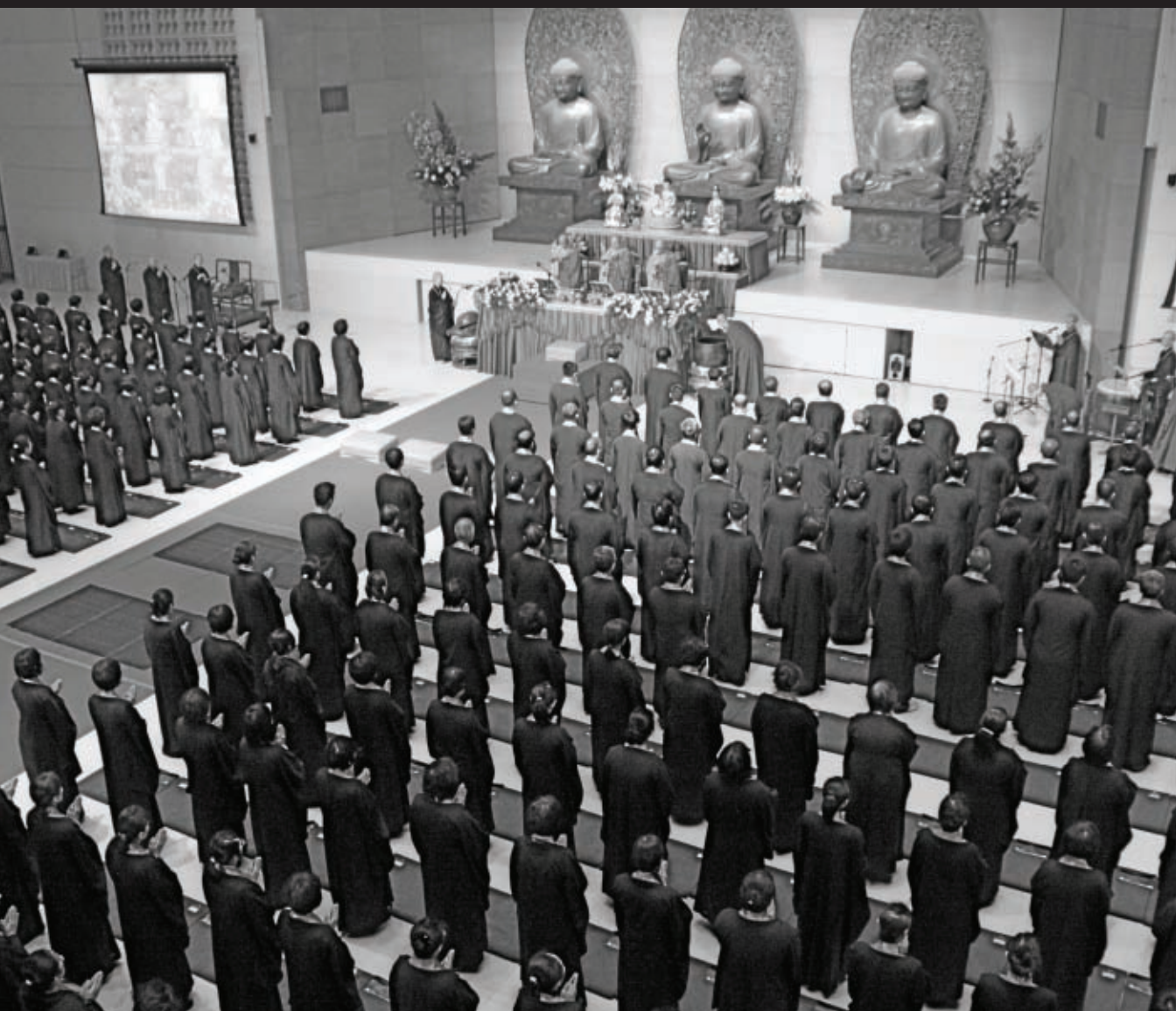


Chan 禪 Magazine

Winter 2011



Chan Meditation Center

Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture

90-56 Corona Avenue

Elmhurst, NY 11373

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“Buddhism is exceptional among the various major world religions and philosophies...[in that it] is thoroughly atheistic. Materialist philosophy is atheistic, yet Buddhism steadfastly opposes the fallacies of materialism. Buddhism resembles a religion, yet it is not a religion; it looks like a philosophy, but is not a philosophy; it is consistent with science, but is not science. These are the most salient features of Buddhism.”

–Chan Master Sheng Yen

**from the first preface to the original Chinese edition of
Orthodox Chinese Buddhism
Dharma Drum Publications
and North Atlantic Books, 2007**

Chan Magazine

Volume 31, Number 1
Winter, 2011

Chan Magazine is published quarterly by the Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture, Chan Meditation Center, 90-56 Corona Avenue, Elmhurst, NY 11373. The magazine is a non-profit venture; it accepts no advertising and is supported solely by contributions from members of the Chan Center and the readership. Donations to support the magazine and other Chan Center activities may be sent to the above address and will be gratefully appreciated. Please make checks payable to Chan Meditation Center; your donation is tax-deductible. For information about Chan Center activities please call (718) 592-6593. For Dharma Drum Publications please call (718) 592-0915. E-mail the Center at ddmbaus@yahoo.com, or the magazine at chanmagazine@gmail.com, or visit us online at: <http://www.chancenter.org>.

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*Cover and table of contents photos courtesy of
Dharma Drum Mountain Archives*

From the Editor

I'm an old athlete. A very old athlete. I teach traditional Chinese martial art for a living, and I just had my 60th birthday.

Now, the Chinese tradition is a little inconsistent on the subject of the longevity of an athlete. On the one hand, 60 isn't even very old by Chinese standards, and longevity has always been one of the main selling points of practicing the Chinese martial arts. (My teacher's teacher was 73 when he came to this country and set up his school; he retired from teaching at 84.) On the other hand, Chinese tradition is extremely conservative when it comes to exercise by the elderly. A traditional daily workout for a man my age would be a nice, relaxing 20-30 minutes of taijiquan, not a 40-minute run followed by a couple hours of intense strength training, stretching and form practice.

So I was probably asking too much of myself when, while repeatedly demonstrating for my students how a retreating step could rebound into an explosive kick, I ruptured an Achilles tendon, and then again when, while trying to return to form months later, I pulled apart a hamstring, and still when, having just gotten back to running after a year and a half of interrupted rehab, I tore a meniscus and had to have knee surgery.

All of which forced me to re-examine how I was training, which coincided with articles in *The Times*, the *New Yorker* and *Science News*, which led me to write this column.

We are evidently, according to those who study biomechanics, anthropology, paleontology and archaeology, born to run. We have – quite unlike our closest relatives, the chimps – long legs (better for jogging than for climbing trees), lots of strong leg tendons (which support the recoil that turns each landing into the next leap forward), long necks (which isolate the head from the twisting shoulders), nuchal ligaments (which keep the head level as the heel strikes), and huge butts (it's the outsized gluteus maximus that keeps us from falling on our faces as we run). Most important, with our furless skin and our millions of sweat glands, we can cool our bodies through perspiration, rather than respiration, which is what gives us an advantage, as distance runners, over even those animals we think of as much better runners than we – horses, antelope, cheetahs. (In an experiment at Harvard, a cheetah was put on a treadmill, at well below top speed – it lay down and refused to budge when, a short time later, its body temperature hit 105 degrees.)

These biomechanical adaptations began to appear between 2 and 2.5 million years ago – they are a large part of what distinguishes the savannah-roaming homo erectus from his tree-climbing australopithecine ancestors. But the biomechanics are only part of the story – the other part is brain size. And the definitive increase in the size of the hominid brain depended on another adaptation that arose about two and a half million years ago – our ancestors started eating meat and mar-

row. No other food source could have supplied enough energy to support the amount of brain growth that occurred.

But how did we bring down the game? Spears, arrows, those weapons that would have allowed hunting from a distance, weren't invented until much later. The conclusion is that homo erectus hunted game by running it down. We couldn't have out-sprinted a bounding gazelle, as a cheetah does, but by dogging our prey at a moderate speed over a long distance, we could overcome its ability to cool itself.

There are modern-day analogs. The Bushmen of the central Kalahari run down kudu antelope, but only when the temperature is over 100 degrees, and maintaining a pace of only four to six miles per hour. The animals run until they collapse, or until they slow to a dazed standstill, heat-exhausted.

So part of the story of the evolution of human beings evidently goes like this: The arising of tall, long-boned hominids, adapted for long-distance running, made possible the killing and eating of animals, which in turn made possible the development of the modern human brain. Or, to adapt the story to explain the provenance of Buddhism: The arising of running, hunting, meat-eating hominids made possible the evolution of the only brain on planet Earth capable of conceiving of the Four Noble Truths and of the precept of not killing.

No wonder our karmic burden is so great. Our ability to practice Buddhism – but not only

that, the Buddhism itself – rests on a foundation of more than a million years of killing and eating other sentient beings. No wonder that when we first sit down to meditate, when we take a first good look at our own minds, what we encounter is more like the chaos of the hunt than the clarity of the Buddha. Our ignorance is more than inbred, it is the root of our family tree, the biological prerequisite to the very possibility of wisdom.

I am being neither cynical nor flip – I have a serious concern, and it is this: Doctrine can never be complete and consistent. It is always a coarse and partial summary of the way things really are, and when we ignore that – when we pay more attention to the teachings on the page than to the facts on the ground – we end up with ideology. And when we attempt to apply ideology across the board – when we “stand on principle” to avoid the hard work of delving into the data – we give rise to fundamentalism.

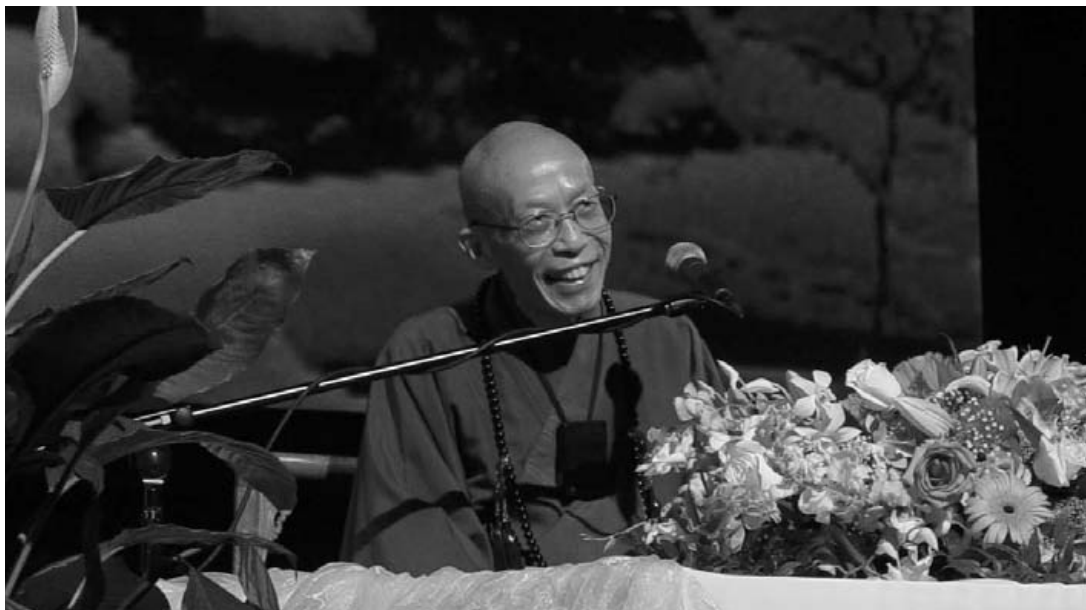
Buddhism is not an exception to this rule. We may not be surrounded by Buddhists insisting that the infidels should be blown up, or that the non-believers will be left behind, or that market forces can solve all our problems, but doctrine is always vulnerable to our limited understanding and our laziness, so I'm always a little cheered up when the data pose a challenge to the doctrine, when, as in the Pope's recent condom conversion, the constant expansion of science produces a crack in the rigid surface of dogma.

I feel like it makes the work of the fundamentalists just a little harder.

Freedom and Liberation

Chan Master Sheng Yen (1930-2009)

This article is from a talk given by Master Sheng Yen at Sha Tin City Hall, Hong Kong, on October 18, 1990. It was translated into English by Chang Luo Fashi of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan, and edited for Chan Magazine by Ernest Heau.



Body and Mind

There is liberation of the body and there is liberation of the mind. If we were in prison, our bodies would be confined, and they would be liberated after we were released. However, for a Buddhist practitioner, liberation of the mind transcends liberation of the body; if we had no vexations and no attachments, we would be free even if we were in prison. Someone once mentioned to me that a certain person might go to jail, and people told him, "This is a chance for you to go into solitary retreat." I said, "For someone who was enlightened, being in prison could be a chance to practice, but for someone else it could just mean sitting in captivity." After I was on solitary retreat in the mountains for six years, someone asked me if it had been a formidable experience. I said, "If I had been in jail, yes; but this was a solitary retreat, so I felt quite at ease." One difference between being in prison and being on solitary retreat is whether one's mind is free.

Liberation Depends On the Mind

When the fourteen-year-old monk Daoxin met the Third Patriarch Sengcan, he said, "Master, please have compassion and teach me how to gain liberation." Sengcan asked him, "Who is preventing you from becoming liberated?" The young monk answered, "No-one." The Third Patriarch replied, "Then why do you need to ask for liberation?" Upon hearing this Daoxin gained realization. So, were you enlightened upon hearing this story? If not, who was holding you back? If you did not gain realization, perhaps it was because you weren't asking for it. People may think they are not enlightened because something is holding

them back. But if one reflected carefully, one would realize that there is no-one in the way but oneself. So perhaps like Daoxin, one can get enlightened upon realizing this. Daoxin's situation is called "falling into one's own trap." There is a saying: "Under the heavens nothing really matters; still the ignorant worry themselves sick."

A Chan Master said, "Seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing are all causes of [the cycle of] birth and death." But he also said, "Seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing are the roots of liberation." Seeing, hearing, and feeling means perceiving with our sense organs; knowing means understanding with the mind. So, if we use our senses and our minds to discriminate among things, believing them to be real and clinging to them, they become causing conditions for continuing [the cycle of] birth and death. However, if you could perceive objectively what you see, hear, feel, and know without counting your gains and losses, then you would have secured the ground for liberation. When you inject the sense of self into your affairs, then that gives rise to troubles; when you discard any sense of gain or loss, liberation is possible.

Once when the Buddha and his disciple Ananda went out for alms, Ananda saw some gold coins under a tree. Ananda said, "World Honored One, look at that pile of gold coins." The Buddha said, "No, that is a poisonous snake. Don't look at it." Later, a man passed by, picked up the gold coins, and ran off with them. At that time, the police were looking for the thief who had stolen the gold, and who, while escaping, had thrown the coins under the tree. But the innocent man who picked up the gold was caught and punished, just as if

he had been the robber. This story says that if you are attracted to something that looks like gold, it could turn out to be a poisonous snake, but if you see it as a poisonous snake, you will keep out of harm's way.

Perceiving the Emptiness of Phenomena

The opening of the *Heart Sutra* says, "The bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, while coursing in deep prajnaparamita, perceived that all five skandhas are empty, thereby transcending all suffering." These lines say that to be liberated, one should be like Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. So, when Avalokiteshvara manifests very deep wisdom and perceives the emptiness of all phenomena, all sufferings are transcended. "Coursing in deep prajnaparamita" means using deep wisdom to help deliver sentient beings from suffering. What is deep prajnaparamita? In the *Platform Sutra*, the Sixth Patriarch Huineng expounded the *Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra*, saying, "Mahaprajnaparamita is the great wisdom to reach the opposite shore (of the sea of existence)." In other words, to be liberated from birth and death, one must accomplish the great (maha) perfection (paramita) of wisdom (prajna).

After practicing Buddhadharma for a while and listening to lectures about liberation and freedom, some people feel very frustrated if they have not gained realization. They forget that it takes a very long time to evolve from being an ordinary person to being a buddha. And some people like to talk about the deepest Dharma—the Dharma of the buddhas and bodhisattvas—but not so much about Dharma for ordinary people. When the teaching is

pitched too high, it can discourage people because it can be too difficult to accomplish. In this situation, the more some people study Buddhadharma, the more frustrated they can become. But if we realistically apply standards appropriate to ordinary human beings, if we use Dharma as our guide and strive to accomplish what ordinary humans can, this wisdom can lead us to the other shore. There being different levels of freedom and different levels of liberation, most people cannot expect to be liberated from everything all at once, and feel free in every place. This must be achieved gradually.

Freedom of the Mind; Freedom of the Body

Freedom of the body means being able to move without obstruction; freedom of the mind means being free from vexations. If one only cultivates freedom of the body, it is possible to gain supernatural powers and manifest transformation abilities. But for ordinary people, supernatural powers are limited and transient. Until one has attained buddhahood, there is no true freedom of the body; one will experience birth and death. Thus, supernatural powers are not enough to lead one to liberation. When one's perceptions are based on greed, anger, ignorance, pride, suspicion, and so on, the world is full of problems; when one perceives the world through wisdom, the mind becomes unobstructed and free.

There are different levels of sentient beings and different levels of freedom. Ordinary people are perplexed and cannot be liberated in the Buddhist sense, and they remain not free. On the other hand, Buddhist saints

Master Sheng Yen Website Launched

We are pleased to announce the launch of a website dedicated to the life and teachings of Chan Master Sheng Yen (1930-2009). In Chinese and English, the website features key aspects of the life of this late beloved master of Chan Buddhism. Please visit us at www.shengyen.org

The website features the following aspects of the Master's life:

Life and Accomplishments: A profile of the Master, an introduction to his teachings, his endeavors on interfaith dialogue and international outreach. There are accounts of his founding of Dharma Drum Mountain, as well as his creation of the Dharma Drum Lineage of Chan.

Publications and Wisdom Teachings: This section features a link to the on-line version of the Complete Works of Master Sheng Yen, and booklets by the Master in five categories: Fundamentals of Buddhism, Daily Life, Spiritual Growth, Wisdom Dialogues, and Chan Practice.

On "Zen and Inner Peace": Selected videos from the TV series: On Self-Development, EQ (Emotional Quotient), Relationships, Chan in Everyday Life, Chan Meditation, and Workplace.

Dharma Talks: Selected audio files from Master Sheng Yen's talks on Buddhist Basics, Peace of Mind, Daily Living, and Chan Practice.

Gallery: Pictures from critical periods in Master Sheng Yen's life with narrative.

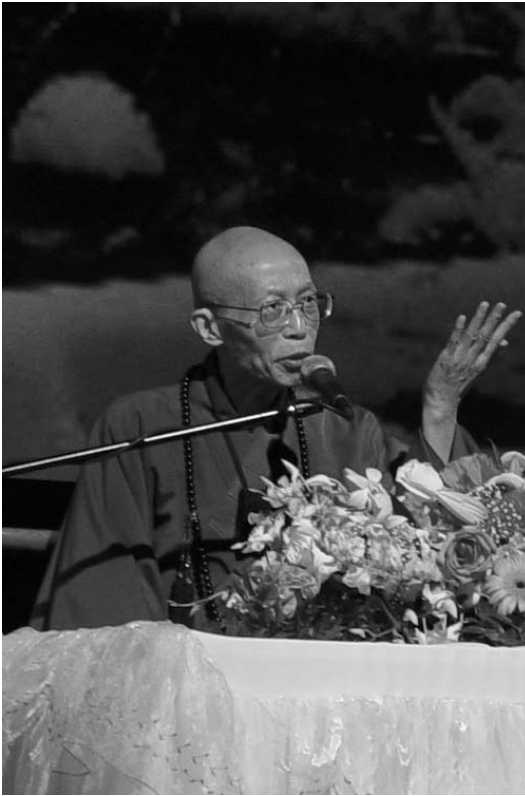
Historic Items of Master Sheng Yen: Includes a video on the founding of the Memorial Hall, located on Dharma Drum Mountain. Photos of items in the Memorial Hall memorialize the benefits that flowed from their owner and their effects on the world. Also shown are samples of Master Sheng Yen's calligraphy with translations of the text.

Daily Wisdom: This interactive page allows visitors to read and contemplate wisdom sayings on daily life by Master Sheng Yen.

Links: Links to the DDM websites and affiliated organizations.

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Our sincere gratitude to the many people involved in creating, and supporting this website. If you found this website useful and beneficial, please share it with others.



who have gained liberation enjoy everlasting freedom. Ordinary sentient beings can apply Buddhist concepts to guide and regulate their lives and resolve light vexations, but it is more complex for heavy vexations. Some have high expectations, hoping that upon hearing the Dharma, their minds will become free. Some who have deep vexations say they are happy, but soon afterwards their eyes may fill with tears. Is this true freedom?

Someone born in prison, who knows nothing about the outside world, may think prison is not such a bad place, but someone who is put there by force knows that being in jail is

not being free. Similarly, some people, upon learning Buddhadharma, realize for the first time that they are not free. It is very precious that we can experience the Dharma in this way.

Those who are averse to life, death, pain, and worldly suffering, and who yearn to enter nirvana can only attain limited liberation. True freedom comes in not fearing life and death, and not being bound by the cycle of birth and death. Thus, we should not strive for limited liberation but for the great freedom of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Only buddhas and bodhisattvas can be fearless in the face of life, death, and suffering, without themselves suffering. Kshitigarbha (Earth Treasury) Bodhisattva said, "Who will descend into hell to deliver sentient beings if I don't?" So he vowed "not to achieve buddhahood until all hells are empty." Willingly going to realms of suffering to deliver sentient beings while being able to enter and leave freely, that is true freedom. By contrast, ordinary sentient beings are restricted to places according to their karma, and are unable to come and go as they wish. Therefore, they are not truly free.

States of Enlightenment

While liberation and freedom are states of enlightenment, ignorance and enlightenment are relative. People abiding in ignorance are not enlightened, but truly enlightened people do not abide in enlightenment. That is because when there is attachment to being enlightened, there is no true freedom. Ordinary people abide in the concept of "I," which includes "me" and "mine." When they analyze the "I," they may find that the "me"

part is non-existent, but the “mine” part still exists. In the first place, the body is “my body” but it is not “me.” As for “my money,” “my house,” etc., these are all “mine.” Since there is no real “me” that could be pointed out or be felt, it is ignorance to think of what is “mine” as “me.”

I once met a retired businessman who said, “I am now liberated and free.” I asked, “How are you liberated and free?” He said, “I passed on all my duties and properties to my son, so now I own nothing!” I asked him, “Is your son still yours?” He said, “Of course my son is mine, nobody can take that away.” I said, “If your son is still yours, how can you really be liberated and free?” If there is still something belonging to “me,” one still abides in ignorance.

If an enlightened practitioner abides in the idea of being liberated, that is not great liberation. The true freedom of the path of the buddhas and bodhisattvas is in having no idea of self, nor any idea of being liberated. The *Diamond Sutra* asserts, “No self, no others, no sentient beings.” This does not mean one should not act in the world, but that one should use compassion and wisdom to help any sentient being, unconditionally. This is true freedom.

Ignorance and Enlightenment

There is a saying that goes, “Do not linger at the place where there is the Buddha,” and another saying that goes, “Move on quickly at the place where there is no Buddha.” Two Buddhists were on a pilgrimage—one of them was not enlightened; the other was. One day, they passed a temple and the first one said, “There must be a Buddha in the temple, let’s go in and pay our respects.” The other one said, “Since the Buddha is already there, let’s not waste time and just move on.” Another time, they passed a deserted temple, and the first one said, “There is no Buddha in there, so we should go in and pay our respects.” The second one said, “We are on a pilgrimage; since there is no Buddha there let’s just move on.”

“DO WE RECITE WITH THE MIND OR WITH THE MOUTH? THERE ARE TWO USEFUL SAYINGS: ‘RECITING THE BUDDHA’S NAME IS NOT A MATTER OF THE MOUTH,’ AND, ‘MEDITATING IS NOT A MATTER OF TRAINING THE LEGS.’ SO WE USE THE PRESENT MIND WHEN WE RECITE THE BUDDHA’S NAME. AND WHEN WE MEDITATE, WE ALSO USE OUR MIND INSTEAD OF MERELY TRAINING OUR LEGS.”

Why move on when the Buddha is there and also move on when the Buddha is not there? Because if the Buddha is not already in your mind you will not find him anywhere outside. If you cannot see the Buddha within and only see the Buddha outside, that is not the real Buddha. Just move on quickly and continue practicing. If you truly know liberation and freedom, the Buddha is everywhere and nowhere.

Seeming Liberation

The Chinese phrase “seeming liberation” refers to the liberation practices of ordinary people. It means using what we understand of the Dharma to help us relieve vexation, and the more we practice, the more we can help ourselves. One example is the use of malas—prayer beads. *Why use prayer beads?* It is used for counting with our hand when reciting the Buddha’s name. *What is the use of counting when we recite the Buddha’s name?* When our thoughts wander, as long as our fingers are moving, that reminds us that we were reciting the Buddha’s name, so we can continue. *What is the use of reciting the Buddha’s name?* Some recite the Buddha’s name to be reborn in the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, for disaster mitigation, or for peace of mind. Actually, reciting the Buddha’s name is for calming the mind and eliminating vexations. *Do we recite with the mind or with the mouth?* There are two useful sayings: “Reciting the Buddha’s names is not a matter for the mouth,” and, “Meditating is not a matter of training the legs.” So we use the mind when we recite the Buddha’s name. The Chinese character for “recite” (*nian*) means the “present mind.” The present mind is the mind that is reciting the Buddhas name, and that is how to recite the Buddha’s name. And when we meditate, we also use our mind instead of merely training our legs.

Using prayer beads, reciting mantras—any proper Buddhist method of practice can lead to liberation. Since the mind has vexations, one way to calm the mind is to recite the Buddha’s name. When we encounter hardship, we can recite the names of bodhisattvas. People have obtained spiritual responses through reciting the names of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

However, reciting the names of buddhas and bodhisattvas is useful even if there are no spiritual responses. A woman came to me for advice about her misbehaving husband, and I gave her the mantra of Cundi (Mother of the Buddhas) Bodhisattva (Chinese, *Zhunti Pusa*) to recite. Later on, she thanked me for giving her the mantra, as it helped her a lot. I asked if her husband was no longer misbehaving. She said, “He still misbehaves but I dedicated myself to taking care of my family, and now at least we have peace in the family.”

When we practice with faith, there can be liberation, at least on the personal level; how much depends on how deep our practice is. For ordinary people, one cannot reach ultimate liberation all at once, so we call it seeming liberation.

Progressive Liberation and Ultimate Liberation

For people who wish to practice the Mahayana path to buddhahood, one begins by entering the bodhisattva path. This path is both gradual and progressive, so one should not be impractical and overly ambitious; one cannot become a buddha overnight. Although Mahayana Buddhism has the concept of sudden enlightenment, it requires long and gradual practice. So what appears to be sudden is actually the result of long practice. Chan and Zen talk about gradual and sudden enlightenment, but the two are actually the same. So, how then does one best practice Chan? The best way is by seeing Chan as daily life. Especially for ordinary practitioners, it is very important to experience Dharma with the mundane body and mind. Chan is not mystical and elusive; as long as one is mindful in daily life, Chan is everywhere.



"Bronx Woman"
By Rikki Asher

The Chan Practice of Non-abiding

by

Ven. Guo Xing Fashi

This article by Ven. Guo Xing Fashi, a Dharma heir of the late Master Sheng Yen, will be published as the introduction to a forthcoming book by Master Sheng Yen, The Mind Dharma of Huineng. Ven. Guo Xing Fashi is the abbot of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, New York, as well of the Chan Meditation Center in Queens, New York. The article was translated from Chinese by Echo Bonner and Harry Miller, and edited by Ernest Heau.

The *Diamond Sutra* contains the sentence, “(One) ought not abide anywhere, and there will arise this mind.” Before he became the Sixth Patriarch, the young Huineng became enlightened when he heard this single sentence. In Chan, we often use a briefer phrase, “Non-abiding, mind arising.” This phrase appears within the entrances to Nung Chan Monastery and the Chan Hall of Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan, as well as the Chan Hall of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in the United States. Master Sheng Yen continually brought up this phrase during long retreats, explained the concepts behind it, and asked retreatants to practice accordingly.

The Chan school places great importance on “non-abiding, mind arising” because the intrinsic nature of the mind is exactly non-abiding. If you wish to be enlightened, your ac-

tions must be in accordance with “non-abiding, mind arising.” Not only must you have a clear sense of this idea, but your every action, word, and thought must be in line with it. This idea that all actions of body, speech, and mind should be in accord with the concept of non-abiding is expressed in the saying by the Huineng: “As the mouth speaks, so the mind acts.”

There are many places in the *Platform Sutra* of the Sixth Patriarch that refer to how one should practice non-abiding. For example, the chapter “Samadhi and Wisdom Are One” says that those who practice non-abiding will see the emptiness inherent in virtue and evil, beauty and ugliness, enemy and friend, demeaning and argumentative language. Such a person does not engage in or think about reward or injury. Thought after thought, he



Guo Xing Fashi lectures; Echo Wong translates. Photo by Kai-fen Hu.

or she doesn't engage in or think about the previous condition. If the previous thought, present thought and future thought continue without stopping, this is called "bondage." If, in regard to all dharmas, thought after thought continues with non-abiding, this is called "unbinding."

Obviously, on an intellectual level, at the outset one knows that all worldly ideas of virtue, evil, beauty and ugliness are empty, impermanent and without self. Our enemies as well as those close to us are empty, impermanent and without self. The deceptions and difficulties that others give to us through words and arguments are also empty, impermanent and

without self. We should not be ready to seek revenge or argue and offer explanations. In applying this principle, when we are present in each moment, thought after thought, we do not react, make distinctions, or grasp or reject. However, when each successive thought is caught up with the previous thought and the present state (whatever your attention turns to) is encountered, then distinctions of other, self, right, wrong, good and bad, arise. This thought process then triggers the subsequent thought (which is now the present thought). And then the next thought will follow this present thought, and we again make distinctions between other, self, right, wrong, good and bad. This thought process continues

without end. Again, this is bondage. If the mind doesn't differentiate, grasp or reject any past, present or future phenomena, then this is called "without bondage."

How then do we not differentiate, grasp or reject phenomena of the past, present and future? We need to cultivate samatha (samadhi) and vipassana (contemplation), or, if one practices Chan, Silent Illumination or Huatou. These contemplation methods lead to the state of non-differentiation—neither grasping nor rejecting past, present or future phenomena. However, the mind can only achieve this effect when samadhi lies at its foundation. According to the *Platform Sutra*, contemplation-samadhi is one body with two parts. After a long period of samadhi, the function of contemplation occurs, and after a long period of contemplation, the function of samadhi manifests. When we begin the practice of samadhi-contemplation, most probably we begin with a scattered mind, which is not yet settled, and is crowded with illusory thoughts. At this time, we need to practice a method of samatha to settle the mind. For example, we might select from among body and mind relaxation, experiencing the breath, or counting the breath. In the beginning all of these are methods of samadhi cultivation.

What is samadhi cultivation? It is precisely allowing the mind to arise with the function of calmness and stableness. One must practice samadhi continuously without stopping. When illusory thoughts arise, quickly go back to the method. If the method is counting the breaths, then quickly go back to that method. Practice this way until you have very few or no illusory thoughts. At this point you may start cultivating contemplation.

Contemplation means using your mind to observe feelings and thoughts that arise from your body and mind. Only observe them, know they occur, don't react to them, interfere or prevent them from happening. It's like watching a basketball game. You can't just jump onto the court to interfere with the players. Let the players play their own game; you just quietly enjoy it. The sensations and thoughts in your body and mind are like the players on the court. You enjoy watching them; you don't pay special attention to one particular player; rather, you watch the game in its entirety.

If your mind becomes scattered again after a long period of contemplation, return to samadhi cultivation. If you were counting the breaths, then go back to that again. When the mind is settled, begin to cultivate contemplation.

If you know how to cultivate contemplation, continue to the next step of contemplating the total body. By "total body," we mean the *totality* of one's physical body, one's sensations, one's breath, and one's mind (thoughts and feelings). So here, when we refer to the total body, we mean to include all these things. Contemplating the total body in the sense defined here is the practice of Silent Illumination Chan, and it is precisely the key and foundation for cultivating the mind of non-abiding. On the basis of the mind of non-abiding, Master Sheng Yen speaks of Silent Illumination Chan as having six stages: (1) relaxing body and mind, (2) experiencing the breath, (3) contemplating the total body, (4) contemplating the environment as a whole, (5) direct contemplation, and (6) contemplating emptiness.

The purpose of the first stage, relaxing body and mind, and the second stage, experiencing the breath, is to calm and stabilize the mind. These are the foundations for the third stage, contemplating the total body. It is only at this third stage that the practice of non-abiding really begins. When you know how to contemplate the total body, you can use this principle and go to the fourth stage, contemplating the environment as a whole, and then the fifth stage, direct contemplation and the sixth stage, contemplating emptiness. When one reaches the point where all bodily sensations disappear, or there is neither body part, nor sensation, nor breath, nor thought to be contemplated, contemplating the environment begins. The fifth and sixth stages are entered naturally.

Contemplating the total body means that you clearly and vividly perceive the total body, not reacting to any particular phenomena, and you are not occupied by a particular part of the total body. The total body, as we have said, includes everything associated with it—breathing and a wide variety of sensations and thoughts. Because you do not react to any phenomenon, illusory thoughts gradually arise less and less. The mind gradually becomes unmoving. The illumination (vipassana) aspect of Silent Illumination is to clearly and vividly know the total body; the silent (samatha) aspect is to not react to phenomena.

Actually, Silent Illumination is precisely samatha-vipassana. In the beginning it is possible to first reach samatha, then vipassana, or first reach vipassana, then samatha. But, in the end, it becomes the dual operation of samatha-vipassana. When Silent Illumination is successfully cultivated, samatha and

vipassana occur simultaneously. If vipassana is not paired with the cultivation of samatha, then the mind will slowly scatter again. Therefore, in cultivating Silent Illumination, illumination must be paired with silence. If there is no silence, the mind is distracted by or reacts to specific phenomena and then will slowly become scattered. Hence, you must go back to cultivating samadhi and go back to experiencing the breath or relaxing body and mind.

Cultivating Silent Illumination does not mean settling at the state where there are no illusory thoughts, because this state is itself a kind of illusory mind. This state comprises not just one illusory thought, but a continuous and sustained (thread of) illusory thoughts. When cultivating non-abiding, the key is that our mind can be settled down from clearly concentrating on a particular object or objects, to the point where concentration is no longer on a particular object or objects. For example, as we have said, the first stage of Silent Illumination is simply to relax body and mind. Here our mind clearly dwells on bodily sensations, and this allows us to be relaxed. At the second stage, clearly experiencing the breath is the object. But at the third stage, contemplating the total body, the breath becomes only one part of the totality and one part of the object of contemplation. There are also a variety of sensations and illusory thoughts. This is contemplating the total body and not paying special attention to a particular aspect or reacting to a particular part. Whatever appears in the total body is known.

Sometimes, feelings and sensations such as leg pain occur. At this point the mind knows there is leg pain. Sometimes, there are illusory thoughts as well as feelings of leg and

back pain within the whole physical body. Then be aware there are illusory thoughts, leg and back pain. Don't pay special attention to, react to, or try to get rid of them and consequently let secondary illusory thoughts arise. Sometimes, there are no bodily sensations or feelings, or illusory thoughts, and even no breath—then know that the total body has no feelings, no illusory thoughts, or no breaths. Know whatever appears in the body at any time; know precisely that. Know it entirely. Do not get caught up in, or react to, partiality.

Here is an example: When a person passes by a mirror, there is only a reflection of a person passing by; if a bird flies by, the mirror reflects only that; a person and a bird appearing—the mirror just reflects a person and a bird. If there is no person and no bird, then the mirror just reflects the environment. The mirror will not choose which part it reflects; it reflects whatever is in front of it; it will not interact or react or have an opinion.

In the beginning of samatha-vipassana, the mind is scattered; it continuously encounters different objects and pays attention to them. Continuously grasping or rejecting different objects means that the mind continuously abides on different objects. With continuous practice, the mind can at last abide on only

one object. This is samadhi. But in Silent Illumination the mind does not abide on even one object. Finally, it lets go of even that object. Not encountering any object, the unmoving mind is developed. This is the silent part of Silent Illumination. Therefore, in "Admonitions for Sitting Chan Meditation," Master Hongzhi Zhengjue wrote, "Without contact it knows; not encountering things it illuminates." This is the most accurate standard principle in cultivating non-abiding. In general, the reason that knowing can take place is because there is an object to be known, and thus the function of knowing is generated. This kind of knowing is the knowing that depends upon the duality of subject and object. However, non-abiding is the knowing that goes beyond the oppositions that are constituted by subjectivity and objectivity.

Therefore, the entire cultivation of non-abiding is to clearly and vividly know the total body, and not react to, differentiate, grasp or reject any particular phenomenon, until the mind finally reaches the knowing that is beyond the oppositions of subjectivity and objectivity, or beyond the dualism of the knower and the known. At this time, it will be easy to realize what the *Platform Sutra* says: "No grasping and no rejecting in the midst of all phenomena."



Walk the Bodhisattva Path and Perform Mundane Affairs

2010 Dharma Drum Mountain North America
Fifth Laity Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony

by

Liu Qian

Many years ago, Master Sheng Yen wrote the following words to one of his Western disciples: “Walk on the Bodhisattva Path, mindfully go about your ordinary affairs, and attain unsurpassed fruition.” Many years later, I have finally come to realize that the essence of the Mahayana Bodhisattva Path is revealed in this simple sentence.

At the Dharma Drum Retreat Center, from July 3 to 5, 2010, seventy-five Western and Asian participants from Canada and seven U.S. states completed the Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony and became Beginner’s Mind Emergent Bodhisattvas under the guidance of eighteen monastic teachers and with the support of twenty-seven volunteers.

On the morning of July 5th, bright sun sparkling over a quiet Chan Hall, birds singing in the trees’ branches, all the novitiates wore their ceremonial black robes, and participated with minds focused and concentrated. After two days of intensive preparation, it was clear that they were ready. There were nine-

teen Westerners, so the ceremony was conducted in both Chinese and English. The ceremony masters were Rev. Guo Xing Fashi, the Abbot of Dharma Drum Retreat Center and Chan Meditation Center; Rev. Guo Yuan Fashi, Dharma Drum Mountain Chan Hall Director; and Rev Guo Chi, Deputy Director of DDM Chan Hall. The entire precept ceremony, from chanting to the call to take the precepts, was conducted in a stately and dignified manner. All novitiates sang the liturgy wholeheartedly with complete and unshakable faith. During the time of putting on the Bodhisattva sashes, many novitiates were moved to tears. They felt the pure precept body of Sakaymuni Buddha entering into their bodies and the bodhi seed was planted in their minds forever. Thus begins the the Bodhisattva path. How could you not be so happy that you would cry?

After the ceremony, Rev Guo Xing Fashi said to the Bodhisattva novitiates that taking the precepts is like enrolling in a Bodhisattva university. We haven’t really begun the true work yet. When we start walking the Bodhi-

sattva path, we meet obstacles, big obstacles. We should not be afraid, nor should we be beaten down by them. Upholding the precepts is like looking into a mirror every day. Find a dirty spot? Clean it immediately, otherwise the mirror will not be clear. Do it daily, at all times and places; this way defilements are wiped away quickly. The attitude we should take in upholding the precepts should be persistent and uninterrupted like smoothly flowing water—neither overburdened nor too lax. Finally, he encouraged the novitiates to not forget their beginner’s mind, to be filled with Dharma joy, and never to give up until they reached Buddhahood.

The Avatamsaka Sutra states: “A Bodhisattva is rooted in the precepts.” The rituals and procedures for this transmission of the Bodhisattva Precepts were originally developed here in the U.S.

On December 22, 1991, after many years of studying the precepts and fourteen years after having arrived in the U.S., Master Sheng Yen conducted the first Bodhisattva Precept Transmission Ceremony at Chan Meditation Center

in New York. It took place in a small, crowded space in Queens. Master Sheng Yen began the precept ceremony by first explaining to the novitiates the meaning and the importance of taking and upholding the Bodhisattva Precepts; he then asked them to wholeheartedly make the decision to take the precepts. The substance of the Bodhisattva Precept ceremony that Shifu developed lay in expanding the spirit of those precepts. It did not advocate rigidly adhering to each specific article. After consolidating the Bodhisattva Precept rituals and procedures from both Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, he developed a new precept ceremony that is easily understood and well-adapted for contemporary recipients. At the end of his explanation of the precepts, eighty-eight people, Western and Asian, made the decision to take the precepts. They were later referred to as “the eighty-eight Buddhas.” This experience gave Master Sheng Yen great confidence. Eventually, he presided over larger scale Bodhisattva Precept Ceremonies at Nong Chan Monastery in Taiwan.

According to Guo Yuan Fashi, who was with Master Sheng Yen at the time, in the begin-



ning the Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony was quite simple. They tried to accommodate the language and cultural needs of the Western and Asian disciples by conducting a separate English-language ceremony. But ever since the Second North American Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony, both Western and Asian disciples participate in the same ceremony. The Western disciples had developed a deep respect for a tradition that has been practiced for a thousand years, and they found that chanting in Chinese enhanced the atmosphere of the ceremony.

The first four North American Bodhisattva Precept Ceremonies were conducted by Master Sheng Yen himself, and so they are held in the highest regard by his disciples. They have inherited Shifu's compassionate vow and resolve to continue to transmit the Bodhisattva Precepts that Shifu advocated and developed through his tireless work. He encouraged everyone to take up the precepts, and he led the way for even more overseas Buddhist disciples to practice the Bodhisattva Path. Shifu said that these Bodhisattva precepts are the cradle of all past, present and future Buddhas.

Rev. Chang Hwa Fashi, current Director of CMC, worked tirelessly on all aspects of the event, from the early stage of planning and preparation through all ceremony rehearsals, including translating the liturgy into English and seeing to even the smallest ceremony details. When asked why it was only recently that the Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony for the Spirits was included, she said that in 2006, when Shifu sensed that it might be the last time that he would conduct the ceremony, he instructed Rev. Guo Kai to make sure that future observances in North America includ-



ed the Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony for the Spirits so that the entire precept ceremony would be complete. Previous ceremonies had not include these rituals because of insufficient personnel and the difficulties Westerners had in accepting the underlying ideas.

In accordance with Master Sheng Yen's instructions, the first Bodhisattva Precept Ceremony for the Spirits was conducted July 4, 2010. All volunteers were also able to attend the ceremony due to the rare and auspicious causes and conditions. The ceremony began with an invitation to all Bodhisattva Ceremony Masters, symbolically representing Shakyamuni Buddha, Manjushri Bodhisattva and Maitreya Bodhisattva, to lead the ceremony. The *fashis* (Dharma teachers) then recited the repentance liturgy, the Heart Sutra and different mantras, and then invited the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas into the ceremony hall. Chanting echoed throughout. I sat next to the volunteers, and realizing the meaning of the

words, felt the sounds, sensed their thoughts, and was filled with awe. I witnessed the novitiates' commitment and faith in the Dharma.

Seventy-five people took the precepts. They came from New York, New Jersey, Florida, North Carolina, Illinois, Michigan, Washington, Toronto and Vancouver. The youngest was Yao Yi Chen who is 11, and the oldest Wang Hong Bi Yin, 79, from North Carolina.

For the rehearsal, they woke at 5am to the sound of the wooden boards. The temperature was 90° F. They listened to the talks and were guided by fourteen *fashis* and eight volunteers.

During the event, a few people felt ill. Others questioned how they would uphold the precepts. For example, a woman from Florida, Tina Bush Rester, had a serious issue. She has a relative who is dying and suffers great physical pain. If the relative asks her to help in ending her life, what should Tina do? Would this be breaking the precepts? Several related questions bothered her. She called her teacher, Guo Gu Pusa, who answered her questions one by one and put her mind at ease. After taking the precepts, she said, "This was truly an unforgettable experience. I sensed a calmness in the Chan Hall, as if everyone in it was supporting me."

Rev. Chang Hwa Fashi made everything that occurred during the ceremony run smoothly. The *fashis* and volunteer *pusas* (bodhisattvas) fully contributed to the event's success. They were briefed at the end of each day so that every step of the event transpired without fault. Finally, all seventy-five novitiates completed the ceremony. Their merits are boundless.

During the ceremony, the kitchen was quite busy. Under the leadership of Yiu Huei Mei Pusa, nine volunteers worked very hard under sweltering conditions. They were always the last to eat. This phrase is written above the stove: "Speak less, do more, recite Guan Yin, and let the great compassionate mind arise." The joyful faces of these volunteers clearly expressed true examples of Bodhisattva practitioners.

Master Sheng Yen said, "Precepts are the best safeguard for a Buddhist in daily living." Let us start with the ordinary events in our lives; treasure this pure Bodhisattva Precept Body; truly give rise to a virtuous mind; move forward with energy and commitment as we walk the Bodhisattva Path.



Ten-Day Chan Retreat

August 5 - 15, 2010

Dluzew, Poland

by

Venerable Chang Wen

A native New Yorker, Chang Wen Fashi is a Western monastic disciple of Chan Master Sheng Yen. After his ordination as a novice in 2004, he lived at the Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education, Taiwan, and received a monastic education at the Dharma Drum Sangha University, which culminated in his graduation and full ordination in 2006. He has attended and assisted with numerous intensive meditation retreats in the Chan Hall and abroad, and served as the leader for DDM's International Meditation Group in Taipei, prior to returning to New York and being named Director of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Ridge.

For the third consecutive year, Ven. Chi Chern Fashi, Master Sheng Yen's first Dharma heir, was invited to Poland to lead a 10-day Chan retreat. The event was hosted by the Chan Buddhist Union, an organization that has been inviting Shifu and his Dharma heirs to lead Chan retreats since the 1990s. This year's retreat, from August 5 – 15, was held in the same location as last year's, a century-old manor house in the small countryside village of Dluzew, about a one-hour drive from Warsaw.

Djordje Cvijic and I assisted Fashi, as supervisor and translator, respectively. We were also supported by a team of devoted practitioners including members of the Union, organized by Pawel Rosciszewski. There were 42 participants from 10 different European countries, making this the largest of these retreats so

far, including many participants from the previous retreats, as well as a number of first-time Chan retreatants and veteran meditators from the Zen and Theravada traditions.

As this was the only time Chi Chern Fashi would be able to teach in Europe during 2010, both the methods of Huatou and Silent Illumination were taught. The instruction of these methods was preceded by a complete review of the fundamentals of sitting meditation practice, including posture, relaxation, and basic methods of experiencing and counting the breath. As is common in Chi Chern Fashi's approach to practicing Chan, he emphasized that the participants should first establish a foundation of complete relaxation of body and mind, as well as a certain degree of mental stability, before applying methods like Huatou or Silent Illumination. This is



especially important because of the tension and scatteredness that is so common among many modern practitioners.

This phenomenon revealed itself as the participants came to their first interviews. As with the previous year's group, there were many participants who came from other traditions, and whose approach to meditation seemed very strict and severe, emphasizing the pursuit of enlightenment experiences more than relaxation. During interviews, a number of participants revealed a tense approach to the use of their method that seemed to be endangering the health of the body and the stability of the mind. They were trying to create, by force, the mental experience they were seeking, and in some cases had generated states that resembled a kind of mental breakdown, leaving the person feeling psychologically

fragile and sometimes suicidal. Retreatants who previously had had such dark experiences of meditation felt a great relief at this retreat. They shared with us how joyful they were to be able to practice in an environment where they felt safe, and even loved. This allowed them to face their previously buried vexations, to shed layers of unnecessary fear and expectation, and to see more deeply into their actual condition.

For those who were in attendance for the second or third year in a row, this retreat was another chance to refine their new attitude towards practice. Many noted that they were able to actually *enjoy* the process of practice, by just being honest with themselves and simply sitting. By not seeking any results, and merely working on adjusting their body and mind according to the condition that they were in, these participants found a sense of naturalness and stability. Although some were dealing with very difficult issues in their daily lives, by just sitting with themselves they were able to honestly face their internal turmoil with a compassionate mind. They discovered that with this approach, they could handle all of their life situations, on and off the cushion.

The Supervisor of retreat, Djordje, although quite familiar with leading retreats and watching over the Chan Hall, shared with me that he found it quite exhausting to play the role of both supervisor and timekeeper: "I'm getting old, you know." He remarked that it was also challenging to keep the retreatants together—to encourage them to practice as a cohesive unit—partly due to the large estate grounds. For example, at break time, one had to walk quite a long distance to get to the bathroom or tea room. The average break



took 10 – 15 minutes, but if one were to take one's time, and enjoy the tea a bit longer, the break time could easily stretch to 20 minutes. So when it was time to begin the next sitting period, oftentimes the only people in the Chan Hall were Djordje and a few diligent sitters. In addition, although the participants were not necessarily beginners, some were not so fond of sitting for long periods of time. "I was sitting there thinking of how to get my revenge on Djordje for making us sit for so long," one retreatant jokingly remarked after the retreat. Thus, whenever there was a chance to walk around, many took the liberty to take a little excursion to the other side of the property, especially if their legs were aching. And if one wanted to enjoy watching the clouds float by or have fun exploring the estate, it was quite easy to stray away. Despite this freedom however, with encouragement and a little compassionate scolding, Djordje was eventually able to keep the participants more on

the method and less on the scenery. As time progressed, especially when the participants were better adjusted to the retreat regimen, they were quick to return to their cushions after a break.

For me, this retreat was also a unique experience, as I was struggling with my health. Although I'm only 30, I felt like 80. For two and a half years, I had been taking on new roles and responsibilities at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in New York, as well as a heavy workload in and out of the Chan Hall, and so I was quite drained, physically and mentally. In addition, I had just completed translating for a 14-day retreat only a week prior to this one, and I found it difficult to gather up the strength to translate. Chi Chern Fashi joked that I resembled "Grand Master Too Weak". I spent much of the retreat sleeping—partly due to exhaustion, and partly due to my inability to adjust to the retreat diet. I realized

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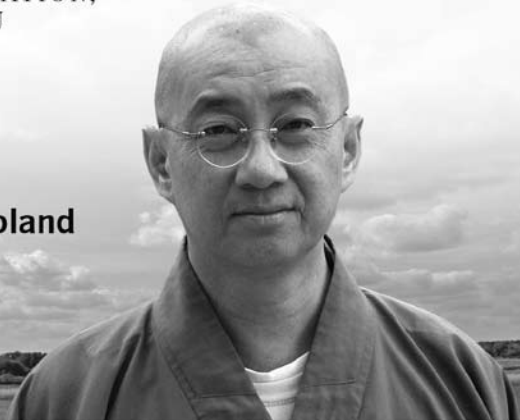
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SILENT ILLUMINATION AND HUATOU

Led by: **Chi Chern Fashi**
(Master **Sheng-yen's** Dharma heir)

Date: **August 1-11, 2011**
Location: **Dluzew** near **Warsaw, Poland**



Contact: Pawel Rosciszewski, ul. Promienna 12, 05-540 Zalesie Gorne, Poland, **e-mail:** budwod@budwod.com.pl
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too late that I may be having a bad reaction to the large amounts of cheese and dairy products at each meal. However, after sleeping fully and eating less dairy, I felt quite rejuvenated. Then I found that practicing Silent Illumination became very natural. It seemed a new feeling to be well-rested and strong, and I had a lot of energy and wakefulness during sittings—just the opposite of the constant grogginess I had experienced when weak and lacking sleep. It was quite refreshing to find that just by sitting and relaxing fully one can be naturally aware of the state of the body and mind. Without *doing* anything to the body and mind, it gradually settles and returns to its natural state of clarity and silence.

Translating also became more natural and easy. In the past, due to my perfectionist habit-energy, I had pressured myself to expect to translate everything, without missing a word. This had made me very tense and uneasy when translating. For this retreat, I had a different attitude—just by emptying out my mind and listening, without pressuring myself to expect to be able to remember every last word, I found that the translation flowed more effortlessly. I may not have remembered everything, but I was able to remember the key points as well as the important details of the talk without worrying. If I felt myself getting behind, I thought: “If Fashi wants to keep talking for 10 minutes, that’s up to him. I’m only able to remember so much. So I’ll just translate what I remember the best I can. Whatever I forget is forgotten.” With this approach, I felt much more at ease and joyful in “just translating.”

Toward the end of the retreat, while the participants were sharing in small groups in the Chan Hall, we had a rare chance to interact

with the estate’s caretakers. We took the opportunity to enjoy the present moment together, admiring the golden sunset. Although we couldn’t speak each other’s language—we just used simple English and gesture to get the main point across—in this case there was no real need for words. Just by sharing in the appreciation of nature, and by being open and friendly, we connected with them. Even their dogs came to say hello. During retreat, the three dogs had only barked at us when we went by. But now, in the company of their master, they had the chance to meet these curious bald-headed people from out of town. The dogs very much enjoyed the attention, and I was also happy to get a little fur on my robes.

The retreat ended with a large-group sharing session, where each of the small groups from the previous night was represented by one person, who gave a report to the entire group. It was a chance to share experiences, as well as express gratitude and encourage each other. Finally, tea and cakes were served in a room covered wall-to-wall with Chi Chern Fashi’s calligraphy—around 100 paintings and characters done while at this retreat. The works were donated to the Union to be used for charity sale. Many people bought them, as reminders of their retreat experiences. To these Dharma friends in Poland, such a work of art represents their life of practice, and also the teachers and sangha who seem very far from them—only coming once a year—yet at the same time seem so close. It helps encourage them to continue to practice and realize the Chan Dharma right within their own mind, which transcends both time and distance.

After retreat, Pawel, the president of the Union, hosted a post-retreat tea party at his

beautiful home in the suburbs outside of Warsaw. This was a chance for the participants to meet the retreat teacher and leaders. After spending ten days in silence together, apart from talking during interviews, it was of course a joyous occasion for everyone to get together in an informal setting. This tea party gave me the strong impression that people who attend retreats need to connect on many levels with their spiritual guides. In retreat, one can contact on a deeper level, in a state of relative clarity and calm, where a simple interaction can lead to a great internal transformation, and this can generate a great sense of respect for the teacher, and a faith in their instruction. The more informal setting, where one can connect with one's teacher in a comfortable every-day manner, can generate a sense of closeness—one sees the teacher as a practitioner-friend, who in this way is more approachable.

The following day, our host Pawel took us to Auschwitz. This was a truly moving experience, to see the lengths to which humanity can go due to discrimination and insecurity.

The next day, we traveled back to downtown Warsaw, where Chi Chern Fashi gave a talk at the Asia Museum, a small but splendid museum of Asian and Buddhist art. He spoke to a crowd of approximately 30 – 40 people about art and Chan, and the unique aspect of Mahayana Buddhism, which uses methods that engage all six senses for spiritual cultivation, extending contemplation beyond body and mind to the environment. Thus, art can be a method for cultivating concentration and could eventually lead to enlightenment.

After the talk, we were given a tour by our hosts and a few local friends, and at an old antique shop we found a charming Buddha Maitreya. His joyous smile really impressed Chi Chern Fashi, and we brought it back with us to NY, where it now awaits a suitable place at DDRC to bring joy to sentient beings.

Overall, it was a complete trip, with a successful retreat and informative cultural excursions, and we all eagerly await next year's retreat, scheduled for late July.



The Past

News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

Religious Affairs Official from China Visits DDM in Taiwan

On September 18, Zuoan Wang, head of China's State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), visited the Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education in Jinshan Township, Taipei.

Director Wang met with Venerable Guo Dong, Abbot of Dharma Drum Mountain, to inquire about developments at DDM and Chinese Buddhism in Taiwan. Among the various subjects touched upon, he expressed his keen appreciation for DDM's promotion of and participation in "The Joint Exhibit of Buddhist Publications Across the Strait," held recently at Taipei's World Trade Center.

Venerable Guo Dong explained that DDM has been making a sustained effort to promote purification of the mind in today's society, based on the concept of "Protecting the Spiritual Environment" initiated by the late Venerable Master Sheng Yen.

It was not Director Wang's first visit to the Center, but his second, and he was moved once again to comment on the solemn magnificence of the setting. He praised the late Venerable Master Sheng Yen for his leadership in promoting a Buddhist exchange across the

Taiwan Strait, and also expressed his appreciation for continuing support of reconstruction efforts in the quake-stricken areas of China's Sichuan province.

As the visit drew to a close, Venerable Guo Dong noted that DDM will continue to cultivate peace through purification of the mind, in hopes of bringing the wisdom of Dharma to society.

Humanitarian Award for DDM

On September 1, the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, Nung Chan Monastery and Yunlai Monastery of Dharma Drum Mountain received distinguished merit awards from Taipei's Department of Civic Affairs for their dedication to assisting the disadvantaged.

Civic Affairs Commissioner Ms. Jing-Ru Huang Lu expressed her deep appreciation to the award recipients for the great compassion they have demonstrated through their devotion to the welfare of the disadvantaged in local communities, bringing great benefit to society.

LIU Visits DDM

On the October 6, 2010, nineteen students from Long Island University's Department of

Religious Studies arrived in Taiwan at DDM's World Center for Buddhist Education for a three-day program on Chan Buddhism.

The International Affairs Department at DDM arranged a diverse program, ranging from an introduction to Buddhism, to thoughts of Venerable Master Sheng Yen, Protecting the Spiritual Environment, Buddhist Etiquette, Chan (Zen) Meditation and the Eight-Form Moving Meditation.

On behalf of the DDM Sangha, International Affairs Director Venerable Guo Jian gave the students a warm welcome, urging them to make the most of the program and to share any questions they might have.

The students took him at his word, practicing diligently, taking copious notes, asking all sorts of questions and exploring the trails surrounding the Center in the early morning (as one student put it: *Awesome!*). They were also intrigued by DDM's apparently volunteer-based operations. "The place would shut down if they ran out of volunteers," said one, half in jest. In the end, as they bid their hosts farewell, they rose to their feet to give them a standing ovation.

Thousands Take Refuge

Over a thousand people gathered at the Nung Chan Monastery in Beitou District of Taipei City on September 26, 2010 to take vows to follow the teachings of the Five Precepts and become Buddhists.

Before commencing the ceremony, Abbot Venerable Guo Dong expounded upon the mean-

ing of "taking refuge" and the Five Precepts to the participants at the monastery.

He said that the act of taking refuge is the first step in the process of eliminating vexations in the mind and following the teachings of the Dharma, the Sangha and the Buddha to enable us to maintain peace and clarity. On the other hand, the Five Precepts work like a vessel that can take us to the realm of the pure land. Taking refuge can also help us to demonstrate the wisdom of Buddhism and assist others in times of distress.

In closing, he urged all the new Buddhists to cherish life and reflect on their own circumstances while staying positive in adversity, cultivating merit and aspiring to become diligent Bodhisattvas.

Reaching Out to the Elderly

In September, volunteers from DDM's Social Welfare and Charity Foundation (SWCF) in Taiwan's Pintung County organized a five-day program of visiting the elderly who live alone in Zhaochou Township.

The volunteers, led by Mr. Ruixian Chen, not only visited elder residents but also brought along daily necessities and gifts, which were gratefully accepted.

As the program drew to a close, participants found that it had been a moving experience, and resolved to provide more care in the future to others in even more remote areas.

DISASTER RELIEF NOTES

Ziyun Monastery Hosts Training Course on Emergency Relief

On August 15, Ziyun Monastery in Kaoshiung City hosted a basic training course on emergency relief. 54 volunteers participated in the course.

Before starting the training, Venerable Guo Yao, Director of Ziyun Monastery, made a special presentation to orient participants on the benefits of this sort of instruction. The course, he explained, would give students a splendid opportunity to gain emergency relief skills, and in the future, should a disaster occur, it would make them all highly proficient at providing assistance to those in need.

The course began with an overview of domestic and overseas relief activities initiated by DDM's Social Welfare and Charity Foundation (SWCF).

Then, Yuan-Yi Lee, Deputy Director of the Kaoshiung County Fire Dept., gave a talk on standard preparations and operations when dealing with disaster. He acknowledged that there were often constraints such as a lack of adequate human resources to be mobilized when disaster occurs. In light of this, it is of vital importance to establish close and efficient relations between government and local humanitarian organizations to ensure successful collaboration when emergencies arise. Citing a recent example, Mr. Lee gratefully acknowledged assistance rendered by SWCF to the Kaoshiung County Fire Dept. last year during flooding caused by Typhoon Morakot.

After this, SWCF relief workers shared their accounts of their growing body of experience, and the class wound up with group discussions.

Typhoon Megi, Hundreds Recruited

Early on October 20th Taiwan's Yilan County was blasted by Typhoon Megi. As the storm pounded the region, torrential downpours triggered widespread flash flooding and landslides. According to the Central Weather Bureau, a record 939 mm (37 inches) of rain fell in a 24-hour period from October 20th to 21st, surpassing an earlier record set by Typhoon Morakot in August 2009. The storm also drenched Hualien, Taitung, and Pingtung counties. At least 12 people were confirmed dead with at least 23 missing.

Immediately on October 21, SWCF set up a center in Taipei to procure supplies and coordinate relief efforts. As flood waters receded, hundreds of volunteers were recruited to help clean up the tons of debris scattered in the typhoon's wake. Special emphasis was placed on helping the elderly who live alone, as well as the disadvantaged.

SWCF Secretary General Venerable Guo Qi visited the scene to encourage volunteers and offer blessings to storm survivors, wishing them a swift recovery and the ability to maintain a positive view in times of difficulty.

A Mr. Tsai, of Suao township in Yilan County, where 46.5 inches of rainfall was recorded, said this was the worst disaster he had seen in forty years. When he saw the amount of debris left by the storm on the ground floor and area around his house he felt overwhelmed with helplessness. But he took heart when he

saw SWCF volunteers appear, offering to help clean up the area and handing out relief supplies to storm survivors.

SWCF Helps Build Center

On October 6, Venerable Guo Qi, Secretary General of SWCF, and Mr. Chao-Lung Hsieh, Secretary General of the Red Cross Society of the Republic of China (Taiwan), signed an agreement for the construction of a permanent Community Center in the town of Fanlu, Jiayi County, whereby SWCF will fund the construction, which will be executed by the Red Cross Society.

A temporary shelter was constructed after Typhoon Morakot flattened Jiayi County in August of 2009. It was hastily erected through joint efforts of SWCF and the Red Cross Society on September 12, 2010, and was immediately occupied.

Both Secretaries General agreed that the current effort to sustain relief and help the community stay together augurs well for relief efforts, as a bright example of how humanitarian organizations working together can benefit the community.

A Calm Mind Saves Environment

In early September, the DMM Humanities and Social Improvement Foundation hosted the 2010 Forum on “Saving Nature with a Calm Mind” in Taipei.

Over five hundred people attended the Forum, whose emphasis was on “living an ecological life,” or making optimal use of limited resources to ensure a sustainable future for the

earth and generations to come. Guest speakers included DDM’s Venerable Hui Min, Cabinet Minister Dr. Wu-Hsiung Chen, Chairman of Taiwan Institute for Sustainable Energy, and others.

DDM Abbot Venerable Guo Dong pointed out that there have been more frequent disasters in recent years as a result of climate change. Beyond the physical impact of these disasters, they have unsettled people’s minds. “The harsher the circumstances, the more stable the mind must be,” he observed.

Dr. Chen quoted from United Nations’ data stating that the main contributing factor to global warming is people’s excessive consumption of fossil fuels. He stressed that reducing carbon pollution has now become imperative.

Minister Chen said that climate change is a global crisis that inevitably includes Taiwan. He emphasized that even small acts, such as turning off the light when leaving a room, can have a positive impact on the environment.

Venerable Hui Min agreed that one should not discount seemingly trivial acts, since environmentalism depends on every positive act by each individual, no matter how big or small. He proposed focusing on Spiritual Environmentalism—living with less material desire—as the key strategy for living in peace. The late Master Sheng Yen once said that successful environmentalism actually results from transforming oneself, by listening more carefully to nature and seeking to live harmoniously with our surroundings so as to foster a sustainable use of the earth’s resources.

The Future

Retreats, classes and other upcoming events.

Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) in Pine Bush, NY

Phone: (845) 744-8114

E-mail: ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org

Website: www.dharmadrumretreat.org

DDRC holds a variety of Chan practice activities, including weekly group meditation, Sunday services, beginner's meditation classes, beginner's retreats and intermediate and intensive Chan retreats. Novices and experienced practitioners are all welcome at DDRC, whether to begin practicing or to deepen their cultivation. Volunteer opportunities are also available.

Schedule is subject to change. Please check the website for updated and detailed information, or to register for activities online.

Classes

Beginner's Meditation Classes

Part 1: Saturday, January 8

Part 2: Saturday, January 15

Led by Chang Wen Fashi

Please call for details.

Retreats

Beginner's Mind Retreat

Led by Dr. Rikki Asher and Nancy Bonardi

Friday - Sunday, January 21 - 23

One-Day Chan Retreats

Led by Chang Wen Fashi

Saturdays, Jan 29, Feb 5, Mar 5

Three-Day Retreat

Led by Chang Wen Fashi

Friday - Sunday, February 18 - 20

Seven-Day Introduction to Chan Retreat

Led by Abbot Guo Xing Fashi, Dharma heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen

Saturday - Friday, March 12 - 18

10-Day Silent Illumination Retreat

Led by Abbot Guo Xing Fashi

Friday - Sunday, May 27 - June 5

10-Day Huatou Retreat

Led by Abbot Guo Xing Fashi

Friday - Sunday, June 17 - 26

10-Day Intensive Chan Retreat

Led by Chi Chern Fashi, Dharma heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen

Friday - Sunday, July 15 - 24

Regular Weekly Activities

Thursday Evening Meditation

7:00 - 9:00 pm; Sitting, walking, moving meditation and discussion.

Sunday Service

9:00 - 11:00 am; Sitting, walking and moving meditation; Dharma talk; chanting.

Chan Meditation Center Elmhurst, Queens, NY

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

Retreats

Monthly One-Day Retreats

Saturdays, 9 am - 5 pm (8:45 arrival)
Jan 29: led by Dr. Rikki Asher
Feb 26: led by Harry Miller; Fee: \$25

Classes

Beginner's Meditation, Parts 1 and 2

Saturdays, Jan 8 & 15, 9:30 am - noon
Led by Nancy Bonardi; Fee: \$40

Intermediate Meditation

Saturday, Jan 22, 9:30 am - 3
Led by Harry Miller; Fee: \$40

Dharma 101 (The Four Noble Truths)

3 sessions, Saturdays, Mar 5, 12, & 19
Led by Bill Wright
9:30 am - Noon; Free of charge

Saturday Night Movie and Mind

Saturdays, Feb 12, Mar 12, Apr 9, May 14,
Sep 10, Oct 8, Nov 12, Dec 10.
6:30 - 9 pm; Led by Lindley Hanlon
Screenings and discussions of movies from a
Buddhist perspective, free of charge.
(Check website for film titles)

(Pre-registration advised for all classes.)

Regular Weekly Activities

Monday Night Chanting

7:00 - 9:15 pm (On the last Monday of each
month there is recitation of the Eighty-eight
Buddhas' names and repentance.)

Tuesday Night Sitting Group

7:00 - 9:30 pm: Sitting, yoga exercises, walk-
ing meditation, Dharma discussions, recita-
tion of the Heart Sutra.

Thursday Night Taijiquan

7:30 - 9:00 pm, ongoing
Led by David Ngo
\$25 per month, \$80 for 16 classes.
First class is free for newcomers.

Saturday Sitting Group

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

Sunday Open House

10 am - 4 pm: Meditation
11 am - 12:30 pm: Dharma lectures
12:30 - 1 pm: Lunch offerings
1 - 2 pm: Vegetarian lunch
2 - 4 pm: Chanting and recitation
1st Sunday: Chanting Guan Yin's name
2nd Sunday: Great Compassion Repentance
3rd Sunday: Bodhisattva Earth Store Sutra
Last Sunday: Renewal of the Bodhisattva
Precept Vows

*(Please note: If there are five Sundays in the
month, there will be chanting of Guan Yin's
name on the 4th Sunday.)*

On the 2nd and 4th Sundays, 1:45 - 3, an
English-language Dharma Study Group will
be conducted by Harry Miller and Bill Wright

Special Events

Water Repentance Ritual Ceremony (in Chinese)

Saturday & Sunday, Jan 1 & 2

9:30 am - 5 pm

(no regular Sunday Open House Jan 2)

Chinese New Year Celebration

Sunday, Feb 6

(Check website for details)

Chan Master Sheng Yen Second Anniversary Memorial

Friday, Feb 11

(Check website for details)

“Zen & Inner Peace”

Chan Master Sheng Yen's weekly television program discontinued due to budget constraint.



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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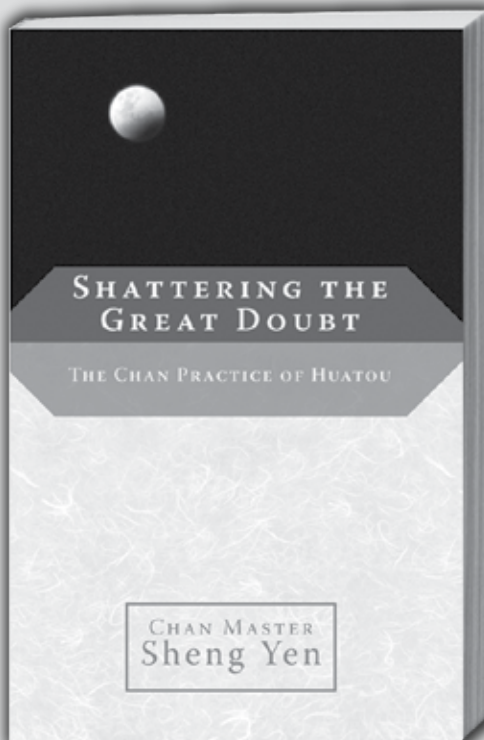
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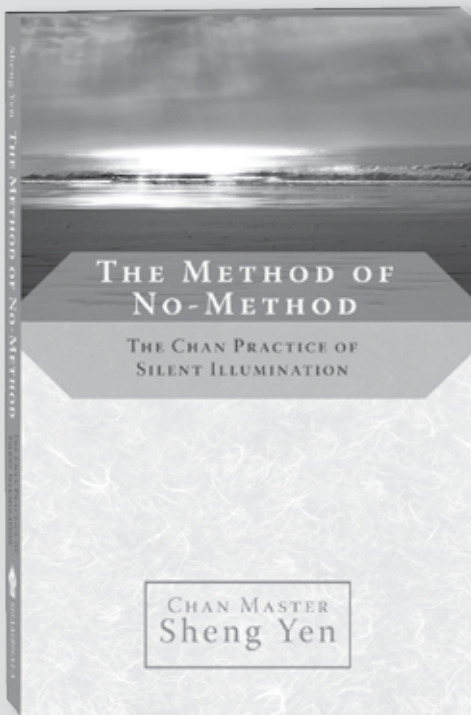
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