

Chan 禪 Magazine

Autumn 2012



“Environmental protection must be combined with our respective religious beliefs and philosophical thinking into an earnest mission, so that environmental protection will not become a mere slogan. So, strictly speaking, the purification of humankind’s mind and heart is more important than the purification of the environment. If our mind is free from evil intentions and is not polluted by the surroundings, our living environment will also not be spoilt and polluted by us. However, for ordinary people, it is advisable to set out by cultivating the habit of protecting the material environment, and go deeper step by step until at last they can cultivate environmental protection on the spiritual level.”

—Chan Master Sheng Yen

*Speech on “Protecting the Spiritual Environment”
August 31, 2000*

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From the Editor

In this issue's lead article Ven. Guo Ru gives some entertaining (and useful) accounts of the dramatic outbursts that can happen on intensive retreats. His stories sparked a memory in me of Shifu's first retreat in America. None of us had been on retreat before. Everything was new, including the food. For some people it was their first time tasting granola and, liking it, they ate a bit too much, not realizing that it's heavier than corn flakes and harder to digest. As a result, along with the new experience of enduring sitting after sitting in excruciating leg pain, we were faced with the reality of people loudly passing gas in the hush of the Chan Hall.

I believe for most Americans this is an embarrassing thing, whether you are the one passing gas or the one hearing it. I was taught that the polite thing to do is pretend it never happened. Of course pretending does not prevent the tension of a mental reaction, and how do you relieve such tension when sitting in meditation on retreat?

Today I know the answer is to recognize the empty nature of the event and return to the method. But thirty-five years ago I didn't know that. It seemed a horrible thing to be trapped in a room with a handful of people, hearing those sounds. I myself was used to granola so luckily I had no gastric problems. But as the sounds continued I found myself literally burning with mortification and becoming fixated on my reactions. I'm pretty sure my fellow retreatants were feeling the same way.

There was one young Asian woman, I'll call her Angela, she was as pretty as a porcelain doll. All the guys had a crush on her. She was delicate and soft-spoken, reserved and proper, like a princess. I didn't know her well but it's possible

that the gaseous sounds were even more embarrassing for her than for anyone else (though she wasn't the perpetrator.) The sounds continued, happening with more frequency until finally there came one long, loud, musical, machine-gun noise which seemed never-ending. I imagine the person had been in great pain trying to hold it in and they made a brave choice to release all it and be done.

Hearing this, I felt an icy stab of sympathetic humiliation, which was immediately compounded by Angela's outburst; she began to laugh hysterically in a high, sweet voice. Then, as if horrified by her own reaction, she began to weep—loud screaming similar to what Ven. Guo Ru describes in his talk. Maintaining her lotus posture (I could see her from the corner of my eye) she flailed back and forth from the waist, flinging her arms up high and then pounding the wooden floor with her fists. The rest of us were frozen in shock. Here we were supposed to be sitting in silence, in a solemn Chan retreat, yet the most proper one among us was totally losing it? All other thoughts were driven away; there was nothing in my mind but Angela.

Angela's weeping and flailing gradually subsided. Her torso rested on the floor, rising and falling with deep sobbing breaths. Then her breathing settled and became more natural. Finally, she straightened up again and, with a deep sigh, settled back into sitting meditation. And an interesting thing happened—I felt myself settle with her. It seemed as though everyone in the room was united in a single awareness, and together we settled into a deep and profound silence that seemed to last for a long time.

Bufe Maggie Laffey
Editor, Chan Magazine

Reactions of Body and Mind

by

Venerable Guo Ru

Ven. Guo Ru became a monk under the guidance of Chan Master Sheng Yen (Shifu) at the age of thirteen, and received Dharma transmission from Shifu in 2005. His Huatou retreats are lively, carrying on the style of Chan training that Shifu utilized in his early days of teaching, making use of methods such as shouting, hitting, and pressing students in a dynamic and spontaneous manner. This Dharma Talk is from a ten-day intensive Huatou retreat at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in Pine Bush, NY in June 2012. It was translated live by Ven. Chang Wen and transcribed and edited by Buffe Laffey.



The Screaming Lieutenant

Today we're going to talk about reactions that can happen with the body and mind when we go through a retreat. When we get deeper into the meditation different phenomena may occur; illusions of sight, sound, and feeling, and other things like crying, laughing, or energy movement. We will also talk about how to deal with these various circumstances if they arise.

First I'd like to share an experience that occurred when I did a retreat with Shifu. One retreatant was a lieutenant in the military in Taiwan; he actually had battle experience. Although we are not supposed to watch other people, I could see from the corner of my eye that he was shifting around. He was obviously not settled in his body and mind. During one sitting period all of a sudden he let out a bloodcurdling scream, incredibly loud. He started crying as if his parents had died. His whole body was shaking. As it was happening Shifu scolded us: "It's none of your business! Don't pay attention! Keep using your Huatou!" We'd been through a few days of practice already, so we straightened up and did not dare to take a look or to wonder what was happening. But at the same time everyone was a bit agitated.

Of course I was startled; I was sitting right next to him. I had no clue what was happening to this guy. Here's a lieutenant who went through the most grueling kind of marine training, supposed to not fear death in any situation, here he is three days into the retreat, and he's crying like a baby? What kind of cowardly thing was this? I thought, maybe I'm a little better off than he is, huh? Although I was in a lot of pain at least I was not

crying like that. I was utterly perplexed; how could anyone cry like that? It was so intense, as if all the energy he could possibly muster up was in his crying, it was insane. At one point he fell forward. He was still sitting on the cushion but his body ended up lying on the floor, completely knocked out from crying so hard.

Shifu's Gentleness

Shifu was there the whole time. After the lieutenant finished, Shifu walked over to him, and using the most gentle, compassionate voice said "Okay, just lie out flat here and take a rest." And I was like, "What is this?!" Shifu went and got him a couple more square cushions to lie on. Now, this is in the Chan Hall, the same place where everyone is sitting suffering in grueling pain, and here's this person stretched out lying comfortably on cushions. Shifu put a pillow under his head, and covered him with towels. There he was, so relaxed [*Ven. Guo Ru demonstrates with a long "aaahh!" sigh of comfort*]. He was sleeping—it must've been a very deep sleep because he was almost snoring—and I'm thinking "What's happening here?!"

Afterwards when the lieutenant got up and came back for another sitting, he was totally different. I was the timekeeper; I was actually doing the monitoring, so I was walking around observing participants and I saw him—he was sitting almost motionless, his breathing very relaxed and natural. He seemed to be dwelling in the bliss of Chan with a joyful expression on his face. It was something amazing, a COMPLETE transformation. As I was monitoring I was still wondering, what actually happened? After the sitting, Shifu took him somewhere. Then when

Shifu brought him back again into the Chan Hall, Shifu scolded everyone saying “Mind your own business! Don’t pay attention to other people! This is nothing to do with you! Don’t be curious about it!” And I was thinking “Don’t be curious about it! What’s happening? Why is Shifu treating this guy so well?” At one point Shifu was even massaging this guy’s shoulders, helping to ease his pain, and I thought “This isn’t fair! Look at all this attention this guy is getting! How come Shifu never treated me like that?”

Trying To Force An Experience

I was thinking “HmMMM, must have been that crying thing. Maybe I should cry. Yeah! I’ll cry!” So I started telling myself “Come on! Cry! CRY! Just cry! Come on, cry a bit!”—trying to force it to come out. (Actually from that whole retreat on, through all the five retreats that I ever did with Shifu, I didn’t even shed ONE tear.) I was really trying to do this to at least get some attention from Shifu. But it did not work.

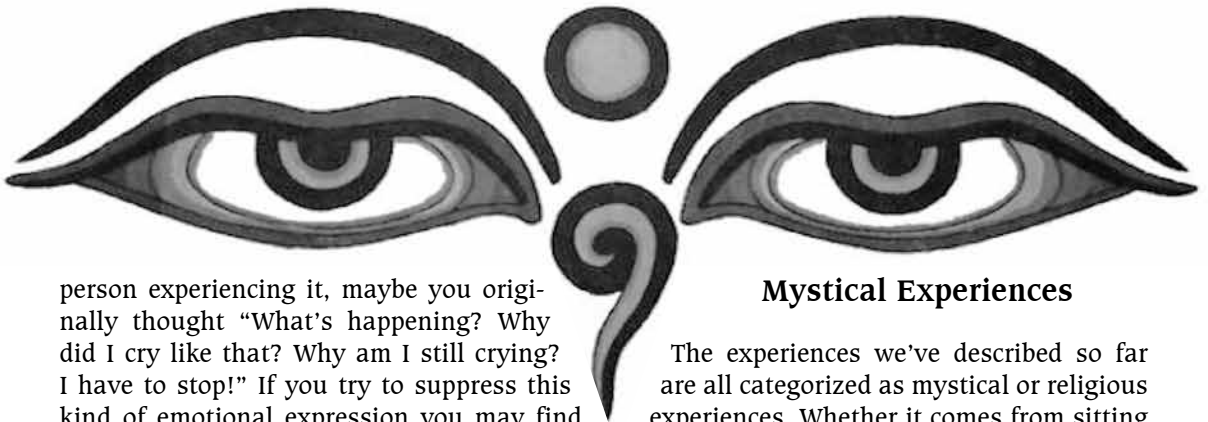
There was actually a sect within Buddhism, a group of monks who called themselves Great Heaven, and they believed that they could realize enlightenment by shouting. Understanding that everything is suffering, they thought that if they screamed the word “suffering” out loud [*Ven. Guo Ru demonstrates: “AAAHHH! SUUFFERIING! SUUUUFFERRRIIING!”*] that eventually this could generate enough power that they could realize liberation. I heard about that and I thought “HmMMM, this sounds like it might work!” So I was encouraging myself to cry; I was trying to get enlightenment that way. Of course it didn’t work; I did not get enlightened and I realized that you can’t try to force yourself to have an

experience. All practitioners have a different capacity for practice. Virtuous roots are at different levels; we can’t say that everybody is going to have the exact same experience. So in your own practice you should be careful not to see someone have an experience, and then try to emulate that person to see if you could also feel the same thing. That just won’t work. What is most important in our practice is to use our own awareness to observe what is happening in our body and mind. We should not get stuck on these reactions nor crave these kinds of experiences.

Use Wisdom to Observe Reactions

Within the course of practice, we take our scattered mind and it becomes more concentrated, even to the point of unification. At times when the mind is very still and stable, it’s possible to have an explosion of emotion. We are unable to control it at all; it just erupts by itself. Many people in that state burst out in laughter; to other people it may sound like a terrible cry of great sadness. Sometimes you can’t even distinguish whether it is laughing or crying. Regardless, it is not a kind of emotion where somebody is really sad, or really angry, or very excited; it has nothing to do with those ordinary emotions. It’s just a kind of expression which arises naturally when the mind becomes very tranquil. When this happens, we don’t have to be curious or wonder what’s happening, we just know it’s a natural reaction.

If you are the person hearing it there is no need to wonder “What happened to that person? It sounds like they’re going crazy, losing control.” There’s no need to be afraid. Now we know it’s just a natural expression which can happen at this time. If you are the



person experiencing it, maybe you originally thought “What’s happening? Why did I cry like that? Why am I still crying? I have to stop!” If you try to suppress this kind of emotional expression you may find that your mind becomes even more scattered and unstable, and you will feel very agitated. If you’re the person’s who’s crying, just know that it’s a natural reaction. There’s no need to think that you’re going crazy. Just let it happen and afterwards you’ll find that you feel much calmer and much more at ease. Having gone through this you’ll actually be able to consistently keep your mind on your method.

For the people taking care of this person, the timekeeper and supervisors, it’s good to just let them lie down after they have laughed or cried, because afterwards they will probably be quite exhausted from releasing all that energy. It’s not like you have to take them in a stretcher and carry them out of the Chan Hall. Just let them lie down where they are; make sure they’re comfortable and warm and let them have a rest. With this kind of experience the person doesn’t lose control of themselves; they don’t become crazy. Actually afterwards they feel calm, settled, and tranquil. Not only that, it’s possible that after having this release a person may go through a transformation of their view on life. They will also have a strengthened confidence in their method, in this spiritual practice and in the Dharma.

Mystical Experiences

The experiences we’ve described so far are all categorized as mystical or religious experiences. Whether it comes from sitting meditation, doing prostrations or reading the sutras, having gone through this a person develops a real connection to their faith. They sense that the practice becomes more powerful. They become more settled and they trust that the teachers, the Buddhas, and the bodhisattvas all have their merits and their strengths and can help them.

In applying ourselves to the practice, if all of our effort is just in terms of thinking, this won’t have great impact on us at all. It’s not about engaging in knowledge or thinking, rather, it’s about truly putting all of ourselves into the method. A person who can unify their own mind, or get to the point of no mind, will find it very easy to experience and truly resonate with the reality of all things. They’ll find that their strength from the practice is something very great, and that their confidence is now very stable. This is only possible if we truly *put* ourselves to the practice, rather than just think about it or reflect on it.

In the course of practice when we are able to stabilize and unify our minds, and achieve some degree of samadhi, it’s possible to have all sorts of mystical experiences. Not only

laughing or crying, but some people may see images of the Buddha, or of bodhisattvas or Dharma protectors, and feel that these saintly beings have come to give them teachings. When a person experiences these kinds of images they may feel that they are something very good. And we could say that this is so. Actually, the fact that they are able to see these things is a result of having cultivated good and virtuous roots. These things are arising from their own mind. Other people may see terrible and horrifying scenes, and we would say that this is a manifestation of negative or unwholesome roots, and again a creation of their own mind.

When Holy Becomes Demonic

When these different situations occur, whether wholesome or unwholesome, pleasant or unpleasant, whether you see the Buddhas or you see demons, the most important thing is to know that it's a creation of the mind. Know that all of these forms and images are empty and illusory. With that kind of attitude a person won't be bothered or distracted. They won't be engulfed by these experiences; they'll be able to let them go. However, when people see these things arising in their mind as real, as something outside themselves and solid, that's where the problem can occur. Because when they see Buddhas or bodhisattvas, they may think that they themselves are the Buddha or some saintly being, and get into all sorts of trouble. That's when a seemingly holy circumstance can become something demonic. It becomes a demonic state because the person isn't aware that it's just a creation of their own deluded thoughts and attachments. Not realizing that it's just an illusory state, they get caught in it. A person

can cause quite a lot of damage to themselves by becoming obsessed with these kinds of images.

So it's most important that regardless of whatever kind of phenomenon occurs, we immediately tell ourselves that it's illusory, it's a creation of the mind. In that way we are using wisdom; we are using the right view to look at these things. We just see them as a result of the process of practice, something we call a mystical or religious experience. If we know that, then any phenomenon that arises will be fine, it won't bother us. We let it go and we are able to continue with the practice.

Using the Sword of Wisdom

Some people, especially when negative or unwholesome images appear in their minds, are completely terrified by them, so disturbed that afterwards they may not even dare to do sitting meditation. But regardless of whether it's a scary phenomenon, or a so-called holy phenomenon (seeing Buddhas or bodhisattvas), whatever arises we should cut it down. As the saying goes "If the Buddha comes we cut him down; if the demons come we cut them down." Whatever arises, we should use



the sword of wisdom to see through these things. If we know they are illusory then that's fine; we're neither attracted nor afraid. In this way we won't be obstructed and we'll be able to return to our method and continue the process of practice.

Bodhisattva Manjusri, although he is seated next to the Buddha, he's always holding a sword, and do you know why that is? Who is he supposed to kill with that sword? Actually, it is the sword of wisdom. It's to be used for any kind of illusory state of body and mind that arises within practitioners. We should use this sword of wisdom; use the proper way to look at these things, and the proper way to deal with them, so these states will not cause us any problems. Only when we use wisdom to handle these things will we be able to have compassion towards ourselves and other sentient beings.

Support of Virtuous Friends

So in the course of Chan practice there are all kinds of states of body and mind that can arise. Most important is that we see them as illusory. In this way we will be able to leave them behind and none of these states will cause us any problems. Although we've heard this explanation now, sometimes that's just not enough because, when it actually happens to us, we may not know how to handle it. That's why it's really important to be at a practice center when you're doing intensive practice. At a practice center we have virtuous friends; we have teachers, people who can guide us and help lead us out of these situations. When we're alone it's quite possible that we could get stuck in these states. But when we are at a practice Center these virtu-

ous friends can give us even just one word or a single gesture; they could do one simple thing which would help us to see the situation properly and pull us out of it. So while it's very important that we have an understanding of these things, it's also very important that we have the support of practice centers, teachers and virtuous friends—the guiding instructors of an intensive retreat.

Doing your sitting practice at home, just doing a little bit of sitting every day, you'll find that it's not likely these experiences will occur. Because it's not often that a person just doing occasional sittings will be able to have a really solid practice where their mind is unified and their application of the method is seamless. But there are people who do put a lot of time into intensive practice at home. If you do find yourself in one of these kinds of situations when you are at home, the best thing to do is just open your eyes, stretch out your legs, massage and finish the sitting. Just get up from the sitting; don't let yourself sink into one of those states.

If you're in the Chan Hall then there's no need to worry about it. If you get into any one of these states just leave it up to the monks and the retreat leaders to take care of you. You don't have to worry about anything. The teacher can help explain to you these different states that you're facing. If you have the proper guidance, these phenomena provide you opportunities to really generate wisdom. In this way the seemingly troublesome obstructions actually become material for our genuine progress in the practice. It's not easy though, without the proper guidance—without the proper guidance it's even more difficult to be able to let go of all phenomena and have an experience of no mind.

Contrived vs. Natural

These things naturally come out in a person's practice when they get into states of unification. It's important not to try to *make* them happen. Especially for those people who do the Huatou method using a lot of tension; at a certain point they may feel they have to shout out loud to release the pressure. Or maybe they think they can get into some deeper state by shouting; if that's the case it's the wrong way to go about it. We won't let you do that—because that kind of shouting is intentional and it's very contrived. If you do that, we're going to hit you with the incense board to remind you, because this is not the proper way to practice.

There's a way to tell the difference between something that's naturally erupting from a person's experience, as opposed to something that's contrived or intentional. If the crying or laughter happens naturally, then it's really an explosion, very intense, and it lasts a while. Whereas when something is contrived, maybe the person could cry or laugh for a few seconds, or shout out a little bit, but then they are not able to continue, they just lose it.

You may find yourself in a situation where you feel something arising and you have the thought "Well, maybe I shouldn't cry because I'll bother other people." Actually at that point you should *know* that it's not natural, because if that thought arises *obviously* your mind is not unified, clearly you have discriminations, worries and concerns. Then *definitely* you should tell yourself "Okay, relax, don't cry." Don't try and make this kind of experience happen. But if it's natural, if it just comes out, don't worry about it. It's not going to bother anyone.

Proper View of These Reactions

If this kind of outburst happens naturally, you don't have to be afraid. It just happens and then it's past. But if you find that it's happening repeatedly, and you WANT it to happen—actually at that time you should make sure that you *don't* let it happen. Don't let yourself fall into reliance on this kind of state in order to practice. Just tell yourself "Okay, there's no need to cry, just relax." Take a few deep breaths. Open your eyes. Make sure that you don't get sucked into this kind of state again and again. If a person comes to rely on such states to feel that they're practicing, eventually this will become their obstruction. So, if it happens naturally once, that's fine. But don't expect it, or try to have it happen again. If it does arise of itself, control it. Don't let it happen continuously.

These kinds of experiences may happen during the fast walking meditation when the retreat leaders are shouting and pressing everyone. In this situation it's possible that you may have an uncontrollable emotional state arise all of a sudden. If that's the case, it's fine. You don't have to worry that other people will look at you and think it's strange. Just let it happen if it happens. If it's happening to you, or you see it happen to somebody else, you don't have to be afraid that it's something strange. You have a mental preparation now so you know that it's just a natural emotional reaction.

If a person is going through this intensive practice, and the instructors are using this very strict way of pressuring people, of course the best situation is that our discriminating consciousness is cut off, or our mind just stops, and at that point we would see our na-

ture. Of course that's the best situation. It's important to know that a Chan retreat is not a place of making people go insane. Just know that these kinds of reactions can occur. See it as something normal and don't be bothered by it. Most important is to apply yourself to the method when this intensive pressure and shouting is happening.

Qi Movement and Blockages

Now I will speak about energy (*qi*) movement and how to deal with it. Actually if we don't do a lot of sitting at home it is difficult to realize that there is this energy within our body, and that it's often moving about. But if we do sit for long enough, and if we practice paying attention to and concentrating on the *tantien*—this area here in the belly—after a while we'll feel this energy start to circulate. It's also possible to sometimes feel this while we're walking. The more concentrated the mind, the more obvious these sensations. If we are aware of this energy we may find that it starts here in the abdomen and starts to move slowly throughout the body, but at some places you may feel that it disappears or gets stuck. Why would it get stuck at some point? Well, it's possible that you may have had an injury so the *qi* is not able to go past that point.

For example, when I was a young novice monk I took this really old, beat up bike out for a spin. As I was speeding down a huge hill, only then did I realize the bike had no brakes! To stop, I aimed for some rising ground and kind of skidded out. The handle of the bike hit me in the chest and I flipped off and landed on a rock. At first it really hurt, but then it seemed to be okay so I got up and went back. But of course I couldn't tell this to Grandmas-

ter Dong Chu because he was really severe—and he hadn't said I could take the bike out for a ride. So I just tried to bear it and not tell anyone. But after a while I realized that it was still hurting quite a lot. All through those years, up until the retreat with Shifu, it was only then that I realized [that the injury had created a very deep internal bruise, the term in Chinese medicine is *yuxue*].

On that retreat with Shifu I was sitting for a long period without moving, to the point that my legs were killing me. Shifu was sitting next to me so I didn't dare to move. But I also knew that Shifu had told me "Don't pay attention to anything; if you die, you die, who cares?" So I just sat there. At that time I had already gotten cancer and had a brain tumor, which made half of my body nearly paralyzed. Ordinarily one side of my body was hot, the other side was cool; one side had feeling, the other side had almost no feeling. (You can see even today that one side has more sweat than the other.) I usually couldn't feel my body, but at this point the pain was so intense that my whole body was shaking. I felt that my heart was going to explode. I didn't know what was going to happen but I just kept trying to sit through it. Eventually I felt this energy rise up and when it reached the area of my heart I felt this [*Ven. Guo Ru makes a loud popping noise*] and I thought "Oh, that's it. I'm dead." But actually it started to feel quite comfortable.

The energy continued to move all the way up to the top of my head. At this point I was thinking, "Oh, wow, what's this!?" If you read Chinese novels about superheroes and *kung fu* masters, they say when the *qi* goes to the top of your head, then the inner orbit and the small universe and all these *qi* cir-

cultivation fields unite together and you have special powers. I was thinking “Whoa, is this like from the stories in the books!?” When it got to the top of my head it also made a [*Ven. Guo Ru makes a popping noise*] and all of a sudden I felt energy circulating throughout my body. Also I had sensation and warmth return to the left side of my body. I felt quite at ease, quite comfortable with this qi circulation throughout my entire body. My experience with qi movement and circulation helped me feel calmer and relieved my body of a lot of pain and discomfort. It didn’t make me the world’s greatest kung fu master, however the benefits that I got were quite a lot.

The Bouncing Retreatant

My experience was all internal; my physical body wasn’t moved or pushed by qi, and this is one thing. But I’d like to share with you now my dharma brother’s experiences with qi, which were something else altogether. My brother monk was actually a layperson at the time, on one of those retreats with Shifu where I was the timekeeper. I was walking around doing the monitoring and when I got to where my dharma brother was sitting I was startled, actually scared out of my brains—he was sitting on his cushion in lotus posture, and I saw him flip over 360° and then just sit there again! He flipped and landed a little bit next to his cushion; thankfully he didn’t land on anyone else next to him.

This flipping on the cushion was one thing, amazing in itself. But other things happened during walking meditation. He’d be walking and occasionally he would just stop. People would ignore it and walk around him. But there were a few times when he’d stop and stay still, and then all of a sudden just

WHOOSH—BOOM! He’d fall down completely straight like a corpse! You know normally if we fall down we have to kind of push ourselves and climb back up. But when he fell down, he would just kind of WHOOSH! come back up again, bouncing up off the ground still straight like a corpse. He could fall down in any direction and then just come right back up, like a *Daruma* doll. I was completely shocked by this. Everybody who saw it was shocked; even Shifu was sitting there like [*Ven. Guo Ru imitates Shifu with eyes very wide*]. Shifu himself had no idea what was happening with this guy.

This was happening during the entire retreat; every once in a while you’d hear these sounds and you knew it was him crashing down and bouncing back up. After a while Shifu decided to take some action—he took the incense



board and gave him a WHACK saying “Don’t move! Don’t let yourself move!” At first this seemed to work. But after a little while he was bouncing all over the place again. At the end of retreat he shared with us saying “Yeah, I don’t know what was happening.” He himself didn’t understand it; he wasn’t trying to do it. (Shifu also shared that once when he was leading another retreat he witnessed a person sitting in meditation bounce off the cushion to different parts of the room, ending up with his legs still in lotus position.)

Not only was it amazing that my dharma brother would fall and bounce back up, but he didn’t get bruised or hurt, not even the times when he hit his head on the wall! I saw that happen and I thought to myself “Oh no, this is

it, this is the last time.” I thought he’d probably have brain damage or something. But when he hit the wall, not only did his body remain straight, but there was no sound! There were also tables and chairs in the Chan Hall and a few times he fell and his head hit the table, but again there was no sound; he just came back up again—very strange. There was only a little bit of sound when he would hit the floor but if he hit other things there was no sound, and he didn’t get hurt. I thought I was seeing something out of one of those novels about the kung fu masters.

Dealing With Qi Movements

My dharma brother shared with us that he’d read in different classics and sutras that



when your energy levels start to build and circulate one after another, they can generate a lot of power. Then it's just a natural reaction for the body to be pushed by this energy [while maintaining its posture]. This is one kind of qi movement, it's very different from my experience [of an energy blockage being cleared]. There is also another kind of qi movement where the person's body will move. Maybe their hands start moving, then their arms start moving and then the whole body starts rocking. If you tell that person "Don't move!" They may say "Oh I can't help it!" And they may say that when they move they feel more comfortable, more calm and with fewer wandering thoughts. So they end being attached to moving like that.

When this movement arises its most important not to crave this kind of feeling, not to continue going deeper into it. Actually some people get so obsessed with this kind of experience, not only do they wait for it to happen, but when it does happen they get so absorbed that they lose all sense of awareness of themselves. This lack of awareness can be similar to incognizance; they don't really know what's happening after a while. Actually at that point, it can be easy for external influences to enter their body. So you don't want to put yourself in that kind of dangerous situation.

If you do experience this, how do you deal with it? Well, you can use wisdom to observe this phenomenon. Relax yourself, tell yourself not to move, open your eyes, take a deep breath. You'll find that by doing that, the energy movement can weaken and you'd be relieved of it. But even more skillful would be to use the contemplation of emptiness. This is not *thinking* about emptiness. At the

moment of this kind of qi movement, because your mind is already very settled and your awareness is very sharp and clear, you can grab hold of that opportunity. If you generate a Huatou such as bringing up "What is Wu?" or saying "Everything is empty how can this be happening?" and just push yourself a bit with this question, your observation would be so sharp at that moment that you could see into the actual empty nature of this phenomenon. You would have a chance to generate wisdom. So it's most important to try not to run away from this kind of feeling or movement. Of course we don't want to crave for it, but, most importantly, we can use all of these reactions of body and mind as an opportunity to cultivate wisdom.

Summary

So I'll summarize—within the course of meditation when we get deeper into states of concentration, into states of samadhi, naturally we may have these various kinds of phenomena arise. Everybody has a different kind of quality, different states of body and mind based on their own experience with the practice, their own understanding of the Dharma, and their own physical and mental state. Because of this everybody has slightly different reactions and so these different things may occur.

Don't make it into a big deal. Please don't expect or wait for these things to happen. Again, there is no need to be afraid of these things if they do happen. All we need to do is have the view that these things are normal. There is no need to be curious or think that they are something weird or bad, of course not. They are just natural reactions coming from intensive practice.

Dharmaloka: Buddhism in Croatia

by

Karmen Mihalinec

Earlier this year I had a chance to speak briefly with Žarko Andričević, a Dharma Heir of Chan Master Sheng Yen, when he was at DDRC to lead an intensive retreat. Curious about the ways our Dharma Drum Mountain lineage is evolving in Western culture, I asked Žarko to tell me in what ways his Dharmaloka organization in Croatia might differ from what we are doing in America? He mentioned that practitioners in Croatia have several different “gates” through which they might enter the practice. In addition to sitting meditation and the scholarly study of Buddhist texts, Croatian students might also enter the practice through yoga, martial arts, or the tea ceremony.

*We had only a limited time to speak. Wanting to know more, I visited their website at www.dharmaloka.org. I can't read Croatian myself, but through the magic of Google Translate I was able to get some sense of the material there. I was intrigued by one article in particular, and asked Žarko whether he could provide Chan Magazine with a proper English translation. The text which follows was originally written by Karmen Mihalinec, an Indologist, Sanskrit scholar, yoga teacher and one of the founding members of Dharmaloka. This was her introductory speech as moderator of a panel on Buddhism in Croatia, in which representatives of all Croatian Buddhist groups took part. For this Chan Magazine article the text has been expanded to include more detail about Dharmaloka. It has been translated into English by Jasna Milcic, a senior member of Dharmaloka who also translated Shifu's book *Subtle Wisdom to Croatian*.*

---Editor

As is well known, Buddhism is a teaching that originated in northern India more than 2500 years ago. Usually it is referred to as “the teaching” because unlike other world religions which have revelation at the core, Buddhism is grounded in the deep experience of enlightenment reached by the individual spiritual effort of one man. That person was the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, the

founder of Buddhism, who in his lessons explained the method of how to realize enlightenment, thereby opening the way to all who want to tread the path.

Whether Buddhism is a philosophy or a religion has been a matter of continuous debate in the West. While on the one hand many religious elements can be discerned in Bud-

dhism, on the other its main feature is a “spirit of free inquiry” rather than a reliance on dogmatic beliefs or experiences that are not one’s own, such a spirit being an attribute of philosophy.

Taking a look at the very rich history of Buddhism in the East perhaps it is worth noting that very early on, two currents of the tradition could be distinguished: the so called Southern Schools, known collectively by their somewhat pejorative title—the Hinayana (the only one of these which now survives is the Theravada), and the Northern Schools or the Mahayana. A special subgroup of the Northern Schools includes Esoteric or Tantric schools which differ by methods of practice while having the philosophical background in common with other schools of Northern Buddhism. All Buddhist communities and groups in Croatia belong to the Mahayana.

Although encounters between Buddhism and the Western world may be clearly discerned in the tradition, art and religious literature of both sides starting from the conquests of Alexander the Great and the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom in what is now Afghanistan, it was not until the 19th century that a direct inflow of Buddhist ideas began to emerge in Western thought, mainly through translations of the Theravada canon literature. The interest in Buddhism among Westerners at that time surged on a wave of curiosity for all things Oriental. Buddhism, as it was reflected by the scope and

depth of understanding of the writings published in that period, was mainly a subject of academic or missionary pursuits.

The first half of the 20th century marked serious scholarly endeavours to understand Buddhism without the prejudices present in Western cultural circles. However, this was achieved to a significant degree only after the Second World War, with the arrival in the West of authentic and suitably qualified teachers from the East. These teachers embodied Buddhism in their lives and succeeded in translating and spreading the understanding of the teaching to their Western students. Probably the most well-known among these were the two Suzukis who popularized Zen. One was D.T. Suzuki, a scholar of profound learning and knowledge of Japanese spiritu-



ality and a prolific writer who embarked on a dialogue between Zen and Western psychology. The other was Shunryu Suzuki, a Roshi who introduced Zen practice in North America and had a marked influence on an entire generation of American writers and on Western pop-culture.

Another pioneering teacher from the East was the great Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the first teacher of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, who left a deep mark and rich legacy of teachings. Two other influential teachers who came from the East won a worldwide recognition: Thich Nhat Hahn, a Vietnamese Zen-monk known for his peace activism and skilful adaptation of Eastern tradition to Western way of life, and Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, probably the most renowned figure of contemporary Buddhism, an icon of non-violence who has consistently utilized the tragedy of his people to call for understand-

ing and cooperation instead of violence and retaliation.

Buddhism has not lost its appeal for Westerners; indeed, we are today witnessing an immensely interesting “transition” process in which the future face of Buddhism in the West remains to be seen. As yet some of the features that are shaping it may be clearly distinguished: the importance of the laity (the main pillars of Buddhism in the West being lay followers and lay teachers), a focus on meditation as the main practice, and an emphasis of the spirit of open-mindedness and humanism. At the same time there has been a considerable departure from religious and ritual practices that are ingrained in the Eastern tradition; only time will tell whether this departure will be a good way to go forward.

In Croatia the presence of Buddhism is even more marginal when compared to the coun-

tries of the former Eastern Bloc like Poland or Hungary. While for the sake of brevity this general outline does not cover all phenomena related to Buddhism in Croatia today, it is worth noting that two approaches to Buddhism have been present: an academic approach and a practical or personal approach. In the past (and even today) there existed a series



of scholars who endeavoured to present the wealth of this ancient teaching in their translations and works. However, as their interest in Buddhism was fuelled by intellectual curiosity, it eventually waned. A remarkable figure among those authors was Vladimir Dević, whose portrayals of Japan brought Zen to our attention, albeit indirectly.

An outstanding person, Čedomil Veljačić (Bikhu Njanađivako) embodied both approaches: he was a serious scholar who translated from the Pali Cannon and wrote influential works that presented Buddhist and Asian thought to audiences in the region of former Yugoslavia, but he was also a person who explored the Buddhist path as his life choice. As far as we know, he is the only person from the region who received full ordination in the Southern, Theravada tradition. His efforts, however, never got on a course that would have resulted in the foundation of Buddhist groups in our country.

A practical approach to Buddhism implies personal exploration of the Buddhist path of spiritual transformation through ways and methods that had been shaped by some of the Mahayana schools. A pioneering role in that sense in Croatia was played by an association called Mushindokai which practiced yoga and martial arts but also had meditation and study groups. Thus it introduced Buddhist practice in our country in mid-1970s, on a modest scale, but with long-lasting effects. No less than three of the Buddhist communities and groups that exist in Croatia today may be said to have their origin in that association.

The beginnings of our Buddhist community Dharmaloka may be traced back to far-off

1977 when a small group of yoga and martial arts devotees—brought together by the Mushindokai association—decided to take the Three Refuges and to follow a Buddhist path as their life choice. At the beginning of the 1980s and in conditions that were adverse rather than favourable, one of those early enthusiasts, Žarko Andričević, founded the first group to investigate original Buddhist texts and explore meditation practice. In that period the foundations were laid for our Dharmaloka community as it is today. Some of the early practitioners still make up the core of our community.

The group's inspiration, earnestness and dedication resulted in the establishment of the first Buddhist center in Croatia in the beginning of 1990s. The Center in Markusevac was our home for more than five years. Although located on a suburban fringe and unsuitable for daily visits, the Center had a library and a meditation hall, which was sufficient for regular study courses and extended periods of meditation. Having reached a new organizational shape, we became a member of the European Buddhist Union in 1993. We brought and assisted in bringing a number of relevant Buddhist teachers to Croatia, such as Ayang Rinpoche, Chan Master Sheng-Yen (Shifu), and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. Their visit came decades late if compared to the West, but at last people in our country had the opportunity to meet great teachers of Buddhism and listen to what they had to say on the nature of human life.

That was an exceptionally important period for our community. After the encounter of our teacher Žarko Andričević with Sheng Yen Shifu, and Shifu's visit to Zagreb, we decided to follow Chinese Chan/Zen in our practice.

(continued on page 22)





Is the Silence attainment of Nonattainment ?

Is the Silence Wisdom ?

Is the Silence at least humbleness ?

And Nonexistence postulate for Dharma of compassion ...?

Bow

**Bow and gratitude
for this transmission**

**Transmission without any expectation
without any expectation
...without any expectation!**



meditation retreat). We also held 14 seasonal seminars on the island of Krk and 15 seminars in Orebic (or almost 200 days of seminars). We launched an internationally certified program for

(continued from page 19) It should be mentioned that even though we had had some inclination towards Sino-Japanese Mahayana tradition, our involvement in Buddhism in the period previous to meeting Shifu was of a more general nature. Therefore, the encounter with a living tradition, indeed the one being embodied in one of the greatest masters of Buddhism at that time—Chan Master Sheng Yen—breathed a new life into our community. Following that, in 1998, we founded a Buddhist Center in downtown Zagreb and came within reach to all who wanted to explore the ancient Buddha's teaching and start following the methods of Chan/Zen.

The past fourteen years of the existence of our Buddhist Center in Zagreb has been a mature and productive period in our history. Expressed in numbers, we organized over 70 Chan meditation practice courses (in Zagreb but also in the towns of Pula, Split, Šibenik, Celje, Belgrade, Berlin and Cape Cod), 30 cycles of lectures, 50 one-day meditation retreats, 30 three-day retreats, 3 five-day retreats and 25 seven day-retreats (or over 330 days of

training zenyoga teachers; so far four cycles of the program have been brought to completion.

Three books have been published and made available to wider audiences: a translation of John Blofeld's *Zen Teaching of Instantaneous Awakening* for the Croatian published by Profil and a translation of Chan Master Sheng Yen's *Subtle Wisdom* published by Dharmaloka. The book *Zenyoga: Developing Mindfulness Through Movement*, authored by Karmen Mihalinec, was also published by Dharmaloka. Meditation groups were established in towns of Pula, Šibenik, Split and Celje in Slovenia. Members of our community attended retreats held by Chan Master Sheng Yen in Europe, USA and Taiwan. Twelve members of our community took the Bodhisattva vows, dedicating their noble aspirations to welfare of other beings.

Our teacher, Žarko Andričević, received a rare recognition in 2001 by becoming one of Chan Master Sheng Yen's Dharma Heirs. He has since become an established international

Chan teacher, regularly leading retreats at Dharma Drum Meditation Center in the USA and on occasion visiting other groups outside Croatia as a meditation retreat master. He is a regular member of the Conference of Western Teachers of Buddhism and an associate of Global Peace Initiative of Women.

An activity worth mentioning is our cooperation in drafting the law on the legal status of religious communities in Croatia. Having spent a couple of years on that task, in 2004 we received the certificate of entry in the register of religious communities. Unfortunately, in reality this did not entail entitlement to the rights that are granted to other religious communities in Croatia. We can only hope that the Government of Croatia will one day give Buddhism in Croatia a status in line with the reputation of Buddhism worldwide and that it will cease to treat Buddhism as a third-rank spiritual movement.

In the near future we have some hard work ahead of us; in the first place we intend to work on developing facilities for practice as these are what we need the most. Over the past few years we have planned to build a meditation center, therefore, the forthcoming period will be dedicated to achieving that ambitious goal.

Our Community, Dharmaloka, is the only registered Buddhist religious community in Croatia. In addition there are other groups in Croatia that bring together people who follow one of many spiritual paths that may be called Buddhist. Two of these groups, Shechen and Padmasana from Zagreb, are of Tibetan background. Shechen follows Nyingma School in the tradition of the renowned Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Padmasana promotes so

called Rime Tibetan tradition. The Mandala group from Rijeka follows the Japanese Shingon tradition. In the city of Split there exists a branch of New Kadampa Tradition, which is seen as controversial by many. Also, in Zagreb there exists an informal Zen group which follows the teaching of Deshimaru Roshi. It may be puzzling for some that all these paths are equally entitled to be called Buddhist ones. Buddhism is a teaching of great inner democratic quality and tolerance; it encompasses a wide variety of approaches to addressing fundamental human problems. From the colorfulness of Tibet to the simplicity of Zen, from loud chanting to silent sitting—all of this is Buddhism. For different people, with different dispositions and aspirations, but always with one essential message “Avoid evil, do only good, purify the mind, these are the teachings of all Buddhas.”



Leaving Home

David Kabacinski Becomes Chang Wen Fashi, Part Six



by

Ven. Chang Wen

Venerable Changwen is a Western monastic disciple of the late Chan Master Sheng Yen. Formerly known as David Kabacinski, 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 sixth 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.

Serving the Sangha

After receiving full ordination and thus becoming a bhikshu, it was time for me to serve the sangha. For the previous two years, I had been engaged mostly in personal study, busy learning Mandarin Chinese, studying the monastic precepts, and engaging in the activities of the community. My only services were to assist with daily chores, chanting and playing Dharma ritual instruments (like the wooden fish and chime) during chanting services, and leading Chan practice once a week. There were other occasional duties, such as giving tours to international visitors, but overall I had a simple lifestyle as a stu-

dent in the seminary, the Sangha University. As such, student life for monastics in training is a protected and semi-isolated experience. However, after graduating from the seminary, we then take on a position in the sangha and make use of what we've learned to serve others.

In April of 2006, I was given the role of assistant in the Class Planning Group within the Male Student Services department of the Sangha University. This gave me the opportunity to give back to those who had cared for me over the past two years, and, more so, it

was a chance to repay my debt of gratitude to all sentient beings. At the same time, it was a way for me to continue my monastic training. By assisting the seminary in training newly-initiated postulants, novices, and bhikshus, I was essentially being trained and becoming very familiar with the process of monastic development. This experience would become the foundation of my knowledge and skill in sangha-building in years to come.

Yet despite taking on a role within the sangha, I was still quite new to everything, having only just taken full ordination. I was only twenty-six years old, still naive in many ways, and was not independent enough to work within the sangha at full capacity. My level of Chinese was sufficient to communicate on a daily basis, but to work within such an education institute required much more skill in language. There was still much to be learned, and so Shifu appointed my Dharma brother, Venerable Chang Du (度), to look after me.

At this time, he was the Dean of male students. I was very grateful to have him as my counselor, as from the very beginning, he impressed me as being a compassionate person with a big vow to help others. He was the same Dharma brother who helped me by explaining what was happening during the novice ordination practice rehearsals. His background included training extensively in the Carnegie system of personal development in leadership, communication, conflict resolution, workplace team-building, etc. Because of that, he had many skills and techniques which came from a Western cultural background. At times when I was impatient and not able to understand others, he would often remind me of a more skillful way to approach

people and situations. I was most impressed by his ability at conflict resolution.

Many times, I thought the best way to deal with a student and help them improve their situation was to give them a good scolding and harsh words. But when I saw Ven. Chang Du handle matters, I found that there are many skillful ways to communicate an important message to others. Instead of direct and sometimes harsh treatment (which is faster yet often not as well-received), we can use encouragement, and emphasizing why it's important to adopt a certain behavior. Rigidly enforcing rules and penalizing those who disobey works better when the sangha has hundreds of monastics and there is not much time for individual counseling. Strictness and directness are usually more effective when the community as a whole practices diligently, and the strength of following rules and precepts creates a momentum which keeps people in line. However, in modern times, in a seminary with only a handful of monastics, it requires much more time to do counseling and explanation. Ven. Chang Du was very good at this, as he learned how to set the stage for discussions or counseling involving sensitive matters and sensitive people. Due to his Western-style training, it seemed that he was able to understand me better. I felt comfortable to share with him about my inner conflicts and experiences and I saw him as a virtuous friend.

Venerable Chang Chi, my previous counselor, was the supervisor of the planning group, and so I worked closely with him on designing and planning extra-curricular classes and activities. There was one activity in particular, the Awakening Camp,

which continues each year to provide young people a chance to experience monastic life at DDM. For this activity, I was asked to assist with translation and various tasks related to taking care of English-speaking international participants.

I was very happy to serve the potential future generation of Western monastics, and hoped that this was an avenue for interested persons to engage in the practice. I was moved by his dedication and his compassionate attitude. He always put 100% of himself into his work, sometimes staying up very late to finish. His attitude towards designing classes was very practical and meaningful, and he would always ask, “What do these people need?” When we did planning for the camp and various other classes, I would often first think of what was most interesting to me. I would consider doing what was most easy and least time consuming. But his question would always be, “Well, what do you think the students need at this time?” This was very moving to hear, and it stuck with me. When planning the group’s activities, and even my own responsibilities, that question resounded in my mind, “What do others need?”

He deeply impressed me with his openness to my opinions. As he was my supervisor, initially, I figured that I’d just listen to his plan and follow along. But he’d often ask, “What do you think?” He may have had a clear idea of what to do, but he’d follow up with that question, leaving space for me to give input. This resonated in my mind, reminding me that I rarely asked others that same question. Being quite opinionated since childhood, I often pushed my own ideas as being the best, and assumed I knew what others were thinking and what they should do. I seldom gave peo-

ple the chance to express themselves. Especially in a leadership role, I forgot about giving others the space to open up and develop their own ideas. This kind of self-attachment wasn’t so visible when I was alone, but when working with others, it manifested quite strongly. This question—“And what are your thoughts?”—was a very simple yet powerful reminder that I needed to become less fixed in my own ideas, and be more open and flexible with others. Planning requires teamwork, and sangha life requires a lot of planning. This was a lesson in learning to plan together with others for the sake of the good of the community, putting forth one’s ideas while maintaining openness to the ideas of others. One of the sangha’s greatest functions is to help the individual let go of attachment to one’s ideas, and follow the consensus of the community.

Entering into the Ocean of Dharma

Until this point in time, my study of Dharma and my practice were mostly centered on reading Buddhist literature in English. I had only begun to attempt to read more books in Chinese on my own, and was limited to books written in everyday language. This was of course a great thing in itself, as I finally was able to read the Dharma as expressed by Shifu in the original Chinese. This opened up many doors, and provided many insights, as there were certain more subtle aspects about practice which I understood more easily when reading them as expressed in Chinese. There is something about the simplicity and conciseness of the language that is able to present abstract concepts very clearly.

There was a wealth of literature for me to choose from—including Shifu’s more than

100 published works. I was very happy to finally be able to begin to read them, but still felt the need to learn from a source closer to the Buddha's own words—the sutras. Shifu had mentioned to me once, that he hoped that I could one day read the sutras in Chinese, and I replied that I would. "It's very difficult," he said, but I wasn't concerned with how difficult it was. I knew it was my responsibility to others, and a tool for my own liberation from vexations.

After having learned some Chinese classics like Confucius and Zhuangzi from my teacher, Mrs. Zhang, I was confident that it would

be possible for me to read the sutras. However, although her grasp of the classics was very good, she felt that Buddhist sutras are another realm altogether that she was not familiar with, and she unfortunately would not be able to help me learn them.

After hearing that, I wondered whom I could find as a sutra tutor. Yet, I didn't have to look far. As it just so happened, in the same room where I spent a lot of time doing homework was an elder monk, Guo Jian (建) Fashi, who spent much of his time there preparing for his Dharma lectures. He was a teacher in the seminary, a lecturer in various DDM chapters

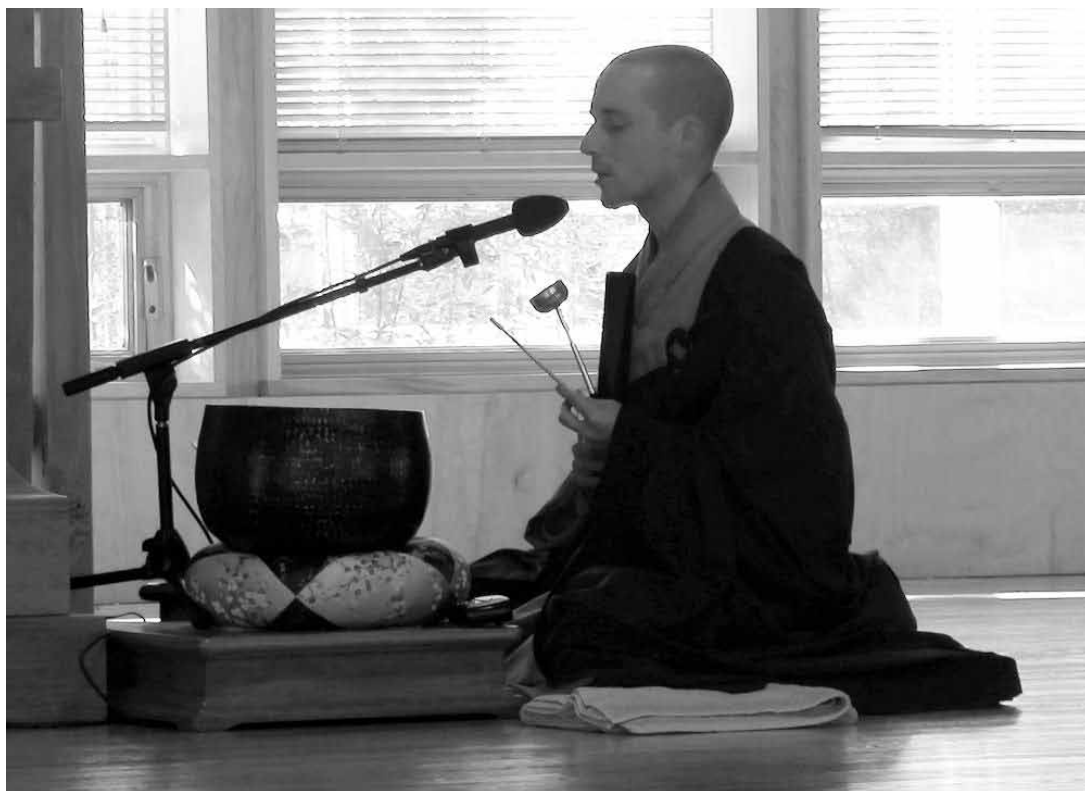


in Taiwan, and in countries where DDM has practice centers. He was very experienced in giving talks and quite well-learned in the various doctrines of Buddhadharma. I would often ask him questions about the Dharma, and he was very happy to engage in Dharma discussion. I respected his knowledge and understanding as well as his practice, and he was very encouraging towards me. It was clear to me that he could be a great sutra tutor. After getting permission from the seminary and Shifu, he agreed right away when I asked him.

We began with *The Sutra of the Bequeathed Teachings of the Buddha*, supposedly the last sermon that the Buddha gave before his pa-

rinirvana. This sutra is part of the required reading for all DDM monastic students, as it encompasses the essence of the Buddha's teaching, especially as applied to monastics. Ven Guo Jian and I met once a week and he took the time to thoroughly explain not only the meaning, but also the structure of the sutra, which was translated into classical Chinese. Line by line, he tested my ability to understand the sutra and explained it.

We discussed aspects of how the sutra applied to daily life of a Mahayana Buddhist monastic. What started as sutra study became an overall introduction to the life and way of a monk, as taught by the Buddha to his early sangha. As there are many things which at first glance



seem to not be applicable to a modern monk or nun, Venerable Guo Jian helped me to understand how it has been adapted in modern times. Ven. Guo Jian was very patient, and gave me much encouragement. Yet, he was very good at giving me a push when I needed it. He sometimes was quite cutting and sharp when addressing my attitude or behavior as a student, and as a monk. He did not hold back his opinion of what he felt I needed to work on. "You know, you need to relax a bit more. It seems whatever you do, there's a kind of inner tension. Do you know that? It shows in whatever you do. It may make other people tense."

At first, I was taken aback by this and other such remarks. However, I recognized his good intention and was grateful that someone was telling me these things. I may not have always agreed, but his observations caused me to reflect on my attitude and behavior. It helped me see my arrogance, which tended to appear when I was in a more comfortable situation. And it just so happens that the sutra addressed these things, which made the impression all the more deep.

Later on, due to his schedule and work, we weren't able to finish the sutra. However, the few months of classes which I had with him were instrumental in providing me with a

foundation for the future, when I would read other Chinese translations of sutras. Reviewing and discussing the *Bequeathed Teachings* sutra with him gave me some familiarity with the common terms and phraseology of sutras in general. Afterwards, I could pick up any sutra, and at least have a general grasp of the meaning. This was truly something magical.

I was filled with Dharma joy to be able to access the abundance of Dharma contained in the Chinese Tripitaka, which numbers close to

"I WOULD OFTEN FIRST THINK OF WHAT WAS MOST INTERESTING TO ME AND CONSIDER DOING WHAT WAS MOST EASY AND LEAST TIME CONSUMING. BUT HIS QUESTION WOULD ALWAYS BE, 'WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE STUDENTS NEED AT THIS TIME?' THIS WAS VERY MOVING TO HEAR, AND IT STUCK WITH ME. WHEN PLANNING THE GROUP'S ACTIVITIES, AND EVEN MY OWN RESPONSIBILITIES, THAT QUESTION RESOUNDED IN MY MIND, 'WHAT DO OTHERS NEED?'"

100 volumes of dictionary-size books. Finally, I could begin to read the text that I began my study of Chan with—the *Platform Sutra*, a revered scripture created from the recorded teachings of the Sixth Patriarch of the Chan school, Master Hui Neng. Not only that, I had

the chance to now re-translate and re-understand all that previously seemed unfathomable. This sutra study experience was the key which opened the door to the vast ocean of Dharma. I was very grateful to Venerable Guo Jian for his teaching and guidance. Even today, when I read the *Sutra of Bequeathed Teachings of the Buddha*, the memory of those classes and what I had learned still remains very clear. But this was only the beginning of entering into the ocean of Dharma. There still remains an infinite storehouse of wisdom to be discovered.

The Past

*News from the Chan Meditation Center,
DDRC and the DDMBA Worldwide*

Chan Meditation Center Expansion

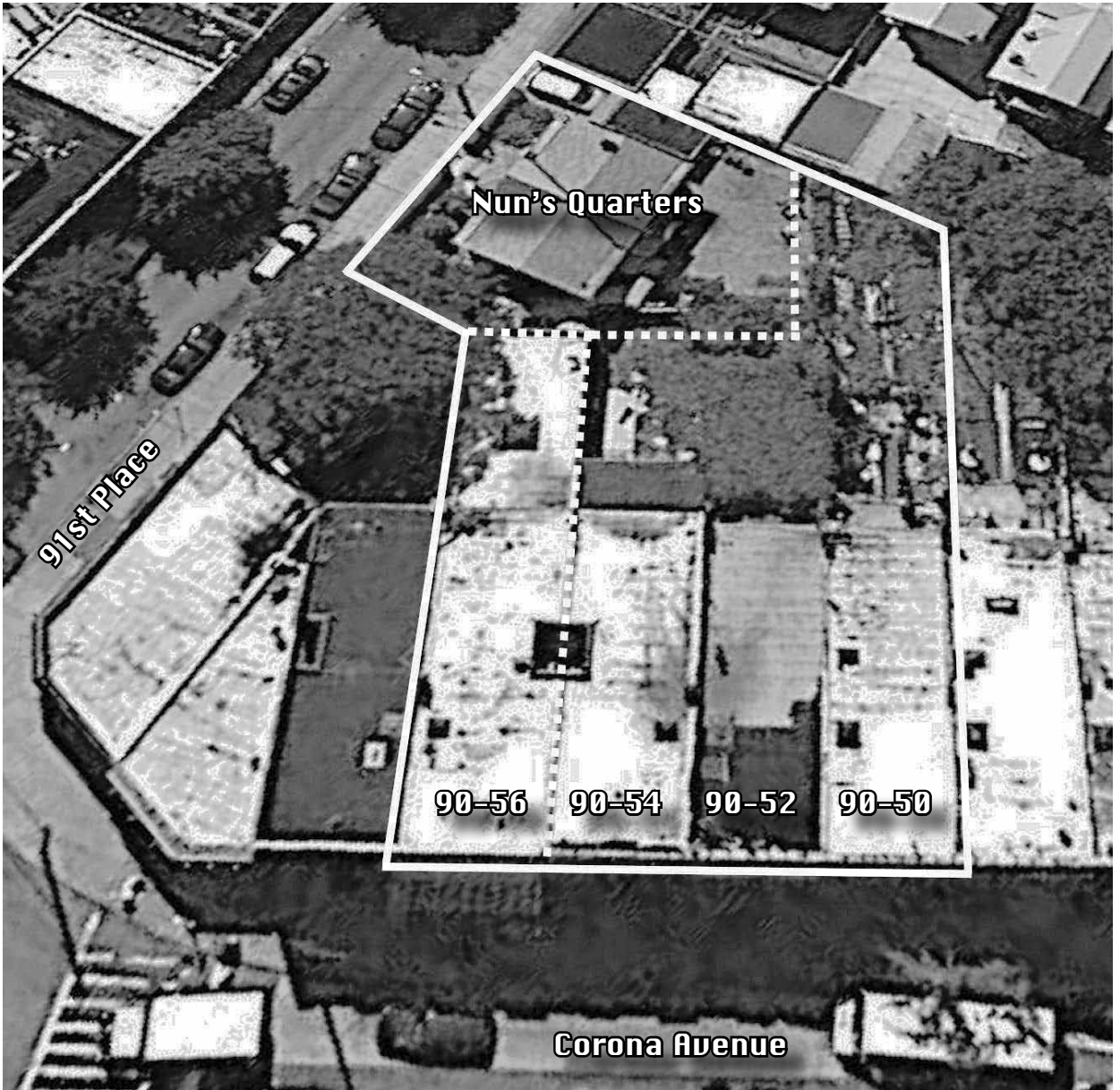
The Chan Meditation Center (also called Dongchu Chan Monastery in honor of our Grandmaster) officially opened on Buddha's Birthday in 1981, attracting over a hundred people. The original location was a small two-story building on Corona Avenue in Elmhurst. A few years later we moved just across the street to our current location at 90-56, and later purchased an adjoining house to use as our nun's quarters. Because our numbers have grown, CMC has been fundraising for many years for a bigger center. After Shifu passed away in 2009, many of our followers from all over the world asked

us to keep the current location at 90-56 Corona Avenue because of its historical value, rather than move to a new location. Fortunately, opportunities came to expand the current property. We are happy to announce that CMC now includes our next three neighboring buildings—90-54, 90-52, and 90-50. Thanks to the efforts of many people, we will finally have enough space to provide for the needs of our congregants. Our next stage will be renovation of the existing buildings and construction of a new Chan Hall. Thank you very much for your support, and we are looking forward to seeing you here.

Ven. Chang Hwa
Director, Chan Meditation Center



Satellite View of Expansion



DDMBA Los Angeles Has a New Center

Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) is happy to announce the opening of a new center. DDM monastics and lay followers have been looking for a permanent property in the Los Angeles area since early 2010, and they finally found one in June 2011. After a partial renovation, the center was officially opened on May 27, 2012 by DDM Abbot President Guo Dong in a special ritual ceremony which included the unveiling of the Buddha statue.

The center is located at 4530 North Peck Rd, El Monte, CA 91007. The neighborhood is primarily Hispanic with a growing Chinese community. The 1.5-acre property was originally a Presbyterian church. It includes five buildings, most them built in 1960. The largest has two stories and houses the Kitchen, Dining Hall, and a Meditation Room. Another two-story building houses the Reception Hall, Book Store, and offices. One large single-story building has been renovated into the Grand Hall. There are also two garages and a large parking lot. Below is one view of the Los Angeles chapter's new center.



DDM Children's Summer Camps

DDM World Center for Buddhist Education hosted a 4-day summer camp in July; 150 children attended.

Da An Branch Office of DDM in Taipei City held a 2-day children's camp in July at Taipei's Da An Forest Park.

Peace of Mind Relief Station of DDM Social Welfare and Charity Foundation in Jiaxian City of Kaohsiung hosted a 3-day summer camp for 100 financially disadvantaged teenagers living in remote villages.

DDMBA-New York held a 5-Day Family Chan Camp in August at DDRC. Though the families were together for meals and sleeping, for most of the day adults and children participated in separate events.

The core idea of these camps is "Protecting the Spiritual Environment". Activities include exercises such as walking while holding a water bowl, to introduce the children to the concepts of focus and mindfulness. Through specially organized games they are inspired to learn to care for others, and to experience the mindful peace that will help them acquire wisdom.

Loving Kindness Photo Contest

On May 20, 2012 CMC held a photo contest to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Master Sheng Yen's teachings on "Protecting the Spiritual Environment". The theme of the contest was "Spreading Loving Kindness". The First Place and People's Choice winners were featured in our last issue. Here we present six more of the ten finalists. The remaining finalists will appear in our next issue.

Peter Lin is a dharma teacher in training at CMC. His wife Joanne Chang introduced him to CMC; he came for the first time in 2000 and took refuge with Shifu. He started to become a bit more involved around 2003, when he went to his first retreat at DDRC. Two of Peter's photos were chosen as finalists.

Spreading Love in South Africa

Taken while doing relief work in South Africa. The elderly patient had been abandoned by her daughter after suffering a stroke. Her bed was soiled with urine and feces but the local volunteer was not affected by the odor and filth. She lovingly cleansed the patient's body and the environment.

Peter says:

"The local volunteer is an excellent example for all of us. She also lives in a very poor neighborhood; her husband had passed away a week before the photo was taken. She demonstrates the idea that happiness and inner peace are generated within, not outside of us."



Preparing a Caring Environment for Fellow Retreatants

Taken at DDRC during an Intensive Huatou retreat last winter. Peter was the timekeeper and he persuaded the supervisor to allow him take some photos, to use photography to share the dharma with Westerners.

Peter says:

"I took it because I always aim to take photos that express the spirit of Chan. As Master Bai Zhan said, 'One day without work, one day without a meal.' This photo expresses that feeling. The spirit of Chan is the cultivation of great compassion. Our Shifu said, 'The purpose of life is serving.'"





Holding the Heart in the Palm of a Hand

By Edith Chuang

Edith had her first 7-Day Chan Retreat in 2010. In 2011 she went to Sichuan as a DDM volunteer to help earthquake victims. There she visited a mountain village to interview a student who was to receive a DDM scholarship. He lived with his grandmother who supported him.

Edith says:

“The old woman complained about nothing for her hard life; optimism gave her strength. Just for a moment during the interview, I saw the hand of the elder take hold of the hand of the younger. One hand was wrinkled whereas the other was smooth. I felt truly warm and peaceful at that time.

When the hands open to hold each other, they both give and receive the heart in the palms of their hands. It’s loving kindness!”

Side By Side

By Jessica Ho

Jessica is a friend of Leonard Cheng, a long-time attendee of CMC. This photo of the photographer and two friends was taken in March 2012 in Pijal, Ecuador during a class trip.

Jessica says,

“Life is a long journey. With the love and trust of our family and friends, we can climb the tallest mountains and cross the deepest gorge. Memories are built when we are side by side.”



Rocker

By Aichen Lin

Aichen says:

"This photo is of a bride and her baby. The couple married after a nine-year relationship with each other. Although their parents were against the marriage, the couple remained in a committed relationship and finally married. The baby's gesture suggests the changing modern attitudes of family and relationships in Chinese culture."



The Love Between Grandpa and Grandson

By Wan-Ting Lu

Wan-Ting took this photo in her home a year ago. The old man is the boy's great-grandfather.

Wan-Ting says:

"This is my grandfather and my nephew. This photo shows the true feelings of four generations! The great-grandfather's eyes are full of love and affection for the child; the child looks firmly back at his great-grandfather, showing the most sincere and meticulous love!"



The Future

*Retreats, classes and other
upcoming events*

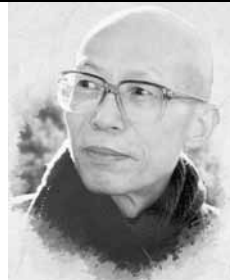
“Zen & Inner Peace”

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

(845) 744-8114 - ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org - www.dharmadrumretreat.org

DDRC holds a variety of Chan practice activities, including weekly group meditation, Sunday services, beginner's meditation classes, as well as beginner's, weekend, intermediate and intensive Chan retreats. Novices and experienced practitioners are all welcome at DDRC. 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.

Regular Weekly Activities

Thursday Evening Meditation

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Sitting, walking, moving meditation and Dharma talk.

Sunday Service

10:00 am - 12 noon

Sitting, walking, moving meditation, chanting and Dharma talk.

Special Events

Family Weekend Activity

Saturday October 6 - Sunday October 7

Retreats

1-Day Retreats & Children's Program

Led by Ven. Chang Wen

Saturdays, October 6, November 3, December 8

Western Zen Retreat

Led by Simon Child

Friday October 12 - Wednesday October 17

3-Day Retreat

Led by Ven. Chang Wen

Friday November 9 - Saturday November 11

10-Day Intensive Silent Illumination Retreat

Led by Simon Child

Friday November 23 - Sunday December 2

7-Day Intensive Huatou Retreat

Led by Ven. Chang Wen

Wednesday December 26 - Tuesday January 1

Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in Elmhurst, Queens, NY
(718) 592-6593 - chancenter@gmail.com - www.chancenter.org - www.ddmba.org

Regular Weekly Activities

Monday Night Chanting 7:30-9:15 pm
Last Monday of each month
Recitation of the 88 Buddhas' names and repentance.

Tuesday Night Sitting Group 7:00-9:00 pm
Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, dharma sharing, recitation of the Heart Sutra.

Saturday Sitting Group 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Sitting meditation and yoga exercises

Classes

(Pre-registration advised for all classes.)

Beginner's Meditation Class I & II
Saturday October 6 & 13, 9:30 am - 12:00 pm

Intermediate Meditation Class
Led by Dr. Rebecca Li
Saturday November 17, 9:30 am - 3:00 pm

Dharma 101: The Four Noble Truths
Led by Bill Wright
Saturday, November 10 & 17, December 1
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Taijiquan Classes with David Ngo
Thursdays 7:30 - 9:00 pm - ongoing
\$25 per 4-week month, \$80 for 16 classes
First Thursday of the month is free for newcomers.

Saturday Night Movies

7:00-9:30pm with Lindley Hanlon
Screenings and discussions of movies.
Check website for dates and film description.

Special Events

Compassionate Samadhi Water Repentance
(Recitation in Chinese) 9:00 am - 5:00 pm
Tuesday January 1 - Wednesday January 2

Retreats

(Pre-registration advised.)

1-Day Harmonious Relationship Workshop
Led by Dr. Rebecca Li
Saturday October 20, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

1-Day Meditation Retreat
Saturday, October 27, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

In-House Thanksgiving Retreat
Saturday November 24 & Sunday November 25
9:00 am - 5:00 pm *Free; donations welcome*

1-Day Right Eating Workshop
Led by Dr. Rebecca Li
Saturday December 8, 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

In-House Reflection Retreat
Saturday December 22 & Sunday December 23
9:00 am - 5:00 pm *Free; donations welcome*

Chan Meditation Center (CMC) Sunday Open House

Sunday Schedule

10:00 am - 11:00 am Sitting Meditation
11:00 am - 12:30 pm Dharma Talks
12:30 pm - 1:00 pm Food Offering
1:00 pm - 1:45 pm Vegetarian Lunch

Chanting and Recitation

1st Sunday: 2-3:30 pm Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service
2nd Sunday: 2-4:00 pm Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony
3rd Sunday: 2-4:00 pm Earth Store Bodhisattva Chanting Service
Last Sunday: 2-3:30 pm Bodhisattva Precept Recitation Ritual

Dharma Study Group

(Every 2nd and 4th Sunday.)

1:45 pm -3:00 pm
Led by Harry Miller and Bill Wright

(Please note: If there are five Sundays in the month, there will be a Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service on the 4th Sunday.)

Sunday Dharma Talks: Please check website for speakers and topics

Chan Center Affiliates

Local organizations affiliated with CMC and DDMBA provide a place to practice with and learn from other Chan practitioners.

If you have questions about schedules, activities or publications you may find useful information at one of our affiliates near you.

New York - USA Headquarters

Chan Meditation Center (CMC)

Home of:

- *Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA)*
- *Dharma Drum Publications*
- *Chan Magazine*

90-56 Corona Avenue
Elmhurst, NY 11373
Tel: (718) 592-6593
Fax: (718) 592-0717
ddmbausa@yahoo.com
www.chancenter.org
www.ddmba.org

Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC)

184 Quannacut Road
Pine Bush, NY 12566
Tel: (845) 744-8114
ddrc@dharmadrumretreat.org
www.dharmadrumretreat.org

Taiwan - World Headquarters

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
webmaster@ddm.org.tw
www.ddm.org.tw

Dharma Drum International Meditation Group

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

Nung Chan Monastery

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

NORTH AMERICA

Canada

Toronto

DDMBA Ontario
Contact: Angela Chang
ddmba.toronto@gmail.com
www.ddmba-ontario.ca
Tel: (416) 855-0531

Vancouver

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

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Chacala, Nayarit, Mexico
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<p>Sydney Contact: Agnes Chow agneschow323@hotmail.com Tel: 61-4-1318-5603</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Singapore</p> <p><i>Singapore Liaison Office</i> No. 10 Second Avenue, Singapore 266660 Contact: Ms. Yeh Yin Shia Tel & Fax: (65) 6469 6565 Cell: 9745 6565. ysyehsg@yahoo.com.tw</p>
Hong Kong		
<p>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</p>		

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<p>Dharmaaloka Buddhist Center Dordiceva 23 10000 Zagreb, Croatia Tel/Fax: ++385 1 481 00 74 info@dharmaloka.org www.dharmaloka.org Teacher: Zarko Andricevic <i>Ongoing program of study and practice, including courses in Buddhism and Chan meditation, meditation group meetings, and retreats.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Switzerland</p> <p>Zurich Teacher: Max Kalin (Guo-yun) Tel/fax: 411 382 1676 Mobile: 4179 416 8088 Email: MaxKailin@chan.ch www.chan.ch</p>	<p>London 18 Huson Close London NW3 3JW, England Tel: 44-171-586-6923</p>
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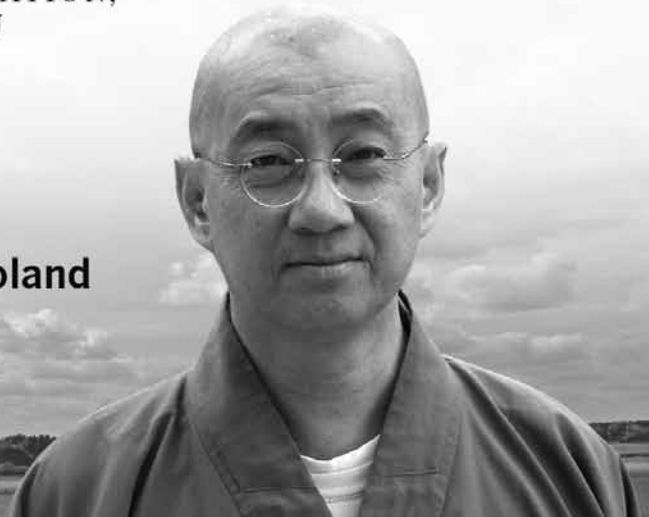
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