

# Chan 禪 Magazine

Autumn 2011



**Chan Meditation Center**  
**Institute of Chung-Hwa Buddhist Culture**  
**90-56 Corona Avenue**  
**Elmhurst, NY 11373**

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
FLUSHING, N.Y.  
PERMIT NO. 1120

**D**ear members of the Western Chan Fellowship,

On behalf of the Abbot President and sangha members of Dharma Drum Mountain, we would like to express our sincere condolences on the recent passing of Dr. John Crook. We also send our thoughts and prayers to you and John's family at this difficult time. It is impossible to adequately express our sincere sympathy at this most difficult time.

Impermanence is the one truth that the Buddha himself awakened to 2500 years ago. Though we may be in fine health today, and may even be wealthy and without complaints, sooner or later we too will pass away. Every living thing eventually must perish.

Though this truth sounds harsh and depressing, the Buddha taught us that only when we accept impermanence and not fight it, can we then discover the true beauty and wonderful gift that life provides. Thus, we are encouraged to be grateful for the time, however brief, that we were able to spend with John. The truth of impermanence also reminds us that we should live our own lives to the fullest.

John worked tirelessly in bringing Buddhadharma to the West. He made Buddhism accessible to Westerners through presenting it from a Western mind. John published several books focusing on consciousness and Chan practice, his latest work being *World Crisis and Buddhist Humanism*. For decades, John helped Buddhist communities in both Europe and the United States, particularly at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in New York, where he made many contributions to the practice of Buddhism.

John was someone who was not only enthusiastic about Buddhism, but was passionate about helping his students learn. I think his sense of caring was evident to everyone who ever met him. A great teacher has been lost, and we mourn him deeply. But we may find some consolation in the fact that his humanity and dedication is still a source of inspiration to us fortunate enough to have known him. He was an outstanding individual and will be greatly missed.

Our deepest sympathies to you and to John's family.

Yours sincerely,

Venerable Guo Xing  
Abbot of CMC and DDRC, USA

# Chan Magazine

Volume 31, Number 4  
Autumn, 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](mailto:ddmbaus@yahoo.com), or the magazine at [chanmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:chanmagazine@gmail.com), or visit us online at: <http://www.chancenter.org>.

## **Founder/Teacher**

Chan Master Ven. Dr. Sheng Yen

## **Editor-in-chief**

David Berman

## **Associate Editor**

Buffe Laffey

## **Coordinator**

Virginia Tan

## **Photography**

John Feng, Jerry Roach, Kaifen Hu, Carol Fong

## **Contributing Editors**

Ernie Heau, Kevin Mathewson, Virginia Tan, Wei Tan, Guogu

## **Contributors**

Rikki Asher, Tina Kacandes, Rebecca Li, Mike Morical, Bruce Rickenbacker, Ayn Steele, Chang Ji Fashi, Chang Wen Fashi, Chang Jie

## **Administrator**

Chang Hwa Fashi

# Chan 禪 Magazine

<b>From the Associate Editor</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>John H. Crook 1930 - 2011</b> <i>Eulogy by Guo Gu</i>	<b>6</b>
<b>Power from Karmic Obstructions</b> <i>Dharma talk by Venerable Guo Ru</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>Leaving Home, Part Two</b> <i>How David Kabacinsky became Changwen Fashi by Venerable Changwen</i>	<b>16</b>
<b>The Illusion of Separateness</b> <i>Essay on Mind and Nature by Žarko Andričević</i>	<b>26</b>
<b>The Past</b> <i>News from the Chan Meditation Center and DDMBA</i>	<b>30</b>
<b>The Future</b> <i>Retreats, classes and other upcoming events</i>	<b>34</b>
<b>Chan Center Affiliates</b>	<b>36</b>

*Cover and table of contents photos by  
Kaifen Hu*

# From the Associate Editor

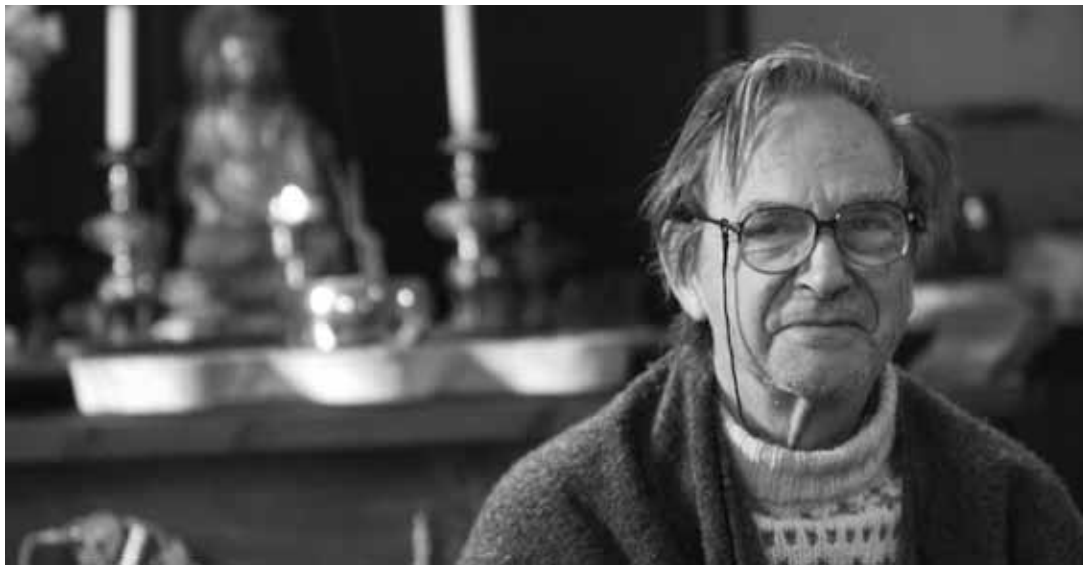


Photo: Rob Stratton

I met John Crook in 2000 at the end of the 49-Day Retreat. I was the Meditation Hall coordinator and during the final week he was assigned to my crew. Theoretically a Dharma Heir wouldn't care if he were assigned to clean toilets or mop floors. But I felt that John's status should be respected, so I asked him to keep the altar supplied with flowers. This he did with great enjoyment. I think it may have been his first visit to Shawangunk; nature-lover that he was, it must have been a pleasure for him to discover unfamiliar wildflowers. Later we needed to prepare the incompletely renovated Chan Hall for the Bodhisattva Precepts ceremony. I asked John to lead a crew taping up the gaps along the many window frames, to protect us from swarms of mosquitoes. John got the job done with efficiency and good humor.

John's great good humor is my most lasting impression of him, along with his marvelous use of language. To a New Jersey girl his accent evoked the Beatles and Monty Python (while his tufted eyebrows and the twinkle in his eye made me think of Gandalf or Merlin). He was a droll story teller, taking on the different voices of characters in his stories. Listen to his audio talks and see if you aren't charmed by the rolling music of his voice. I once heard two Chinese-speaking monks taking turns doing their impressions of John, and discussing how much they enjoyed his way of speaking. I never had the courage to repeat this story to John but I know he would have loved it.

Once when he was leading a retreat at Shawangunk I got to the Chan Hall before the

morning exercises. John was alone at the altar, tapping quietly on the wooden fish, chanting a mantra to Avalokiteshvara. The depth of his devotion was clear, his voice timeless and natural; he sounded like an old shaman. After that I always tried to arrive early just to hear his personal chant.

Over the years it was fun to discover, bit by bit, what a fascinating person John was. One evening I was watching television and suddenly John Crook was on the screen explaining how Tibetan monks can dry wet sheets with the power of their meditation. He told us stories of his retreat center in Wales where sheep wander outside the meditation hall, of his country house where mice made nests of his diaries. He organized journeys; to the Ganges in India, to the Silk Road, to islands of wild birds. He seemed like one of those intrepid British world travelers you find in literature, or like Dr Who. Once it started to rain as I left the Chan Hall; seeing John further ahead I hurried to bring him an umbrella. When I reached him he laughed and said, "Oh no, thank you, I'm from England. We don't mind the rain!"

I am fortunate to have received personal training from Shifu, in the small classes and retreats he led when he first came to America. But after just a few years I foolishly wandered away to explore more earth-based spiritual practices. By the 1990's I realized that nothing I'd pursued was better than Chan, so I returned to study with Shifu. Of course by that time his organization had become huge and there was very little chance of personal attention from the master, outside of a rare interview on retreat. But I was so ignorant in my practice that I couldn't even conceive an interview question worth asking.

I kicked myself for stupidity in wandering away for so long, but resigned myself to the causes and conditions. There was nothing to do but cultivate my practice in the absence of personal guidance. I continued this way for a few years without any sense of progress.

Then, in the mid 2000's, John Crook starting bringing the "Western Zen" style retreats to Shawangunk. I was delighted; the group chanting of aum, the moving meditation (akin to free-form dancing) and the "personalized koan" were exactly the sort of thing I was looking for when I wandered away so many years ago. I was terrified when I first learned of the "talking exercise", but quickly found it to be liberating. To my surprise the listening aspect was more potent than the speaking; from the words of everyone else I learned that we are all the same "I." John's style of teaching made it very easy to understand one's personal issues in terms of Buddhadharma. His genuine caring for his students was evident; it was easy to feel a personal connection. He was quick to respond to e-mail questions. Interviews with him frequently shifted my perspective and led me to deep insights. The clarity of mind I gained from his retreats has allowed me to benefit more fully from the traditional Chinese-style retreats. I know now that both styles can facilitate rigorous self-examination; but I think it would have taken me many more years to discover this without the Western Zen training. I'm sure I am not the only student who has benefited in this way. I am so grateful to John Crook for enriching our school with his style. I will so miss his warmth, his constant joy, and his lively presence.

—Buffe Laffey



## **John H. Crook, Chuandeng Jingdi 1930–2011**

*“Everything is just as it is, and that this in itself is totally remarkable, completely astounding, a condition of extraordinary improbability. Spring is coming, summer follows... Summer follows and the days grow shorter. Autumn comes and then the season of ice and snow.”*

Excerpt from “Everything Is As It Is—This in Itself is Remarkable,”  
a Dharma Talk by John Crook



Life and death are remarkable, astonishing, yet completely natural. From the changing seasons to the way people cross paths, everything is meaningful and connected. Between life and death, causes and conditions unfold in miraculous ways for different reasons. We are often unaware of those reasons at the time something happens until its meaning reveals itself to us retrospectively in the future.

Who would have thought that in the fifties, when John was stationed as an army officer in Hong Kong, he would come across the teachings of Master Xuyun (1840-1959)? Or that it would lead him to find Shifu's book, *Getting the Buddha Mind*, that would prompt him to join a retreat in 1986 in Queens, NY? Or that he would even become Shifu's first Western Dharma heir in 1993? John has definitely left a mark in the history of Chan. Even though his Dharma activities were humble—he quietly expanded his Western Chan Fellowship at the rustic Maenllwyd retreat house in Wales into 18 local groups in UK, one group in Poland, and one in Norway—his person and innovative Chan teachings will be part of his legacy.

I had met John some years before the 1993 retreat when he received Dharma transmission. It was the 60<sup>th</sup> intense seven-day retreat led by Shifu in NY. As Shifu's attendant at the time, I was the one who typed up the transmission "certificate." I remember it well; it was really an ad hoc document. Shifu wanted it done at the end of the retreat on June 4<sup>th</sup>, but didn't give much instruction on how to do it. I didn't really know what a certificate was supposed to look like; there was no reference to go by. So I basically just created a Word document with the essential

points: statement of transmission, Dharma name, dates, etc., and had Shifu sign it. I also took photos of the transmission ceremony at the end of the retreat. Now, 18 years later, I'm writing a eulogy for him.

In those 18 years, I have come to appreciate John's thoughtfulness, genuine concern for practitioners' well being, skill in organizing retreats, humor, and innovation in his Chan teachings. To give examples of his thoughtfulness, on Shifu's first Wales retreat in 1988, John arranged two cooks for Shifu and retreatants, and had them take two weeks of Chinese cooking lessons before the retreat started so they could prepare food for Shifu. I was also impressed with his attention to details during the retreat. Whenever there was an issue, he was there. Whatever we needed, he had thought of. In 1995 I accompanied Shifu on his third Wales retreat. On that retreat, John had arranged an artist to paint a portrait of Shifu, which was to remain in his retreat house as a symbol of the lineage he had inherited. He not only made sure Shifu's health was taken care of throughout our stay, but also took care of me—he had arranged an attendant for the attendant of Shifu!

John was sensitive and creative in the transmission of Buddhadharma in the West. In the seventies, he learned the dynamic psychological-therapeutic retreat method of Charles Berner and Jeff Love that appropriates Zen techniques with the aim of "spiritual awakening." John felt that this presentation had limitations, and in 1975 developed his own presentation of this method within a retreat context, which he called the Western Zen Retreat. In 1986, at the end of John's first retreat in NY, he had a discussion about

this approach with Shifu, who basically recognized its usefulness but encouraged John to refine it so that retreatants could go beyond the experience of a diminished sense of self or a unified state of mind. After years of modification and refinement based on the principles of Chan practice and John's personal experience, he developed his Western Zen Retreat into the form it is today. The process involves a dynamic way that allows retreatants, particularly those educated in the West, to effectively enter and engage with their lives and who they are. I remember John describing it to me as a way for the Western mind to exhaust itself and break through certain conceptual barriers so that it can enter the practice. John's Kōan Retreats, another one of his creations for Westerners, which have retreatants contemplate exhaustively the whole kōan story rather than the huatou method, would function basically the same way. These innovative and distinct methods in John's teachings are a bridge that can bring Westerners closer to Chan. I know that they have helped many people. All methods are expedient means. These new approaches will go down in Chan history as part of the new arsenal in overcoming sentient beings' delusions.

I have fond memories of John's sense of humor. I remember doing many retreats with him and he would always experience some kind of difficulty, from severe colds, to back aches, to leg pains. After all he was the same age as Shifu. One time I asked him at the end of one retreat how it went. He replied, with a big smile, saying, "I had no physical difficulties this time but was appreciating the monkey mind!" We laughed as we looked at each other. There was an indescribable openness and clarity that transpired between

us. I knew that his monkey had little effect on him. He was at peace. I also recall him enthusiastically explaining to me the different meanings of bird songs. He had always loved birds since childhood—he was by profession an ethologist who had studied birds and primates in the field—and so he was animated in imitating their songs. In those moments, he was a bird.

John's life will be remembered dearly. "Everything is just as it is, and that this in itself is totally remarkable, completely astounding, a condition of extraordinary improbability." His life and death are like changing seasons, ordinary yet remarkable. He left quietly and suddenly on Friday, July 15, in his home in Somerset, without a fuss. After winter, spring arrives again. The passing of the teacher is not necessarily a sad thing; it can strengthen resolve and deepen practice. Its significance will unfold in the future. To his students, I send my deep respect and good wishes for their practice. May they continue to spread the true name of their teacher, Chuandeng Jingdi, or "Transmitting the Flame with Purifying Truth."

—Guo Gu 7/19/2011



Photo: Simon Child

# Deriving Power from Karmic Obstructions

by

Venerable Guoru

*This Dharma Talk was given by Ven. Guo Ru, one of the earliest monastic disciples of the late Chan Master Sheng Yen, on June 27, 2009 on the morning of the next-to-last day of a ten-day Intensive Huatou Retreat at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY. It was translated live by Guogu (Jimmy Yu) and transcribed and edited by Buffe Laffey.*



Good morning Venerables and everyone. Let's take a look at the fourth lesson by Chan Master Dahui. The text continues: "It is only at that time that people cannot cross over them. It is not that the rivers and lakes obstruct them." Just prior to this passage it talks about the fact that rivers and lakes do not have the intention to obstruct people, and Buddha and the patriarchs have no intention of deceiving people. Despite the fact that there are great rivers to cross in the path of one's practice, the practitioner should not give up easily when encountering these challenges. One should not blame the obstructions, or believe that one's body and mind are unable to continue. One can come up with many excuses. But what really decides whether one can overcome obstacles is one's own determination. As long as one has the will to continue, it will be possible.

It is important to relate this to our own lives in this very retreat. Some people come here and they are caught up in a net of psychophysiological reactions to meditation and hardship. This retreat is strict, so they feel obstructed and do not feel a sense of contrition for the reality of the karmic obstacles. If throughout the retreat they just wallow in these body and mind phenomena, by the end they will take away nothing more than these obstacles. It is of utmost importance to face obstructions and use them to generate great determination to go forward. If they can do this, these will no longer be perceived as hindrances to the path.

### **Embracing Karmic Obstruction**

If we compare this retreat with the early years of Shifu's retreats, at least the ones I attend-

ed, those retreats were ten times harder than what you are experiencing. Every time I entered a retreat I felt like the walking dead. Every time I came out, I always promised myself, "I'm never doing this again". But the next time I couldn't help but see that life is fragile and impermanent. If I did not take hold of the opportunity, when would it come again? This is the way I would encourage myself. I would always struggle: Should I go on the retreat? Should I not? I had a relatively long time before the retreat to decide. But then Shifu would say, "Come on the retreat," and I just gave up these thoughts and went in. Those strict retreats gave me a tremendous amount of strength afterwards, to this day. With my bodily conditions at the time, retreats were excruciating. But I was able to endure and willingly finish despite the pain. Whenever I experienced physical challenges I would give rise to a sense of humility and practice repentance for the past karma that had led to the current obstacle. I would not expect change or dwell on the matter but simply accept my karmic obstruction and embrace it fully. This is what I've discovered—as long as we can generate great vows, these pains will eventually disappear.

### **Western Medicine and Acupuncture**

When I encountered my physical illness I had to see a Western physician. This was in the 1970s, it was very expensive, and I really had no money. I had my Shifu but he was studying in Japan. I had my Grandmaster Dong Chu, but he considered me an adult at that time; I had received full monastic vows so should be able to take care of myself. So there was no financial aid from anyone. Each time I would see this doctor it would cost the equiv-



Photo: Kaifen Hu

alent of two months' salary for an ordinary administrator's position, and as a monk I did not earn that kind of money. All I could afford was maybe three or four visits and then I had to stop. After that I continued the treatment with Chinese herbalists. Of course this was a lot cheaper, but still I had to pay everything out of my own pocket. One prescription from the herbalist was still a good sum of money for me. Unfortunately the Chinese herbal medicine appeared to be unsuitable for my body. Every time I took the prescribed herbs I would have extreme diarrhea; I couldn't retain the medicine and I would become weaker.

Eventually I had to resort to free clinics for treatments. At that time these clinics did not provide Western medicine; they provided acupuncture. It is not an exaggeration to say that I've probably had 10,000 needles in me. These needles come in different sizes; some of them are about this long [indicates approximately three feet]. Because my paralysis was basically on the right side they would put all the needles in the left side, in the "good" arm. It felt extremely uncomfortable especially when they went deeper. They put them in my face, in every part of my body; you name it, I've had it. That's extreme pain. Sometimes they would use moxibustion; they would heat up the needle before they'd pierce me which was a much more uncomfortable feeling. I remember lying there with all these needles in me and recalling the Buddhist scriptural descriptions of hell. One hell is described as being constantly stabbed by swords and spears until you die and then you wake up and continue to get stabbed over and over again. I thought that my karmic obstruction must be so heavy that before I even entered Hell I was already experiencing it.

## Electric Shock Therapy

After about a year or two the acupuncture had not really worked. So someone had this great idea that I should go through electric shock treatment. At that time I would see commercials on TV; basically the person was wired up and the electric current would go through the body. I thought maybe this treatment would make my paralyzed right side feel something again. So in total I had two treatments of this therapy. The first time I sat there all wired up and the doctor turned on a moderate level of electricity. He asked me, "Do you feel anything?" and I said no, not really. At the very least there were muscular movements but aside from that I really didn't feel anything. So he turned it up a little bit and asked, "Do you feel anything?" and I said no. Each treatment lasted maybe five or ten minutes maximum. The human body can't endure an electric shock wave for much longer than that. He turned it up one more notch and asked, "Do you feel anything yet?" and I said not really. The left side was quite clear, but on the right, aside from this muscular kind of flapping I really didn't have any sensation. So the doctor turned it even higher. After that he turned it down gradually again and asked me about it. All I could say was, "The left side yes, my head is kind of unclear overall and I feel a little nauseated but as for sensation on the right, I really don't see any improvement." So the doctor said, "This paralysis is quite heavy; perhaps you waited for too many years. You need more treatment. Come back the same time next week."

The second time I went back I got wired up and he started from low to medium to high and then this time he went past high to maximum. I could have sworn that I smelled my

body roasting like a barbecue. If I had had hair instead of a shaved head, I guarantee you I would have had a big afro [indicates length of hair with hands] standing straight out like this. Throughout this shock my whole body was kind of straightened out [demonstrates an arched back]. My teeth clenched down so tightly they felt they were about to shatter. Thank goodness my tongue wasn't in between them otherwise it would have been bitten in half. After turning on the maximum setting for about 30 seconds (because the human body cannot withstand much more than that) he turned it down and then off and he asked me, "How did you feel?" I said, "The normal parts have a lot of sensation, the abnormal parts have no sensation at all". The doctor just sat silent for a while. Then he said, "I've been in this business for fifteen years. I've only turned on this maximum setting for two people; you're the second one." So I asked, "What happened to the first one?" and the doctor said, "He passed away eventually." [audience erupts in laughter]

## **Retreat Training and Physical Illness**

Compared to these temporary episodes of treatment, the suffering I endured during retreats was much more difficult, not only physically but especially when investigating

and unable to resolve the Huatou. During retreat the physical pain completely maxed out to the point where it could not be any worse. The period of sitting was like burning flame. When sitting was over I dared not even touch my legs let alone massage them. That was how much pain I was in, to the extent that if I wanted to go somewhere I had to literally crawl there with the pain going through my entire body. It wasn't like the pain of the acupuncture needle or the electric shock treatment. This completely pervaded all parts of my body and lasted through the duration of the retreat. Excruciating pain.

But I realized eventually that this was the treatment my body needed. Because these pains stemmed from, yes, my karmic obstacles, but they really stemmed from my paralysis. The internal

energy was trying to penetrate through the meridians and channels of the body. Because of that my whole body was burning with pain. But once the energy had completely penetrated, I actually began to have sensation return to the right side of my body. Gradually I overcame the paralysis, not completely but much better. Thus I can testify that Chan meditation training, especially retreat practice, is extremely useful for regulating and harmonizing the body and treating physical illness. But how do we apply the hardship training we receive during retreats to our daily interactions with people and affairs?

I CAN TESTIFY THAT CHAN TRAINING, ESPECIALLY RETREAT PRACTICE, IS EXTREMELY USEFUL FOR REGULATING AND HARMONIZING THE BODY. BUT HOW DO WE APPLY THE HARDSHIP TRAINING WE RECEIVE DURING RETREATS TO OUR DAILY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE AND AFFAIRS?

## Making a Living and Going to School

I recall when I was a novice monk (this was before I began my Chan training with Shifu) I wanted to go to school and pursue a higher education. I had to pay for the tuition and the costs of textbooks myself; Master Dong Chu did not support me. Therefore I had to do chanting at funeral services to make a living for myself. But I wasn't a particularly good chanter, and I wasn't really that good on the Dharma instruments. So I basically latched onto this group of Buddhist monastic ritualists who specialized in these affairs. I received a lot of criticism from them. When they were paid they would split the money they received from donors. Every time the money was split they would complain: "We work hard with melody and we are very familiar with our instruments, but all you do is kind of hum [imitates bad chanting], and you make mistakes hitting the instruments. Yet you get the same share of the fee. Aren't you ashamed?" Yes, I was ashamed, but I needed tuition. So I kept on hanging around them and some other groups whenever I could to get money to go to school.

At one time I lived at another monastery and the Abbott there said, yes you can stay here, you can go to school, any medical expenses you just let us know and we'll pay for it. I was delighted, because I had a lot of medical expenses. I gave my first medical bill to the monastic accountant; I remember when he saw it he slapped the table and said, "Your grand master is rich! How come you don't go over to him and ask for money? We work extremely hard for each and every penny we have, and we're going to split it with you? A young monk that can't even chant? Can't do

this and that and all day long you just go to school?" So I had to take back the bill.

I knew my grandmaster was not going to pay for it. Once again I had to make my own living. So I returned to my home monastery, Master Dong Chu's Temple. There were of course monastic chores. Everyone was assigned a job on chanting festival days, each one was assigned an instrument and had to perform certain rhythms. Buddhist rituals typically involve many instruments big and small, not like the Chan retreat style where there's only two or three instruments. Often when it was my turn to perform these rituals it would conflict with school time. So I would complain to Master Dong Chu: "Grandmaster, I'm not going out to play, I have to go to school. I already earned the money for my tuition and I really can't cut class." Master Dong Chu used to say, "THIS is your business, living here in the monastery. You do what a monk should do. We need that particular instrument played; if you go to school who's going to play it?" So there I was thinking, "Why don't you come downstairs from your room and play the instrument so the ritual can go on?" I wanted to say that but I dared not. I shut my mouth and cut class so I could be involved with monastic affairs.

## Owning Karmic Obstructions

Sometimes I would get really sick and had no money to receive treatments. I didn't particularly view it as my karmic obstruction. I used to think from an ordinary person's perspective: "I am your grandson in the Dharma. Why don't you take care of your own grandson? Surely when your cat is sick you take the animal to the hospital to receive treatment. Am I lower than even an animal? Is it



because I am not your real grandson in blood that you treat me this way?" So my mind was enduring indescribable misery. Physically I was undergoing pain. I was laughed at by monastic ritualists, the center of a joke, publicly humiliated. I was gravely ill and my own teacher refused to help me. Physiologically and especially psychologically I was undergoing a lot of pain and it was in this context that Shifu returned to Taiwan and began to lead Chan retreats.

When I went through the retreats, through Shifu's guidance I truly came to understand that these are MY obstacles. If someone doesn't help you it's not their fault, its natural. Why should you expect someone to help you? But if someone does help you it shows you established a karmic affinity with that sentient being in previous lives; when they meet you again they are happy to extend help. So I reflected on my karma, my obstacles and lack of merit. In previous lives I must not have established a positive affinity with sentient beings. Therefore the obstacles that I received, or in other words the scant help that I received, were really my own doing. Understanding this process, I practiced repentance and generated a sense of contrition. Not because of guilt, but really going face-to-face with the fruits of my own actions, understanding the mechanism that led to this fruit. Facing it and embracing it and vowing to change it.

## Transformation Through Understanding

After intense practice in retreats I not only understood the workings of karma and the reality of obstacles, I was especially grateful

to Shifu for allowing me to penetrate these obstructions. I began to see them as sources of my own inner strength. Primarily this comes from a transformation of how I looked at these aspects of my life. Once I changed my understanding and worked through my own karmic obstacles, I was able to gradually empathize with the suffering of others. I was able to offer myself for sentient beings and generate a very sincere compassion for them. Not the kind that involves the emotions but generally a sense of identity with them. I was guided to truly help people by my understanding of Chan and the wisdom I was able to gain. I am extremely grateful to Chan practice for all this.

So in summary Chan practice can not only treat our bodily illness, more importantly it can transform all the karmic obstacles that lie on our path to awakening. Therefore the Scripture says that these so-called obstacles are not intentional. It's up to you to overcome them. So all the hardships we are experiencing on this retreat, I sincerely hope that you will be able not only to avoid getting caught up with them, but to use them as a source of inner strength and penetrate through them. More, that you will be able to use this power in your daily lives, in your interaction with other people and your handling of different affairs. Otherwise coming to the retreat would simply be a process of training the body a little bit, listening to Buddhadharma a little bit, and then going home the same person you came. That would be a waste of your money and time. So I'm going to ask you a question, "Do you have confidence to overcome obstacles?" [students make loud "yes" response] Okay. Louder. [students respond more powerfully]

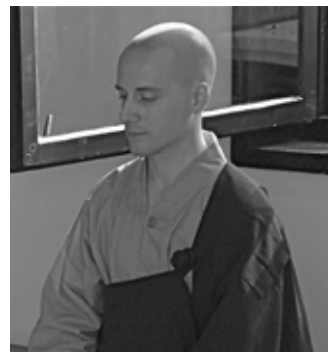
# Leaving Home

## David Kabacinsky Becomes Changwen Fashi, Part Two



by

Ven. Changwen



*Venerable Changwen is a western monastic disciple of Chan Master Shen Yen. Formerly known as David Kabacinsky, he was ordained as a novice in*

*2004, received his monastic education at Dharma Drum Sangha University in Taiwan, and received full ordination in 2006. He currently serves as Director of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY. The following is the second installment of his autobiographical account of becoming a Buddhist monk. It was originally published in Humanity Magazine in Taiwan, and was edited for Chan Magazine by David Berman.*

### Meeting a Clear-Sighted Teacher

During the summer and fall of 2001, after graduating from college, I continued to work at the beach where I had each summer before. I was perfectly content with this work, and did not have any special plan for changing careers in the future. I wasn't really concerned with career at all, but was more concerned with spiritual cultivation—engaging in Chan practice and finding a teacher. I was happy to have found a community of practitioners at the Chan Meditation Center to whom I could relate, and whom I could join in group practice weekly. Also, after having met the old

masters Ren Jun and Zong Cai, I had an even deeper sense of faith in Buddhadharma and the Three Jewels. Overall, I felt an increasing sense of direction and stability, knowing that I was on a path that led to freedom from suffering. I also felt that regardless of what career I had, I could use Chan as a means to improve relationships among people, and to help them improve the quality of their lives.

In addition, the world began to show even more signs of needing people who could heal the wounds of mental distress, so I became even more inspired to learn to live an awakened life and help others. At that time, there

was so much conflict in the world among individuals, different racial and ethnic groups, and different countries. The whole world was awakened to the wounds in the hearts of its people, when on September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center in New York City was attacked and demolished. Not only were the two buildings destroyed, but thousands of people died, victims who were in the buildings, as well as rescue teams of firefighters and police. This was an attack on the American people, but also an attack on humanity in general, as the World Trade Center was a center of international culture and affairs. I witnessed the event from afar, seeing the plumes of smoke from the beach at Robert Moses State Park. I was quite moved by this attack, and realized that people must have an incredible amount of hatred to do such a thing. Yet I was not angry as many Americans were—I saw everyone as a victim, including the terrorists, and all in need of healing. This event gave me an increasing sense of urgency to practice diligently and offer myself to society. Yet I still had many unanswered questions related to Buddhadharma and Chan practice, and felt unable to shoulder the burden of helping this wounded world. I was still searching for a teacher to help me to engage in this path.

When Shifu returned from Taiwan in October of 2001, I finally had a chance to meet him. My Dharma brother Wei Tan, who had introduced me to masters Ren Jun and Zong Cai, also introduced me to Shifu. One day, while Shifu was having a meal, Wei brought me over and said a few words to him in Chinese. Then Shifu asked me in English, “You speak Chinese?” Wei encouraged me to demonstrate my Chinese pronunciation, which they thought was quite proper, and say “Hello, Sheng Yen Shifu.” I did, to the applause

of Shifu and a few others who were nearby. “Wow, great pronunciation,” they said, and I shyly said thanks and felt embarrassed to be on the spot in front of Shifu and everyone. After a few friendly words Shifu smiled and continued to eat, and Wei and I went on our way.

During the time he was in New York, I had many chances to interact with Shifu on a personal level. The first few encounters were quite unnerving, as I was quite afraid of him. I held him in such high esteem and somewhat naively saw him as a perfect person—a fully enlightened being—who could see and know everything about me. I was afraid my imperfections would be revealed to him; I wanted to be perfect, and thus made myself overly self-conscious when meeting the Chan master that I admired so much. Yet the more occasions that I had to speak with him, the more I relaxed. I began to trust him and see that he recognized me and encouraged me. During mealtimes at the Center, Shifu would sit at the center table, and everyone else would sit on the sides, and sometimes he would chat with everyone. On a few occasions he taught me Chinese, and encouraged me to overcome my fear of speaking incorrectly. His manner was quite gentle and humorous, so I enjoyed being taught by him.

I had other chances to speak with Shifu, for example, when we drove him to give talks at various places in the city, or when we were cleaning up the Center after a Sunday activity. Actually, just by being at the Center one would surely bump into him, as it was such a small building with few people. In this way, I was able to observe how he spoke with people and how he showed concern for them, as well as the skillful ways in which he interacted. For example, one day a disciple, whose

daughter was in the World Trade Center the day of the attack, related the story to Shifu. She very emotionally told how her daughter just barely escaped with her life, and began to cry. Shifu responded by expressing a kind of surprise and empathy. He mostly said, "Oohhh," and, "Awww," and made sounds that showed he shared the kind of shock, yet emotional relief that the mother had felt. At first sight I thought, "Hmmm. Shouldn't Chan masters have no emotions? Aren't they unaffected by any situation? How come Shifu looks surprised and emotional?" Later on I realized that if Shifu were to respond to someone else's traumatic experience with a blank look and say something like, "Well no big deal. She's still alive right? And even if she did die, life is impermanent, isn't it?" that person would probably think that he was a cold, compassionless stone. Rather, Shifu replied by showing concern and by acknowledging the woman's distress, and comforted her with his words. The mother seemed relieved to have received his attention and caring words, and returned to what she was doing. In these and many other occasions, I was impressed by Shifu's warmth and compassion towards others.

I found his humility quite moving. He always spoke of himself as just knowing "a little bit about Buddhadharma," or having just "a little bit of experience in Chan," and did not have any pretentious ways about him. For example, if he was challenged openly during Dharma talks, he did not show that he was being threatened. Rather, in a very calm and gentle manner, he addressed the question in a straightforward and respectful way. I was also quite touched when one day, after helping to clean up the Center after a Sunday activity, with my palms together, I said, "OK Shifu, I'm

going home." He joined his palms very mindfully and respectfully, and we bowed to each other. It was a very simple gesture but I felt appreciated by him, and moved that he would bow like that to me. With these gestures and behaviors I observed that Shifu was grateful and respectful to everyone, regardless of who they were. He didn't appear at all to behave with any sense of arrogance or pretense, and that meant to me that he was a genuine Chan master. I knew then that Shifu was someone that I could trust and learn from.

## Chan Retreat

In the winter of 2001, I finally had a chance to attend a seven-day Chan retreat under Shifu's guidance. Previously, I had read in his books about these intensive retreats. They seemed quite alluring to me, as when he said in one of his books that in the face of pain and hardship, "one must not fear death," and, "forget about one's body, see it as a corpse." Such instructions addressed the very important matter of the vexations surrounding our birth and death. I was also attracted to a practice that seemed so intense that it surely could lead to enlightenment—or at least some kind of life-changing experience. Yet, having no real idea of what an intensive Chan retreat was like, having only read the lectures in Shifu's books, I was full of curious expectation.

The retreat was held on Christmas day at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center, in upstate New York. To the dismay of my family, I drove off early in the morning, just after our tradition of sharing Christmas gifts. I grumbled and frowned during breakfast as they complained about my leaving on a holiday, but I was determined to go on this retreat despite the holiday activities. While resenting my family's

lack of “practitioner spirit,” I was grateful that they supported me by giving me an army-surplus sleeping bag, as participants were required to bring their own bedding on retreat.

At that time, DDRC’s Chan Hall had just been renovated after years of work. It was a beautiful hall, with a floor-to-ceiling wood interior. The Buddha statue was also wooden, and looked very solemn with its simple design and gentle smile. It served as both the meditation hall and the sleeping quarters for the men—there were no dormitories at that time, so the participants slept on the floor in either the Reception Hall, packed like sardines, or in the Dining Hall or Chan Hall. The men slept in the Chan Hall, and there were quite a few of us sprawled out in the meditation area, so at night the snoring sounded like a symphony of animal calls. I heard sounds I never thought could be made by a human being. It sounded more like frogs, birds, or beasts of various sizes and temperaments all chanting their native songs. I found it disturbing at first, occasionally hilarious, yet was so tired from the daily schedule that I fell asleep with no problem after a few minutes.

At that retreat, there were 93 participants, and including volunteers—who were there to support the retreat by cooking, doing reception, and helping to maintain the Center—there were around 108 people in attendance. This made sleeping and showering arrangements quite an ordeal. We were assigned to shower in shifts; each person was designated one time per day for a five- to ten-minute shower, to allow enough time for other people. The water was often not hot enough, and had an overpowering stench of sulfur, due to its being drawn from a well on the property. These weren’t harsh conditions—not compared to

the stories of the earlier days, when participants slept in the old cabins and there was no heat in the temporary meditation hall—it was just inconvenient enough to make one feel it was a hardship compared to home life. But I was so happy to do a retreat with Shifu that I would have endured much more to get a chance to learn Chan practice from him.

As for my experience on the meditating cushion, I had incredible expectations, and thought that I actually could get enlightened on that retreat, and that all I had to do was listen to Shifu and follow his instructions. This attitude led me to practice diligently and “work as if my head were aflame,” yet I used so much mental energy trying to suppress my thoughts, it was as if I were trying to put out the flame by making water come out of my ears. I was using such an intense approach to stopping thoughts that I actually did, yet at the expense of blood flow to the brain. During one sitting, when Shifu walked in the room, I sat intensely trying to stop thoughts, almost mentally tying my brain in a knot. He walked by me and I thought to myself, “Come on! Here I am working really hard. Can you help me out? Is this it? Am I close to enlightenment? Look—almost no thoughts!” Shifu did something, as if he heard my inner cries for help. He very gently used two fingers to adjust the posture of my head, which was tilting to one side, due to the immense tension I was applying. I instantly relaxed a bit, as I realized I was doing something wrong. I continued to sit diligently, yet with a more relaxed approach. Still, it took quite awhile after this retreat to realize that suppression is not the way to achieve “silence” of mind in the practice of Silent Illumination. However, there were also experiences during sitting and working meditation of calm and clarity



of a quality that I had never experienced before. Although I wasn't sure how it happened and didn't have a grasp of the method, I was sure of the practice. I was completely confident that although I hadn't gotten enlightened yet, it was surely possible for anyone to realize enlightenment eventually, as long as they have the right methods and views. By attending the retreat, I was given a taste of intensive practice and, for the first time, felt that I truly absorbed the teachings and that I was getting the answers to the questions that I had. I had found the path to liberation.

Particularly beneficial was the experience of interviews with Shifu. Interview was given to all participants, and Shifu interviewed close to 100 people, in groups of five. When the retreat supervisor, Guo Yuan Fashi, told us that

interview was about to proceed, my heart began to pound and my palms became wet with sweat. "Don't think about what to say in interview," he said, but that was all I could think about. Although I was very excited to finally ask questions related to my own practice, I was deathly afraid of presenting myself. In daily life, I hadn't been one to enjoy formal presentations of myself, especially in a situation where I couldn't use humor and playfulness to avoid serious and personal communication. Actually, as mentioned earlier, my perfectionist attitude led to a fear of revealing my imperfections. Although I enjoyed hearing about practice and learning how to do it, I was quite afraid of letting people—let alone Shifu, whom I saw as a "perfect" person—know about my faults and weaknesses. I was so concerned about presenting myself

as a good practitioner to Shifu that, before the interview, I was trembling with fear. To my surprise, I found the experience very healing. When the time came to speak and ask my question, I just opened up my heart: "Shifu, sometimes when it seems I'm sitting well, I feel happy, and kind of proud. Then my mind gets scattered again." He answered, "Just don't entertain thoughts of gain or loss." Then I asked, "When we're talking, how do we practice? Should I be aware of my body and how it feels?" "No, that would be burdensome. Just be aware of what you're talking about," he replied. "Oh, okay...that's it?" "That's it." I smiled and then bowed, feeling a sense of ease. Afterwards, I realized that it's not difficult to share one's faults or difficulties, and if we share with our spiritual teacher, we can surely learn something. Shifu's answer was very simple and straightforward, and helped me quite a lot during retreat and for years later. I realized that honesty with my teacher was essential if I was to make progress with the practice.

During retreat, apart from observing myself, I was also able to observe Shifu and get to know him better just by seeing and hearing how he taught his disciples. He taught the very marrow of Chan in such a clear and logical manner, and often with such humor, and yet with definite confidence and ease, that I admired his wisdom. Especially in interview, I had a better sense of Shifu's compassion. I was impressed by the directness of his answers to my questions, and how they were just what I needed to hear. I sensed his gentleness and compassion in the way he looked at and replied to students, and felt safe in his presence. What was most memorable was Shifu's demeanor and appearance as I asked my question in interview. His eyes were so

still, and face so serene, that it felt as if I was talking to a mirror. I felt a silence and calm that seemed to emanate from him. Because of this I was able to trust in Shifu's teachings with certainty that they came from a solid ground of his own experience. As the retreat was also attended by some of Shifu's Dharma heirs and senior disciples, I also observed how experienced lay practitioners conducted themselves. On one occasion, I watched as one of Shifu's Dharma heirs walked across the frozen lake towards me with a look of single-minded concentration that I had not seen in a person before. I was quite surprised that a person would do that. I thought, "Isn't he afraid of falling in?" I smiled at him and joined palms when he reached the side that I was on, yet he paid no attention to me at all. His expression was calm and unperturbed, as though no one was in front of him. I was surprised at how he seemed to be unmoved despite my distracting attempt to communicate, and admired that as well. It seemed Shifu's disciples also had a certain calm and clarity, which was what I was looking for in my own practice.

I will not explain in detail much more of my retreat experience here; however, most notable was that my faith in Shifu, Chan, and myself became firmly established with this intensive retreat experience. I continued to study with him and the sangha at the Chan Meditation Center with increased enthusiasm, trust, and energy.

## **Learning from the Fourfold Sangha**

Along with studying the Dharma and practicing meditation with Shifu, and learning from his conduct in everyday life, I also learned a lot about practice from the "fourfold sang-

ha”—the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen—at the Chan Meditation Center. During the time I was a volunteer at CMC, from 2001 to 2003, the Center was composed mostly of ethnic Chinese, a miniature Chinese culture within the multicultural neighborhood of Elmhurst. On a day-to-day basis, the people that I encountered at the Center were Chinese-speaking, and mostly of an older generation. Yet, due to my lifelong interest in Chinese culture, and having studied Mandarin in college, I felt very at home there. Still shy and self-conscious about speaking Chinese, I grew more comfortable as I got to know people and received their encouragement and help.

As a volunteer I had many opportunities to learn from the monastics, especially then-abbot Guo Yuan Fashi, and Guo Sheng Fashi, who oversaw much of the administration as well as the volunteer work. Between them they seemed to share the work of 10 people.

I was very impressed at how Guo Yuan Fashi seemed eternally relaxed and happy; how Guo Sheng Fashi was always caring to the volunteers, including me. I very much appreciated hearing them greet me with an “Ah!” as in, “Ah! David Pusa (Bodhisattva)!” Then, after I had taken the Three Refuges, they would greet me by my Dharma name, “Ah! Chang Wen Pusa!” Their bodhisattva spirit allowed them to devote all their energies to helping others while keeping a mindset of joy and

ease. They also showed concern for me and gave me much encouragement.

My experience with Guo Yuan Fashi was that he was a very established practitioner. I had the opportunity to travel with him on occasion, and helped him with activities like the Beginner’s Meditation Class. Helping to take pictures for a prayer service after the 9/11 tragedy, I observed how very confident and secure within himself he was. At the same time he was very good-humored and joyous and laughed very playfully. I was also deeply

impressed by the way he taught meditation, which was useful to me when I began to help lead Chan practice myself. He emphasized dealing with suffering rather than focusing too much on theory or the more mystical aspects of Buddhism. His explanations were easy to understand and readily applicable to daily life. I found this very refreshing and enjoyed hearing him talk

...EVERYONE SEEMED TO FEEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING CARE OF THE CENTER...WITHIN FIVE MINUTES AFTER THE SUNDAY DHARMA TALK, CHAIRS WERE FOLDED AND STACKED, CUSHIONS STOWED BACK INTO THE CABINETS, AND THE HALL WAS CLEAR AND READY FOR THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITY...

about Chan practice.

I was very appreciative of Guo Sheng Fashi for her encouragement, and felt very welcomed by her, as she was very caring. She encouraged me to do more volunteer work, and invited me to help transcribe Shifu’s Dharma lectures. I am very grateful to her for giving me the chance to become more familiar with Shifu’s teachings, as well as the opportunities to help the Center. Mostly, I learned from



her that by selflessly putting our effort into these tasks we cultivate a mind of giving—the true bodhisattva spirit. And I experienced great joy from volunteering, by giving for the sake of giving. I observed from her inexhaustible energy, that it's possible to do so much, as she took care of many monastery affairs—from accounting, to activity organization and kitchen management. It seemed she had as many hands and eyes as Guanyin Bodhisattva. To support the sangha gave me happiness, and I was thankful that she welcomed my efforts. She taught me that people need attention and encouragement, as she herself gave this to all the volunteers.

I was also impressed that all the lay practitioners gave of themselves to the Center and worked together as a team. What struck me as a unique quality of the CMC community was that everyone seemed to feel responsible for taking care of the Center. For example, within five minutes after the Sunday Dharma talk, chairs were folded and stacked, cushions stowed back into the cabinets, and the hall was clear and ready for the following activity, the lunch offering. After the day's activities were finished, volunteers would stay to cleanup, doing a more detailed job of vacuuming, dusting, clearing the trash, and rearranging things. It may have seemed natural to everyone there, but in the culture that I grew up in, when an activity was over—like a public lecture for example, or even a church activity—people just left, and all that remained was garbage or an empty messy room. But at CMC the volunteers, and even visitors unfamiliar with the Center, all pitched in to help clean up. To me, this seemed unique to the Buddhist culture at CMC.

The Chan Meditation Center became my “Dharma family,” so I spent much of my free time there. I certainly wouldn't miss a Tuesday sitting or Sunday Open House for anything, and I truly enjoyed being among practitioners. Eventually, I was asked to be timekeeper for the Tuesday sitting group, which I gladly accepted. I was happy to be of service but was also quite nervous and unsure of myself. The timekeeper also has to lead the yoga exercises, walking meditation, and even facilitate the discussion afterwards. I felt very insecure speaking in front of others, and was uncomfortable leading discussions about teachings I was still struggling to understand. I became so nervous and self-conscious that my abdomen would convulse, and my belly felt like it was being shocked by electricity. It was so uncomfortable that I felt like I couldn't bear being in my own skin. But encouraged by the monastics and appreciated by the group, I kept on being timekeeper and overcame a lot of fears and insecurities. My self-consciousness lessened and I eventually learned to let go a bit. I was very grateful for the opportunity and for the life lesson.

## Lay Practice

From winter 2001 until spring 2002, I was unemployed, having been laid off from my job at the State Park beach. I knew that being asked to leave during the winter season was inevitable, but it was still disappointing. The beach had become a second home and my co-workers were like family. I was not worried about money, as I was still living with my parents, and I had some savings, so I didn't have to borrow money from them for daily expenses...but it was unsettling that I had no idea what I wanted to with my life. I could think of many possible careers or at least

kinds of work I could do, but I had no real skill or passion for any type of profession. I was at home most of the time—I read a lot of Dharma, meditated, and practiced tai chi, and these latter activities helped to keep me healthy mentally and physically; however, I was still involved in a great internal struggle. This period of time was quite dark and I was depressed.

In the beginning of this “career” search, I had thought of pursuing my earlier dream of traveling to Mainland China to study Buddhism and martial arts, while teaching English to get by. So I took a course on teaching English as a second language from Cambridge University in Manhattan. It was a “crash” course where on the very first day we were told to teach a group of people who had no English-speaking ability. Of course the classes were free to them, so they weren’t bothered at all by the student-teachers’ inexperienced attempts at teaching. But for us teachers-in-training, it was quite unnerving. I enjoyed the training and the classes but at the same time, I felt deep fear and lacked self-confidence. At home preparing for the next day’s class, I spent half the time worrying and imagining that I would not do well. I was convinced I had no teaching ability and wondered how anyone could teach; I was immersed in doubt and powerfully negative thoughts. I would look at skyscrapers and think, “Wow, it’s incredible how we’re able to build such high structures. How do we do it? How is it possible? How did they figure out how to do it? Aren’t the contractors and architects afraid that the building will fall down? I couldn’t do that.” My many doubts like this paralyzed me. I graduated from the course, but decided not to pursue the dream.

So after this I was even less sure of what to do with my life. I was home for days and months at a time; I began to feel useless. My self-confidence sank; I did nothing productive, feeling I would soon forget even how to cook a meal. My depression became quite heavy; isolation and hopelessness overcame me; I often sat on the sofa worrying and dreaming of how I wouldn’t be able to do anything with my life. Thankfully, the Dharma literature that I was reading helped me have a more positive outlook and gave me a method for being able to see this negativity and its harmfulness. In particular, I read a commentary on the “Sutra on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness”, by Thich Nhat Hanh, which taught the necessity of deeply observing even the most painful vexations—directly experiencing the mind, feelings, thoughts in the immediacy of their arising. With observation of them, we can understand them as just mental formations—merely empty thoughts and impressions—and they cease to be a burden. I began to observe these heavy vexations and they lifted somewhat, like a fog lifting in the morning sun. I also read Shifu’s teachings on silent illumination, and practiced it when these more troublesome worries had subsided. I found that Shifu’s and Thich Nhat Hanh’s books had given me an approach to Chan practice that suited me quite well at that time. I gained some clarity and confidence to keep looking for work.

Eventually, I found work with the New York State Department of Agriculture, on the Asian Longhorn Beetle project. This project was created to ensure that the beetle, which in the New York area had become a pest that could potentially threaten the very existence of ma-



ple trees in North America, did not spread to other regions. The main work consisted of inspecting trees and recording data. It was basically a wild goose chase—we were to travel across all of Long Island, to nine geographical points, and inspect a few trees. It required some skills, like using a GPS to navigate our way to the middle of wooded lots, pine barrens, marsh islands, or even abandoned buildings.

It also required certain people skills in convincing the land owners or business managers to allow us to investigate the trees on their property. Yet the work itself was quite simple. I enjoyed it—it was fun to explore these areas and to be close to nature. I enjoyed hiking, so the work felt like just a walk in the park.

My partner was a semi-retired man in his sixties who loved to talk; I was a young man in my early twenties who loved to be silent. Every day he would entertain himself talking

about his past, as I sat there grumbling to myself, having to hear it all. If we were quiet, I would be enjoying the silence and being mindful of work, while he sat there sighing and fiddling with pens, almost unable to bear the quietude. Eventually though, we found a way to accept and appreciate each other and got along quite well. From this experience I learned to appreciate other people's experiences more, to allow them to work in their own way, while still maintaining mindfulness for myself. I realized that one didn't have to be totally silent to practice—one could speak mindfully and wholesomely while sharing ideas with others.

However, about one year after working for the Department, I realized that I wanted to make a greater commitment to Chan practice, and devote my talents to helping Shifu and the sangha share the Dharma with others. And so, I decided to make a big change in the direction of my life.

# The Illusion of Separateness

by

Žarko Andričević

*Žarko Andričević was one of Chan Master Sheng Yen's four Western Dharma heirs first introduced in the book Chan Comes West (Dharma Drum Publications 2002). He is the founder and director of Dharmaloka, a Buddhist community in Zagreb, Croatia. This paper was originally written for the United Nations summit on climate change in Copenhagen in December, 2009.*

Our incapacity to live in harmony with ourselves, others and the environment is a consequence of deep ignorance of our nature and the nature of existence in general. All human suffering, misery and discontent, be it personal or collective, arises out of a fundamental ignorance that is called *avidya* in Buddhism. *Avidya* is not common ignorance or what we commonly think of as ignorance. Every person, learned and unlearned alike, may be a victim of such ignorance. Human maladjustment to the nature of existence has varied throughout the history of mankind and has had consequences that have usually been short-lived and local. The harm that one person could have inflicted by his or her actions to the self, the community or the environment was quite limited. However, since the beginning of the industrial revolution, the incredible development of science and technology in a short period of some two centuries has made the consequences of human action long-lasting and global. Today the World is smaller than ever, while the impact of mankind on the planet has increased to a rate unprecedented in history. Now we are witnessing a global ecological crisis that threatens our survival,



the survival of other forms of life on Earth, and nature as we know it.

Therefore the global ecological crisis is what comes back to us as our own collective karma. To face the crisis means to face the self. We have to become fully aware that the situation demands much more than superficial changes only. We have reached the point where sustainability is possible only if we are ready to undergo a radical and genuine transformation of our worldview and behavior. To be profound and efficient, that transformation has to be reflected in all aspect of our lives – be it personal, social, economical, political or religious. It is good to remember that this, like every crisis, contains both danger and opportunity. It is true that we have brought ourselves to the edge of abyss, but this position gives us an opportunity to use the awareness, awakened and sharp because of danger, to start afresh with a life based on the ethics of the common good and cooperation instead of pursuing selfish interests and competition.

The process of industrialization, the use of fossil fuels, the ever-expanding consumption of goods, human population overgrowth, pollution of soil and groundwater, the increase in greenhouse gas emissions, global warming, melting of ice, rise in sea level, shortage of drinking water and food, the extinction of animal and plant species that ultimately threatens the survival of the human race – this is the cause and consequence sequence that has been proven undeniably by uncorrupt and wise members of the scientific community. These alarming phenomena are among many symptoms of uncaring human actions such as economic exploitation, wars, religious and ethnic hatred, to mention only a

few. To struggle against these phenomena on the individual and local level, as they appear, means to deal with the symptoms, and not with the causes. However positive and necessary such actions may be, unfortunately they are never universal, efficient or permanent.

The crucial question is: Where do the true causes of the crises lie, what is their nature and how do we eliminate them? If we stop for a moment and look closely and deeply into the current crisis, we will inevitably see ourselves. The deeper we look, the deeper we will get onto our own self. What is it in us, human beings, that is responsible for the situation that we got ourselves into? What are the traits in us that lead to the causes of the crisis? Are these the worldviews and attitudes that we hold or are these emotions that govern our behavior? What is it in us that makes us so destructive to ourselves and to our surroundings? This is actually a question on who we are in the first place. If we were utterly honest and open in our inquiry, without inclination to any theory, we would arrive at a conclusion that we do not know the answer to that question, indeed. And if we reach that point, we will realize that most of our problems stem exactly from our conviction that we know everything about absolutely every thing in the world. We all have our identities, ethnicities, religions, names, personalities, our special life stories, our virtues and faults, our professions, talents, hobbies, a multitude of roles. We make huge efforts to maintain the belief that our own identity is solid, and to keep the self-image that we want to present to ourselves and to others. But who are we, really?

The very awareness of that question may help us to find the way out of the clouds of mental

constructions and ground us to here and now, in the reality of the present moment. We may then discover that in our self-preoccupation we find very little place for others, for nature, for the reality in which we live. A peculiar paradox of egocentrism is that the more we want for ourselves, the poorer and more unsafe we feel. The feeling of alienation, separateness and confrontation with the world is what we call the illusion of separate existence. Because of it, we view ourselves and the world through a prism of our own narrow interests that are constant sources of conflict at all levels. Guided by an illusion of duality of the self and the world that is often accompanied by the belief in a special and superimposed position that we hold in the world, we used modern technology to create the crisis in which we find ourselves today.

The belief in the illusion of duality makes us unaware of our own nature and of the nature of life in general. We behave as if we were going to live forever, we hold on to things as if they were eternal and as if we can truly own them. The world exists for us, to be subordinated to the human race, and other beings live to serve us. This anthropocentric and egocentric perspective is narrow, shallow, harsh, painful and dangerous, and misses the wide context and subtle nature of the phenomena as they are. We are not aware of the impermanence and fragility of life. We are not aware of the opportunity that we have been given by life.

We are not aware that the suitability of our planet for life is not absolute, but rather it depends on a very fragile balance of a series of causes and conditions that are fluctuating and inconstant. Mankind living on this planet

may be compared to a bull in a china shop, clumsy and uncaring, moreover too overbearing, arrogant and aggressive to look at its own face and ask: Who am I, really?

We are not aware of all that because our awareness is captive to our egocentrism. When we are full of ourselves, there is little place left for anything else. Being full of oneself means wanting to own everything else, wanting to become master of everything else. That is the source of our troubles, the condition that makes our nature full of conflict and our experience painful.

It is of critical importance to free ourselves from false views on separate existence, from arrogant views on the superiority of humans over other forms of life and nature itself. Only if liberated from egocentrism can we really become aware of ourselves, of others and nature as intertwined phenomena, deeply inter-related and interdependent. It is like a cup of tea—when it is full there is simply no space for fresh tea. Likewise with us, if we want the world to unfold in its entirety and in its full splendor, as it really is, we have to escape the egocentric perspective.

In our deluded condition we think that the skin is boundary between the self and the outside world. Everything that happens in our body we see as internal, and all that happens outside we see as external. This is a narrow understanding of the self as opposed to the world. The self that expands draws within its boundary things from the outer world that are considered to belong to it or with which it identifies. However, no matter how the boundaries are shifted, the self stays separated from the whole, opposed to the rest that it

hasn't incorporated, hence the conflict. If we free our mind of self-concepts and if we start to observe ourselves carefully from one moment to the next, the myth of who we think we are will begin to dissolve. To begin with, the body that we identify with, internal and separate from the outside world, is sustained thanks to the environment only: air, water, food, warmth, light, gravitation, other beings, people... Without air we would not be able to live more than a few minutes, nor without the other elements of which we consist. Our body is made up of the same elements that make our planet, and the universe.

From that perspective our body is not ours at all. It is an inseparable part of nature that surrounds us, it belongs to nature and to nature we "return it" upon death. If we succeed in liberating our mind from egocentric perspective and rigid categories that enslave it, we will discover a completely new dimension of our being that is bound to change our understanding of the self, the body, others and the environment. The realization of oneness with the world leads to profound internal transformation. If all people perceived and treated the environment as if it were their own body, we would not have the crisis that we have today.

All sentient beings share not only the experience of having a body, but also the nature of their corporality. Usually we are oblivious of that deep connectedness. We are deceived by our superficial, shallow and scattered ordinary mind that sees only differences – in species, shapes, sex, color...

If we look even deeper, deep inside our being, we will discover that in addition to corporality we also share experience. The common denominator of human experience and the

experience of all sentient beings is suffering. Birth, illness, old age and death connect us deeply; these are experiences that we all are subject to and that we all share. Dhammapada says: "You too shall pass away. Knowing this, how can you quarrel?" How far have we gotten from that truth, the insight that what we have in common connects us more deeply and strongly than the differences, of any kind, divide us.

Going still deeper, we will observe that we do not only share the same experience, but we also share its very nature. We share the same nature of mind and its potential of realizing that nature. So when we, observing our mind, recognize how relative all views, perspectives and beliefs that we hold true and absolute are, and that these views present merely just another description of reality, only then will we be able to say that we know that not a single thing remains to divide us and make us stand apart. This realization holds the answer to a question – who we are, really.

Mankind today is perhaps confronted with the greatest challenge in history. The challenge is so great because we have to open ourselves to a new and substantially different way of living in the world and dealing with that world. If we fail to agree on the fundamental principles of the new way of being that comes from the deep sense of Oneness of people, animals and environment, we will miss the great opportunity that lies in the crisis. The crisis is but a mirror. It seems that the future of life on Earth depends on whether we are ready to look deeply enough to be able to recognize our true face and change the way we live accordingly. We may not get another chance like this, ever again.

# The Past

## News from the Chan Meditation Center and the DDMBA Worldwide

### John Hurrell Crook, 1930-2011

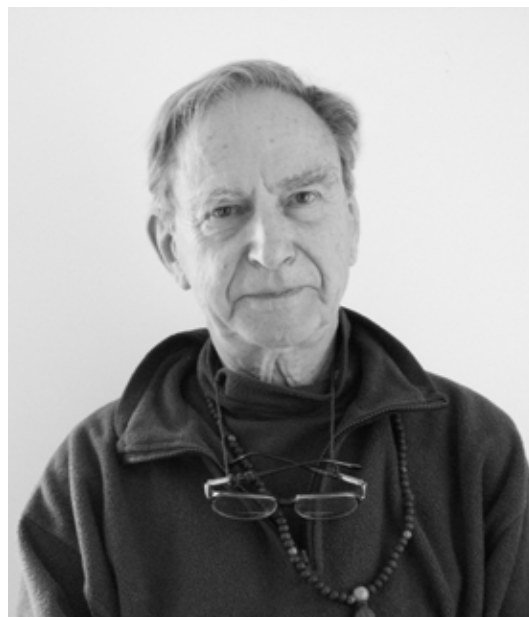
At 1 pm on Friday July 29<sup>th</sup>, over 200 people gathered for a Buddhist funeral in Weston-super-Mare, England to celebrate the life and honor the passing of Chan Master Dr. John Hurrell Crook (Chuan-deng Jing-di), the first western Dharma heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen. The gathering consisted of John's family, friends, academic colleagues, Dharma students, and fellow practitioners (both monastic and lay) from various Buddhist traditions.

John's Dharma students and fellow practitioners were particularly grateful to John's family for making the service open to all who wished to attend – especially since this resulted in a standing-room-only service. The moving ceremony was presided over by Rev. Master Daishin Morgan of Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey. John began practicing at Throssel Hole in the 1950's after discovering Buddhism in Hong Kong, and has maintained close ties with the organization and its leaders ever since.

During the ceremony John was posthumously ordained into the monastic Sangha as a means to expedite the dropping of all attachments and the attainment of Buddhahood. Ji Chern Fashi, Guo Xing Fashi, and Chang Wen Fashi were also in attendance to represent Dharma Drum Mountain and to lead Amitab-

ha Buddha chanting as part of the funeral ceremony. Statements and readings were also offered by a leader from the Western Chan Fellowship, an academic colleague, an old friend, and John's daughter Tanya Long. After the ceremony, most of those in attendance gathered at Winterhead Hill Farm—John's house outside of Shipham, England—to reminisce and to enjoy each other's company in memory of John.

A scattering of ashes ceremony was to be held on Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, at the Maenllwyd retreat center, Pant-y-dwr, Wales.





## Finding Wholeness Retreat

On May 11-13, 2011 the Finding Wholeness Retreat was held at Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY. The event was led by Venerable Guo Chan and Venerable Chang Ji, along with Taz Tagore and Adam Bucko, founders of the Reciprocity Foundation. This foundation enables homeless New York City youth to permanently exit the social services system and start meaningful, sustainable careers. The retreat at DDRC was part of their Integral Well-Being program, which teaches the principles of holistic health.



This was the first time many of these young people had ever been outside of New York City; it was also their first encounter with Buddhism. The event included meditation, 8-form moving meditation and other yoga practices, and personal counseling. The students watched a film on South Africa's healing process after Apartheid, with a main theme of forgiveness. They also participated in a living nature ritual that combined the Chan "carrying water" practice, direct contemplation, and Metta practice. Many of the students reported that the retreat had been a deeply transformative experience.

## Six Ethics of Mind as Spice of Life

On June 30, at the invitation of the DDHSIF, famed Taiwanese Master Chef A-Chi (Yen-Chi Cheng) paid a visit to the Dharma Drum Degui Academy in Taipei City.

His liveliness and great sense of humor delighted all present and filled the evening with laughter. The 58-year-old culinary master explained that owing to the hardships he had experienced in childhood he had had very little education. Even so, he felt no resentment; although he had received no support from his family, he had won recognition for his cooking through his own perseverance and vision.

A-Chi drew parallels between cooking and life: "Knowing how to cook is like knowing how to live—main courses, appetizers and spices—each one has its appropriate time and place. One must live ethically and be humble in one's attitude towards others and the world, cultivating merit and striving to create a pure living environment."

## Buddhist Studies Conference

The 16<sup>th</sup> International Association of Buddhist Studies (IABS) conference was formally wrapped up on June 24, following closing remarks by DDM Abbot Venerable Guo Dong congratulating the crowd of more than 500 Buddhist scholars.

He noted that despite a tight schedule, participants brought off the impressive achievement of presenting hundreds of papers at numerous panel sessions, which could be thought of as a Dharma feast for the purification of one's mind.

IABS President Cristina Scherrer-Schaub expressed her deep appreciation for DDM's hospitality and outstanding effort. Then, to lively applause, Venerable Guo Dong and President Scherrer-Schaub held up a long silk scroll signed by more than 200 IABS members, in memory of the victims of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan last March.

"Overall, the results of the conference were satisfactory," noted Venerable Hui Min, President of Dharma Drum Buddhist College, thanking the many people who had helped to make it a success.

### **Taipei Prison Concert**

On June 23, Dharma Drum Humanitarian and Social Improvement Foundation (DDHSIF), staged a concert in the main auditorium of Taipei Prison as part of an initiative to introduce inmates to the "Six Ethics of Mind," in keeping with the teachings of the late Venerable Master Sheng Yen.

Minister of Justice Yung-Fu Tseng thanked DDHSIF, expressing the hope that such collaborations could inspire the inmates and raise their spirits.

### **Healthcare for the Elderly**

On the morning of June 7, the SWCF Peace of Mind Relief Station in Liukuei District's Baolai Community in Kaohsiung City held a half-day program for the elderly. The aim was to provide care to residents aged 65 or older, with free health exams, including blood pressure and tests for vision, diabetes, and osteoporosis.

After the exams, volunteers led the elderly in a slow Eight Form Moving Meditation, helping them to relax their bodies and their minds, and experience the slow breathing that results from the practice.

The event was wrapped up by a lively birthday party for anyone born in April, May or June. As one volunteer noted, the beautiful smiles on participants' faces was a more than ample reward for the services rendered.

### **Sichuan Medical Center Opens**

On May 8, DDM Vice Abbot Venerable Guo Pin arrived at Chenjiaba village in Northern Sichuan, China accompanied by medical professionals from Taipei to attend the inauguration of the Chenjiaba Medical Center at a ceremony also attended by local officials and more than 100 villagers. That same afternoon, the Taipei professionals commenced their three-day tour of duty at the new center.

In the wake of the May 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, Chenjiaba Medical Center was financed by DDM Social Welfare and Charity Foundation (SWCF) as part of ongoing recovery efforts.

### **Taking Out the (Mind's) Trash**

April 22 saw the dawn of the planet's 41<sup>st</sup> Earth Day, inspiring over 100 million people worldwide to engage in activities aimed at environmental conservation and sustainability. In a show of support for this unique global event, SWCF and the Department of Environmental Protection

of New Taipei City co-hosted a clean-up at Shachu Beach in the Jinshan District.

The campaign started in the early morning, drawing over 1500 people. At the outset, SWCF Secretary General Venerable Guo Qi conveyed auspicious blessings to all present, and pointed out that while removing trash from the beach is significant for environmental protection, we must reflect that this should also act as a reminder for us to remove our “mental trash” such as vexation and excessive desire, which is even more crucial for our own well-being, for society in general and for the natural environment as a whole. When we remove the trash from our minds, we will live in a much more peaceful and beautiful world.

Also in attendance was Dr. Wen-Yen Chiu, Vice Minister of Environmental Protection who expressed his appreciation to SWCF for the clean-up campaign: “Once we understand and become humble towards Nature, then the idea of having a truly green planet can become more than just a dream.”

In addition to the clean-up, SWCF used the occasion to confer awards of financial assistance on 431 disadvantaged students from New Taipei City to encourage them to pursue their dreams while helping them to understand the importance of Earth Day.

### **Ziyun Monastery Helps Students**

On April 24, DDM’s Ziyun Monastery in Kaohsiung City hosted a special event at which 164 disadvantaged students received awards of financial assistance.

The event opened with prayers for those suffering from the effects of the earthquake

and tsunami in Japan at the beginning of March. Venerable Guo Yao, director of the monastery, conveyed auspicious blessings to all students and their families, wishing them peace and happiness. She then encouraged students to nurture living skills and a positive attitude, to cultivate gratitude in their hearts at all times, and to pursue their dreams courageously with diligence, tenacity and hard work.

### **Mainland Delegation Visits DDM**

On June 8, Venerable Ze Wu, President of the Buddhist Association of Xiamen in mainland China (BAXM), joined by 18 members of his community, paid a first visit to the DDM World Center for Buddhist Education in Taiwan.

Abbot Venerable Guo Dong and Vice Abbot Venerable Guo Hui warmly greeted the visitors upon their arrival. Venerable Guo Dong then proceeded to lead the welcoming tour for the distinguished guests, visiting the Grand Buddha Hall, the Wish-Fulfilling Guanyin Hall, and the Founding History Memorial Hall.

He introduced the concepts of “protecting the spiritual environment” and “uplifting the character of humanity” as the main focus of the Center, which aspires to be a place of respite where one can know the happiness of Dharma by purifying the vexed mind and easing the weary body.

In addition to enjoying the Center’s beauty and tranquility, Venerable Ze Wu praised DDM’s long-term dedication to a variety of charitable activities throughout the world, in line with the compassion of the Buddha and the late Venerable Master Sheng Yen.

# 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](mailto:ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org)

Website: [www.dharmadrumretreat.org](http://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.*

### **Retreats**

#### **Western Zen Retreat**

Led by Dr. Simon Child

Friday - Wednesday, October 14 - 19

#### **Ten-Day Silent Illumination Retreat**

Led by Dr. Simon Child

Friday - Sunday, Nov 25 - Dec 4

#### **Seven-Day Huatou Retreat**

Leader TBA

Monday - Sunday, Dec 26 - Jan 1

#### **Three-Day Meditation Retreat**

Led by Chang Wen Fashi

Friday - Sunday, November 4 - 6

#### **One-Day Retreats**

Led by Chang Wen Fashi

Saturdays, Oct 1, Nov 12, Dec 10

### **Regular Weekly Activities**

#### **Thursday Evening Meditation**

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

#### **Sunday Service**

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

## **Chan Meditation Center Elmhurst, Queens, NY**

E-mail: [chancenter@gmail.com](mailto:chancenter@gmail.com)

Websites: [www.chancenter.org](http://www.chancenter.org),

[www.ddmusa.org](http://www.ddmusa.org)

### **Retreats**

#### **Monthly One-Day Retreats**

Last Saturday of each month

9 am - 5 pm (8:45 arrival) \$25

#### **Two-Day Meditation Retreat**

Led by Guo Ming Fashi

Saturday - Sunday, Nov 26 - 27

#### **Two-Day Living Chan Retreat**

Led by Abbot Guo Xing Fashi

Saturday - Sunday, Dec 24 - 25

## Classes

### **Beginner's Meditation, Parts 1 and 2**

Saturdays, November 5 & 12

9:30 am - 12 noon

Teacher TBA; \$40

### **Intermediate Meditation**

Saturday, November 19

9:30 am - 3 pm

Teacher TBA; \$40

### **Dharma 102: The Heart Sutra**

Three Saturdays, Sep 24, Oct 1 & 8

10 am - noon

Led by Dr. Rebecca Li; Free of charge

### **Saturday Night Movie and Mind**

Saturdays, 6:30 - 9 pm

Led by Lindley Hanlon

Oct 8: "From the Life of Hildegard von Bingen"

Nov 12: "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind"

Dec 10: "A Mother's Courage: Talking Back to Autism"

Screenings and discussions of movies from a Buddhist perspective, free of charge.

*(Pre-registration advised for all classes.)*

## Regular Weekly Activities

### **Monday Night Chanting**

7:30 - 9:00 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, walking meditation, Dharma discussions, 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**

9:30 am - 3:00 pm

Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation

### **Sunday Open House**

10 am - 11 am: 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 Dharma teachers-in-training

## Special Events

### **2001 DDMBA North America Dharmapala**

#### **Annual Meeting at DDRC**

Friday - Sunday, Oct 28 - 30

(members only)

### **Three-Day Chanting of Compassionate**

#### **Samadhi Water Repentance**

Saturday, Dec 31 - Monday, Jan 2

Led by the Sangha group

# Chan Center Affiliates

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

## NORTH AMERICA

### USA

#### USA Headquarters

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

*Dharma Drum Retreat Center*  
184 Quannacut Road  
Pine Bush, NY 12566  
Tel: (845) 744-8114  
Email: [ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org](mailto:ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org)  
[www.dharmadrumretreat.org](http://www.dharmadrumretreat.org)

#### California

*Los Angeles Chapter*  
Contact: Ashley Chiang  
Tel: (626) 350-4388  
Email: [bluebean88@earthlink.net](mailto:bluebean88@earthlink.net)

*Sacramento Chapter*  
Contact: Janice Tsai  
Email: [ddmbasacra@yahoo.com](mailto:ddmbasacra@yahoo.com)

*San Francisco Chapter*  
Contact: Hogan Chang  
Tel: (650) 988-6928  
Email: [ddmbasf@gmail.com](mailto:ddmbasf@gmail.com)  
[www.ddmbasf.org](http://www.ddmbasf.org)

#### Colorado

Contact: Yun-tung Chu  
Email: [tomchu100@gmail.com](mailto:tomchu100@gmail.com)

#### Connecticut

*Fairfield*  
Contact: Ming-Mei Peng  
Email: [contekalice@aol.com](mailto:contekalice@aol.com)

*Hartford*  
Contact: Linyung Wang  
Email: [ling-yunw@yahoo.com](mailto:ling-yunw@yahoo.com)

#### District of Columbia

*Washington D.C.*  
Contact: Jack Chang  
Email: [chiehhsiungchang@yahoo.com](mailto:chiehhsiungchang@yahoo.com)

#### Florida

*Gainesville*  
Contact: Lian Huey Chen  
Email: [lianflorida@hotmail.com](mailto:lianflorida@hotmail.com)

*Miami*  
Contact: May Lee  
Tel: 954-432-8683

#### Orlando

Contact: Chih-Hui Chang  
Email: [chihho2004@yahoo.com](mailto:chihho2004@yahoo.com)  
*Tallahassee*  
Contact: Guo Gu  
Email: [tallahassee.chan@gmail.com](mailto:tallahassee.chan@gmail.com)  
<http://tallahasseebuddhistcommunity.org/mondayevening.shtml>

#### Tampa

Contact: Nancy Kau  
Email: [skau@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:skau@tampabay.rr.com)

#### Illinois

*Chicago Chapter*  
Contact: Susan Lincke  
Tel: (847) 824-6882  
Email: [ddmbachicago@gmail.com](mailto:ddmbachicago@gmail.com)  
[www.ddmbachicago.org](http://www.ddmbachicago.org)

#### Kansas

Contact: Ching Hsin Wang  
Email: [alicewang0618@hotmail.com](mailto:alicewang0618@hotmail.com)

#### Massachusetts

*Boston*  
Contact: Chen Zhang  
Email: [ch\\_cherry@hotmail.com](mailto:ch_cherry@hotmail.com)

#### Michigan

Contact: Li Hua Kong  
Email: [lkong2006@gmail.com](mailto:lkong2006@gmail.com)

## Missouri

Contact: Tai-Ling Chin  
Email: acren@aol.com

## New Jersey Chapter

Contact: Chiu-Ling Wang  
789 Jersey Ave  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
Tel: (732) 249-1898  
Email: chiuwang@msn.com  
www.ddmba-nj.org

## New York

### *Long Island:*

Contact: Hai Dee Lee  
Email: haideelee@yahoo.com

### *New York City Chapter*

Contact: Carol Fong  
Email: carolyfong@yahoo.com

### *Rochester*

Contact: Chi An Hong  
Email: chian@turb-tech-int.com

## Nevada

### *Las Vegas*

Contact: Mabel Lin  
Email: mebaltan@go.com

## North Carolina

Contact: Shirley Wang  
Tel: (919) 852-4860  
Email: tsuili2@yahoo.com

## Pennsylvania

Contact: Kun-Chang Yu  
Email: ddbbapa@gmail.com  
www.ddmbapa.org

### *Philadelphia*

Contact: Thomas Chiang  
Email: tchiang2001@hotmail.com

## Texas

### *Dallas*

Contact: Patty Chen  
Email: ddbba\_patty@yahoo.com

### *Houston*

Contact: Theresa Feng  
Email: power26v@aol.com

## Tennessee

### *Memphis*

Contact: Dan Tu  
Email: dan\_tu@hotmail.com

## Utah

### *Salt Lake City*

Contact: Inge Fan  
Email: inge\_fan@hotmail.com

## Vermont

Contact: Jui-Chu Lee  
Email: juichulee@yahoo.com  
www.ddmbavt.org

## Washington

### *Seattle Chapter*

Contact: Panqing He  
14028 Bel Red Road Suite 205  
Bellevue, WA 98007  
Tel: (425) 957-4597  
Email: panqing.he@yahoo.com

## Canada

## Toronto

### *DDMBA Ontario*

154 Poyntz Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M2N 1J4  
Contact: Angela Chang  
Email: ddbba.toronto@gmail.com  
www.ddmba-ontario.ca  
Tel: (416) 855-0531

## Vancouver

### *DDMBA Vancouver Center*

8240 No.5 Road,  
Richmond, BC, Canada V6Y 2V4  
Tel: (604) 277-1357  
Fax: (604) 277-1352  
Email: info@ddmba.ca  
www.ddmba.ca

## Mexico

### *Mar de Jade Oceanfront Retreat Center*

#### *Chacala, Nayarit, Mexico*

Contact: Laura del Valle MD  
USA tel: (800) 257-0532  
Mexico tel 01-800-505-8005  
Email: info@mardejade.com  
www.mardejade.com  
Daily meditation; regular retreats;  
2005 residential period

## EUROPE

## Croatia

### *Dharmaaloka Buddhist Center*

Dordiceva 23  
10000 Zagreb, Croatia  
Tel/Fax: ++385 1 481 00 74  
Email: info@dharmaloka.org  
http://www.dharmaloka.org  
Teacher: Zarko Andricevic  
Ongoing program of study and practice, including courses in Buddhism and Chan meditation, meditation group meetings, and retreats.

## Belgium

## Luxemburg

15, Rue Jean Schaack L-2563  
Bonnevoie GD.DE Luxemburg  
Tel: 352-400080

## Poland

### Warsaw

#### *Zwiazek Buddystow Czan (Chan Buddhist Union):*

Contact: Pawel Rosciszewski  
ul. Promienna 12,  
05-540 Zalesie Górne, Poland  
Tel: 48 22 7362252  
Fax: 48 22 7362251  
GSM +48601224999  
Email: budwod@budwod.com.pl  
www.czana.org.pl

## Switzerland

### Zurich

Teacher: Max Kalin (Guo-yun)  
Tel/fax: 411 382 1676  
Mobile: 4179 416 8088  
Email: MaxKailin@chan.ch  
www.chan.ch

### Bern

Hildi Thalmann  
Haus Sein  
Bruungasse 16  
CH3011 Bern Switzerland  
Email: hthalmann@gmx.net  
www.chan-bern.ch  
Tel: 31 352 2243

## United Kingdom

### London

18 Huson Close  
London NW3 3JW, England  
Tel: 44-171-586-6923

#### *Western Ch'an Fellowship:*

24 Woodgate Ave.  
Bury Lancashire, BL9 7RU, U.K.  
Contact: Simon Child, secretary  
Email:  
secretary@westernchanfellowship.org,  
www.westernchanfellowship.org

## ASIA

## Hong Kong

Room 205, 2/F BLK B,  
Alexandra Industrial Building, 23-  
27 Wing Hong St., Cheung Sha Wan,  
Kowloon, Hong Kong  
Tel: 852-2865-3110  
Fax: 852-2591-4810

## Malaysia

#### *Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhism Information Centre in Malaysia:*

Block B-3-15 & B-3-16, 8 Avenue  
Pusat Perdagangan Sek. 8  
Jala Sg. Jernih  
46050 Petaling Jaya, Selangor,  
Malaysia  
Tel: 603-79600841, 603-7319245  
Fax: 603-7331413, 603-79600842  
Email: kahon@pc.jaring.my  
http://www.media.com.my/zen

## Singapore

#### *Dharma Drum Mountain (Singapore Liaison Office):*

No. 10 Second Avenue,  
Singapore 266660  
Contact: Ms. Yeh Yin Shia  
Tel & Fax: (65) 6469 6565  
Cell: 9745 6565.  
Email: ysyehsg@yahoo.com.tw

## Taiwan

#### *Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education:*

No.14-5, Lin 7, Sanchieh Village,  
Chinshan, Taipei  
Tel: 02-2498-7171, 02-2498-7174  
Fax: 02-2498-9029  
Email: webmaster@ddm.org.tw  
http://www.ddm.org.tw

#### *Dharma Drum International Meditation Group:*

Contact: Antonio  
Tel: 02-2893-4646 ext. 6504  
Email: contact@ddm.org.tw  
Saturdays, 2:00 – 5:00 pm at the  
Jiantan Group Practice Center  
http://www.ddm.org.tw

#### *Nung Chan Monastery:*

No. 89, Lane 65, Tayeh Road  
Peitou, Taipei  
Tel: 02-2893-3161  
Fax: 02-2895-8969

## Australia

### Melbourne

Contact: Laura Chan  
Email: ddmlaura@hotmail.com  
Tel: 61-4-0204-1997

### Sydney

Contact: Agnes Chow  
Email: agneschow323@hotmail.com  
Tel: 61-4-1318-5603

## New Zealand

No. 9 Scorpio PL.  
Mairangi Bay, Auckland,  
New Zealand  
Tel: 64-9-4788430



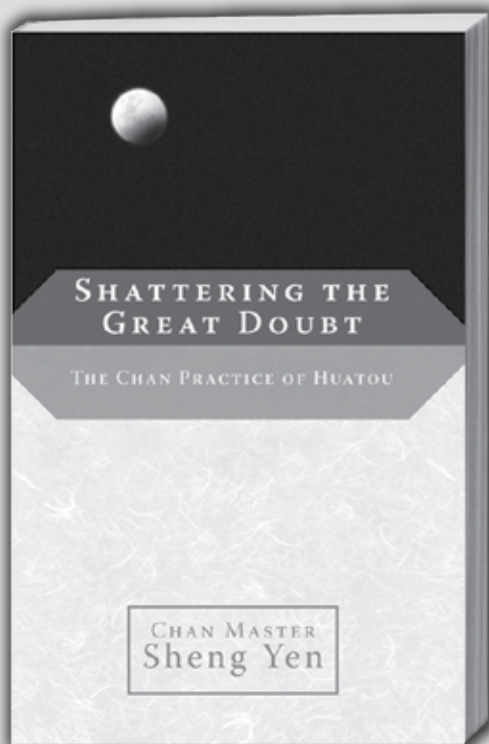
*“Master Sheng Yen is a true spiritual practitioner of deep and broad learning.”*

—THE DALAI LAMA

## SHATTERING THE GREAT DOUBT

*The Chan Practice of Huatou*

Chan Master Sheng Yen



\$17.95 Paperback

**T**HE BELOVED CHAN MASTER'S skillful teaching on practicing with an unanswerable question (like “What is *wu* [nothingness]?”). Resolving to live with the sensation of doubt that arises from this method can result in a sense of profound wonder, and ultimately to the shattering of the sense of an independent self.

### ALSO BY CHAN MASTER SHENG YEN



Attaining the Way

The Infinite Mirror

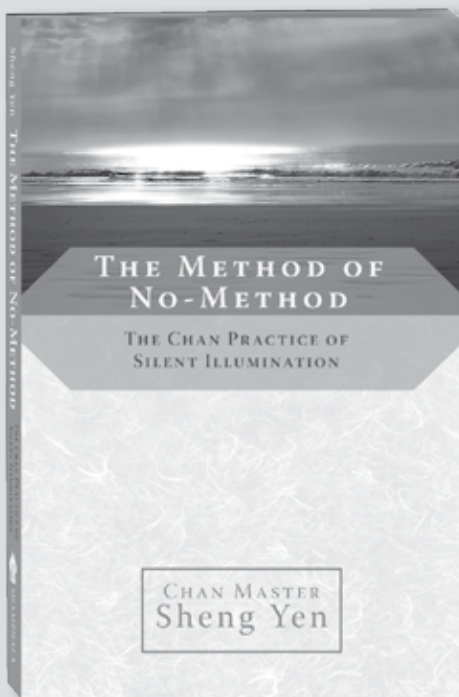
The Method of No-Method



Shambhala Publications | [www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com) | 888-424-2329

# THE METHOD OF NO-METHOD

The Chan Practice of Silent Illumination  
Chan Master Sheng Yen



\$16.95 Paperback

“Chan Master Sheng Yen is a great teacher, and I have great confidence in his scholarship and wisdom.”

—THICH NHAT HANH

**P**ut aside all thoughts other than the perception of yourself “just sitting.” It’s a simple practice, but one that can lead to an experience of the vast ocean of pure awareness. The beloved master’s wonderfully practical teaching on Silent Illumination shows what a skillful means to awakening it truly is.



**Shambhala Publications**

Visit [www.shambhala.com](http://www.shambhala.com) to receive a 20% discount on this and over 600 other great books!