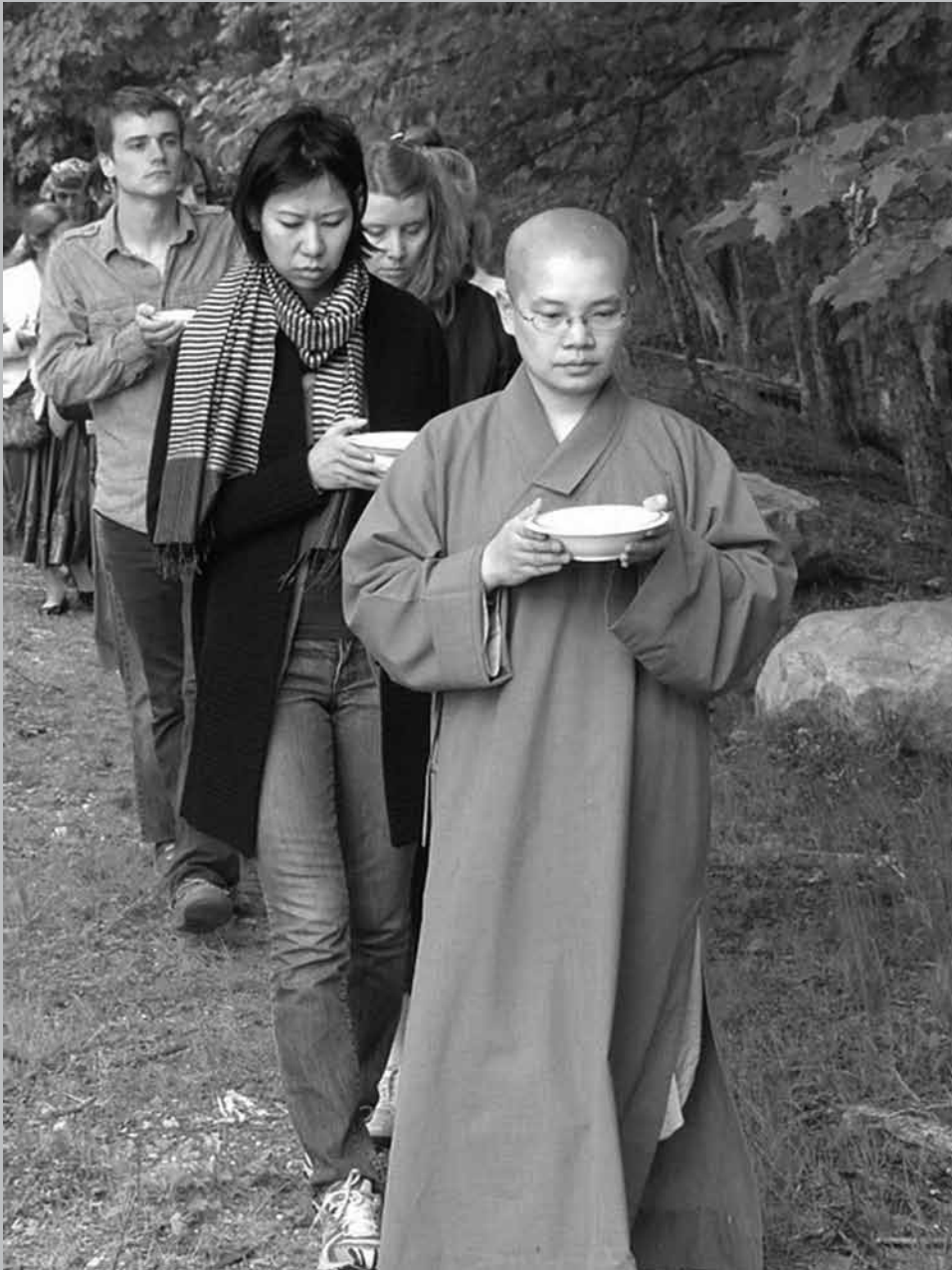


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CHAN MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2013



“Is there any place, anything that we do that is absolutely secure and safe? No. There is no such thing, there is no such place, and all we can do is to keep this calm mind.

Is this useful to you?

What is it useful for?

I am here to remind you not to have this attitude: ‘I’ll wait until the disaster happens, and then I’ll do sitting meditation.’ I tell you, there will be no way you can settle your mind. It’s important that you practice now, in your daily life—practice settling and calming your mind. That way when a crisis happens, you’ll be in a safer place with this practice already under your belt. If you do come down with a serious illness, if you can maintain a calm and peaceful mind you will get well sooner. Don’t wait until illness gets to you, thinking ‘Oh, I know the method already, so I’ll wait until I get sick and then I’ll do sitting meditation.’ It won’t be useful then.”

— Chan Master Sheng Yen
Elmhurst, New York
April 25, 2003



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Directly Practice “No Mind”

by

Chan Master Sheng Yen

An excerpt from a lecture given by Chan Master Sheng Yen to the monastic sangha at Dharma Drum Mountain, Taiwan, on June 17, 2007. Translated by Ven. Chang Wen and edited by Antonio Hsieh.

Today, I would like to introduce to everyone how we can practice Chan in the midst of daily life. The practice of meditative concentration (*Ch. chan ding*) can be divided into 4 stages: one begins with having a scattered mind, and goes on to a concentrated mind, then to a unified mind, and lastly no-mind. However, the Chinese Chan School’s approach is to make an effort to go directly to the fourth stage. It doesn’t matter whether or not one previously has a concentrated mind, or a unified mind; one directly begins with no-mind. We all know that a scattered mind is when there are many wandering thoughts. We begin the practice from this scattered mind, and then we skip over the middle stages of the concentrated and unified mind, to directly enter into no-mind. This is called the Chan of “sudden enlightenment.”

How is it possible to attain no-mind by skipping over the states of concentrated and unified mind? The ancient worthies—the Chan Masters of the Tang Dynasty, all the way up until Venerable Master Xuyun—all spoke in this way and advocated this method.

The method can be divided into two levels; the first is a state of “scattered mind.” In this state our mind is simply deluded. We may feel that we are not working on the method, or that we are unable to gain any strength from the method. At this point, what should we do? Even a person who is unable able to count the breath, simply unable to calm the mind down, can directly practice no-mind. This refers to:

*“When thoughts arise,
just be aware of them;
with awareness of the thoughts, they vanish.”**

At all times, one can practice in this way. What is the meaning of “when thoughts arise?” Right now, your scattered mind is the deluded mind, which is just wandering thoughts. These thoughts rise and fall in a flurry in the mind, as you’re thinking in a very random and chaotic way. We call this “wandering thoughts flying about in disorder.” In this state, we are not aware that they are wandering thoughts; we just know that we’re unable to settle down our mind.

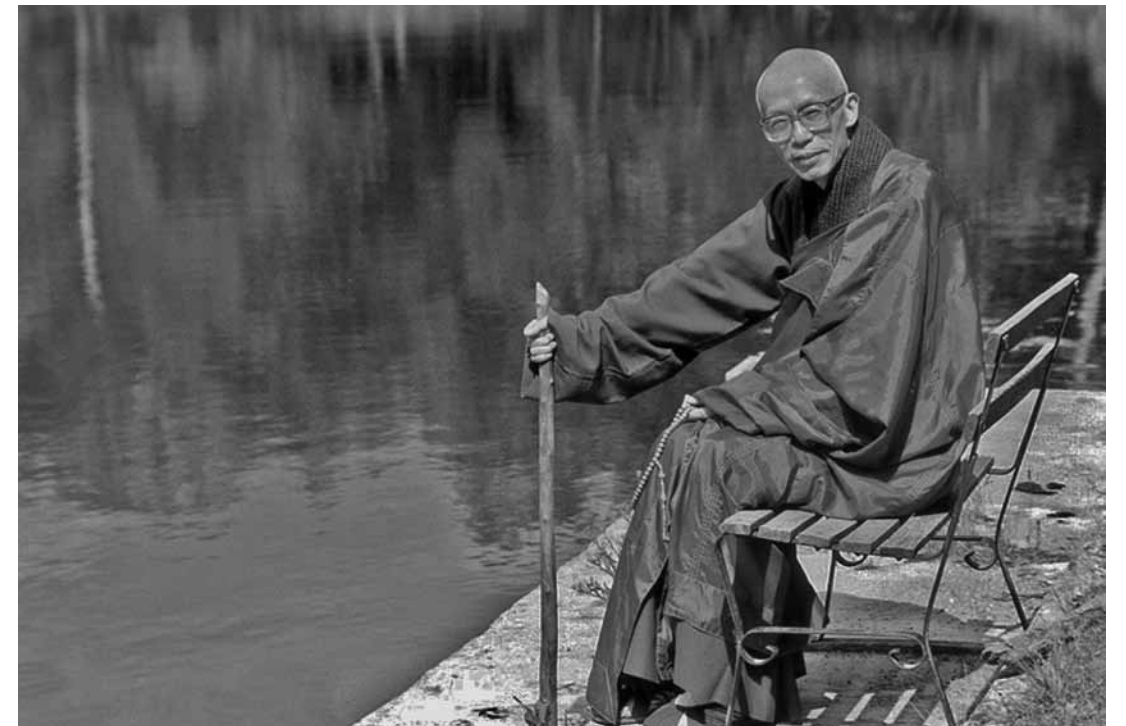
*This quote can be seen in a variety of places within the Chan records. Some notable texts are “*The Three Principles of Chan*” by Master Zongmi, “*Contemplating Mind*” by Master Hanshan, and “*A Guide to Sitting Chan*” by Master Changlu. They all have the same general meaning, with slight variations in the words: with awareness of [deluded] thoughts, these thoughts vanish instantly.

We should be aware that they are wandering thoughts, aware of how they arise or appear. We pay attention to the wandering thoughts, and know what we are thinking about. When we are not paying attention, when we don’t care about them, these wandering thoughts continue on forever. Yet, once we are mindful of how the thoughts arise and what kind of thoughts they are, they immediately stop. This is what “with awareness of them, they vanish” refers to.

“When thoughts arise, just be aware of them” refers to being aware that there *are* wandering thoughts. When we are aware that there are wandering thoughts, we will have immediately departed from them, and thus at that time, they’ll no longer exist. We should practice this way at all times. However, it’s not possible that as soon as we practice we’ll get enlightened. Rather, we

should practice ceaselessly. Whenever there are wandering thoughts, just know about them and don’t bother with them. When the next thought appears we should just say again, “I know these are wandering thoughts, and I’m not going to follow them.” In this way, you’ll have pulled yourself away from these wandering thoughts, and will have left them behind.

At the next moment, if wandering thoughts still appear, you should continue to use this method of “when thoughts arise, just be aware of them.” Know that these are wandering thoughts, and then immediately leave them behind. If when you have wandering thoughts you are continuously wallowing in them, neither wanting to be aware of them nor wanting to depart from them, then you’ll forever be amidst these wandering thoughts, without hope of leaving them behind! So when



there are wandering thoughts, we should practice “When thoughts arise, just be aware of them; with awareness of them, they vanish.” This is the first level.

The second level is “To depart from all thoughts, and let go of all entangling conditions.” Since at all times you are aware of these wandering thoughts and let go of them, you would not be wrapped up in them or pulled along by them. This is “When thoughts arise, just be aware of them.” After becoming aware of them, we should not get involved with them, thinking, “What was I just thinking of? I wonder if I’ll think of it again...” Don’t bother with any of this; just leave wandering thoughts alone. At this time, just “let go of all entangling conditions;” let all inner and outer circumstances be. In this way, you’ll very quickly enter the state of no-mind.

Because you have already let go of all conditions, you are able to not generate wandering thoughts; not generating wandering thoughts, you are able to let go of all conditions. So the thoughts that were previously in the mind are gone, and the grasping mind is not generated. Since there are no wandering thoughts or grasping, the following thought would not arise. At this time, one would be in a state of no-mind.

In this condition of no-mind, the previous mind does not exist and the following mind will not arise; there are no thoughts—no scattered thoughts and no wandering thoughts. This condition is a shallow no-mind state.

Well, this is “sudden practice, sudden enlightenment!” Everyone hopes that they can attain sudden enlightenment through sudden practice, but they didn’t know that there is such a Dharma gateway. Usually we are wallowing amidst our many wandering thoughts, completely unaware of them, and do not want to depart

from them. In that case, there is no hope of enlightenment.

When neither the previous thought arises nor the following thought is generated, this is “no-mind.” This just means that when the previous thought does not arise and no wandering thoughts are generated, then let go of all conditions so no wandering thoughts are generated. Venerable Master Xuyun gave this state just such a name, called “Without a single thought arising, let go of all conditions.” When not even one single thought arises, you once again have let go of all conditions.

“All conditions” means that in the following moment you again start thinking of this and that, and again other thoughts appear. So if thoughts appear again, what should we do? Just start again from the first level, “When thoughts arise, just be aware of them; with awareness of them, they vanish.” Then follow with “Without a single thought arising, let go of all conditions.” Ceaselessly, incessantly utilize these two levels of practice.

When there are wandering thoughts, we cannot say that this is “without a single thought arising,” because thoughts have already arisen. Yet when one is able to discover that there are wandering thoughts, these thoughts will immediately disappear. For example, when we see darkness, maybe we don’t know that it’s darkness. However, when we turn on the light, we immediately know what darkness and light are. As soon as the light appears, darkness disappears; this amounts to “with awareness of them, they vanish.”

*“When thoughts arise,
just be aware of them;
with awareness of them, they vanish.
Without a single thought arising,
let go of all conditions.”*

If we practice like this continuously and ceaselessly in our daily lives, we would be practicing Chan.

When practicing meditative concentration (of gradual stages) there’s a definite process. Yet, Chan is the sudden approach to enlightenment; there’s no mention of any method for cultivating meditative concentration. For example, the levels of “scattered mind,” “concentrated mind,” “unified mind,” and “no mind,” are stages that I designated. The ancestral masters of ancient China did not speak of any methods where one progresses level by level. Nevertheless, I have found that the cultivation of these eminent masters is actually not without levels.

Their levels of practice began with “When thoughts arise, just be aware of them; with awareness of them, they vanish.” Afterwards, when thoughts again arise, immediately become aware of them. Then they will cease. When there aren’t any thoughts in your mind, as in “without a single thought arising,” just don’t give rise to any other thoughts. At this time, you are not grasping at anything or any condition, because as soon as you grasp at any condition, thoughts arise. This is the method with which Masters from the ancient times all the way up to Venerable Master Xuyun taught people.

Now I want to tell you all: this is what we should strive to practice in daily life. However, in order to practice this, we don’t always have to be sitting on the cushion in the Chan Hall.

We know that throughout his life, Venerable Master Xuyun didn’t spend a very long time in the Chan hall. Since he embarked on the spiritual path, he devoted most of his time to practicing austerities, traveling on foot, reconstructing monasteries, and extensively delivering sentient

beings. There are not many records of him actually residing in the Chan Hall. There’s also Master Laigu of Gaomin Monastery in Yangzhou, who spent his life dedicating himself to the building of monasteries and maintaining places of practice, all for the sake of sentient beings. Chan Master Baizhang advocated “A day without work is a day without food.”

To practice Chan, we don’t have to be constantly doing sitting meditation, all day and night, or all year long. In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, when Shariputra was deep in the woods sitting peacefully in meditation, Bodhisattva Vimalakirti scolded him saying, “Your meditation is useless.” In the history of the Chan school, this kind of story has been evolving ever since, as the periods before and after Chan Master Mazu Daoyi there were many instances where people were scolded for sitting in meditation. However, the example in the *Vimalakirti Sutra* is the best.

Listen, everyone, don’t think that you don’t have enough time to spend for sitting meditation. You may think that you’re busy all day, doing this and that, and don’t have any time for practice. Actually, your mind should be unified with the work at hand. Whatever you’re doing, the mind is just doing that—without any wandering or scattered thoughts. If you can do this, then you’d be practicing Chan. If on the other hand, you’re doing one thing, and your mind is doing something else—thinking about all sorts of things in a random and chaotic way—then you’d certainly not be practicing.

When we eat, we just eat; this is practice. When we are working, this is also practice. It’s like what Chan Master Baizhang said, “A day without work is a day without food.” When we are sleeping, this is also practice. Within twenty-four hours a day, there is not one moment that is not considered practice.

If we are ordinarily full of vexations and irritable in our daily lives, always thinking that there's something wrong with other people, and that there's something wrong with this and that, or that we're always being taken advantage of by others, and that other people are in conflict with us—we'd feel incredibly unhappy, almost like we're in hell. This is because we would not be practicing. If we were practicing, no matter what we'd see, it would be pleasing to the eye, pleasing to the ear, pleasing to the mind—we'd be very happy. In this way, we'd really be practicing, otherwise, you'd feel that there's always some kind of contradiction, or discomfort, unhappiness, and feeling of being restricted. In this way, we'd be in a terrible mess.

The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara has another name called "Contemplating Freedom" (*Ch. Guan Zizai*). Although she is incredibly busy, always looking for sentient beings who are suffering and responding to their needs, she is still so at ease, and therefore the name "Freedom" is given to her. For those monastics who really know how to practice, they are truly happy, free, at ease, and full of Dharma joy; taking the bliss of Chan as their nourishment. Therefore, all of you should have confidence that Chan is amidst daily life.



A Verse on Huatou

by Venerable Chi Chern



(一) 生命有疑情
本來面目誰
深心想一探
參透其究竟

(1) *If one wonders about life:
What is my "original face"?
By reflecting deeply
one can thoroughly grasp and realize it.*

(二) 禪宗有善巧
話頭禪是也
傳統禪法外
另闢一蹊徑

(2) *The Chan sect uses skillful means
Of which Huatou is one.
Apart from traditional meditation methods
This path was specially developed.*

(三) 所謂話頭者
一念未生前
生命之本性
亦即法空相

(3) *What's called "huatou"
is [that which is] before thought has arisen;
The basic nature of life
that is, the emptiness of phenomena.*



(四) 話頭乃頓法
但非無次第
話頭之次第
念問參和看

(4) *Huatou is a sudden method
But it's not without stages.
The stages of huatou are:
Reciting, asking, investigating, and watching.*

(五) 先提話頭念
亦可數隨止
念至一心境
心話頭統一

(5) *First pick up and recite the huatou
or count it, then follow it, until achieving stillness.
Recite it until [attaining] single-mindedness
Where mind and huatou are unified.*

(六) 或以觀呼吸
數隨止一心
一心念話頭
話頭心統一

(6) *Or [first] contemplate the breath
Counting it then following it,
until achieving stillness and single-mindedness.
[Then] single-mindedly recite the huatou
so that huatou and mind are unified.*



(七) 話頭心統一
方迴心向內
轉念而為問
漸問出疑情

(7) *With huatou and mind unified
Then direct the mind inwards:
Change from reciting to asking.
Gradually, asking leads to wonderment, or "doubt".*

(八) 疑情非外來
亦非妄念生
心中有疑情
話頭與之應

(8) *Doubt does not come from the outside
Nor does it arise from wandering thoughts.
When the mind has this wonderment
Huatou resonates with it.*

(九) 疑情漸凝聚
深問即為參
疑情凝成團
內斂而猛烈

(9) *Doubt gradually concentrates
and this deep questioning is called "investigating".
Doubt concentrates into a mass
Internally collected and intense.*



(十) 已無文字相
更無時空感
疑團不透風
猶如黑漆桶

(10) *Already without any words
And without a sense of time or space
The doubt mass is stifling
just like [being] in a barrel of black lacquer.*

(十一) 切莫求答案
疑團須參破
桶底若脫落
直接見佛性

(11) *Do not seek for an answer
but shatter the mass of doubt.
If the bottom of the barrel falls off
then directly see buddha-nature.*

(十二) 有情曰佛性
諸法為法性
佛性即法性
法性即空性

(12) *For sentient beings, it's called "buddha-nature"
regarding all phenomena, it's called "dharma-nature"
Buddha-nature is dharma-nature
And dharma nature is empty-nature.*



(十三) 破參見佛性
亦見法空性
自此信不退
勇猛向佛道

(13) *Shattering the question and seeing the buddha-nature
is also seeing the empty nature of dharmas.
From here, confidence does not regress.
Go forth courageously on the Buddha path.*

(十四) 仍然提話頭
自此看話頭
以此而修定
修定養聖胎

(14) *Yet, still picking up the huatou,
from here on "watch" the huatou.
In this way, cultivate stability.
Cultivating stability, nourish the holy womb.*

(十五) 任運自然去
從心所欲去
放任六根去
廣度眾生去

(15) *Functioning freely and naturally,
Doing whatever [is necessary],
Setting free the six senses,
Delivering sentient beings everywhere.*

July 25, 2012

Dharma Drum Retreat Center, NY, USA

Discover the True Mind

by
Abbot Venerable Guo Xing

From a talk given at the Chan Meditation Center on February 13, 2011. Translated by Echo Bonner, transcribed by Lingyun Wang and edited by Buffe Maggie Laffey.

The practice of the methods of Huatou and Silent Illumination is to discover the true mind. According to the Shurangama Sutra, the mind you are using now to listen to my talk is actually the deluded mind, not the true mind. Therefore, whether you think my talk is good or not good—this is all from your deluded mind. You may not understand what that means now, but at least you have heard that this is the deluded mind that you are using. The root cause of the cycle of samsara is that sentient beings take the mind that seizes

upon conditions (deluded mind) as the self-nature. The deluded mind always includes a discriminating mind and discriminable phenomena, which is made up of the six objects—sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts. Since sentient beings take this attaching and rejecting mind as their mind, they have lost their true, wondrous mind of nirvana—the original mind departing from all phenomena.

Silent Illumination practice emphasizes “do not illuminate upon the conditions.” This means that



1) the object that the mind relates to is not the true mind;

2) the conditions or objects in phenomena are irrelevant to the true mind; and

3) the illuminating function of the true mind does not need an object to relate to.

However, since sentient beings are used to attaching and discriminating phenomena they must work hard to return to their original unmoving, and non-attaching mind. When the mind is in a non-dual status, beyond subject and object, we call it enlightenment.

The original true mind is non-dual. Due to a single unenlightened thought (ignorance), the Three Subtle Appearances (ignorance, the subject seeing, and the object being seen) arise. Sentient beings live with this dual mode in every moment of their lives. They cannot see self-nature in the phenomena.

Master Sheng Yen once said, “when the enlightened one sees, she/he sees both self-nature and phenomena at the same time.” Just like a mirror reflecting objects—all the objects are within the mirror. If you seek the Dharma outside the mind, you become an externalist, just like saying that the objects in the mirror are external objects.

Now, a question for you—I am right now talking about the Dharma; am I within your mind or outside your mind? Answer: “Inside.” Everyone knows the standard answer. Through practicing Silent Illumination, we will have the ability to see that people and language are just images in our mind. Silent Illumination means that we don’t attach to or reject any of the phenomena arising in our mind. One stage in Silent Illumination practice is to contemplate totality. In our daily life, when

we interact with people, if we can contemplate the totality of all phenomena within our mind, and are not attached to a particular object, we will be content with any images or sounds arising in our mind without like, dislike or any discrimination.

Master Sheng Yen spoke many times about the phrase “Mind arises without abiding anywhere.” Non-abiding means that mind has no attachment to any sense objects, just as the sun shines on everything, with no discrimination. The sun does not give someone more sunshine, because it likes that person, or that person needs more warmth. Similarly, it will not withhold sunshine, because that person has done many unwholesome deeds. Have you ever seen such a sun? The sun always shines equally in all places with no discrimination.

That is the Chan method that the Caodong School promotes. Pure awareness is equal, while the phenomena vary. However, within the diverse phenomena, there is the equally existing pure awareness. Just as the sun shines equally on everything, pure awareness resides equally in all phenomena without arising or extinguishing. The essence of true awareness is unmoving, so we call it tranquility. The manifestation of true awareness is diverse, moving, rising and perishing. Sentient beings, in attaching themselves to manifested phenomena, lose their true mind (emptiness). The enlightened one is aware of true nature and phenomena at the same time.

The practice of Silent Illumination and Huatou is to return to the original mind. The returning process includes four key stages: 1) no attachment and no rejection; 2) emptiness of all phenomena; 3) shattering of emptiness; and 4) manifestation of true awareness.

The mind originally has no subject, object, empty space or a world. Due to that one deluded thought,

space came into being, then the continuation of the world, living beings, and karmic retribution. We transcend sentient beings from the cycle of samsara to nirvana, which is beyond duality, and beyond space. Enlightenment is to see the emptiness in all phenomena, shattering the empty space, with true awareness present. At that moment, one will realize that no phenomenon is apart from the self, but no single phenomenon is the self. The above is not a word game.

The Chan practice of Silent Illumination and Huatou is to return from the deluded dual mind to true awareness. What is the difference between the two methods? Silent Illumination is based on the enlightened status, where emptiness and awareness are inseparable from all phenomena. The method of Huatou is to investigate "what is wu?" Using Huatou, it is easy for one to recognize external phenomena, then let it go. One continues letting go until the empty space is let go, then true awareness manifests. When the great doubts are shattered, there is no further question about when or how to get enlightened since one is already enlightened.

Huatou differs from Silent Illumination in that Huatou is letting go of phenomena, while Silent Illumination is within phenomena, letting go of the attaching and rejecting mind. The Dharma Drum Lineage of Chinese Chan Buddhism carries on both Silent Illumination and Huatou methods. Master Sheng Yen considered Silent Illumination as the main method, because this Chan method can easily apply to daily life, and can be related to the fourfold foundation of awareness in Theravada Buddhism, and Mahamudra and Dzogchen in Tibetan Buddhism.

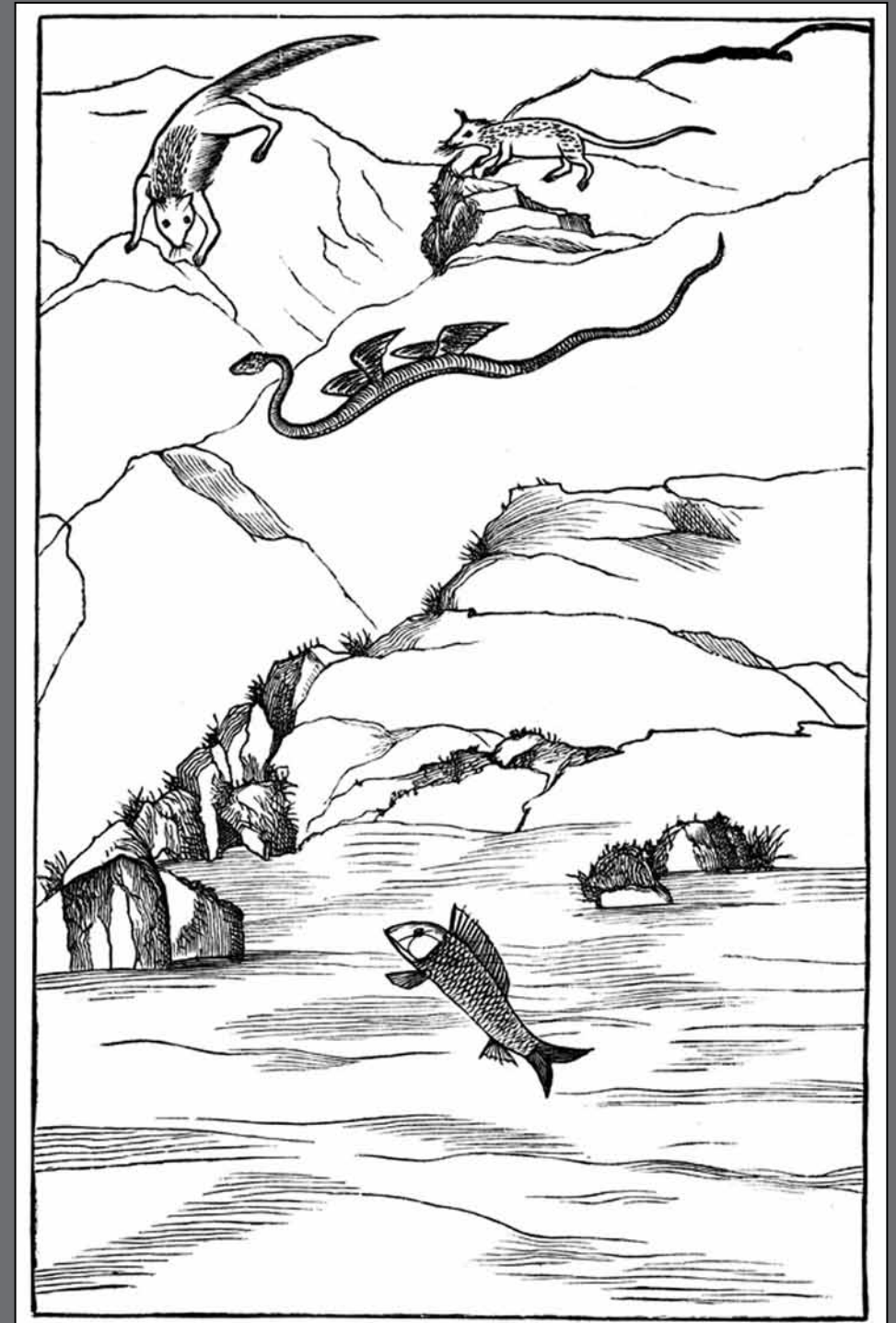
No matter which method is used, it is all about the deluded mind (from the one deluded thought, then, space, world, living beings, and karmic retribution) returning to the original mind (no

karmic retribution, no sentient being, no world, and no empty space). Chan practice is supposed to point directly to the true mind, with no need of gradual practice. If a Chan Master questions you, and with that question, you directly experience the enlightenment status, we call it sudden enlightenment. If you have heard the Dharma for over 10 or 20 years, and have not yet experienced the enlightenment status, we call it gradual practice.

For example, a Chan Master asks, "Where are you from?" You answer, "I am coming from home." This is called gradual practice. If you answer, "No coming, no going," then, the Master says, "You pretend to know the answer." If you kick the Master, it looks like some enlightenment. Then the Master kicks you back. After several interactions, it will be clear whether you are enlightened or not. An enlightened person, at any moment, has the true mind being the phenomena.

In summary, sentient beings take the images in their mind as one's true mind. Some practitioners knew that Shifu had mind-reading power, therefore, they were very much afraid that Shifu would know what they were thinking, so as soon as they saw Shifu, they started to chant the Buddha's name. Do you think Shifu would take your wandering thoughts as you? Only those who have mind-reading power but still take the five skandhas as sentient beings will spy on another's mind. It does not matter if you have illusory thoughts or chant the Buddha's name, the enlightened ones will not take them as you. The picture drawn by the mind is not the mind pen. The mind pen of sentient beings is pure and perfect. Therefore, when an enlightened one sees sentient beings, they see the pure and complete true nature.

If you think my talk today is just so-so, that means you took my words as me. Understand I have not talked about anything at all today.



Work Practice

by

Guo Gu (Jimmy Yu)

A short excerpt from a Dharma Talk given at the 7-Day Gateway to Chan Retreat held at the Dharma Drum Retreat Center in March of this year. Transcribed by Yanming and edited by Buffe Maggie Laffey.

How's your work practice? Is it good? Work practice is very important, ever since the beginning of the Chan tradition, because Chinese Buddhism was persecuted several times in China, very, very badly. The 9th century was one of the worst persecutions; nearly all of the Buddhist traditions perished. Chan survived because it moved to the forest. That's why sometimes Chan monasteries are called "forests"—it comes from that period. Communities gathered together to practice. There were no patrons during this persecution, and everything had to be done by themselves. That's where the saying comes from: "Chopping wood, carrying water is all Chan."

Since that time, this spirit of seeing daily life in the community as practice has been a defining feature of the Chan tradition. This new orientation toward practice was a shift away from both intellectual doctrinal studies and hermitic practice, where individuals would run off to their own solitary retreats. Coming together and practicing, supporting one another—that is Chan practice! So the work practice that we do, that we still promote, has a long history, over a thousand years.

In fact, it's during work practice that most of the people in the Chan tradition got their insights from. Very, very few got their insights from sitting meditation. I can count maybe on one hand how

many Chan masters got enlightened during sitting. Less than five! But in daily life, working?—all the rest of them.

So if you think that working and your daily life is not practice, then you are gravely mistaken. During retreats some people just want to work to get it done as quickly as possible, so they can "do their practice." So they can come here [to the Chan Hall] and do walking meditation, or do more sitting meditation, because that's practice. Yes, that's certainly practice, but I can't fathom why people would skip work so they can sit! What's the mentality of that? Work that actually supports everyone that uses the space, and you don't want to do it? Can you see the selfishness in that?

I used to love cleaning toilets. You know why? Because other people don't want to do it, so I do it. When people go in to the toilet, and see it's clean, they feel at ease. I help reduce one little vexation. My teacher once said to me, "What is the mind for the Way? Use your body like a rag; let your mind be a mirror." What does a rag do? A rag doesn't touch the Buddha statue. It cleans the toilet! Every time we had job assignments, some people would clamor, "I want to clean the Buddha statue, I want to clean the Buddha statue!" I felt, "I'm not worthy. Let me clean the toilet." Places that everyone uses, public space like water station, toilets—they need

to be cleaned. So we clean. We clean that so that everyone can practice at peace. Let me tell you a secret: All the merit that they gain from practicing, from going there and happily using the clean bathroom and public space and feeling at peace, you get a percentage. THAT'S A LOT OF MERIT! You're investing in the best possible things. When you invest, you have to invest in things that everyone uses, that everyone needs. Things that support practice. You see? There's only one Buddha statue to clean, but there are many toilets for practitioners. Now, don't you want to rush to the bathroom and start cleaning?

Practice. Practice. Practice. Someone came to the interview, and he said, "I'm sorry I didn't clean the bathroom good enough." He apologized. I don't

remember saying to him that he didn't clean well enough, but he came in to the interview and said "I'm sorry, but I cleaned it very good today, and I will continue, tile by tile by tile by tile." I said, "Good." That's practice.

We make our environment clean. In that process of mindful work, our mind becomes clean. We're grateful to the environment for providing the opportunity for us to serve and to clean our mind. Thus, cleaning is very important. Being clean is also very important—cleaning our own body and mind for others. Pure mind, in a clean body, practicing in a clean environment. This is what my teacher meant by "building a pure land on earth." That's the Chan tradition. Please remember that.



Painting by Chia-Mei Tseng

Cultivating the Bodhisattva Path At Work

By Rebecca Li

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Most of us have to work to make a living, yet many people dread going to work for many reasons, such as boredom, interpersonal conflict, stress and competition. In our attempt to feel better in our work life most of us try to change the external conditions. Some may keep changing jobs. Others may find distractions outside of work to deal with the stress and pressure. As practitioners, we might explore ways we can apply the practice *while* at work, since running away does not really get to the root of the problem. For those who keep changing jobs, they may find that they get dissatisfied not long after starting the new job. For those who try to forget the problems at work by devoting themselves to other things—family, volunteer work, or hobbies—they may find the same problems still staring them in the eyes every time they go to work.

Observing this, one may realize that perhaps the problem is not external. Dharma practice allows us to turn inward to reflect on how sufferings arise. The bodhisattva path provides us with guidance on how to free ourselves from suffering. In this article, I would like to examine how one can engage in the bodhisattva practice at work.

First of all, I would like to clarify what we mean by cultivating the bodhisattva path—it is an approach to practice which focuses on bringing benefits to others without being concerned with one's own gain and loss. Personal benefit results from such practice; this sounds paradoxical, but not so if we keep in mind that the goal of practice is to lessen self-centered attachment, which is the source of our suffering. As long as we put ourselves before others, see our needs as more important than other people's needs, this self-centered attachment will only strengthen. If, instead, we stop being so concerned with our own desires, comfort, worries and suffering, and turn our focus to bringing happiness to others, we will find that we end up being happier and the worries that were haunting us disappear.

Many of us have probably experienced this in one way or the other. For example, on some days, we wake up feeling pretty lousy because we did not sleep well. Very often, we attach the self to the notion that "I am not feeling well and I am not going to put up with any garbage today." So we set our mind to put our desires and suffering first, expecting others to yield to us, and perhaps



Illustrations by Yiyun Liu

feeling totally justified in being mean and nasty. In this way, the self-fulfilling prophecy begins. We are going to have a lousy day not because we woke up feeling lousy, but because we made the decision to focus on our discomfort at the expense of our concern for others. When we are inconsiderate, others respond in kind, and thus more unpleasant experiences are generated. Or, we can take a different path—the bodhisattva path: We are aware of the headache, but we focus on smiling, being considerate and helpful to others. Then we will find that either the headache disappears by itself, or we stop noticing it; our suffering disappears when we do not dwell on it.

If we are only concerned with bringing benefits to others, we will be motivated to improve ourselves. We will find ways to calm our minds, maintain emotional stability, learn new skills, and try to understand others' points of view, so that we can be more effective in helping others. As a result, without thinking about what benefit we may yield, we are the ones who benefit most from our selfless concern for others. This is how the bodhisattva path works.

How do we go about cultivating the bodhisattva path? The content of the bodhisattva precepts provides some guidance. The three cumulative pure precepts include: refrain from causing harm to others, engage in all virtuous acts, and vow to help all sentient beings. I will go over these precepts one by one in the context of our work life.

Refrain From Causing Harm

The first of the three cumulative pure precepts is to refrain from causing harm to others. This involves, for the laity, upholding the five precepts: not killing, not stealing, not lying, not engaging in sexual misconduct, and not using intoxicants. We avoid getting intoxicated to prevent acting with poor judgment which often results in hurting others. The teachings on right livelihood (part of the eightfold noble path) as explained by both Master Yin Shun and Master Sheng Yen, talk about making a living while upholding the five precepts. Hence, in choosing our profession (an important step in our work life) besides making sure it is legal, the precepts also provide some guidance on what kind of professions practitioners would like to avoid. While perfectly legal, for instance, running a slaughter house would be a profession a practitioner might like to avoid because slaughtering animals breaks the precept of killing. This is an obvious example; there are some more subtle ones. Some jobs appear on the surface to be perfectly in accordance with the precepts until we start working there. For instance, in some jobs that involve selling and promoting products or services, some companies push the salespeople to deceive customers in order to increase sales and profit. Discovering this, a practitioner might like to consider a different job.

This is often a difficult issue to discuss. For one thing, these precepts seem to put practitioners at a disadvantage in our already challenging world. One may complain, "It's not easy to find a well-paying job to support my family. It is simply not practical to narrow my choices to comply with the precepts. Perhaps only some people are fortunate to have such options if they do not have huge student loans to repay or they come from a wealthy family." This is a fair comment and warrants clarification. Precepts are not rules to restrict our behaviors, the



disobedience of which leaves us condemned. Rather, precepts are tools that help us free ourselves from suffering. They provide guidance on how we would like to live our lives so as to refrain from causing harm to others and ourselves. For instance, if our job asks us to convince people to pay for products we know are not good, how would it make us feel inside? We may make a decent amount of money doing so, but deep down, we probably don't feel so proud of ourselves. Such turmoil gnaws at us and may surface as resentment, irrational anger, low self-esteem or insecurity—emotional afflictions that cause us unease or suffering. Our personal happiness is not the only victim. Our performance and effectiveness can also be adversely affected. Consider this: feeling lousy because of this internal turmoil may cause us to treat others poorly and we can feel quite helpless about it. We may get grumpy or snap at our boss, colleagues or clients, who may in turn evaluate us poorly which can cost us our next promotion or even our job. Knowing this, what would be the wise thing to do? It may be a good idea to stop working at this job that involves breaking the precept of lying and look for a job that allows us to sleep well at night.

Observing and upholding the precepts helps us attain peace of mind; breaking them knowingly causes us suffering. The choice is ours. As long as we are willing to suffer the emotional turmoil caused by our actions that cause harm to others, we can choose not to uphold these precepts. There are no precept police out there enforcing these precepts. We are responsible for ourselves. In fact, the practice of upholding precepts is a perfect illustration of how the bodhisattva practice works—the intention appears to be for the benefit of others, yet ultimately, we ourselves benefit the most in the form of inner peace and happiness.

Before we move on, for those of you unfamiliar with the teaching of precepts, I would like to clarify one more thing. The upholding of precepts is our own business, and thus we set the standard to which we are able and willing to adhere and practice accordingly. They are not standards we use to judge and evaluate other people. This is very important. If we do not understand this point, we may misuse the teachings of right livelihood and pass judgments on and discriminate against people in some professions. This is not the purpose of the precepts. Doing so will only generate more vexations and suffering for ourselves.

Engage in All Virtuous Actions

The second of the three cumulative pure precepts is to engage in all virtuous acts. In our practice, it is not enough just to refrain from harmful actions, we also aspire to bring joy and happiness to others. Hence, in our speech, in addition to refraining from lying, using harsh words, engaging in divisive and frivolous speech, we also say things in ways that bring comfort and happiness to others.

I heard a story about a person who teaches the Dharma. When he learned that one of his

students had just been diagnosed with cancer, he thought he would help the student understand the impermanence of life by saying to her, "you are going to die." The student was very hurt. In this case, the teacher was certainly not lying, but what he said did not bring comfort to the student.

This point may seem trivial to some of you, but it is a crucial part of our practice. Master Sheng Yen often reminded us that we should pay equal attention to wisdom and compassion in our practice. If we emphasize wisdom at the expense of compassion, we can become arrogant thinking that we know the truth and become callous in our relations with others, as illustrated in the example just mentioned. If we cultivate compassion without wisdom, we are likely to do things we think are helping others, but because such actions are based on ignorance rather than wisdom, we often end up causing harm and vexations to self and others. An example may help illustrate this point: I used to work with someone who thought of himself as a nice, compassionate person. When students went to him for help because they neglected to fulfill certain requirements, he would bend every rule in the book to make exceptions for them. He believed that he was helping them, but because he was violating policies and procedures, his actions caused everyone else loads of problem. Students became very confused about the policies. While some students who were exempted from some requirements thought he was a great guy, others felt cheated. So, in this case, trying to be compassionate without wisdom caused others a great deal of trouble.

When we cultivate the bodhisattva path by engaging in virtuous actions that bring comfort and happiness to others, we practice putting others' needs and concerns before ours. Wisdom helps us understand what is happening and what needs to be done, compassion reminds us to do the right

thing based not on what we think is right (which is a self-centered attitude) but on what others need most.

When I was department chair about ten years ago, it happened to be an incredibly busy time because the university was restructuring its entire curriculum, and I was often quite overwhelmed. There were a few times when students came to me to ask for help because they had to spend an extra semester as they neglected to take their courses in the correct sequence. I told them that there was nothing I could do and it was their responsibility. Later on, I found out that these students were quite hurt by my refusal to help them. I felt very badly when I heard that. While it was true that their situation was the result of their own negligence and it would be unfair if I gave them any exemptions, I could have expressed more kindness and understanding even though they would still need to stay an extra semester. At that time, I was too concerned about defending my decision enforcing the department's policy. As a result, I neglected how these students felt; they must be deeply worried about the implication of having to graduate late. I certainly could have been more mindful of their agony and expressed my empathy more. It was a good lesson for me; it taught me that being too concerned about myself and my beliefs (in defending how right the department policies are and how I should enforce these policies equally to be fair to all students) had caused me to lose sight of taking care of the feelings of these students whom I cared about. I worked very hard to make the curriculum restructuring go smoothly for them. Yet, I neglected to be kind when I was interacting with them, and very often those moments really matter.

We may take our work so seriously that we become very attached to our way of doing things, believing firmly that we are working for the

benefit of the organization. This belief is actually a form of self-centered attachment. It is relatively easy to spot that we are being self-centered when all we care about is making more money or getting the next promotion. Yet, this other form of self-centered attachment—where we believe strongly that we are doing the right thing for everyone—is more subtle and difficult to recognize. Various forms of practice, such as sitting meditation, that help us settle and clear our mind are useful in self-reflection that sheds light on these more subtle forms of self-centered attachment. While we can remind ourselves to engage in virtuous actions, maintaining a calm and clear mind puts us in a state of being where these virtuous actions come naturally. Hence, if we want to be better at being kind and generous to others at work, practicing some form of meditation to calm the mind is important. When our mind is calm and clear, we are the first to benefit from this peace. If we approach our relationship with people at work in this way, putting their comfort and happiness ahead of our self-centered concerns, many of the interpersonal problems can be resolved.

Let me share another personal example to illustrate this point. There was a period when I was having some difficulty getting along with a colleague of mine. We both care about the department very much but we have different ideas about how to make things better. Things were quite tense between us for a while. One day after a meditation session, it suddenly became clear to me that it must be very stressful for her to be dealing with these departmental problems. I knew it because I had to deal with them in the past. For me to constantly voice very different opinions must have made things even more difficult. I thought to myself, “she too wants to make things better, it's just that we have very different ideas.” So I bought a nice plant in a pot in her favorite color as a gift to show her my goodwill and told her that she was

doing an excellent job. It made her very happy and the tension in our relationship disappeared. Do we still have disagreements? Of course, we do. But we can now disagree in an amiable way, and it makes life at work so much more pleasant for both of us.

Upholding this precept does not mean that we give up our principle, or pander to everyone, or never disagree with anyone at work, or let our subordinates slack off, or let people walk all over us. It merely means that we interact with them in a way that brings them joy and comfort rather than hurtful feelings, even when we are firing someone or giving someone an order or disagreeing with someone in a meeting. Also, when we keep our mind calm and clear, we can listen better which helps us understand the real issues. We are then more likely to be able to find a solution that is satisfactory to all parties. On the other hand, when we are consumed with anger—often righteous anger—at others, it is difficult to see the situation clearly and come up with a satisfactory solution for all.



By this time, some readers are probably thinking, “What she is saying is nice but a bit naïve. Maybe it works in places where things are not so competitive. But there is no way I can be kind and generous and rejoice in others' success in my ultra-competitive, cut-throat corporate world. This bodhisattva practice can never work in my job.” This is an important criticism. It is a common perception that Buddhist practice is only compatible with life in a relatively low-stress, non-competitive environment such as a monastery, and it is not realistic to try to apply these principles of bodhisattva practice in a highly competitive environment. If this is true, then the buddhadharma will become irrelevant soon as our world is only getting more fast paced and competitive with increasing globalization. Since work takes up a significant chunk of our time each day, if the Dharma is not applicable at work, it is not really relevant in our modern world. But is this true?

Master Sheng Yen talked about competing against others versus competing against ourselves. Very often, when we think about competition, especially at work, we are competing against others. It goes along the line of, “I want to have better sales performance than everyone else,” or “I want to be the most popular teacher,” or “I want to outperform everyone else in front of our boss,” so on and so forth. This approach to competition may motivate us to work harder and improve ourselves, but it also causes a lot of stress and suffering. By thinking of competition as me against others, we reinforce in our mind the notion that there is a “me” who is permanent and separate from others. This is an erroneous understanding of the true nature of self, which is actually the result of the coming together of causes and conditions that are constantly changing. When we think of ourselves as separate from others, it is easy to feel isolated. If we add the idea that we are in a “me against others” situation,

it becomes very difficult for us to see how we are actually living in an interconnected world, where other people's efforts contribute to our existence. Think about it, if none of our co-workers did their work, there would be no company to provide us with our livelihood, and we would not be able to pay bills and support our family. Yet, we do not see ourselves as interdependent with others. We, instead, see it as a zero-sum game. If someone else is praised by the boss, I am automatically devalued. If someone else is popular with students or customer, I am by default the less popular one. If someone else makes better sales number, I am automatically the loser. Therefore, we want to beat down others to be the best, and this attitude causes the workplace to be quite competitive.

When we think of competition this way, we allow ourselves and our aspirations to be defined by someone else's performance. If Joe, a colleague, makes \$100,000 more in sales commission than we do, we can get very jealous. It is almost impossible to rejoice in his accomplishments. We would want to do whatever it takes to make more than he does. While this desire to be better than our competitor can be a motivator that propels us forward, if we fail to outdo them, we can become resentful, thinking that the world is unfair. When we are so focused on outdoing our competitor, we may become blind to the causes and conditions that made their success possible and thus fail to assess whether these causes and conditions are present for us.

For example, perhaps Joe is so successful because he is extremely outgoing and can make friends easily, thus allowing him to get many new clients. Do we ask ourselves if we have the same capability? I know someone who only needs to sleep three hours a day. This gives him many more hours to work and be productive. Without the same biological disposition, should I try to compare my level of productivity with his? Because

everyone has very different causes and conditions, comparing ourselves with others often brings unnecessary sufferings.

One might ask, "wouldn't it mean that to avoid suffering, we should forget all about competition and just let ourselves fall behind and become obsolete?" The answer is "no"; if that were the case, then the Dharma would indeed be teaching passivity and complacency and would not be a contributing force to the society. According to Master Sheng Yen, it is not competition per se that is problematic—it is how we approach it. Instead of competing against others, we should be competing with ourselves. When we compete with ourselves, we are constantly trying to improve ourselves, even when we are in a non-competitive environment. When our focus shifts to competing with ourselves, we



will not see others as competitors but instead as the source of help to improve ourselves. For instance, I work in a congenial and friendly department and it is a relatively non-competitive environment. It can easily breed complacency, thinking that doing a decent job is good enough. Using Master Sheng Yen's teaching, I understand that even though I am getting good reviews for my teaching, there is always room for improvement. I find out how my colleagues approach various aspects of their teaching and learn from them in order to improve my teaching. In the process, I enjoy my work more and experience growth and development.

This approach works in a competitive environment as well. When our focus is on improving ourselves rather than defeating someone else, we are much more open to information that helps us make adjustments to improve our performance. This openness helps us appreciate the ability of those around us, who might otherwise have been identified as our "competitors." Hence, competing with ourselves motivates us to improve ourselves and avoid complacency without pitting us against others in our workplace. In fact, it helps us learn from each other more effectively, resulting in our being a more valuable asset to our workplace, thus increasing our chances for advancement. More importantly, we do not need to suffer through the sense of isolation, resentment and jealousy that results from competing against others.

I want to share one more thing I find important in Master Sheng Yen's teachings related to this topic. It is common for practitioners to mistake complacency for contentment. Very often, instead of being overly competitive and ambitious, some practitioners become satisfied with their current level of performance. They see this as "not being greedy" and think that they are practicing well. Shifu warned that this is complacency. Even though we do not seek promotion because it is not

important for us, it does not mean that we should be satisfied with what we can do now and just hum along on auto-pilot mode at work. It would be a mistake to think of that as contentment or a high level of practice. It is actually complacency and laziness. Whatever job we have, we can always find ways to do it better.

Regardless of the kind of job we have and whether there is a boss breathing down our neck, we should continue to improve our performance. This is the attitude of competing with ourselves. In fact, that was how Shifu approached his teaching. Even though everyone always said that his retreat talks were wonderful and perfect, he continued to improve his retreat teaching over the years by experimenting with different things so that he could help more people. Here is another illustration of the bodhisattva path: If our focus is on doing a better job so that those we serve and work with can benefit, we will find ways to improve ourselves, and in the end, we are the one who benefits most from the learning process. Bodhisattva practice is about benefiting oneself while bringing benefits to others.

Vow to Help All Sentient Beings

The third of the three cumulative pure precepts is to vow to help all sentient beings. This part of the bodhisattva precept motivates us to be diligent. Since we have vowed to help all sentient beings, we make use of every opportunity to help others, not just when we feel like it or when it is someone we like. This point is particularly useful for cultivating the bodhisattva path at work. Very often we may not like some of the people we deal with at work. This is one of the most common complaints I hear from people about their work life: "My boss drives me crazy," or "I can't stand the people I work with," or "I hate dealing with the customers." If we remind ourselves of our vow to help all sentient beings, when we complain about someone at work, we are

more likely to ask ourselves, “why am I not helping this sentient being?” This thought often is enough to stop the chain of frustrated and angry thoughts and provide us with the space to give rise to empathy, understanding and kindness, and to find ways to get along with these people and help them.

I know someone who told me that she could not stand her secretary; she would complain about her non-stop. But after a while, she saw that her complaining was destructive. She realized that when she complained about her secretary’s incompetence, she was reinforcing her own sense of pride while suppressing thoughts of empathy and understanding. Not only did she not feel good, these negative feelings came through in her interactions with her secretary, making it more difficult for them to work together. Being a practitioner, she realized that she was clearly not applying the practice when it came to her secretary. This thought got her to stop the frustration and instead see the situation more clearly. She saw that her secretary was being asked to perform tasks that she was not equipped to do, and it was a situation

that they just had to work with. Being aware of that, she learned to give her secretary tasks within her capability and to give her more detailed instructions to help her. More importantly, because she no longer thinks negatively of her secretary, she can treat her with more kindness and appreciate better what she does. As a result, they now have a much better work relationship.

Some people may think of this vow to help all sentient beings as a burden. If we look at it from the perspective of cultivating the bodhisattva path, every person we encounter is an opportunity to practice. In this way, we ought to be grateful for all the difficult people we have to work with because learning to work with them deepens our patience and compassion, and definitely improves our interpersonal skills. Practicing this way, we come to see everyone we encounter at work as bodhisattvas who help us with our practice. When we see that our workplace is filled with bodhisattvas, then our workplace becomes no different from the pure land. When that happens, we will no longer dread going to work.



Retreat Report by D. C.

From kindness, I suggest that those who expect to earn peace and relaxation in the very midst of this busy world by way of meditative retreats, not to read this report. Huatou is not such a method. You can’t understand and accept it comfortably slouched in your armchair in your cozy, warm home, or killing time reading while waiting for someone to call you on the mobile. But, if you are still discomforted by the childhood wish to find out what lies beyond the manifestation of this world, by what is beyond our stories and illusions about us and the world, if your fear of non-existence is greater and stronger than all your other fears together, then you are in the right place reading this.

After three days of travel by trains, cars, and planes we came to a fairytale monastery in Taiwan. Previously called Tao House, it is a beautiful edifice amidst flowers, bamboo, and bonsai trees, surrounded by the sound of water flowing over stone waterfalls and settling in the small fish-pond lakes. With greenery and the singing of tropical birds, it is still in a city, with omnipresent tourists who peek curiously and cheerfully all around, taking pictures.

The schedule of sitting meditation, the daily schedule, the rules of retreat, the introduction... everything was ready for us when we arrived! The retreat began in the best manner of the long tradition and excellent organization left by Shifu, Master Sheng Yen. But once the retreat had started, the heavenly fairytale was replaced by an exciting action movie!

This seven-day retreat, the shortest period available, which did not seem to be that tightly scheduled, turned out to be the longest seven days

in my 63 years of life. The retreat was designed as a block of time with neither a single moment free, nor some space where one could hide, lie low, or surrender to daydreaming the inner story of the Ego-Mind.

The retreat started abruptly, without any warning, with no time lost on introductions or explanations of method, but by teaching us in the most direct, and also the most dramatic way, that the only thing we actually need is what all of us already have within us, even if we do not know it yet: our real Buddha Nature! It was a full day — a tight schedule required of us the uttermost effort during the motionless sittings, which lasted up to an hour and a half. The walking practice even included two “fast-walking meditations,” but in reality it was running up to the edge of exhaustion and even beyond! With the active help of the Guest Teacher and four time-keepers, whose shouts were accompanied by loud slaps of the *kyosaku* (stick), all this created an atmosphere in which the everyday mind quickly lost its self-referential obsession with talking to itself. Existence was direct, here and now! The mind was completely united, even though only through fear — a senseless kind of fear considering that the pain of the *kyosaku* slap was infinitely small compared to the already present pain of our backs and knees.

So how and from where has this fear emerged? To me, it seemed that the root of the fear was in meeting the unknown, the incomprehensible, in the depth of one’s own being — the fear of the premonition of decay of the picture of oneself and the surrounding world — the panic when waking up from a bad dream, we realize that this nightmare is not really a dream!

Imperceptibly, as the retreat went on the fear was converted into the energy of presence, of clear lucidity which grew — to the participant, it became clear that in such consciousness even what is called enlightenment is possible. The conventional, associative way of thinking had stopped, the usual picture of oneself had stopped, and was replaced by the direct sensing of existence, the real existence without any additional attributes, without any additional demands. Anticipation of the end of sittings, the end of running, of eating lunch, of resting, of nights and days had stopped...

And so, one morning while I was drinking my tea in the moment of silence under the morning stars, the last frame of the “Ox-herding Pictures” had manifested to me — the return to the marketplace, empty-handed. I thought I knew that, I’ve understood it “philosophically” a long, long time ago, but this had nothing in common

with philosophy or with my way of understanding. It was clear to me why the understanding of us Westerners (and it seems that things are not better for the Easterners) does not go further than what Guo Ru Fashi called “worldly Chan.” And even though inside myself I was united and holding no doubts, even though my body shimmered with inner joy with such clarity, I am not now able to tell you anything about it, or to write anything...

What was accomplished? If there was an accomplishment, it was the knowledge that the awareness at the end of the retreat could continue, that it could be extended into eternity — only the right shape of the awareness, the true shape of my existence. True existence in one single moment is more important than endless unconscious lives. Existence in even one single moment is enough for a human being to know and to be able to do something. That is the necessary cause and the result at the same time!

The joy and humor appearing in the stories and reports on the closing day scaled down the memories of pain, efforts, shouts, and blows, to a distant faintness. Nonetheless, very serious insights were presented in the stories of those participants who spoke about their experience of a Huatou retreat for the first time. A group photograph was made when we were once again in the paradise of rippling water, bird songs, flower fragrances, and inquisitive tourists trying to find out what was happening.

Visits to the tea shops. Airports, airplanes, continents. A return home into winter. We were welcomed by a large group of Dharma friends eager to sit around us and absorb our first impressions, with cups of tea.

On the train ride home, I succumbed to the accumulated weariness and fell asleep. When I awoke the train had already passed the destination

— my home town! Now from a distance I feel sincere gratitude to all who have made this retreat, and my participation in it, possible.

You have surely noticed that I have not directly mentioned the man whose compassion and wisdom have made this retreat possible. Guo Ru Fashi...is out of reach of my description...like a monumental mountain... To put it plainly and exactly, he simply is not in need of my humble praise or gratitude. But just such attitudes and reasons have made such a difficult retreat feasible. His faith and strength have uncovered so much more self-confidence, perseverance, energy, and audacity than we ever dreamt of having in us. By crossing this invisible boundary of one’s own possibilities, directed by Fashi’s assistance, a man subliminally realizes that his limitations are not from the outside.



Chan Huatou Retreat - Chan Cultivation Center - February 17-23, 2013



Buddha's Birthday

On Sunday, May 12, 2013, the Chan Meditation Center hosted a celebration for the Buddha's Birthday and Gratitude to Mother Earth, to commemorate the birth of Shakyamuni Buddha and Mother's Day. Eight people took refuge in the Three Jewels and received the Five Precepts with Abbot Venerable Guo Xing. A special chanting service and Bathing the Buddha Ceremony was held, where people were invited to bathe a statue of the baby Buddha, a method of purifying the mind. There was also a fundraising bazaar called "Merit Fair."

The Venerable Abbot gave a special Dharma talk entitled, "The Mind, the Buddha, and Sentient Beings—One in Essence." After a vegetarian feast, there was a musical performance by the CMC choir and a theatrical play by children and members of Dharma Drum for Young People. The event was concluded with a guided meditation, "Contemplation of Earth" led by the Venerable Abbot.

In preparation of CMC's renovation and expansion plans, plants from the backyard garden were potted for attendees to take home and care for. These plants will be returned for replanting once construction is completed.



Bodhisattva Precepts

On May 16-19, 2013, Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association held Dharma Drum Mountain New York's sixth Transmission Ceremony of the Bodhisattva Precepts at Dharma Drum Retreat Center. 104 participants from the United States, Canada, Asia and Europe received the precepts. The ceremony was presided over by Venerable Guo Dong—Abbot President of DDM, Venerable Guo Xing—Abbot of DDRC and CMC, and Venerable Guo Qi—Secretary General of DDM Social Welfare and Charity Foundation. A team of monastics from Taiwan and the Chan Meditation Center and a team of lay volunteers assisted.

The weekend included video lectures by the late Venerable Master Sheng Yen on the meaning and significance of the precepts. There was also a purification ritual, repentance practices, dharma talks and rehearsals for the ceremony. On the next to last day a Transmission of the Precepts to the Spirit Realms ceremony was held, where participants invited spirit beings to receive the precepts. On the final morning the participants themselves received the Transmission of the Bodhisattva Precepts. The event concluded with small group sharing sessions and presentations.

Photo by Pamela Shih

E-mail From Bodhisattva Precepts Participant

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude and joy to Venerable Guo-dong, Venerable Guo Xing, Venerable Guo-qi, all of the monks and nuns, and all of the laity and supporters who made possible the recent Transmission of the Bodhisattva Precepts at DDRC in Pine Bush, New York. Thank you for your compassion.

Please know that I am back home safe and that my family is safe. As you may recall, I live Edmond, Oklahoma, which is part of the Oklahoma City metro area. When I was waiting in the Newark airport terminal on Sunday afternoon for my return flight, I was surprised to hear CNN report that a tornado was within about 2 miles of my home. I called my wife, Ling. She and our twin daughters, Sophia and Lara, were hiding in our hallway closet. I could hear the tornado sirens in the background. Our house was not hit and my family is safe. However, the storm continued eastward, damaging homes, and at least 1 person lost their life. The next day, today, another tornado came in Moore (south of downtown Oklahoma City; we live north of downtown), and it hit a medical center, large movie theater, and elementary school. Currently, there are reported fatalities, many of them children from the school.

Please keep Oklahoma, and the people suffering here from the recent tornadoes on May 19th and 20th, in your thoughts, wishing them compassionate Dharma peace and protection.

Amitufo,
Austin Reams

Mr. Reams Bodhisattva

We are so grateful to hear your family and you are safe and well. As Buddhists, we believe the dharma protectors always surround practitioners to keep them safe while they are practicing diligently. Please continue on your practice and we all will transfer merits to the survivors and victims as well as their families and friends.

Best Regards,
Wen-Chiao Peng
Coordinator, Bodhisattva Precepts Ceremony



Photos by Mina Tang



Spring Events at DDRC

Friends and staff of the Dharma Drum Retreat Center (DDRC) welcomed the return of Spring weather with several outdoor events. On April 6 the Children's Program made their second visit to the Catskill Animal Sanctuary (CAS). A 110-acre haven for farm animals rescued from cruelty and neglect, CAS provides innovative programs that educate the public about the sentience of animals, and the devastating impacts of agribusiness and institutionalized cruelty on animals, people, and the planet. The children were given a personal tour by CAS director and founder Kathy Stevens, and met many of the famous animals, including the rooster Poseidon and Buddy the blind horse.

DDRC held its annual Gardening Weekend on April 27-28. Twenty-four lay practitioners received instruction on performing gardening tasks as mindful practice. They helped prepare the grounds for Spring by weeding, mulching, planting flowers, and building a small rock wall. The work was done mostly in silence, or with quiet voices. Fresh fruit was provided for snack breaks. During free time, groups of friends explored the forest trails. In the evening there was group sitting practice and a Dharma Talk.

For Hiking Day on May 4, Chang Wen Fashi led a group of thirty practitioners on a silent hike to VerKeerderkill Falls in Sam's Point Preserve. At 180 feet tall, this is the highest waterfall in the Shawangunk Mountains, which are visible from the DDRC campus. Resting at

the falls, the group enjoyed the view and a picnic lunch, then chatted together in friendly groups on the return hike.

Several families gathered for Family Weekend May 11-12. On the first day the adults attended a One-Day sitting meditation retreat, while the children planted a garden. That evening all gathered for a drumming circle at the Dining Hall's outdoor fireplace. The next day everyone went for walk in the woods and a wade in the stream.

Wildlife at DDRC

The giant snapping turtle known as "The Prime Minister" was spotted sunning himself on a log on one of the first warm and sunny days. This venerable elder has lived in DDRC's lake for many years. He is estimated to be a little over two feet long from his nose to the tip of his tail.

In the wild these turtles have a lifespan of thirty years, and at full growth their shell can be twenty inches in length, so this one is probably only middle-aged.

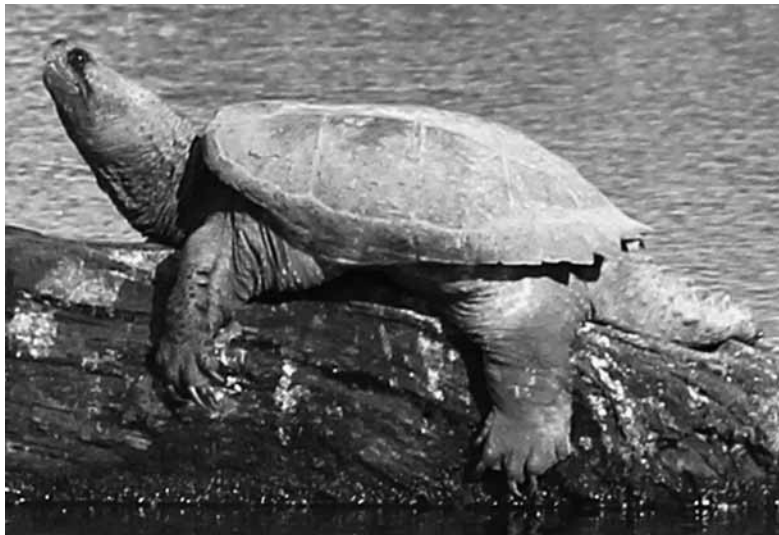


Photo by Taylor Mitchell

During Family Weekend (which coincided with Mother's Day) a litter of five baby raccoons appeared in a hollow tree at the end of the Sangha House driveway, directly across from the Reception Hall. They were very vocal as they climbed up and down the tree and walked around on the ground beneath it. They appeared to be several weeks old, open-eyed, fully furred and very mobile. It is not clear whether they had been born inside the tree; mother raccoons are known to stash their brood in such places while they go off and forage for food. But no mother was seen.



The babies seemed too young to be afraid of the people who came close to them. They never ventured far from the tree. They screamed and cried all that night and into the next day. On the second day local licensed animal rehabilitator Erica Ward-Gonzalez was called. She came and collected



Photos by Ven. Chang Wen

the one baby who was on the ground at that time, and set non-harming traps for the others. The traps were baited with a high-protein peanut-butter based food. That night it rained heavily and was cold and all the babies retreated into the tree. The next morning two of them ventured out to warm themselves in the sunlight, and later climbed down to the ground but showed no interest in the food. They seemed very much weaker and at one point it was feared that one had died, but this was not the case.

Wearing gloves, DDRC staff picked the babies up off the ground and put them into a cat carrier, where they walked all over the high-protein food without eating it. (Obviously they had not been weaned and were in need of the nursing formula Erica was bottle-feeding to their sibling she'd collected the previous day.) Chang Wen Fashi took a ladder and climbed up to the hollow portion of the tree, then gently coaxed and removed the two remaining babies and put them with their siblings in the cat carrier. All are now thriving and happy at Erica's facility, and will be released back into the wild when they are old enough.

The Future

Retreats, classes and other upcoming events

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

“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

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Thursday Evening Meditation	7:00 pm –9:00 pm	Sitting, walking, moving meditation, Dharma talk.
RETREATS		
1-Day & Children’s Program	Saturday Jul 13	9:00 am–5:00 pm Led by Ven. Chang Wen
	Saturday Sep 7	
10-Day Intensive Chan Retreat	Jul 19-28	Led by Ven. Chi Chern
Young People’s Retreat	Sep 13-15	Led by Ven. Chang Wen
3-Day Beginner’s Mind Retreat	Sep 20-22	Led by Rebecca Li and David Slaymaker
CLASSES		
Beginner’s Meditation Part 1	Saturday Aug 24	Led by Ven. Chang Wen
Beginner’s Meditation Part 2	Saturday Aug 31	Led by Ven. Chang Wen
SPECIAL EVENTS		
Hiking Day	Saturday Aug 17	Check www.dharmadrumretreat.org for details.
Family Weekend	Sep 7-8	

Chan Meditation Center (CMC) in Elmhurst, Queens, NY

(718) 592-6593 - ddmbaus@yahoo.com - www.chancenter.org - www.ddmba.org

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Monday Night Chanting	7:30 pm–9:15 pm	Last Monday of each month: Recitation of the 88 Buddhas’ names and repentance.
Tuesday Night Sitting Group	7:00 pm–9:30 pm	Sitting, yoga exercises, walking meditation, Dharma sharing, recitation of the Heart Sutra.
Saturday Sitting Group	9:00 am–3:00 pm	Sitting, yoga exercises, video teachings by Master Sheng Yen
Sunday Open House	10:00 am–4:00 pm	See below

CHAN MEDITATION CENTER (CMC) SUNDAY OPEN HOUSE

Sunday Schedule	10:00 am–11:00 am	Sitting Meditation
	11:00 am–12:30 pm	Dharma Talk
	12:30 pm–1:00 pm	Food Offering and Announcements
	1:00 pm–1:45 pm	Vegetarian Lunch
Chanting and Recitation	1st Sunday 2:00 pm–3:30 pm	Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service
	2nd Sunday 2:00 pm–4:00 pm	Great Compassion Repentance Ceremony Dharani Sutra
	3rd Sunday 2:00 pm–4:00 pm	Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra Chanting Service
	Last Sunday 2:00 pm–3:30 pm	Bodhisattva Precept Recitation Ritual
<i>(Please note: If there are five Sundays in the month, there will be a Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service on the 4th Sunday.)</i>		

RETREATS (Pre-registration advised)

1-Day Retreat	Jul 27	Saturday 9:00 am–5:00 pm
5-Day Recitation Retreat	Aug 12-16	9:00 am–5:00 pm Chant the name of Amitaba Buddha while sitting and walking. Suitable for beginners as well as experienced practitioners.
3-Day Retreat	Aug 31-Sep 2	9:00 am–5:00 pm
1-Day Beginner’s Meditation Retreat	Sep 28	Saturday 9:00 am–5:00 pm

CLASSES (Pre-registration advised)

Beginner’s Meditation Parts I & II	Sep 7 & 14	Saturdays 9:30 am–12:00 pm Led by David Slaymaker
Dharma Drum for Young People (DDYP) Gathering	Every 3rd Saturday except otherwise noted	2:30 pm–5:00 pm. Buddhists and non-Buddhists ages 18-35 are welcome!
Taijiquan with David Ngo	Thursdays	7:30 pm–9:00 pm \$25 per 4-week month—\$80 for 16 classes First class is free for newcomers

SPECIAL EVENTS

Family Chan Camp	Jul 31-Aug4 (at DDRC)	Applications due by July 10 Download application form at www.chancenter.org
Film Viewing and Discussion	Aug 18	2:00 pm–5:00 pm Led by Dr. Peter Lin; check website for film description.

Chan Meditation 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) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association (DDMBA) • Dharma Drum Publications • Chan Magazine 	90-56 Corona Avenue Elmhurst, NY 11373	(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	(845) 744-8114 Fax: (845) 744-4753
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Dharma Drum International Meditation Group	Contact: Antonio Saturdays, 2:00 – 5:00 pm Jiantan Practice Center	02-2893-4646 ext. 6504	contact@ddm.org.tw www.ddm.org.tw
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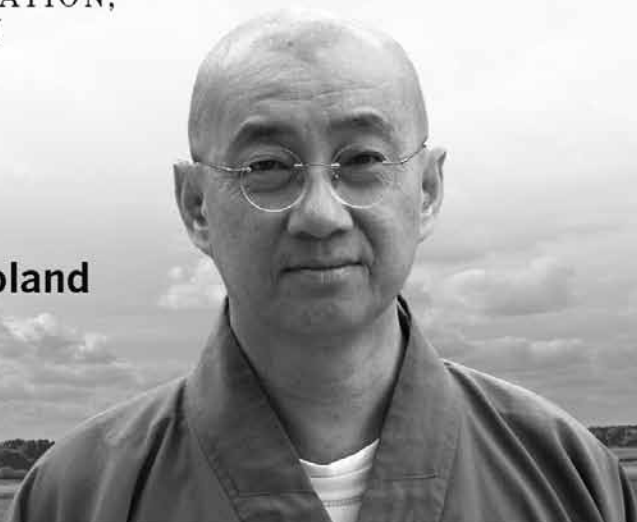
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