master Sheng Yen

1930 – 2009

Chan Meditation Center

Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture

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**As a conclusion, I compose
the following verse:**

**Busy with nothing, growing old.
Within emptiness, weeping, laughing.
Intrinsically, there is no “I.”
Life and death, thus cast aside.**

**Bhikkhu Sheng Yen 1930-2009
Founder, Dharma Drum Mountain**

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Page One poem translated by Guogu

From Dharma Drum Mountain

Official Notifications to DDM Disciples Regarding Shifu's Passing

Translated by Ven. Chang Wen and Chang Ji

Dear supporters and Dharma upholders of Dharma Drum Mountain, Amituofo!

Our guiding teacher in life, Master Sheng Yen (Shifu), passed away peacefully on February 3rd, 2009 at 4 PM (Taiwan time) on the way back to DDM from the hospital in Taiwan. With this letter, we are proceeding with Shifu's instructions to notify you of his passing as soon as it occurred.

Shifu once described the course of his life as being full of illness and difficulty, yet he was always full of gratitude. He said this about himself: "Although I led a very busy life, very seldom was I troubled by matters out of concern for myself." While advocating "Protecting the Social Environment," Shifu pointed out that "Death is neither a joyful matter, nor an occasion for grief; rather it's an occasion for a noble and solemn Buddhist ritual." He stated in his will in 2004: "Busy with nothing, growing old. Within emptiness, weeping, laughing. Intrinsically, there is no 'I.' Life and death, thus cast aside." Shifu viewed matters concerning aging, sickness, birth and death with an open-mindedness, demonstrating the expansive breadth of his mind that transcends the vexations of birth and death. This is Shifu's most earnest admonition to us, and his spirit serves as an exemplary model for us all to emulate.

Shifu's tireless lifelong mission of spreading the Dharma and bringing benefit to all sentient beings through his travels and undertakings could not have been realized without your involvement. Shifu was always grateful for all of the support and devotion that you have shown him throughout his life. As Shifu had instructed, we would like to convey to you on his behalf his utmost gratitude, blessings, and bid of farewell.

Under Shifu's leadership, Dharma Drum Mountain has developed into a well-established organization and it will continue to operate to carry on Shifu's legacy by way of DDM's ethos in making contributions to society and to all sentient beings. In addition, DDM's devotees, monastic or lay, are all under Shifu's orders to never dispute over matters regarding properties, funds, power, and positions. Rather, we are expected to uphold the standards of "Compassion, Wisdom, Harmony, and Respect and to carry out the education based on the Four Kinds of Environmentalism." In accordance with Shifu's vow—"Although the universe may one day perish, yet my vows are eternal. What I am unable to accomplish in this life, I vow to push forward through countless future lives. What I am unable to accomplish personally, I exhort everyone to undertake together,"—we will be united in heart and vows and set out to spread the

Buddhadharma to benefit all sentient beings. Let us transform our grief into the strength of making vows and repaying kindness by jointly perpetuating Shifu's vows of great compassion.

We've been truly blessed to have been able to study under Shifu. Today, he displayed for us the ease of being "Thus Come, Thus Gone." We know just like us, you all must also feel the deep sense of sadness in having to part with Shifu. Yet we must remember that although Shifu's physical body is no longer here with us, his Dharma-body has never left us, as his inexhaustible power of compassionate vows will forever remain in our hearts.

At this time, we sincerely ask that you pass on the information on the following Buddhist

ritual to all who are also concerned about Shifu and DDM. Please go to any DDM-affiliated monasteries and branch centers to join our 14-day "Buddha-name recitation Dharma ritual: Repaying the Benevolence of Our Master" to show our gratitude and send our blessings to Shifu. Please stay in close contact with your DDM society and/or group (i.e. Buddha-name Chanting Society, Meditation Society, etc.). For more related news and information, please visit the DDM website at www.dharmadrum.org

With palms joined,

Ven. Guo Dong, Abbot President
and the Sangha of Dharma Drum Mountain



Last Will and Testament

The following is Master Sheng Yen's will, written in 2004, translated into English by his disciple Chang Wen Fa Shi.

1. I was born in 1930 in the Jiangsu Province of China, and my family's surname is Zhang. After I pass away, do not issue the obituary notice, make meal offerings, build the grave, stupa, or monument, erect my statues, or collect my relics, if any. Please invite one to three eminent elder Dharma masters to respectively preside over the rituals of sealing the coffin, bidding farewell, cremation, ash burial, and so forth. All this must be carried out in a simple, frugal manner, and never in an extravagant and wasteful way. In the mourning hall, only hang an elegiac plaque with the words "Nirvana is Bliss" written by a calligrapher as an encouragement. Request people not to present flowers or elegiac couplets, but just recite "Namo Amitabha Buddha" to form pure affinities for rebirth in the Western Pure Land.

2. If, after I pass away, there is any cash offered to me by Buddhist believers and any revenue from my copyright royalty, they should be donated to Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Foundation and Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Foundation. I have no personal property during my lifetime. All my belongings have been offered to me by the general public, so they should all go to the Dharma center of Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM), and be handled according to both the codes established by the Buddha and my will, which has been notarized by the court.

3. All the Dharma centers that I have founded and have been in charge of belong to the Dharma lineage of Dharma Drum Mountain. Except that they are financially independent in their operation, they should adopt a unified mechanism with respect to the sustaining of DDM's Dharma tradition, education of talents, mutual loving care, and personnel arrangement. However, the branch Dharma centers overseas should take as their principle to have a uniform style of Chan and make use of local manpower, so that the pure, authentic Chan teachings will not decline and Chan practice will take root and spread in societies of different cultures.

4. Whether the post of the abbot president of DDM's headquarters is assumed by one who is elected internally or is an eminent bhikshu or bhikshuni invited from outside of DDM's system, he or she, while succeeding to the post, also succeeds to DDM's Dharma orthodoxy, and shall inherit and carry on DDM's Chan lineage, and shall not relinquish the vision and aims of DDM, which all shall abide by permanently. The Buddha said, "I don't lead the assembly; I am a member among the Sangha." The abbot president is the Sangha's spiritual nucleus, as well as supervises and advances the monasteries' operation and Dharma affairs of the Sangha, making sure that they are resolved and executed by monastic members in accordance with the Dharma, precepts, and regulations, and that all live in joyful harmony, diligence, and purity.

5. In order to avoid misuse and adulteration, any manuscripts of my writings which have not been reviewed by me personally shall not be compiled into books hereafter, except for those that have already been published and can be included in the complete collection of my works.

6. After I pass away, please request Professor Lin Qixian and his wife to complete the "Chronicle of Master Sheng Yen's Life" up to the time of my death, as historical materials for the reference of future generations. Therefore, please do not compile or print any commemorative collections and the like.

7. DDM's Sangha is entrusted to carry out the instructions in my will. Please perform the ceremony for my death not as a funeral, but as a solemn Buddhist ritual.

8. My monastic and lay disciples have nothing to dispute over regarding properties, funds, power, and positions. Rather they are expected to act in compassion, wisdom, harmony, and respect, and carry out the education based on the Four Kinds of Environmentalism. Virtuous followers, please cherish yourselves. We have the good karmic roots and blessed causes and conditions to walk the bodhisattva path together, and we have formed affinities while practicing under the guidance of innumerable Buddhas in our past lives. We will also be cultivating together the supreme enlightenment at the assemblies of innumerable Buddhas as fellow practitioners for one another in the right Dharma.

9. The wills that I made prior to this one can be used as a reference. However, this will shall be the standard one.



Photo: Jerry Roach

Transmission

Dharma Teachers-in-Training Meet Shifu for the Final Time

In 1998, Master Sheng Yen (Shifu) began a program to certify his senior Western students as Meditation Instructors and Dharma Lecturers. Since 2006 Guogu has continued this program with advanced Dharma Lecturer training and hands-on experience in leading short meditation retreats. In 2008 Shifu invited the group, now known as the Dharma Teachers-in-Training, to visit him at Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan. The purpose of the visit was twofold. First, it might be the last chance for some of these students to meet with their Shifu in person, and he wanted to give them encouragement in teaching and spreading the Dharma. Second, Shifu wanted them to see Dharma Drum Mountain for themselves, so they could understand the great work that had kept him from staying full-time with them in America.

The two-week visit began with a 7-day Hua-tou Retreat, led by Guoru Fashi especially for Shifu's Western students. In addition to Guogu's group of teachers-in-training, the retreat was also attended by senior Western (English-speaking) students from other parts of the world, some of whom already lead small groups of their own. At the end of the retreat Shifu invited these students to a private interview with him. Presiding at this meeting with Master Sheng Yen were Guodong Fashi, the Abbot President, and Guoyuan Fashi, DDM's Chan Hall Master. Representing the Dharma Teachers-in-Training were Guogu, Rikki Asher, Nancy Bonardi, Buffe Laffey, Peter Lin, Harry Miller, Echo Wang and Bill Wright. Representing Croatia were Zarko Andricevic (a Dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen), Karmen Mihalinec, Mirela Rakocija, Mario Varsic, Ela Vukelja



and Maja Zinic. Also present were Trish Ing and David Wiley from Martha's Vineyard, Hildi Thalmann from Switzerland, Laura Del Valle from Mexico, Lu Nelson from Princeton, Abbey Rader from Florida and Liz Shaw from Shambala Publications.

After the meeting, Shifu invited all who were present to come and see his house, called the Founder's Quarters. We walked up a winding, wooded road to a secluded structure at the highest point of Dharma Drum Mountain. Guogu led us around the outside of the little house, so we could see it from all sides. We had heard that it is very rare for Shifu to invite people up to the Founder's Quarters, and we did not expect to go inside, especially such a crowd of us. When we had nearly completed the circle, Guogu pointed to the side of the house and said "Shifu's room is right there. Let's join our palms and send our best wishes for Shifu's health." As we did so, Shifu came around from the front of the house and found us all standing there solemnly with joined palms and bowed heads. His quizzical expression seemed to say "what are you doing out here?" and he gestured for us to come join him inside the house. So we all crowded into his little sitting room. We stood around admiring his calligraphy table with its brush stand, and his meditation chair, and simply enjoyed the delicious atmosphere of the place while Shifu chatted with Guogu. Then the visit was over. We all walked away with a warm good feeling of happiness, and for most of us that was our last face-to-face meeting with our beloved teacher.

Here then are the words spoken by Shifu to the Western students at Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan, July 26, 2008.

– Buffe Laffey

Transmission

I am delighted to see all of you. Since I began teaching Chan in the west, it has been over thirty years. I see we have 21 persons here; all the old-timers, some of the representatives, and newcomers who have attended the last few retreats that I've led are also here. I'm very happy to see all of you.

About a month ago John Crook and some of his students, and Simon Child, came to Taiwan before they went on to the mainland for a pilgrimage tour. There were seven of them, and right now I see that there are 21. Added together, that makes almost thirty. As for myself, my impact on mainstream Buddhism in the West can be said to be not that successful. But you can't say it's a failure, either. Having all of you, as disciples, at least 30 people, makes me quite proud and happy. After over thirty years of teaching Buddhism in the West, at the very least, I have all of you. It can be said that I have already planted seeds in America and Europe for the future of Chinese Chan Buddhism. So that in itself is wonderful.

Many people feel that transmitting the Dharma is a mysterious, unfathomable phenomenon. But in fact, since the time of Shakyamuni Buddha up until now in history, transmitting the Dharma is simply a passing on of responsibilities—the responsibility of carrying out the mission of benefitting sentient beings through Buddhadharma. As for this thing called "enlightenment", yes, there is such a phenomenon called enlightenment. If people have received Dharma transmission, it does not mean that they have already attained Arhat stage or are thoroughly enlightened.

Dharma transmission is not contingent on whether the recipient is enlightened or not.

There are three pre-requisites for transmitting the Dharma. First is to have a correct understanding of Buddhadharma. Second is to have a stable life, to live a life of purity. (This refers to the stability of a person's character and emotional life. That person must be very steady emotionally and have the maturity to help people, living out his stable and pure life as an example for those around him.) Third is to have the vow to deliver sentient beings, to benefit sentient beings. Benefitting sentient beings is compassion. Having the vow means wanting to use the Buddhadharma to make it available to everyone.

In the depth of your hearts, if you are equipped with these three aspects, then what else do we need, what else can we ask for? If you are one with the Buddhadharma and you live your life purely, then you and Buddhadharma are already together. Buddhadharma is the life within your whole being. And if you have the vow to benefit people through Chan, through Buddhadharma, then the Dharma transmission has already occurred, because there is not a "thing" that is being transmitted. When a practitioner can do this then he or she has the responsibility of spreading the Dharma, transmitting the Dharma to the world.

One example, Daido Looi Roshi of Zen Mountain Monastery had a chat with me one time; this was before his teacher, Maezumi Roshi had passed away. When Maezumi Roshi was still alive Daido told me this story. Maezumi Roshi said to Daido, "You know I don't have many students who really understand and can carry out my teaching." At that time one of his students had a kind of bread shop, to

support the center, and some students were already teaching. Maezumi Roshi said, "You, Daido, should carry out the task of transmitting the Japanese Zen line." And Daido very honestly said, "Roshi, I'm not enlightened." Maezumi's reply was, "Just do it. Just start a center, and just go through the teachings. Just carry out the teachings, just start teaching." And so he did. Now, Zen Mountain Monastery is a big place, attracts many people, and has benefitted many people. Daido Roshi was very honest and forthright in talking to his teacher. He was not enlightened, yet he has a great center with many students, and many of his students believed that Daido was enlightened. That's not the issue. The point is you just go teach. Benefit other people.

I'll give you another example. Those people who teach Buddhism, who spread the Dharma in that way, can be likened to basketball coaches. For a basketball coach, basketball is his area of specialty. He knows the game, he knows the regulations, and he knows the attitude of the player. He knows how to shoot the hoops in certain ways, the game strategy, he knows everything. But if you send him on the court, he cannot play. If the winning of the game depends on the *coach's* playing, the team will definitely lose the game. But, the people that he trains, *they* can win the game. They can shoot the hoops. Following the coach's strategies, they will become great players.

Similarly, a person who teaches the Dharma is like a person pointing a finger towards the moon. The moon is the experience of awakening, enlightenment. All that the teacher can do is correctly point at the moon and not somewhere else. This means he knows the Buddhadharma. He knows the principle of

it, and he knows how to practice the method properly. He knows how to carry out the teachings so the practitioner can, and here is the key message, so that the practitioner can himself or herself discover, come to see, the moon. The teacher at most can point to the moon but he cannot help you, in a direct way, to see the moon. So in conclusion this means that an unenlightened Buddhist teacher can teach practitioners to become enlightened.

One more story: all of you know this Hollywood star, a movie star who made his name through martial art. His name is Jet Li. Before he became a movie star, he was a real martial artist. He won the National Martial Artist Tournaments (meaning the whole of mainland China); he won first place, five times, okay? He told this to me, so I was very curious. I asked him, "So, how many times has your teacher, your trainer, won this national tournament?" And Jet Li was sorry to say, "Not a single time."

Prior to coming here Guogu sent an e-mail to me about the future of the Dharma Teachers-in-Training. Basically his question is, since he will be leaving to Florida very soon, what's going to happen to the group? How will they continue to help spread the teachings? What will be the internal structure for continuing to train them?

Basically we have two types of Dharma Teachers-in-Training. One is people who are clear with the method and have ability to teach beginner's meditation. They have assisted in retreats as long as three days. Some of them are able to lead short retreats themselves. They are called Meditation Instructors. The other type is people who are inclined to teach Buddhist doctrine. They are called Dharma



Lecturers. They begin with basic study of Buddhism, going through the course, and then passing an examination. They can begin to teach open classes at the beginning level. As their students ask them ever deeper questions they learn slowly in that way; because their students require it, they too will have to deepen their understanding of the teachings. So they will learn through teaching continually, open classes that are on an intermediate level or even deeper level. So these are the two basic strands of teacher training that we have been doing, for those of you who didn't know.

As for Zarko in Croatia, he can do both. In retreats he can lead up to seven or ten day retreats and he's able to give courses and workshops on Buddhist doctrine, he's already been doing that.

For those people who are meditation instructors, the process of becoming one is not that difficult. You have to of course have attended retreats, either Silent Illumination retreats or Huatou retreats. You have to go through the training course, pass the written exam and the presentation exam. Once you do that you can begin teaching the Beginner's Meditation classes. A step beyond that is to continue to go on retreats, both Huatou and Silent Illumination, and understand the correct attitude and methods of these two practices. And two things more: you have to have the patience of a teacher, and you have to have the caring, the concern, for practitioners, for others. Then with the knowledge of the method you can actually guide, learn to guide maybe shorter, eventually to longer, Silent Illumination retreats and Huatou retreats.

In the future when you do lead these retreats and you run into students with physiological or psychological reactions from meditation, that's also very easy to deal with. The principal is you tell them there are no ghosts around, there is not some supernatural cause and definitely there's no Mara behind all of these phenomena. It's basically problems that stem from wandering thoughts. Also, originally, maybe prior to meditation, they already have some kind of issue with the body. So through meditation there will be psychophysiological reactions that come out. As for the lesser kind of issues, leg pain, back pain, headache, we don't even have to talk about that. Just tell them to deal with it.

Many people nowadays are very curious, particularly in the West perhaps, when they learn retreats or some kind of practice, the first question they bring to you as a teacher, they want to know, "Excuse me, are you en-



lightened?" I myself have been asked many times. In the West, in the East, my answer is very simple: "Whether I'm enlightened or not, that's my practice. What is more important is the fact that I can lead you to enlightenment."

The experience of enlightenment is indescribable through words, and it is something of one's own self nature, one's own practice. There is no need to tell people that you're

enlightened, if you are. Even if you are, and you tell people “Yes, I’m enlightened” it will not necessarily benefit them. When it comes down to it, it has no real relevance. If you tell them, “No, I’m not enlightened,” then the dust from them running away is faster than anything, right? So they don’t even begin to practice. So the more important thing is to tell them, “I can point out the way for you, as a student, to become enlightened.”

The way to avoid the issue of whether or not we are enlightened is you have to very explicitly state to the students that the teachings have a source. It’s not something that I create, this new set of things. I have received the teachings from Chan Master Sheng Yen and this line of teachings also has its own history.

The Dharma that I transmit has its source in Chinese Chan Buddhism. So this is the Dharma that I will transmit to all of you as students. Central to this is, one, that you must have confidence in me. Two, you must abide by what you have learned from me, and not create your own kind of strange thing that you add in there, in the mix. In this way the Dharma transmission between all of you and myself can be complete and pure and will continue.

Perhaps I should clarify a little more about this Dharma transmission business. Since the time of the Buddha until the present, what is transmittable of the Dharma? Only two things; the responsibility of carrying out the teachings, and the correct methods. What is not transmittable, and you may have heard this word, is the Mind Dharma; transmission of mind. Many people have misunderstanding of what this Mind Dharma is. It’s definitely

not something that you get from the teacher’s mind, somehow transplanted to your mind. It’s nothing like that. So-called Mind Dharma is simple; it is your personal, direct experience. Of what? Of the teachings and of the methods! And this is not something that anyone can transmit to you. It’s a figure of speech.

What does it mean to have the experience of the teaching and the methods? Two things; after you have practiced your vexations are diminished, and your compassion has increased. So if you have this, if you truly have this experience of your vexations decreasing, and your genuine concern for sentient beings, your compassion, is increasing or deepened, then you have tasted this Dharma of Mind. Simply put; your mind is transforming; your mind is coming in accordance with the Dharma.

So that is Dharma Transmission and Mind Transmission. It is not something from outside. It is definitely not something like, you sit in meditation and you become insane, or you see some kind of image, maybe some holy bodhisattvas, deities or something, no experience is like that. It’s the experience of two things, can you remember? [*asking the audience*] — The teachings and the methods. And the Mind Dharma is your own experience of what? Vexations decrease, compassion increases.

What exactly is the experience of enlightenment? It’s very hard to describe but what I can say definitely is that it’s not some experience, and it’s not some state of mind. That’s the key. If you think it is some kind of experience of something, or a state of mind, then it’s not enlightenment. In fact there’s not a

single thing in the awakening of enlightenment. Why? Because you have tasted emptiness. It is, relatively speaking, a state of no mind. No self. No self that grasps onto anything. So it is indescribable in any words or language. Short of that, all experiences and states will have some sense that you have acquired something, you have experienced something. You know, we call it: going up, or down, or deep, or profound, or shallow, or expansive, all these states of mind, none of them are enlightenment.

The true enlightenment is something that you yourself know. And when you do come to know this personally, it's indescribable; it's not a state that you have ever experienced. Because in terms of any conditioned way that you have been living your life is totally different than that. Because it's not about grasping something or attaining something, and your vexations are drastically decreased in that moment, or for some, are no more. So you, depending on the depth, will definitely know. When vexations have decreased to the minimal or vexations just vanish, then you will feel self at ease under any challenges and any situations in your mind. There will not be any sense of struggle or sense of loss, no, none of these mental states and movements. There's no one grasping, there's no grasping of that. Self at ease — *because* there's self at ease that's why you know it. It's unlike anything you have experienced; under any circumstances you cannot be disturbed.

Now if the enlightenment is shallow, and you're not sure, you're wondering, "What is this?" then you go to a teacher and the teacher will give you a seal of approval. And by "seal of approval" it doesn't mean that he's going to take a stamp and stamp you with some kind

of seal. It's just mutual recognition, double-checking what you yourself have experienced from someone who already knows. That is so-called "inka" or seal of approval.

As for me, I'm an ordinary monk. I'm not an arhat. I'm not a Buddha, just an ordinary monk. But, over the years, especially as I get older, and because of my nature, I have few vexations, a little fewer than you folks. And my compassion? A little more than you folks. And my wisdom? The older I get, the more years I have been teaching the Dharma, my wisdom seems to increase over time. So this is how I feel.

As for all of you, don't dream of, "I have no vexations now." But what is attainable is, "Yes, after practicing Dharma, the teachings, the methods, my vexations are fewer. In the past it used to be very heavy, this burden, and now it is less. And my concern, my genuine concern for sentient beings and others has increased a little bit. And my understanding of Dharma also has increased." Can such a person be a Dharma Teacher? Of course.

For example — Carmen, from Croatia. I didn't transmit Dharma to her. I didn't give her my seal of approval for enlightenment. Now, do you think she can transmit the Dharma? [*Shifu asks Carmen directly*] Do you think yourself, you can transmit the Dharma?

Carmen: I'm helping it to be transmitted.

Shifu: That is Dharma transmission. She is transmitting the Dharma. Buffe, for example, most of the time she is just so busy doing administration work at Dharma Drum Retreat Center, and she also leads the sitting group there, on Thursday nights, sometimes group



practice. Do you think she is transmitting the Dharma? Do think you are transmitting the Dharma, Buffe?

Buffe: I stay on the path, Shifu. I stay and I try.

Shifu: When you use the Buddhadharma yourself, for example, you stay on the path, that's helping oneself. When you use Buddhadharma to help other people, that's transmitting the Dharma to them. Nancy for example came to study with me around the same time as Buffe, so many, many years ago. For many years she's been using, basically, meditation on the breath. [*Translator updates Shifu, now Nancy is using Huatou*] and she's giving meditation classes and teaching people at our center in the West. Now, is she transmitting the Dharma? Nancy, are you transmitting the Dharma?

Nancy: Yes.

Shifu: Rikki, for example, she's teaching beginner workshops, she's helping to lead retreats, she's teaching on retreats. Is she transmitting the Dharma? Of course. She's transmitting the Dharma.

Bill has difficulty putting his leg in all the postures that are covered during the Beginner's Meditation Workshop. Does it mean that he cannot teach meditation? Of course he can, there's no such thing. There's a saying in Chan; "The practice of Chan meditation is not about leg work." Can Bill teach meditation? Of course! For example, S. N. Goenka, the Insight Meditation teacher? His source is from Burma, he's a Vipassana teacher. He can't sit in a cross-legged posture. When he teaches meditation he says "Now, this meditation posture looks like this and that posture looks like that ..." and his students will demonstrate for him. And he's the head of the Insight Meditation Tradition. So if he can do it, you can do it.

Laura, you have a zendo in Mexico, and over the years you've been asking many teachers to come there and teach. I don't know whether you like my teachings and whether you find them useful, if you do then you can also transmit the Dharma in this Chinese Chan tradition, and start a group there, and work from there onwards. [*Translator updates Shifu about the Shenryu Suzuki line with which Laura is affiliated.*]

Shifu: Okay, scratch that.

Laura: Shifu, what I am teaching is the stability of Silent Illumination that I learned from you. Although I am in communication with another tradition, I would like more learning from the Chinese Chan tradition because that's where my real changes are coming from. The other changes are a little more exterior.

Shifu: And would you consider something like inviting teachers from our tradition to go there and teach?

Laura: Absolutely! Please, send them.

Shifu: Generally speaking, it's difficult. We have so many branch centers that are requesting us to go there and lead retreats that we really can't afford sending anyone out to other centers. Guo Yuan Fashi is extremely busy.

Guo Gu: I will be in Florida which is very close to Mexico, I can go there to teach.

Shifu: Oh, sure, go ahead!

So, Trish and David, at Martha's Vineyard, people who are interested in meditation, you can start your own group. You can transmit the Dharma there. You have been with me for many, many years. You can teach meditation, no problem, even if there's only one student, or two, because one and two will multiply to three and four.

Harry, Echo, Peter, and also the rest of you who are not in the Dharma Teacher's Training class, if you have the heart and as I said the intention to benefit sentient beings, then you take the examination for, starting off, Beginner's Meditation Instructor. You pass it,

and you can teach. The channel of communication is still the same. Invitations come from all directions to the Chan Meditation Center. The Chan Meditation Center contacts Guo Gu, Guo Gu dispatches people. And every year for example, Harry goes to Hunter College, to do his thing, Rikki to different libraries, or the Omega Institute. Just report back to us so we have some kind of record who's been doing what. So the channel of communication is clear, so everyone is clear, so the process is transparent.

For those of you who haven't become a Dharma Teacher-in-Training yet, or a Beginner's Meditation Instructor, Guo Dong Fashi will contact the new abbess at the Chan Meditation Center, Venerable Guo Chan, (Also we have venerable Chang Ji, her English is perfect.) The Abbot President will contact them and let them know that anyone who Guo Gu passes as a Beginner Meditation Instructor, or Dharma Lecturer, can be in this network to dispatch them to teach. Now we have an easier retreat, the Beginner's Mind retreat, that you can all lead. So, that's fine. As for seven-day retreats, maybe we can wait a little bit for that. But certainly up to three- or four-day retreats.

So I would like to know, what are we going to do with Liz Shaw? She didn't directly study with me. She's very familiar with the books by working there at Shambala. So, [*addresses Liz directly*] what would you like to do? If you're interested, Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, upstate New York, is really not that far from Boston. And you can come often for retreats, seven-day retreats, as you become more familiar with Silent Illumination and Huatou, and if you want, you can transmit the Dharma. Do you know Michael

and Narayan [Grady]? Do you belong to the same group?

Liz: I go to the Cambridge Insight Meditation Center.

Shifu: [to Zarko] I would like to know about your group, whether there is anything you would like to raise now, about the people that you have brought, that you wanted to let me know? Any news? Updates?

Zarko: There's lots of news. We are working very hard on the project for the new retreat center. We already started some small working on the land we bought. There is very good promise in respect to getting the permission to build. The team of architects (who are all from our group) are just about to finish the design. When we come back to Croatia we hope to see it.

Shifu: Let me tell you about this place, briefly. I bought the land when I was sixty. All the money was used up, no more money to do anything with this empty piece of land. Up till now, twenty years later, this is what you see. I'm not saying that you should build a temple this big. [*much laughter*] I'm saying that this is what happened to me. If you were to build a big temple in Croatia, maybe there is no need, maybe it's too big. You build a size that can facilitate the people there. Certainly Croatia is open ground for the beginning of Buddhism there, there's a lot of potential. So you build a sizeable one which can facilitate all the people there. It won't take twenty years. You have to make a great vow. You're the first generation there. You vow that at least you will last five generations in Croatia. That will be very good.

All of us know Guo Yuan Fashi, he's here. We'll take a group picture. Where should we take the photo?



10-Day Intensive Huatou Chan Retreat

Led by Guo Ru Fashi (果如法師)



**Dharma Drum Retreat Center, NY
June 19-28, 2009**

Our suffering is like an immense ocean of birth and death.

Huatou is the life preserver which we use to transcend this sea of birth and death.

At the age of thirteen, Guo Ru Fashi became a monk under the guidance of Chan Master Sheng Yen (Shifu). For over 20 years, has been teaching Buddhist principles and Chan practice extensively throughout Asia. In 2005, he received Dharma transmission from Shifu, thus taking on the role of one of the Head Trainers at Dharma Drum Mountain's Meditation Hall in Taiwan.

Guo Ru Fashi has carried on the style of Chan training that Shifu utilized in his early days of teaching, by making use of methods which are specifically characteristic to huatou practice—such as shouting, hitting, and pressing students in a dynamic and spontaneous manner.

In this way, he helps huatou practitioners to suddenly put a stop to the mind's grasping consciousness, thus allowing the mind to be without any attachment. In this way, one opens up to the reality of life, experiencing completeness and freedom.

***Note:** Due to the intensity of this retreat, the screening of the application process will be more strict, to allow only those who are suitable for this stringent regimen of practice be permitted to attend.*

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Please register for the retreat at www.dharmadrumretreat.org, and email apply@dharmadrumretreat.org for more information.



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Led by: Chi Chern Fashi

Date: August 6 – 16, 2009

Location: Poland (specific location to be announced)

Contact: **Pawel Rosciszewski** / ul. Promienna 12, 05-540 Zalesie Gorne, Poland
e-mail: budwod@budwod.com.pl / mobile phone: +48601224999 / phone: (48) 22 7362252 / fax: (48) 22 7362251

2009 Chinese New Year Greetings

by

Venerable Master Sheng Yen

On December 18 Master Sheng Yen, gravely ill, recorded the following New Year's messages to be played at various branch temples in Taiwan. These were the final talks that he gave.

Amitoufo, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a happy, healthy, blissful and peaceful 2009.

Inheritance & Innovation

The word inheritance in and of itself denotes the passing on of experience from one generation to the next. It also means to inherit assets and resources from the predecessor by succession. And as far as Buddhism is concerned, with the cultivation of talents as its software and the erection of temples as its hardware, both form the legacies of our inheritance.

I came up with the concept of "Spiritual Environmentalism¹" myself. The Four Fields for Cultivating Peace², the Four Guidelines for Dealing with Desires³, and the Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign⁴ are the social movements we've been promoting for the past few years. We still practice these methods today. Spiritual Environmentalism has become the benchmark at Dharma Drum Mountain; it is also our trademark. The concept of Spiritual Environmentalism is neither new nor old.

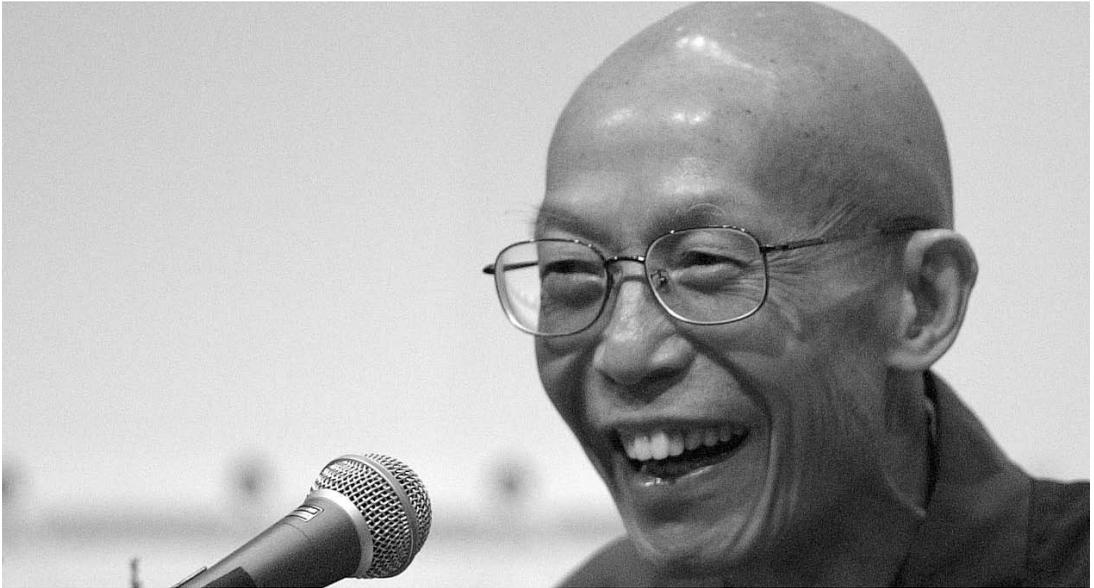
It isn't new because it's derived from the core principle of Buddhism. The mind is the central focus in Buddhism. If we can tap into the mind, explore and expand it, eventually we will master it. This is the fundamental spirit and essence of Buddhism.

Though this concept has been given a new term of reference, its underlying spirit and content have always been part of Buddhist teachings.

In Buddhism, whether it's spiritual practice, efforts to purify our society, the living environment, or people's minds, it all comes down to the mind. While people do talk about the mind, in Buddhism, the term is used to refer to the mind of compassion and that of wisdom, which are the two components of Spiritual Environmentalism. All in all, we've been very effective at living this ideal. Moreover, the year before last we launched a movement called the Six Ethics of the Mind Campaign which followed the Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign.

Spiritual Environmentalism was followed by the Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign, and finally, the Six Ethics of the Mind Campaign⁵. What is the Six Ethics of the Mind Campaign? It addresses family ethics, school ethics, living ethics, environmental ethics, ethics between ethnic groups and workplace ethics. These six ethics reinforce the "five ethics" from Confucianism.

The six ethics are meant to complement the conventional five ethics of Chinese culture. The Chinese have made reference to the five ethics for too long a period of time. It's already quite outdated and old-fashioned; it's the old



paradigm. The six ethics we've proposed is the new paradigm, a new social movement. It's something that the whole world can find useful. The five ethics can't permeate into every corner of the world, but the six ethics can. It is a global paradigm of ethics. And we'll remain committed to carrying on its promotion this year.

Gratitude and Vows

For the fact that Dharma Drum Mountain has come this far, I feel nothing but gratitude looking back on the 60 years that have gone by since I began following in the footsteps of my master, Ven. Dongchu. I was not alone making this journey.

I've always been in good company. Those who took the journey with me included my disciples, my pupils, my friends, and the Dharma upholders. They have walked alongside me all this time. And in this journey, people

have devoted their time and effort, as well as shared their wisdom and compassion to help Dharma Drum Mountain materialize from scratch, so it could gradually grow and reach the size it is today. And so I'd like to express my gratitude to everyone and everything. Take Humanity Magazine, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. The Chung Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies is also approaching its 30th anniversary.

Time sure flies. My vow is to spread the Buddhadharma to the rest of the world.

I'll do everything I can to this end. I always let the causes and conditions take their course. And I seize every opportunity I get when the causes and conditions ripen.

The bit-by-bit gathering of the various causes and conditions has given me the means to bring about the accomplishment, namely the realization of Dharma Drum Moun-

tain. Needless to say, I'm truly grateful. And what am I grateful for? I'm grateful because if it weren't for the various causes and conditions that were present, none of this would have been possible. I'm also grateful for the much freedom we enjoy in Taiwan so that we can fully exert ourselves.

Being grateful alone without making any vows will only keep us stuck. We should always be grateful to the past, and make vows for the future. What should we aspire to do in the future? Now that we have laid the groundwork, what's the direction we should head toward next? We've already made it this far, if we don't take further steps forward and make vows, all the previous efforts will have been in vain.

This is why we must make vows to spread Chinese Buddhism, especially the Dharma Drum Lineage of Chan Buddhism to the world. Chinese Buddhism has been on the decline in the past few hundred years to the point that it's nearly unheard of now. Chinese Buddhism is not as accessible to the world as Japanese, Tibetan and Theravada Buddhism, so our job is to make it known to the world. We've founded scholarships, foundations and graduate schools and invested much effort in the hope of popularizing Chinese Buddhism—this is our vow.

A Mind at Peace, A Life at Peace

Back in 2008, everyone anticipated a difficult year for 2009. We're facing challenging times; the global economy is in bad shape. But we have great hopes for the year 2009. We still see hope when there seems to be none. Even under harsh conditions, we can still find happiness. In doomed times, it's up to us to create bliss for ourselves. I proposed

that we must have peace of mind in order to have peace in our lives. But how? Feelings of unease are merely psychological sentiments. It's the external factors that cause us to feel insecure in the first place. We must feel secure in order for us to have peace in our lives.

As long as we have a sense of security, we'll be able to enjoy peace in our lives. And how is having a peaceful mind related to a peaceful life? When we have peace of mind, no matter how chaotic our external environment is, we won't be affected at all. It's like when it's pouring rain outside, it's really pointless to fret over the rain. Instead, we should be figuring out how to get the leaks in our house fixed. To find ways in which we can still go about our daily business despite the heavy rain. To think about what we can plant that will bloom in the rain. To find fun things we can do on a rainy day.

This is how we can gain peace, by first having a peaceful mind. Though rain is never welcomed, as long as we're feeling at peace, even if it does rain, we can still feel very happy and blessed. The concept of "A Mind at Peace, A Life at Peace" is based on this rationale. And hence, I proposed that with a peaceful mind, we'd have peace in our lives. The launching of the suicide prevention movement was also built on this premise. As long as we have hope, and we don't feel a void in our hearts, but feel free from anxiety, regardless of how materially impoverished or how bad the circumstances are, we can still feel whole inside.

Don't let disappointment get the better of us, let hope live in our hearts for always. And use this opportunity to share with others what our hopes are for the future. People's basic need is to live and to survive. And as long

as we're still breathing, hope will always be around, and our minds can be at peace.

To sum up, we need to learn to face and accept any circumstance. Find ways to deal with it and then just let it go. When we can face our problems, accept our problems, deal with our problems, and then let go of them, we'll have peace of mind. I believe a great deal of people already know what the Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign is. The central practice is facing the difficulty, accepting it, dealing with it and then letting go of it.

There's also the Four Guidelines to Dealing with Desires which holds we should pursue only what we can acquire, and never pursue what we can't acquire. Pursue only what we should acquire, and never pursue what we shouldn't acquire. The truth is we need only very few things, we need only to eat, to keep ourselves warm, and to have a shelter to keep ourselves out of the rain and the scorching sun—that's about it. We can do without a lot of other things. And so, if we learn to have fewer desires, and have big hopes for the future while keeping our desires in check, we will have happiness.

Two years ago we started advocating a campaign for suicide prevention. Suicide really is unnecessary; people don't need to commit suicide. Fear, a sense of insecurity, disappointment and feelings of hopelessness are the contributing factors of suicide.

I hope everyone can bear in mind that peace in life goes hand in hand with peace of mind. You don't have to commit suicide. Instead of always looking at the downside you should look on the bright side of things. On a rainy day, tell yourself that

the rain will stop. On a windy day, remind yourself the wind will turn, and it will stop.

Typhoons and whatnot must all cease one day. In the darkness of the day, say to yourself the sun will still shine tomorrow. With this mindset, our hearts will always be filled with hope. When we have hope, we'll have peace in our minds, and we'll enjoy peace in our lives. Last but not least, I'd like to wish everyone a Happy New Year!

¹ The "spirit" spoken of in the protection of the spiritual environment refers to the mind, which is the essence of the Buddhadharmā. They are the protection of the spiritual environment; the protection of the social environment; the protecting the living environment; and the protection of the natural environment.

² They are cultivating a peaceful mind by having few desires; cultivating a peaceful body through hard work and thrift; cultivating a peaceful family lies through love and respect; cultivating peaceful activity by being honest and upright.

³ The four guidelines are examining what we really need; what is indulgence; what is within my ability to obtain the things I need; and whether or not it's proper to obtain it.

⁴ The Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign is a proposition for living in the 21st century and also a way to implement the four kinds of environmentalism.

⁵ Six Ethics campaign, which consists of Family Ethics, Living Ethics, School Ethics, Environmental Ethics, Workplace Ethics, and Ethics between Ethnic Groups. Within each of the different areas covered by the Six Ethics, each one of us plays not only a single role, but also actually multiple roles. Whatever roles we play, we should develop the correct concept: We should contribute ourselves for the sake of fulfilling our roles and responsibilities, instead of fighting for our interests; while seeking our own benefits we should respect others and care about them. Therefore, greed and fighting for gain are not in line with ethics; the value of ethics lies in serving and giving. We must bear this same concept in mind with any of the Six Ethics.

Gratitude and Vows

by

Guogu

Shifu, words cannot express our feelings about your passing or the gratitude we feel for your teaching. You have been an exemplar of the bodhisattva ideal and you tirelessly shared the Dharma with all of us, and this has transformed us. Until the end of our own lives, we shall carry on your vows to transmit Chan Buddhism throughout the world.

As your former attendant, I was a witness to your actions and dedication. I remember you once said that when Master Dong Chu, your Caodong master, passed away, you felt as if the pillar of your life crumbled. Your tears were not of sadness for your loss, but from gratitude for his teachings and regret for not having done more to spread the Dharma. Since that time, you devoted your life and energy to helping others to repay his kindness, guidance and teaching and to offer your gratitude to the Three Jewels. Even the momentous task of building Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan was a direct fulfillment of Master Dong Chu's wish to promote Buddhist education. You extended your gratitude to everyone and persisted and endured through every adverse condition you encountered. Now, causes and conditions have freed you from your tired physical body after a lifetime of fulfilling your vows.

I will never forget the occasion when I asked you how I can repay your kindness for teaching me. You said: "Shifu does not need you to repay your gratitude, but sentient beings need Buddhadharma. What's the use of repaying gratitude to one man? That would be no more than a petty exchange of goods and services! Repay your gratitude to all sentient beings and benefit them with the Dharma. That is your payment of gratitude to me!"

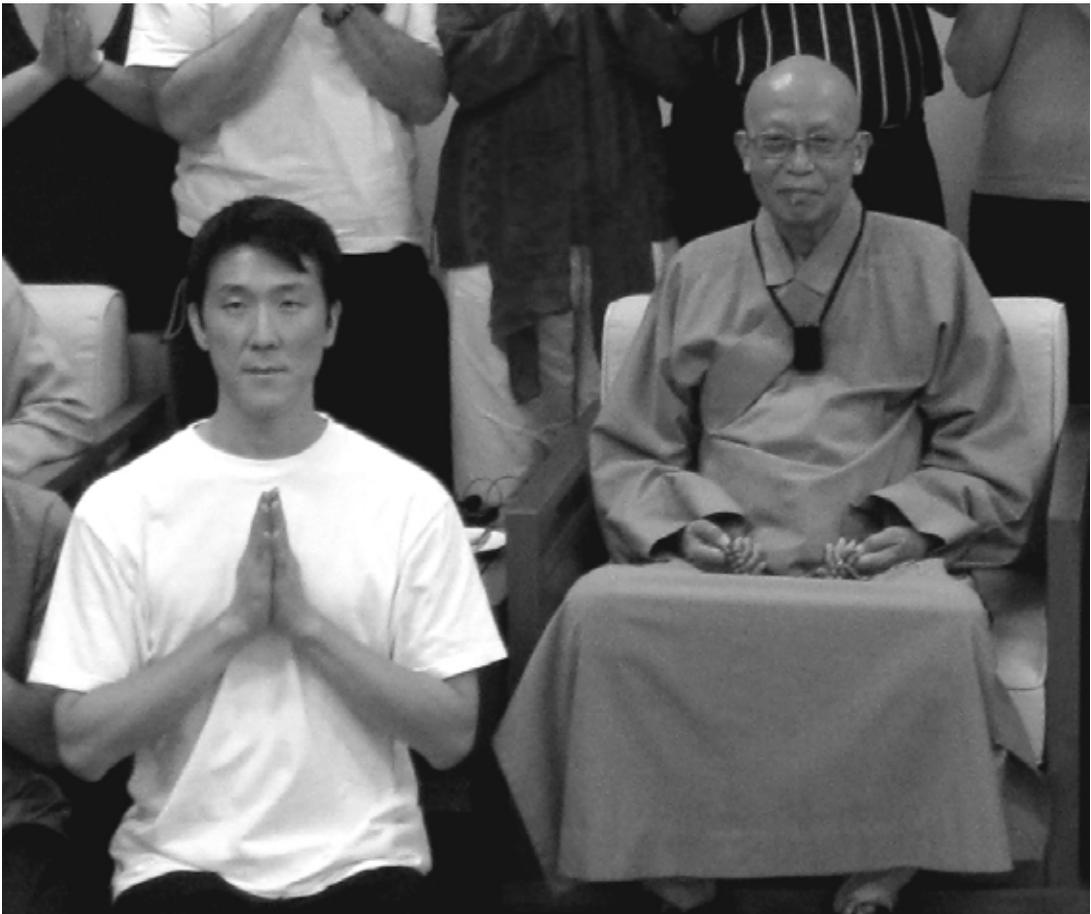
Our sadness has turned to a strong determination to continue your vows. The significance of your passing will serve as a lens through which we will view our own endeavors, and your example will continue to move and instruct your disciples. But our vow to benefit all sentient beings will not change. This is the determinant of our life's direction. Our gratitude to you and the direction of our practice will lead us forward on the path you have shown us. The tasks you left unfinished will be finished; the vows you made will be fulfilled. You reminded us that when you drink from a spring, you must be aware of the water's source so that you will have the proper feeling of gratitude. We now know that everything is connected; water comes from rain, sun, earth, and all sentient beings, and that there is no birth and no death. In

this process of transformation and interconnection, nothing has been destroyed, nothing has increased. This deep wisdom and the understanding of all things is the wellspring of Dharma. It is natural to give back the same nourishment to the environment and all beings. Benefitting all beings is the best way to repay the gratitude we feel for you, the Three Jewels, and all beings.

The organization and leadership of Dharma Drum Mountain is strong, and the sangha has grown to maturity. You prepared us well,

and our practice is strong. We know that the Dharma Drum Order of Chan will continue your legacy and that your teachings will continue in our lives. Before you passed on, you told us that you would return to Dharma Drum Mountain in the next life. We wait eagerly for that day when you will return and assume leadership again. Until then, we will continue to keep the flame of Buddhadharma alive.

May you fulfill your bodhisattva vows and attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all!



The Noble Eightfold Path

Part Three

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

In the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2004 Master Sheng Yen gave several lectures at the Chan Meditation Center in Queens, New York, on the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. This article is the third of four in which Master Sheng Yen discusses the Eightfold Path as a liberation process. The articles are part of Master Sheng Yen's forthcoming book on the 37 Aids to Enlightenment. The lectures were orally translated by Dr. Rebecca Li, transcribed by Sheila Sussman, and edited by Ernest Heau.

Buddhist practice is traditionally defined as the cultivation of three related but distinct disciplines, namely precepts (ethical behavior), samadhi (meditation), and wisdom (awakened, or bodhi mind). Another tradition is to fold the Noble Eightfold Path into the three disciplines in the following way: Right View and Right Intention are the paths that comprise wisdom; Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood define ethical behavior, and Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are the Noble Paths that make up the practice of meditation, or dhyana. In this article I will discuss Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, the paths that make up the practice of the precepts, or morality.

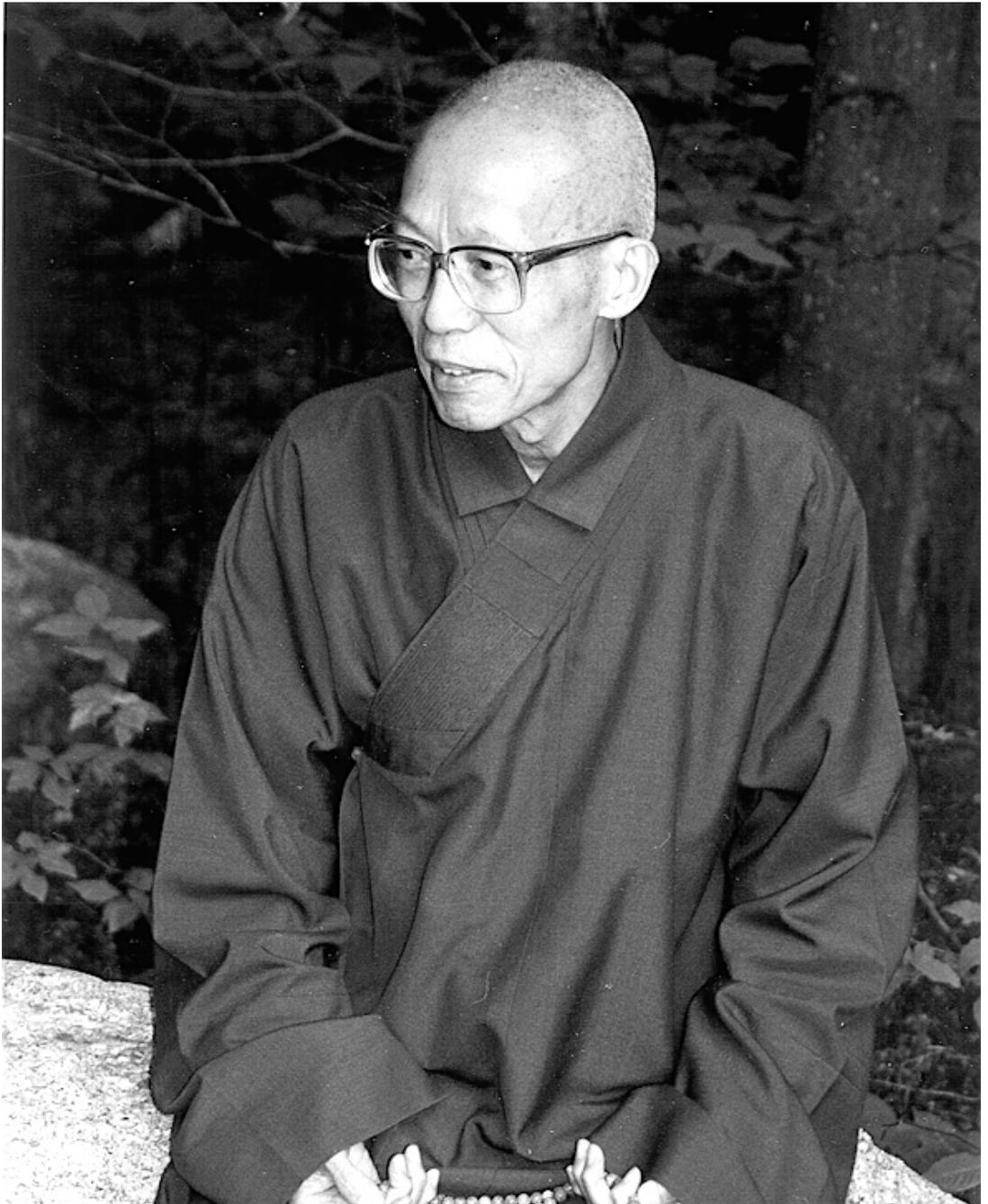
Right Speech

The third Noble Path is Right Speech, also called True Speech, or Noble Speech. Right Speech means speaking only what is true. The *Diamond Sutra* says that a buddha does

not engage in the four kinds of unwholesome speech: lying, vulgarity, slander and frivolous talk. Lying means saying what is untrue, vulgarity means using improper language, slander means defaming other people and causing disunity, and frivolous speech means saying meaningless things, including idle chatter.

The true purpose of speech is to enable us to express ideas, opinions, and feelings in social interactions, and to bring comfort, benefit, encouragement and happiness to others. When we use speech for these purposes we benefit ourselves as well. Speech that causes harm to other people is not Right Speech regardless of the manner in which it is said. One should not hurt others with words and then say, "I said it in a nice way; I didn't mean to cause harm." But if what you said caused harm that is not Right Speech.

Speech is also properly used to express wisdom and most importantly, compassion, not for venting our own emotions and frustra-



tions. Nor is the purpose of speech to fight, conquer, or suppress other people. There are people who rarely speak but when they open their mouth they are scolding and criticizing. Others use speech to vent their emotions and frustrations. As long as your speech discomforts other people that is not the practice of Right Speech. A teacher of Buddhism might say to their students, "I have been teaching you Buddhadharma and you should show more compassion." Or, "You people have no wisdom at all." Speaking this way is not in accordance with Right Speech and such a teacher has neither compassion nor wisdom.

A young couple fought all the time after two years of marriage. The wife would complain to the husband saying, "You are the only person in my life. I always think about taking care of you in the best way, to make your life comfortable. I'm willing to sacrifice everything for you, so why are you so cold to me?"

The husband responded, "Before I got married, I ate, slept, put on my clothes in the same way I do now. I don't need you to take care of me."

They speak to each other in this vein all the time. So this wife felt very frustrated and upset and came to me for advice. I suggested that she tell her husband that she takes such good care of him because in return, she needs his help. She went back and tried this and it was very useful. It gave the husband a sense of accomplishment, feeling that he was being helpful to her.

How you use words can make a difference. If you express an idea in a way that makes the other person comfortable and happy, you also benefit from the interaction. If you express

the same idea in a way that makes the other person uncomfortable, you also suffer the consequence. Therefore, when you go back and interact with your family and friends, whatever you say to them, if you make them feel happy, you are practicing Right Speech. Whatever you say to make them feel unhappy or uncomfortable, or give them suffering, at that moment remind yourself, "This is not Right Speech that I'm practicing."

When long-time practitioners seem to suffer a lot some people may ask, "Why do some Buddhists who practice a lot still suffer a great deal?" In part, that may have to do with their not paying attention to Right Speech, not making sure to express themselves in ways that bring happiness and harmony in their relationships. It is truly important to express yourself in ways that bring happiness and harmony to others. That way you will truly be able to depart from suffering. When people treat you unfairly or unjustly, you may feel an urge to respond by hurting them through speech. Instead, you should give rise to compassion and bodhi mind and hope that the other person will behave more harmoniously in the future. That way you will automatically not be so upset or feel the urge to react with unwholesome speech. If you allow yourself to get upset you are no different from the other person. By practicing Right Intention, you will be able to handle the situation and avoid giving rise to more ignorance.

Right Action

The fourth Noble Path is Right Action, or Noble Action. It is the idea that our every action should accord with Buddhadharma. Right Action also refers to the elimination of the three kinds of unwholesome bodily conduct:

killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. For laypersons, sexual misconduct means sex with anyone other than one's spouse. For monastics, sexual misconduct means any kind of sexual interaction. The reasons why people commit the three kinds of unwholesome acts are: not having the Right View; giving in to greed or desire; and harboring hatred or aversion. Not having the Right View, people will not be able to see these kinds of conduct as improper. Other erroneous views are thinking these kinds of unwholesome conduct will yield certain benefits such as fame, power, wealth, or health. Greed and desire can bring about unwholesome conduct when we have wants that we think we need to satisfy. And because of hatred and anger people want to hurt or retaliate against others, or vent their emotions and frustrations by killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct.

What causes the conflict between nations and cultures that have them killing each other, as we have today? Part of the answer is hatred and the perceived need for retaliation. It is also because of ignorance about the unwholesome consequences of war and conflict. The same logic applies to stealing and sexual misconduct. Some people steal out of hatred or wish for vengeance. This can take the form of stealing property, someone's spouse, or in fact, an entire nation. The same thing applies to sexual misconduct, which can also be caused by hatred as well as desire. But if one

can give rise to compassion and bodhi mind, one will not give rise to these kinds of unwholesome conduct.

From the positive side, Right Action expresses love for sentient beings and the desire to be very protective of the environment in one's own life, as well as at large. It also means engaging in a healthy and harmonious sexual relationship with one's spouse only, not thinking only about oneself and not harming individuals or the community. Furthermore, one should cultivate positive relationships with people, engaging in charity and so on, while at the same time giving oneself happiness. Positive relationships and charitable acts are therefore two proper paths to Right Action. As far as charity is concerned, one should not indiscriminately give to every cause or everyone who asks, but give to the right people, at the right time, in an appropriate way.

“RIGHT ACTION EXPRESSES LOVE FOR SENTIENT BEINGS AND THE DESIRE TO BE VERY PROTECTIVE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN ONE’S OWN LIFE, AS WELL AS AT LARGE. IT ALSO MEANS NOT THINKING ONLY ABOUT ONESELF AND NOT HARMING INDIVIDUALS OR THE COMMUNITY.”

Right Livelihood

Right Livelihood is the true way to secure the necessities of life and the proper way to conduct oneself in daily life. The conventional sense of livelihood is earning a living, but Right Livelihood means doing that in accordance with wisdom and compassion. This means not causing vexations and afflictions for oneself or others. It is not Right Livelihood if your job causes others to lose theirs; secur-

ing one's livelihood should not cause unhappiness to others. A livelihood that brings a lot of security and safety but makes other people insecure and unsafe is also not Right Livelihood and not compassionate.

When taking a job, people should consider whether it is legal or likely to bring a lot of vexation. There are livelihoods that are legal but likely to harm others. Knowingly taking such a job is not wisdom or compassion. For a lay practitioner the main principle is to make a living while upholding the five precepts.

What occupations would involve violating the five precepts? Foremost would be a job that requires killing sentient beings, especially humans. The second precept forbids stealing, so this would exclude jobs that involve getting other people's property improperly. Clearly, one should not take a job that entails sexual misconduct, which is forbidden by the third precept. Fourth is the precept against lying, so to be avoided are occupations that involve deception and saying untruthful things. The fifth precept, no use of intoxicants, precludes making a living dealing in illegal drugs or addictive gambling.

To summarize, occupations that contradict upholding the precepts, that cause harm to people and chaos to society, should not be taken by practitioners. At first glance some of these occupations seem to bring much benefit to oneself, but if one looks at them more clearly there can be more harm than benefit. For example, people who are involved in slaughtering animals may think they are just offering a service to society. However, killing animals causes suffering to them and is not a very compassionate way to make a living.

Someone who took refuge with me comes from a family that has been pig farmers for three generations. Their farm had about a thousand pigs at any given time. The pigs are ready for slaughter at three or four months, and in a typical year this farm processed about 3,000 pigs.

This disciple told me, "Shifu, I'm very compassionate in taking care of my pigs. I make sure that they are fed well, I get them pretty chubby; I love these pigs." I asked him, "What happens to these pigs after you take care of them?" He said, "We sell them to the slaughterhouse." "What happens in the slaughterhouse?" "Well, they get slaughtered." Then he said, "Yes, those people who work in the slaughterhouse, they could use some help to reform their mind." I asked this person, "Could you bring these people to me so that I can give them help and reform them a little bit?"

So, this disciple brought the two owners of the slaughterhouse to me. I asked them, "Of all the possible occupations, why slaughtering pigs?" One of them said, "Shifu, actually I am really very compassionate. In the past, pigs were slaughtered in a really cruel way. We worked very hard to figure out a system to kill pigs in a humane way, so these pigs are very fortunate. Besides, it's all because people want to eat pork."

I said to them, "Nevertheless, these pigs are still being slaughtered." One of the owners said, "Master, even if we do not kill these pigs, other people would be doing it. So if you truly want to deal with this problem, get people to stop eating pork. It is the people who eat pork who are not compassionate."

Two other people witnessed this conversation. I asked them, "Do you agree that if people stopped eating pork, there would be no need for people who slaughter pigs? Do you eat pork?" Their response was "Well, it's not that we have to eat meat, it's just that everywhere we go they serve meat. If they stopped slaughtering pigs there would be no meat in the restaurant and we won't eat it any more. It's out of our control."

As you can see this is a very interesting cycle. The slaughterhouse people say it's because of the demand for pork, the meat-eaters say it's because meat is served to them. Neither admits responsibility and they all claim to be compassionate. What do you think?

Student: This sounds very familiar because most people are meat-eaters. When we abstain from meat, our families criticize us and our co-workers make remarks, so it is a familiar problem.

Sheng Yen: You happen to be vegetarian. Maybe other people would disagree with you.

Student: Other people think that I'm not very compassionate towards carrots and broccoli!

Sheng Yen: One can distinguish between living things that have a nervous system and memory, versus those that don't. Human beings and higher forms of animals that have a nervous system and memory are capable of suffering. Some simple forms of life have a nervous system but they don't have memory. Plants have cells but no nervous systems and no memory. Buddhism considers it not compassionate to eat living things that have a nervous system and a memory because they are capable of suffering. Plants lack a ner-

vous system and are not unlike fingernails or hair, which are nourished by our circulatory system, but do not experience pain when cut. Out of compassion one refrains from killing or eating animals because we don't want to cause them fear and suffering. Therefore, for Right Livelihood we should avoid any occupation that involves killing animals. Refraining from causing harm to others is not just directed to animals; in fact the emphasis should be on directing compassion to other human beings.

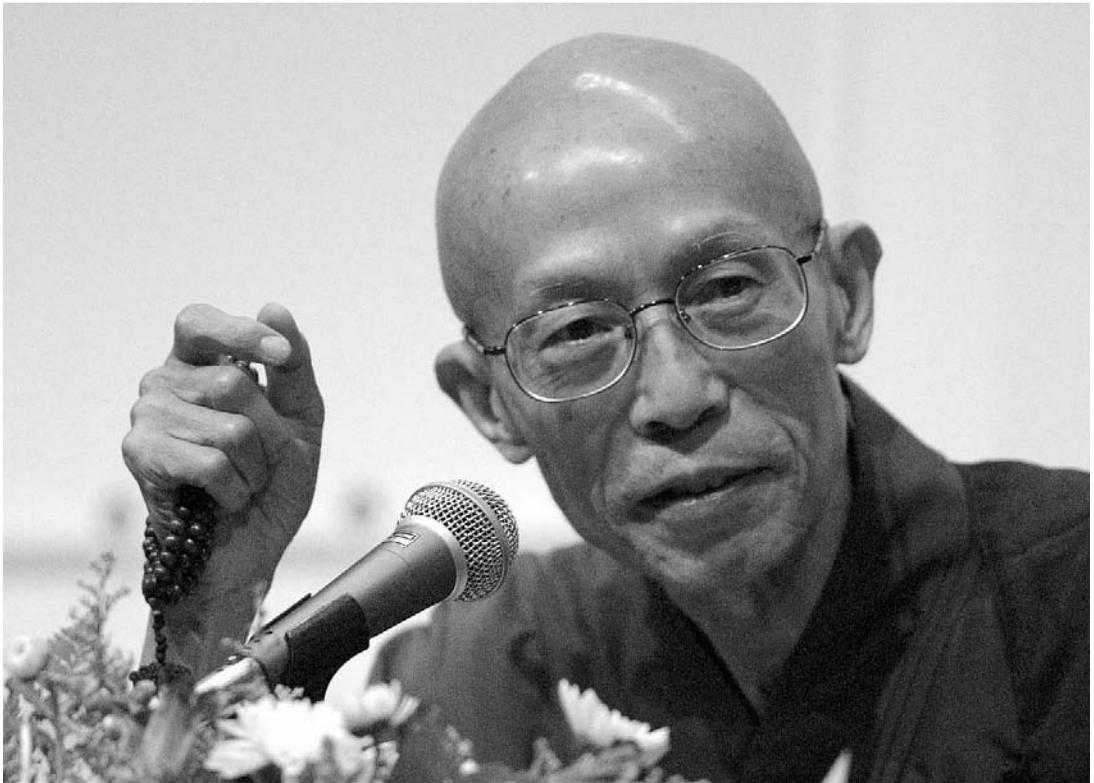
The second precept prohibits stealing—taking something from others without their permission— or robbery, taking something by force. Quite a number of occupations in the world involve stealing or robbing. Piracy is a vivid example of a profession that involves robbing people by force.

There was a case in Taiwan about people who went to a remote national park to collect rock specimens and rare medicinal herbs, which they would sell. Somebody discovered what they were doing and reported them to the authorities. At a trial, the defendants claimed that the rocks and herbs were just laying there and nobody was using them anyway. They claimed that they performing a service that created wealth for society, but the court found them guilty. These people had the wrong livelihood.

Right Livelihood means securing one's livelihood while following the Buddhist principles of wisdom and compassion. Lay people have families as well as careers, so upholding the precepts is adequate to ensure that they are practicing Right Livelihood. Those who have left home (monks and nuns) are supported by the offerings of followers and disciples. There

is no need for them to engage in jobs or careers to secure their daily necessities. In fact, monastics are not allowed to earn money for material necessities. However, the standard for Right Livelihood in Buddhist monasteries can also vary across cultures. For example, in India of the Buddha's time, monks were supported by the lay people and by the royalty, so that their material needs were provided for. Also, Indian monks went around with an alms bowl, receiving offerings from the public. In China, lay people also provided support for the monastic community but not to the same level as in India. For Chinese monks and nuns, farming was part of Right Livelihood and there was no strong mendicant tradition.

In olden times, it was considered improper to sell Buddhist sutras, which were supposed to be free as a way to help sentient beings. To sell a sutra would be like selling the Buddhadharma and was not Right Livelihood. When I was a young monk in China, if a Buddhist master charged a fee for teaching Dharma, he would be described as making money off the Buddhadharma. The problem is that in contemporary society if there were no admission fee, it would be difficult to raise enough money to maintain or rent facilities for teaching and practicing. I once asked a famous Buddhist teacher if charging admission for a lecture was selling the Buddhadharma. He replied, "The proper way they should think of it is making an offering to the Buddhadharma."



The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

Master Sheng Yen Dies at 79

by Guogu

Venerable Master Sheng Yen of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan and the Chan Meditation Center in New York passed into Nirvanic bliss in Taipei on February 3rd, 2009, 3 am (Taiwan time: February 2nd, 4 pm) at National Taiwan University Hospital at the age of 79.

Master Sheng Yen was born into a humble farming family in Nantong County, near Xiaoniang Harbor, in Jiangsu Province on January 22, 1930 (December 4 of the lunar calendar). Master Sheng Yen became a monk at age thirteen. He began as a frail novice, yet he was destined to become one of the most influential Buddhist clerics in modern Chinese history and in the renaissance of Western Buddhism. Master Sheng Yen was a Chinese lineage holder of both the Linji and Caodong Chan Buddhist schools, the founder of the Dharma Drum Order of Chan Buddhism, the founder of the Dharma Drum Mountain Center for World Education, the first Chinese cleric to receive a Ph.D. degree in Buddhist studies from Rissho University in Japan, a stellar Buddhist scholar of Ming Buddhism and of Master Ouyi Zhixu (1599-1655), and an active advocate of environmental protection.

Master Sheng Yen came to New York in 1976, soon after receiving his Ph.D. He might have

confined his activities to the pastoral guidance of the immigrant Chinese community, but he instead embarked upon the more difficult challenge of teaching Chan to Americans. He overcame many obstacles: language, culture, prejudice, logistics and financial difficulties. Until 2006 when he became ill, he divided his time between New York and Taipei, training generations of Chan practitioners with methods skillfully adapted to the contemporary problems facing his students.



Master Sheng Yen was a dedicated scholar and prolific writer. His collected work, *Fagu Chuanji*, amounts to over 100 volumes, covering topics as diverse as Tiantai and Huayan philosophies, vinaya, Buddhist scriptural commentaries, Indo-Tibetan and East Asian Buddhist histories, Chan Buddhist studies, and comparative religions. He also wrote many popular books introducing Buddhist teachings to both beginners and those with a more advanced understanding of Buddhism.

He spoke out for what he called spiritual environmentalism: the essential task of purifying our environment by first purifying our minds. This is more than just philosophy. It is a call for personal commitment coupled with practical goals that will benefit all the peoples of the world. Many in Taiwan and in other countries have responded to this exhortation with great enthusiasm.

Master Sheng Yen was one of the foremost contributors to the vital Humanistic Buddhism of Taiwan that blossomed in the 20th century. He was an exemplary leader of contemporary Chinese Buddhism, combining a deep understanding of Buddhadharma with an equally profound concern for the welfare of all sentient beings. He was a warm, insightful, and inspirational teacher to his many students around the world. All who encountered him were touched by his personal concern and his remarkable ability to communicate difficult ideas simply—always with wit, compassion, and a profound sense of humor. Master Sheng Yen will be deeply missed by Buddhist practitioners, scholars of Chinese Buddhism, and everyone who had the good fortune to meet him.



Funeral Observances in NY

by Buffe Laffey

The Chan Meditation Center in Queens was the gathering place for those who were unable to travel to Taiwan for the funeral rituals. From February 3rd until February 16th, the **Buddha Name Recitation Dharma Ritual** was held daily, to repay the benevolence of our Master Sheng Yen.

For 14 days, a recording of Shifu chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha was played continuously from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Devotees came and went throughout the day; donning robes, they sat in the main hall and chanted along with the recording and each other. Downstairs, people sipped tea to soothe throats sore from chanting, and spoke quietly, comforting each other and sharing memories. At the front of the main hall a screen displayed a live video feed from Taiwan. For the first three days, the video showed the **Wake Service**; Shifu's body lying in state in the Main Buddha Hall of Dharma Drum Mountain, while devotees came to pay their respects.

On the third day Rebecca Li organized a gathering at the home of Echo Wang, where the Dharma Teachers-in-Training joined together to chant, sit in meditation, and share remembrances of Shifu. After lunch they were joined by more of Shifu's Western students. Some had not seen each for many years. Later this gathering moved to the Chan Meditation Center, which was packed to capacity for the **Moving the Coffin Ceremony** from 8:00-9:30 pm. People stood shoulder to shoulder, too tightly packed to do prostrations, and simply chanted together along with the ritual displayed via the live video feed from Taiwan.

At 10:00 pm Professor Yu gave a eulogy in Chinese and English. Then Rebecca moderated and translated as various students came to the front to speak their memories of Shifu. From 11:00 pm to midnight was quiet time, with many taking naps upstairs in the Buddha Hall before the **Cremation Ceremony** began at midnight. Approximately 120 people remained at CMC for this ceremony. They followed the event on the live video feed, chanting and kneeling along with the people in Taiwan. The ceremony ended at 3:30 am; afterwards Rikki Asher opened her home to those who needed to sleep before traveling home.

On the fourteenth day people again gathered at CMC for the **Burial of Ashes**, from 11:00 pm - 1:30 am. Approximately 50 people attended. All were asked to write a vow on a paper bodhi leaf; these were collected and then hung in the entryway to honor Shifu's sentiment: "The universe may one day perish, yet my vows are eternal." Once again the attendees viewed the proceedings on the live video feed from Taiwan, and followed along, chanting, kneeling, and prostrating. Many commented on the feeling of warmth and bonding from sharing these rituals together. Afterwards, all who attended were gifted a copy of the Heart Sutra in Shifu's calligraphy.

At the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Shawangunk, the Buddha Name Recitation Ritual was observed at the Thursday Night Sitting Group and the Sunday Service which occurred during the fourteen days. On the night of the Cremation Ceremony, the lay staff members who were unable to attend the viewing at CMC sat a vigil at the Chan Hall. Shifu's photo was placed on the altar, a candle was lit, and participants sat in meditation while Shifu's body was committed to ashes.

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 and Expanded Activities

DDRC now provides a greater variety of activities, ranging from weekly group practice, Beginner's Meditation Classes, Beginner's Retreats, Weekend Retreats, through to Intermediate Level and Intensive Chan Retreats. Beginners and experienced practitioners—whether from the local Tri-State area, from across the States, or from across the globe—are all welcome to begin the practice or to deepen their cultivation.

Schedule is subject to change. Please check the website before applying for updated and detailed information.

3-, 5-, 7-, 10-Day Intro to Chan Retreat
Friday, April 3 – Sunday April 12
(Flexible choice of either a three-, five-, seven-, or the whole ten-day retreat within the period)

One-day Retreat
Saturday, April 18, 9 am – 5 pm

Buddhist Vegetarian Cooking Class
Saturday, April 25, time to be announced

One-day Retreat
Saturday, May 2, 9 am – 5 pm

Koan Retreat
Saturday, May 23 – Saturday, May 30

One-day Retreat
Saturday, June 6, 9 am – 5 pm

10-Day Huatou Retreat
Friday, June 19 – Sunday June 28

Regular Weekly Activities

Thursday Evening Meditation
7 – 9 pm; Sitting, walking, moving meditation and discussion.

Sunday Service
9 – 11 am; Sitting, walking and moving meditation; Dharma talk; chanting.

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 – 9:15 pm (Last Monday of the month: Recitation of 88 Buddhas and repentance.)

Tuesday Night Sitting Group

7 – 9 pm: Sitting, yoga, walking meditation, Dharma discussions, Heart Sutra recitation.

Saturday Sitting Group

9 am – 3 pm
Sitting, yoga, walking meditation

Sunday Open House

10 – 11 am: meditation
11 am – 12:30 pm: Dharma lectures
12:30 – 1 pm: lunch offerings
1 – 2 pm: vegetarian lunch
2 – 3 pm: Chanting (Second Sunday:
Great Compassion Dharani Sutra; last Sunday:
Bodhisattva Precept vows.)

Retreats

One-day Retreat: Chan and Recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name

Saturday, April 4; 9:30 am - 5:30 pm

One-day Retreat with Nancy Bonardi

Saturday, May 16; 9 am – 5 pm

Classes

Beginners' Meditation I, II: Dr. Rebecca Li
Saturdays, April 18 & 25, 9:30 am – 12 pm.

Intermediate Meditation: Dr. Rebecca Li
Saturday, May 9, 9:30 am – 3 pm.
(Please pre-register for meditation classes.)

Dharma 101 I, II & III: David Berman
Buddhist basics via the Four Noble Truths
Fridays, June 12, 19 & 26, 7 – 9 pm.

Taijiquan with Instructor David Ngo
Thursdays, 7:30-9 pm, ongoing,

\$25 per month, \$80 for 16 classes.
First Thursday of month free for newcomers.

Sunday Lectures

11 am – 12:30 pm; Check website for topics.

April 12: Dharma Teacher Bill Wright
April 26: Dharma Teacher Dr. Rebecca Li
April 19: Ven. Chang Hwa
April 31: Ven. Chang Ji & Ven. Guo Chan
May 10: Ven. Guo Xing
May 24: Ven. Chang Hwa
June 7: Ven. Guo Ru
June 14, 21 & 28: Ven. Guo Xing

Friday Night Movies

7 – 9:30 pm with Lindley Hanlon.

April 3: *Why Has Bodhidharma Left for the West*, Dir. Bae Yong-Kyun
May 1: *The Truman Show*, Dir. Peter Weir

Special Events

**Recitation of the Sutra of Earth Store
Bodhisattva's Fundamental Vows**
Sunday, April 5; 9:30 am – 4 pm

Buddha's Birthday Celebration
Sunday, May 3; 9:30 am – 4 pm
Including bathing of the baby Buddha

CMC Annual Membership Meeting
Sunday, May 17; 9:30 am – 12 noon

Chan Master Sheng Yen's weekly television program, "Zen and Inner Peace," has been cancelled effective March, 2009.

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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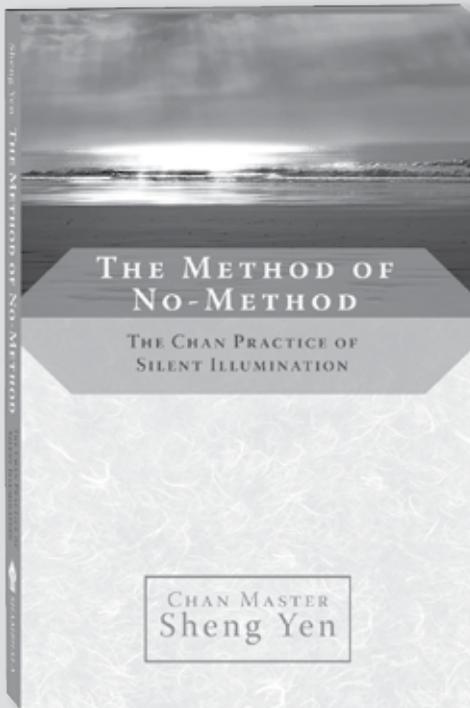
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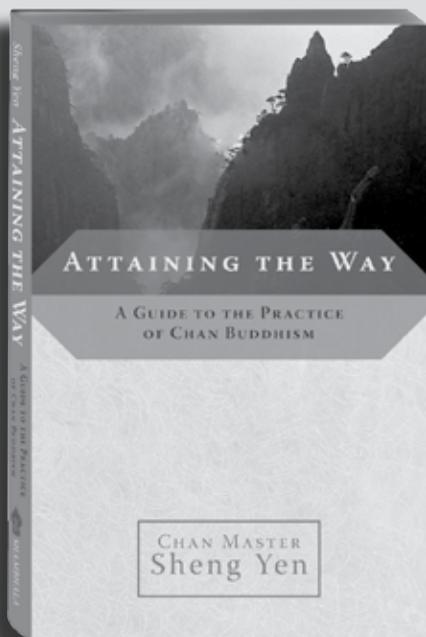


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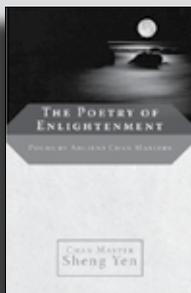


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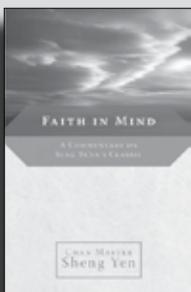
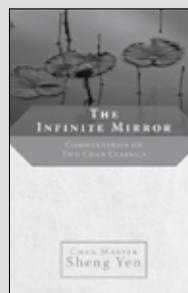
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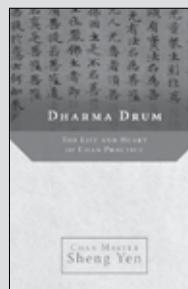
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