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CHAN MASTER SHENG YEN
A Journey of Learning and Insight, 1993

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My Intellectual Autobiography

Life in the Army

BY

Chan Master Sheng Yen

This article is excerpted from Master Sheng Yen's book, *A Journey of Learning and Insight*, originally published in Chinese as “聖嚴法師學思歷程” (*Sheng yen fashi xue si li cheng*) in 1993. As a part of Master Sheng Yen's “Complete Works,” it was translated under the auspices of the Cultural Center of Dharma Drum Mountain by Venerable Chang Luo, Bilingual editing by Venerable Chang Wu, English editing by Ernest Heau.

I Am Still a Monk

WHY DID I CHOOSE the Communication Corps when I enlisted? It was at the suggestion of several officers at the recruitment station. Consider a monk who prostrates to the Buddha everyday, eats a vegetarian diet, maintains a compassionate mind, advocates freeing captive animals, and keeps the precept against killing. Then all of a sudden, he joins the army, becomes a soldier with a loaded gun, stays on guard at the front line, goes onto the battlefield; there, he charges and breaks through enemy lines, and when the two armies confront each other, he opens fire at the enemy, or even engages in close combat. Such cruel slaughter is clearly against Buddhist beliefs. However, other than the wealthy who could pay for air tickets and boat fares to flee Mainland China, the situation was that the only other

easy way to go to Taiwan was to join the army. I had no followers to support me nor any savings, and no sponsoring or consent from my elder masters. So after careful consideration, the only way for me was to enlist. The officers at the recruitment station said that after enlisting enough people, they would immediately ship us all to Taiwan for recruit training there. When they saw that a few of us were monks, and that it was probably improper for us to engage in combat, they suggested that we apply for defense logistic duties.

So it was that we joined the army and put on uniforms. People still called us monks, and the senior officers and fellow soldiers occasionally called us monks. Some did that for fun, while others did it out of caring. To me, being called a monk was a reminder that protected my mind and helped me keep my faith, so I felt very grateful towards those



Master Sheng Yen (1st row 2nd from right) with his fellow soldiers in 1950 DDM Archive Photo

who called us monks. After being promoted and transferred to many different units, I would always take the initiative to proclaim, “I am a monk and will be a monk again!” I did that for ten years until the day I retired from the army. Saying that was quite useful and it saved me many unnecessary troubles and perplexities. Many young colleagues would secretly sneak out in groups to eat, drink, visit prostitutes, and gamble, but did not count me in. During holidays I had some personal time to do advanced studies in Buddhism.

Leaving monastic life and joining the army was the second great transition in my life. When I was a country boy entering the monasteries, I had to pay attention constantly and learn everything wherever I could. At the time I only had one thought in mind, which was to do well what a monk should do, so I had a strong interest in learning. Furthermore, due to my

wish to spread the Dharma, I constantly worked hard to improve myself. Now, aside from living a group life as I did in the monasteries, the entire way of thinking, talking, and doing things was different. The monasteries emphasized “spreading the Dharma and delivering sentient beings,” “precepts and demeanor,” “being pure and sacred.” The army, on the other hand, emphasized “protecting the country and the people,” “military discipline,” and being “fierce and vigorous.” It was difficult to adapt, especially with meals. I had not eaten meat for almost six years. My first meal in the army was at the recruitment station in Shanghai. They borrowed the Machilus Warehouse on Datong Road, and, although the place was huge enough to accommodate a regiment of new soldiers, they packed the place full of people both up and downstairs. And since there weren't enough lavatories, both outdoors and on the deck of the roof,

feces were everywhere. Our dining room was also located in such a place, our rice bowls and dishes placed in the gaps between piles of feces. The food was awful – there were some thin pieces of fatty meat floating on top of the vegetable soup, which almost made me nauseous. It took some effort to swallow and finish one bowl of rice. After every mealtime, even if one's stomach was empty, one always felt a kind of indescribable fear. As a result, some people left after staying only for one day.

However, like most people, I endured it for the time being – we heard that in Taiwan, the corps of young soldiers would receive a new type of education and get American-style equipment. We heard that the training camp there was like a garden and that the life of a soldier was like being a student. On May 19, we finally boarded ship at the dock of Shanghai Bund and after a two-day journey we arrived at Kaohsiung, Taiwan. After riding a roofless freight train overnight, we arrived at Hsinchu and stayed in a glass factory abandoned after the Japanese colonial period. But when we arrived, instead of a garden or a school, the living environment was like this: the surrounding area was encircled by a ten-foot bamboo fence, our coming and going was restricted, and the entrance was strictly guarded. We had two meals a day, and every meal was brown rice mixed with soy sauce soup. We drank muddy well water, slept on straw-covered brick-laid floor, and used straw for cover. Three people shared one cotton blanket. Luckily, when we first came to Taiwan, it was in the warmth of early summer. At the time, other than the guarding platoon that held some old Type Zhongzheng rifles and a few high-ranking officers who had pistols, the whole regiment was unarmed. Every day we had recruit training on the sports field and in the wilderness, with shaved heads under the fierce sun, bare-footed and bare-naked except for shorts.

At this stage a few of the classmates were very disappointed and in agony because they couldn't adjust and found life unbearable. Also, their commanders had transferred them out of the Communication Corps and into the Artillery Corps, so in the dead of night, when everyone was asleep, they escaped from camp and deserted. We chose the Communication Corps because we wanted to avoid opening gunfire and killing with our hands. However, the state of affairs in the army was very difficult to anticipate, and several of the officers at the recruitment station were already gone.

After the deserters left I considered whether it would be better to leave or to wait, stay, and observe for a while. Thus it was that for ten years I stayed in the army, one day after another. This, however, was only partly due to the attitude that when I joined the army I wanted to do my share and was hoping to return soon to Mainland China. It was also because I heard news from several fellow monks who had left the army; during that period, circumstances for monks who left Mainland China for Taiwan were very difficult. The monasteries in the local province refused to accept them, so monks who came from outer provinces had no way to support themselves. For example, one classmate went to a monastery in Taipei to seek refuge with a certain master. This master allowed him to stay for only one night and provided two meals; if he stayed longer, the master would call the military police to arrest him and return him to camp. The monasteries were very afraid of the trouble it could bring them by sheltering a deserter.

Actually, in 1950 in Taiwan, there was a trend of wide-ranging arrests of monks from China. Even the well-known Master Cihang (1893–1954) and his disciple Master Luhang, who had been a lieutenant general, along with ten or more others were arrested and confined in the detention center. As a result, people respected us monks who remained in the

army safely and peacefully. It appeared that it was better to stay still than to make a hundred moves. In this era of turmoil and the chaos of war, the most dangerous place was the safest place.

After several months of group life as a new soldier, I discovered that the 207th Division became just an ordinary unit after arriving at Taiwan; it had been regrouped into the 339th Division. Among the soldiers not many were educated. The commander of the East North 207th Division, General Dai Pu, had been promoted to commander of the 6th Army. At the time, both the 207th and 339th Divisions belonged to the 6th Army. When he came to Hsinchu to speak to us, he asked anyone who had studied at the university level to raise their hands and stand in front of the platform; about thirty or more people did, and then were taken away. He told us that he wanted to nurture educated youth, so next he asked the high school graduates to raise their hands. Since everyone wanted to be taken away by the army commander, this time many people raised their hands. My five fellow-monks from Jing'an Monastery and I didn't know which level we belonged to. We wanted to raise our hands both times, but we lacked the courage to do that so the army commander didn't take us away. For the high school students who were taken away, they established the Student Military Group, and the students were given basic training as squad leaders at the racecourse at Beitou, which is the present-day Fuxing Gang. As for the university students, some of them applied for the university entrance examination, and some applied for the entrance examination for the Officer Candidate School. General Dai truly appreciated talent, and the brothers of the army all loved and respected him.

Later our unit was mobilized to many different places – from Hsinchu to Beitou, from Beitou to Xinzhuang, from Xinzhuang to Danshui. Although they were all located in northern Taiwan, every

move out was a march on foot. At the time, we hadn't received any communications equipment such as wireless transmitters, telephones, wires, etc. We only carried our personal luggage and some simple clothes. However, another classmate and I from Jing'an Monastery carried more burdens than the others. I had given my robes to classmates who left camp, but from Shanghai I still carried ten or more books which I treasured and couldn't part with. After settling at a place, the two of us became a "library," and everyone would come to us to borrow books. But once the army decamped and moved on, the borrowers returned the books, so our luggage was particularly large and heavy. My classmate got angry after the second move and threw away all his books. Since nobody wanted to share the burden of carrying the books, he didn't want to share the benefit of reading them. On the other hand, I took my books with me until I arrived at Jinshan Village, Taipei County. In June 1950, I was promoted to Sergeant First Class Radio Operator, and when the army was on the move, I had the privilege of entrusting the books to the military trucks to transport them for me.

How did I become a Sergeant First Class Radio Operator within one year after enlisting as a Private First Class? When the unit arrived at Beitou and camped at the Old Beitou Elementary School, a young officer came in contact with us monk-soldiers, and discovered from our behavior, speech, and language that we should all be university students. He felt strangely about this and asked us why the army commander didn't take us away for further education. I said, "We are monks, graduated from the Buddhist Academy. We didn't receive high school training, so of course we wouldn't know what university is about!" The officer immediately encouraged us, "No matter what, if the Buddhist Academy isn't a university, it should at least be a high school! If you don't go to university or Officer

Candidate School, you should at least be in the Student Military Group. The country needs talents, and outstanding young people like you should go and receive officer education!" So we really did apply for the entrance exam. They didn't test us on Buddhist studies, Chinese, or history; the examination sheet only contained three types of questions, on trigonometry, geometry, and algebra. This is the best way to test for a formal high school level. The result was that only one of us was accepted because he had studied two years of high school at Nanjing Qixia Mountain. The rest of us, including myself, handed in blank examination papers. It was such a humiliation! Luckily one proctor didn't criticize us and consoled us instead, "You are still young, there are many days yet to come – go back and study harder, and come back again next year!" The other proctor thought we handed in blank examination papers on purpose fearing that the officer training may be too strict and harsh. However, by mid-October of the same year, I had already prepared for several months for the junior high school level courses, and passed the exam for the Education of Infantry Squad Leader. By mid-December, I completed a transfer exam for the 6th Army Military Department radio operator training class. At that time, I was probably at the high school level.

It may sound strange that without studying at any formal high school, I could progress so quickly within several months. Actually, it was quite simple. I applied for the exam three times, and each time I would memorize most of the exam questions. I would then discuss them with the other classmates who failed the exam, so we could help each other. I also asked the classmates who passed the exam on how to grasp the scope and principle of the exam. I passed the exam by taking such short cuts. Was I really at the high school level? I wouldn't believe so; I was simply accepted out of pure luck.

Because I was a monk from the Buddhist Academy without high school education, every time I entered the exam I would encounter difficulties. In addition, my physical condition, weight, and height were out of proportion. My height was 172 cm (5' 8") and I never weighed over 52 kg (126 lbs). I once applied for the examination for the Officer Candidate School but I wasn't accepted. Then I applied for the examination for the Military Signal Corps School, and was almost rejected. At the written exams I almost failed every time. However, I had faith that no matter which school or training institute I took exams for, I wasn't afraid of failing – I only feared not trying. I could only worry about not being accepted, not about being unable to graduate. After persevering, I would surely achieve my wish. It was not a problem if my level was insufficient, I could catch up by doubling my efforts. That was my belief. From entering the Buddhist Academy to studying at all kinds of training schools, and even to taking the Master's Program at Rissho University (in Tokyo, 1969), I always held such a belief in accomplishing my goals.

Joining the Army yet Not Giving Up Writing

According to *the History of the Later Han Dynasty: A Biography on Ban Chao* (Chinese *Houhan shu: Ban chao zhuan*), Ban Chao (a distinguished general from the Han Dynasty, 206 BCE–220 CE) supported his poor family by transcribing documents for the government day after day, year after year. Feeling tired and bored he threw down the pen and said, "A great man has no other plan but to follow the footsteps of Fu Jiezi and Zhang Qian, achieving glorious deeds in foreign wars and earning the status of nobility. How can I waste my life on writing?" Due to this allusion, later generations would refer to giving up writing and joining the army as "casting aside the pen to join

the army." Actually, many famous generals in history also had outstanding literary talents. These scholar-generals who fought in the saddle and wrote off the saddle – a general outside the imperial court, a prime minister inside the court – were called "possessed with literary and military talents" and "both brave and wise." So it seems that being a soldier doesn't necessarily require putting down the pen.

I was a monk, not a warrior, but since I was in the army you could say that I was a soldier. Nevertheless, I was always preparing to return to the identity and appearance of a monk. The books I brought to Taiwan were mostly Buddhist texts and some others on literature and philosophy. There was also a thick diary among them. Everyday no matter how busy I was, I would read a few pages from the books and write a few lines. Especially on weekends when it was raining and we couldn't go for field training, my colleagues slept or found entertainment at snack bars, small restaurants, and small theaters. They did so to balance the nervousness of life in the army with the dull and boring life in the barracks. Some officers even urged that "sleep is more important than nutrition," suggesting that the soldiers should sleep as much as they wanted on the weekend. This would also keep them out of trouble and save them some money. In a way, reducing the frequency of going out also protected the safety of the soldiers and the army. I should be the kind of soldier most liked by the senior officers since I used my spare time reading. Outside of group training and track and field training, there was a lot of free time so I read a lot. And when the army was stationed on guard, there was even more personal time. After lights-out I could go to the kitchen, ask the cook for some peanut oil, pour it into an inkbottle, drill a hole in the cap, and use a strip of rag as a wick. I would then find a corner where I would not interrupt other people's sleep, light my lamp, and read. Although not allowed by



Shifu (in the middle) with other monk soldiers Tian Feng (left) and Master Liao Zhong (right), who founded Hsuan Chuang University
DDM Archive Photo

military discipline, my actions were mostly tolerated by the senior officers, who would turn a blind eye.

In June of 1950, I was transferred as Sergeant First Class Radio Operator of the Army Military Department, Radio Operator Squadron, to the 1016th Regiment headquarters of the 339th Division on the coast of Jinshan Village, Taipei County. I lived in Jinshan, Shimen, and Small Keelung for two years more. In October of 1952, because the army reorganized, I was transferred to the 6th Army headquarters at Martyrs' Shrine at Yuanshan, Taipei. In June of 1953, I was transferred to Yangmei, Taoyuan County. In December of the same year, I passed the exam for Lianqin Signal Corps School at Yuanshan,

Yilan. In June of 1954, the 6th Army regrouped into the 2nd Army. I was transferred to the Jianjun military camp, the 2nd Army Corps headquarters, at Wukuai Tso, Fengshan District, in Kaoshiung County. Finally, from 1949 up to this time, I had been promoted from Private First Class, to Sergeant First Class, to Warrant Officer. It could be said it was a big transformation for me since joining the army. But if I weren't a monk and if I had a formal high school education, with better health, after five years I could have graduated from the Military Officers Academy, and I could have been at least a Second Lieutenant, a Lieutenant, or even a Captain if I were promoted sooner.

During these five years I read many books, mainly Chinese classics, and also translated Western literary works. I read general and theoretical books – any such as I could borrow – on philosophy, politics, law, natural science, and social science. Some were bought from second-hand bookstands, some were borrowed from the public library, either from their mobile library (books transported by trucks to districts, cities, and even beaches) or by going to the library building. Reading enriched my ordinary general knowledge as well as contemporary theoretical knowledge.

At this stage, I didn't have any Buddhist texts to read, and had only been to a few native Taiwanese monasteries, like those in Yuanshan, Neihu. The monks and nuns I met almost never read any books and there were no young people. Other than a few old liturgies and repentance texts, no other Buddhist sutras (sermons of the Buddha) or books could be seen. And of course, there weren't any copies of the Tripitaka (the "Three Baskets" of the Buddhist canon: Vinaya [precepts], Sutras [sermons of the Buddha], and Abhidharma [analysis/commentary]). Later, visiting the Fengshan Buddhist Lotus Society, I saw a copy of the *Shurangama Sutra*, which I was able to borrow for a week. Because they only had one

copy, they couldn't give it to me. To me, it was like discovering a priceless treasure. The distribution of sutras in Taiwan happened after 1952, when lay Buddhist Qian Zhaoru established the Taiwan Sutra Printing Center (Chn. *Taiwan yinjing chu*), and lay Buddhist Chang Shaoqi managed the Jueshi Book Club. However, they had limited funding and not many sutras. The people who would read these Buddhist texts were very scarce, so very few texts were published and distributed. It just so happened that I had several years of spare time to read some non-Buddhist books.

The young men in the army who studied hard did so mostly for their future prospects, preparing for the examination for the Military Officers Academy, or the High-level Examination for government officials, or the Test for Specialized Personnel, etc. My physical condition disqualified me for the Military Officers Academy, and with no intention of becoming a government employee, I read with no direction or purpose in mind. When the army was stationed on guard at Jinshan Village, an officer in our company had suspicions about me, and he paid special attention to my thoughts. I was called in to talk to him several times. In that era someone in the army initiated the "Be tattooed to show loyalty" movement which spread like wildfire. Some people imitated Yue Fei (1103–1142), a well-known general in Chinese history, and tattooed "*jingzhong baoguo*" (repay the country with loyalty) on their back. Some tattooed on their chest the Blue Sky with a White Sun emblem of the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) of China. Some tattooed on their arms "Long live the Three Principles of the People" and "Long live President Chiang." This officer wanted to know what words I would tattoo on myself. My reply was: "Repay the country, protect the people; loyalty is in the heart, not in a tattoo!" He said: "I think you were sent by someone! You say you are a monk but

I suspect that was to cover up your true identity." At that time, "monk" was a very terrible label to have.

The next day, while I was in class, this officer inspected my books and personal library and discovered that I had copied a poem "The Verse of Liangzhou," by the great Tang Dynasty poet Wang Han. It was a seven-character quatrain: "How wonderful is the wine in this precious glass. I would like to empty it all while racing on horseback. Please don't laugh at me lying drunk on the battlefield. How many have returned from battles since antiquity?" Since it was a poem with an anti-war tone, similar to "The Prayer for the Dead on the Ancient Battlefield" by Lee Hua, it made him even more suspicious. Actually, during that time I had read many literary works. Had he looked at my diary more carefully, he would have found that I also copied many poems and songs from the Tang, the Song, the Five Dynasties (907–960), and even the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). I copied them to memorize and appreciate, not thinking about being anti-war or having a war phobia. Luckily, this officer had only joined our company recently, and didn't dare to make quick judgments. So he went to ask the other senior officers and comrades in the company. Of course, I had been with them for a year, especially with the leader of the Wireless Platoon, an officer who graduated from the Department of Electrical Engineering of the National Southwestern Associated University. We often kept in touch and talked. He didn't treat me as a subordinate but as a younger brother, especially when he knew that I was a monk. So this dispute, which almost got me killed, was settled in the end. However, due to this label, nobody dared invite me to join and become a member of the Kuomintang, even after many years had passed. You can say this attitude was a kind of tragedy for society at the time.

My greatest gain in the army was to develop writing skills. At the Buddhist Academy the essays I

wrote often received awards, and the wall newspaper would post my articles regularly. I also published a few articles in *Student Arena*, a monthly magazine compiled and edited by our classmates. I got into the habit of keeping diaries and took notes while reading. At one time, the senior officers required everyone to keep diaries; the purpose was to provide a way for soldiers to vent their frustrations, and to reflect their personal opinions to the senior officers. But its greatest use was to discover the thoughts of the soldiers through the accumulation of time; it was a kind of measure to prevent spying. So I used the diary to express my opinions. As a result, whether in the army or training institutes, whenever it was time to publish the wall newspapers, the senior officers would name me to be chief editor in charge of selecting, editing, writing, and laying out articles for posting on the wall. My calligraphy was poor, but every time we published the wall newspapers, I would be chosen for the job.

When we were stationed at the Jinshan coastline, I read literary books and also tried to write short stories, essays, and new poetry. I often submitted articles to *The Lion* newspaper managed by our 6th Army Military Department. From becoming the official reporter to official writer, this went on for two years. I also submitted to literature and arts magazines in society such as *Modern Youth*. The author's remuneration every month often exceeded a Sergeant First Class's salary, so I was often invited by the colleagues and senior officers to be the "rich fool" (who pays for the bill). Actually, the money was still not enough because I needed to buy books. Although my writing was still immature and I didn't know what my thoughts really were, I would just write what I saw and thought, and what would encourage me or console others. I expressed my work with a sincere heart and faithful pen and dedicated it to the readers. I often encountered a bottleneck in my

flow of thoughts and in the helplessness of real life. However, reading and writing helped me dissolve the anguish of reality and open up to inner brightness.

In 1953, I applied for fiction writing classes in the China Literature and Arts Correspondence School organized by Dr. Li Chendong. There were six to seven famous writers among the teachers, such as Xie Bingying, Shen Ying, and Zhao Youpei. I earnestly wrote short, medium, and long stories. Of course my life experience, intellect, and observation of reality were not deep enough, and my fiction writing skills were not high. I submitted the medium and long stories to the Literature Award panel, hoping to receive a prize without first submitting them to the papers and magazines. You can imagine the outcome – the works were rejected. I lost faith in them, so I burned them. Up until now, I only kept two short stories – one titled “Mother” and the other “Father” – that were published in *Literary Forum* (Chn. *Wentan*) magazine. This happened in 1956, and they were later included in the book *Buddhist Culture and Literature*, a collection of my literary works published by the Buddhist Culture Service Center. At the time, Mr. Mu Zhongnan was the chief editor of *Literary Forum*. His quality was good and the other magazines of his time such as *Gusty Wind* (Chn. *Yefeng*), *Gleanings* (Chn. *Shisui*), and *Fluency* (Chn. *Changliu*) were also literary magazines with more or less the same quality. I also wrote many new poems, using many different pen names, and published ten or more of them in the irregularly issued new poetry magazines and several literature magazines. At the present, not one of them is left.

In the spring of 1956, one of my classmates from the Buddhist Academy saw that I was writing poems, novels, and essays like crazy, but not winning any prizes or becoming famous, so he advised me to write articles engaged in logical thinking and reasoning. He was very much into the political thought of the

Three Principles of the People and international events at the time, so he suggested that I write some analyses of international events or focus on political philosophy. This gave me the idea to attempt to write philosophical and religious articles. By chance, my immediate supervisor, the chief of a radio station, was a pious Christian. Knowing I was a monk, he still gave me a Holy Bible. For two months I read it very carefully and took many notes. The same year, between summer and autumn, I saw a book written by a Christian criticizing Buddhism. Because Master Zhuyun wrote a book, *The Comparison between Buddhism and Christianity*, this compelled a pastor from Hong Kong to write a book to refute him. Reading it, I felt that I could in turn refute the Christian pastor’s arguments. I didn’t care how much value the content of the book had or whether the perspectives were fair, but at least I was able to write a debate-style article of up to 40,000 words without stopping.

In the autumn of the same year, I was transferred to the Ministry of National Defense and stationed at Xindian. Afterwards I began reading the series of *Hu Shi’s Works* (Chn. *Hu Shi wencun*), the Chinese translation of Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy*, and *The Young Sun* magazine, edited by Mr. Wang Dao of Hong Kong. These are all works rich in thoughts and ideas. Consequently, I also began writing discourses and intellectual articles for the Hong Kong magazine *The Young Sun*, and several Buddhist magazines in Taiwan such as *Sound of Ocean Waves*, *Buddhist Youth*, *Buddhism Today*, and *Humanity*.

Every time I submitted an article, I would receive praise and encouragement from the chief editor. I discussed two types of issues: first, in those concerning human life, pointing out the defects, loneliness, desolation, and suffering in life, and advocating hard work, transformation, transcendence, and



Shifu stationed at Xindian in 1956 DDM Archive Photo

peacefulness, believing there must be wonderful future prospects to be achieved by humanity as a whole. These articles were included in the book *Buddhist Life and Religion*, another collection of my literary works. Second, with issues concerning religion and literature: I wrote two articles on Mr. Hu Shi’s religious thoughts. At the same time, I read his *A History of Vernacular Chinese Literature*. In Chapters Nine and Ten, the book introduced the topic of translations of Buddhist literature, and I discovered the Buddhist sutras’ effect on Chinese literature. This gave me much inspiration and I wrote an article, “Literature and Buddhist Literature,”

published in *Buddhist Youth*. Using the knowledge I had regarding Chinese and Western literatures, as well as my understanding of Buddhism, I proposed that Buddhists should respect and write literary works. I also suggested that writers take note of their writing skills and through choice of words, clearly depict the concepts of the sutras, and that they should write with compassionate mind. I also appealed to readers to respect literary works, and not to treat them as small tricks. At the time I proposed, “Stand at the Chinese viewpoint, accepting the strengths of Westerners, to express the compassionate Buddha’s ideology.”

When studying and researching, I also combined these three guidelines: Buddhist, Chinese, and Western. After the article was published, I received responses from two writers from the Buddhist community, and they separately wrote articles to express their different viewpoints. I accepted the challenge and wrote two more articles consecutively: “Further Discussion on Literature and Buddhist Literature,” and “The Third Discussion on Literature and Buddhist Literature.” In the end both of them became my pen pals, proving the saying, “No discord, no concord.” And they were Mr. Zhang Mantau and Mr. Cheng Guanxin, both lay Buddhists.

Whether or not the thoughts expressed in these three articles were mature, my purpose was to advocate Buddhist literature. And till now, I have no regrets about the effort I put into emphasizing the importance of Buddhist literature. It could be said that since I have studied literary works and attempted literary writings, I understood that to write an article, one must first consider who the readers are, their needs, whether they would be able to understand, and whether they would want to read the article. At the least, I would not want readers to feel pressured or burdened to read my articles, and still be able to receive some knowledge and inspiration to the mind. Otherwise, no matter

how many good intentions I had, it would still be torture for the readers. I had this little inspirational thought, and so I have been writing continuously until now.

Buddhist Practice and Buddhist Studies

In August 1956, I was transferred to Taipei because I passed the exam for an Intelligence Interception and Collection Unit at the Ministry of National Defense, and I began doing duties at intercepting and collecting wireless communication intelligence. We faced the wireless operators from Mainland China everyday; although the Taiwan Strait separated us, we even knew their gender, name, and age. They didn't know of our existence or perhaps they did know, but they didn't know who we were. In this capacity we provided results to the supervisors according to our own personal diligence, and being a diligent worker I received several awards.

This kind of surveillance is around the clock so we rotated in three shifts: day shift meant the regular working hours; night shift was afternoon till midnight; and the early morning shift was from midnight to eight the next morning. The most unbearable was the early morning shift, especially for me. Every time I did the early morning shift, I wouldn't be able to sleep the next day. So I would take advantage of the time to read, meditate, and recite the Buddha's name.

At this time more Buddhist texts were available, some imported from Hong Kong and some reprinted in Taiwan, such as commentaries on *the Flower Ornament Scripture* (Chn. *Huayan jing*; Sanskrit *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*), *Nirvana Sutra*, (Chn. *Daban niepan jing*; Skt. *the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*), *the Lotus Sutra* (Chn. *Miaofa lianhua jing*; Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*), and *the Diamond Sutra*

(Chn. *Jingang jing*; Skt. *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*). At the time Master Yin Shun (1905–2005) was abbot at the Shandao Temple, and his student Master Yen Pei, was teaching at Fu Yan Buddhist Institute. I went to Shandao Temple during the weekends and would meet them occasionally. Master Yen Pei knew that I liked to read, so he collected all of Master Yin Shun's works, as well as his own works and other translations, and made them gifts to me. This opportunity gave me both the time and the books to read.

A Buddhist should not separate practice and studies but should use the concepts and methods of Buddhism as guidance and means for practicing. If one only conducted Buddhist studies without practicing, one would be an ordinary scholar who can write books to express their opinions, give lectures, provide teaching materials, or even make a living; they may contribute to the discussion and introduction of historical culture, but not feel much impact on their spiritual life or improve their character. The sutras describe this as “talking about food and counting others' treasures”; in other words, it is like reciting a menu yet not enjoying the meals, or counting treasures that belonged to others – both are worthless activities.

On the other hand, ordinary people may have Buddhist faith, recite the Buddha's name, eat a vegetarian diet, meditate, repent, but not care much about Buddhist concepts. They would not know the meanings of dharma with or without outflows, created dharma or uncreated dharma, worldly or world-transcending dharma, socially engaged or world-renouncing; they would not know the differences and similarities between Buddhism and other religions. They appear to be Buddhist but after talking with them, you would discover that they were no different from the followers of other religions who attach themselves to Buddhism, or followers

of folk beliefs in gods or in superstitious Taoism. This is such a pity!

For this reason, since ancient times, the Masters have emphasized both practice and understanding – that the two were like the wings of a bird, or the two wheels of a bicycle. Understanding without practice would be useless, and practice without understanding would be blind faith. Based on such concepts, I would of course advocate consistency of knowledge and action. Consequently, I also agree with the theory of “unity of knowledge and action” proposed by Wang Yangming. At the time, the whole country used Dr. Sun Yat-sen's theory of “knowing is more difficult than doing” to encourage everyone, which I also accepted. It would be absolutely correct to treat Buddhist practice and Buddhist studies from the perspectives of “acting upon knowing,” “knowing upon acting,” and “equating knowing and doing.” If we required everyone to act after “knowing and realizing thoroughly,” then that would be wrong. The reason being, ordinary people are “slow in knowing and realizing.” So Confucius said: “The common people can be made to follow orders without understanding why they should.” This is also correct. Dr. Sun Yat-sen stated many examples concerning this issue in his book, *Sun Wen Theory*. Even today, I would still use this point to encourage people who do not yet believe in Buddhism, that they need not have a thorough understanding of all the Buddhist concepts before believing in the Buddha and practicing the Dharma. People should start believing in the Buddha and practice while enhancing their knowledge of the Dharma at the same time. Many people thought that after they understood the Dharma, they would wait until they could uphold all the precepts before becoming Buddhists. If that were the case, there would never be a chance for them to become Buddhists.

From 1957 onwards, the publishers of several Buddhist magazines in the Taipei Buddhist

community knew that I could write papers, and that I had submitted articles to several literary and philosophical magazines in Taipei and Hong Kong. They were also aware that I wrote a book about Buddhism and Christianity, so they invited me to submit articles. At the time, I was hoping to write about what I encountered, saw, and thought about several Buddhist theories and issues, and to share them with readers in our society. You could say that it has been my long-held aspiration to convey the correct Dharma, and to convert difficult Buddhist concepts into words that are easy to understand and accept, and to provide them to people who wanted the Dharma. As a result, I was really grateful for these few magazines which provided a place for me to publish them. Although these magazines were for subscription, they didn't sell well, so its writers received no remuneration. However, money was not the issue for me. As long as someone could read my article and accept Buddhism as a result, I would feel very satisfied. At the time, I used several pen names; one I used more often was General of Awakening the World. Up until the present, there were still many Buddhists over age fifty who decided to believe in Buddhism and practice the Dharma after reading the articles written by the General of Awakening the World. However, they mostly would not know who that was.

In recent decades, from the behavior of the Buddhists themselves, or from the scholar's understanding of Buddhism and their judgments on its value, Buddhism could be described by several terms: “superstitious,” “passive,” “non-productive,” and “selfish.” Actually, the Buddhism founded by Shakyamuni was not like that. The monks of the sangha had something they would need to do everyday – practicing earnestly without dissociating from society. For example, Shakyamuni set up the rule that bhikshus (monks) must go into society to

beg for alms, using this opportunity to spread the concepts and essence of the Dharma, as well as the Buddhist's living guidelines, the five precepts and the ten virtues. So they were called the "humanistic bhikshus" who would travel and benefit humanity.

Once, when Shakyamuni asked for alms from a farmer, the farmer said, "We farmers cultivate the fields; therefore, we have food to eat. You don't cultivate the fields, so why should you get to eat?" The Buddha replied, "You cultivate the fields and we bhikshus also cultivate the field. You cultivate the muddy fields in the wilderness, and we cultivate the fields of people's minds." The farmer was happy upon hearing this and gave alms to the Buddha. When Buddhism spread to China, social customs disdained begging, so the bhikshus could only plant and cultivate their own foods in the mountains of the monasteries. As Chan Master Baizhang (720–814) of the Tang Dynasty said, "On any day that I don't work, I will not eat." This kind of Chan and farm life was not being non-productive.

However, in recent eras the big monasteries relied on rental income from farmlands, and the small monasteries in the countryside and cities depended on donations and fees from repentance ceremonies and money received from social interactions. Even though these monasteries had morning or evening services or meditation, still, they were disconnected from the larger society. This disconnection is why the monasteries were not operated to educate society, and therefore unimportant in the spreading of the Dharma. Since the need to spread the Dharma was not considered necessary, nobody nurtured the talents for teaching the Dharma, or even felt the need to nurture such talents. This resulted in the impression and image of Buddhism as escapist and not beneficial to society, making it appear superstitious and harmful, like a religion that should be abolished and eliminated.

This was why in modern times the lay Buddhist Yang Wenhui, alias Renshan, advocated printing and distributing Buddhist sutras and texts, and establishing institutes to nurture talent for Dharma teaching among monks and laypeople. Mr. Yang's student, Master Taixu, promoted Humanistic Buddhism; in turn, Master Taixu's student Master Yin Shun followed in his footsteps and proposed Humanized Buddhism. My own Master, Dong Chu (1907–1977), founded the monthly magazine *Humanity*. I myself founded the Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan, whose purpose is to establish a pure land on earth. These were all done to transmit the wisdom teaching and save the future of Buddhism, which was suspended in thin air. It was also a movement to return to the original essence of the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Between 1957 and 1960, I focused on these issues and wrote ten or more articles to clarify them. For example, monasteries relied on repentance ceremonies and ritual services as their main source of income. This caused the monks to use the practice of reciting the sutras, repenting, and reciting the Buddha's name as a means for earning their living, thus losing the original meaning of practice. Laypeople who came in contact with the monasteries requested the services of reciting the sutras and performing repentance ceremonies. They also negotiated prices, like how much money for one chapter of the sutra, how much for one set of repentances, how much for a two-hour stay, for a one-day stay, and so on. This caused the sangha – one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism – to lose its respectful dignity and status, and caused the monks to be treated as carpenters, tailors, and cooks, etc. Since they were treated in the same manner as hired laborers, they were no longer called "masters" but "chiefs." However, over hundreds of years, Buddhism was sustained by reciting sutras and repentance

ceremonies, so such rituals indeed have their irreplaceable function.

Regarding this, I wrote an article of over ten thousand words, titled "A Discussion of Buddhist Rituals and Repentance Ceremonies and their Pros and Cons," and my conclusion was: "Buddhist rituals were necessary indeed; however, the ideal Buddhist ritual definitely would not be a kind of business, but a guidance on the methods of practice and a guidance on demand. Because the responsibility of the sangha is to actively engage in the teaching and spreading of the Dharma instead of passively relying on the repentance ceremonies to make a living. Each monastery should adopt teaching the Dharma as its main task. If possible, monasteries should rely on the donations, instead of doing business, to survive. If there were no alternatives but to conduct repentance ceremonies, the Buddhist rituals should be a joint practice for both the monks and the donor. When conducting Buddhist rituals, the monks should do so in accordance with the Dharma and with reverence. The donor's family should also participate in the recitation, taking hold of the opportunity to redeem the dead, and sharing the taste of the nectar of the Dharma. At the very minimum, during the Buddhist rituals, there should be a section explaining to the donor about the Dharma and its essence. Only by doing so, could we prevent the sangha from being treated as hired labors paid by the hour, and not lose the dignity of Buddhist rituals."

In addition, regarding the negative images of Buddhism being seen as passive and not beneficial to the society, I also provided explanations several times. I wrote in the article "Calming the Human Mind and Transcending the Self-Nature," "Secular scholars often attacked Buddhism as selfish and escapist, saying that Buddhism advocated the pursuit of nirvana and transcendence of the three

realms, but not contributing oneself to improving the reality of human society.... On the surface, it may seem that Buddhism advocates personal liberation and transcendence, which appears to be selfish. However, the fact is that this "selfish" goal is exactly the perfect expression of the spirit of compassion. Selfish in terms of personal liberation, but to achieve personal liberation requires the actions and mindset of compassion and salvation."

In the article "The Ideal Society," I said, "The people with superficial views would consider the Buddhist life as passive because the ultimate goal of practice is to transcend the three realms and leave the world instead of striving to construct a better world. Actually, leaving the world would be the goal of practicing Buddhism, and building a better world is the actual means of Buddhist practice."

I also said, "The teaching of Buddhism is to allow everyone to perform one's own duties, not only 'to do no evil,' but also 'to cultivate all goodness.' Any action that would be harmful to sentient beings, a Buddhist would not do. Anything that would benefit the general public, a Buddhist would do accordingly."

Because I had this idea, I agreed with Master Taixu's proposal that "the perfection of humanity is the perfection of the Buddha." I also highly praised the book *The Buddha in the Human Realm* written by Master Yin Shun.

Prior to this era, Chinese Buddhism from the end of the Song Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty and in the early Republic, only very few scholars were studying profound Buddhist concepts, and they ignored its practical application in humanity. Generally, the Buddhists could not understand the usefulness and rationality of the Buddhadharmas and only rested on the form and facial appearance of the belief. That was due to serious abuses resulting from the inability to attend to both Buddhist practice and Buddhist studies. ☺

Don't Think

BY

Gilbert Gutierrez

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Gilbert Gutierrez at DDRC Photo by Ven. Chang Hu

Waiting for Enlightenment

THERE ARE TWO THINGS that you avoid on a retreat. The first thing is to be waiting for enlightenment. Shifu (Chan Master Sheng Yen) said that you need both eyes on the practice, not one eye looking for enlightenment and the other eye on the practice. If you are solely waiting for enlightenment, the practice will become very difficult.

The second thing that you should not wait for is the bell. If you do, your mind begins to think that the sound of the wooden fish [signaling the start of the sitting period] is bad and the sound of the bell [signaling the end of the sitting period] is good. You become conditioned like Pavlov's dogs and when the bell rings you feel released. This is the exact opposite of what you should be feeling.

You should feel “Ah, the bell has rung so now I can take a rest from meditating and do something else.” When you are meditating you are taking a rest from walking to the Chan Hall. Everywhere you're at, you're taking a rest. So when you sit to meditate, you are at rest. You should not think that you are like a piece of meat being cooked slowly on a rotisserie because that will only feel like torture. When you change the way you meditate it helps you tremendously. Even though you may practice every day, you don't practice with folded legs for eight to ten hours a day when you are at home. So during a retreat your legs are going to be sore. If you can get past that, then you can overcome the bodily sensations; it is very important that we do not attach so much to the bodily sensations.

Pain vs. Suffering

A couple of years ago my son Ananda had a problem; in the middle of the night he woke me up and said his kidneys were hurting him, by which I knew that he had kidney stones. I was trying to do my best for my son by feeding him a proper diet but as it turned out, the specific foods I fed him were all triggers for kidney stones. I ended up taking him to the hospital and nothing was working to ease his pain. Finally he said to me “You know dad you're always talking about pain and suffering; can you tell me something right now that can help me?” So I started talking about the difference between pain and suffering. Pain is the body telling you something is wrong, cautioning you not to continue on with whatever activity you are doing. Suffering is holding on to that sensation. The more we hold on to that sensation the more uncomfortable we get. It is not important whether it is a bodily sensation or an emotional sensation since emotional sensations create suffering in the mind as well. The more we

cling to it, the more we suffer. As I was beginning to tell him that, his pain went away.

It is natural to experience pain as we sit in an extended retreat but it is the suffering from this pain that we seek to overcome. I had been sitting very well before I attended my first retreat, but I had no idea what I was in for until I got there. I knew I was in trouble when my legs began hurting on the first night, just as they began giving instructions. As I sat there in pain, I held an auction with myself. I got up to about \$10,000 that I would pay someone if I could just walk out at that moment without anyone knowing that I was ever there. I didn't even know where I was going to get \$10,000 but the suffering from pain was all that was on my mind. In any case the mind created the situation. It's this clinging that causes us trouble. When we begin to understand that this clinging is not really part of our nature, then we can let go.

Causes and Conditions Never Fail

The ego is not part of our true nature so we should seek to let it go. To clarify, I mean the awareness of the mind that is not confused that it is consciousness. We use consciousness as part of awareness, but only for us to perform our function. When we are clinging to thoughts of a future or a past event, we are no longer in the present moment but instead we are clouding our awareness. When we are sitting on this cushion, we should be very aware. However, the key to this awareness is the understanding of the main law of nature: *pratītyasamutpāda* [dependent origination]. This is the Buddha mind, it is how everything appears in nature and can be said as, “causes and conditions never fail.” When we understand that, we do not get frustrated by the fact that thoughts arise nor do we try to swat them away. There is just an awareness that they are arising. We don't need to do anything except

simply understand that thoughts are arising for a reason; there was a cause for this present condition. We also understand with *pratīyasamutpāda* that if we let go of our thoughts, they will begin to lose energy and like an echo will begin to fade. If we do not know these things when we sit to meditate we are merely wasting our time so it is important to understand how mind works. The thoughts that have come up in your mind this morning arose precisely because you put them there.

Chan is very ordinary and mundane and trains you to take responsibility for whatever is around you. Whether phenomena arise in your mind or in the perceived environment, they are there for a reason. You are here sitting on this cushion precisely for your interest in investigating mind, otherwise you would be elsewhere. Your interest brings you here today, and you are clear about it. This is not a place where you come to suffer by folding your legs but instead it is a place where you come to practice; a place of liberation. The liberation is not found through my words, but instead obtained through you putting in the effort on your cushion by practicing in a very vigilant way. You don't have to put pressure on yourself. If you hold the practice lightly, enough to stay there then you will overcome your drowsiness, your body pains, and the scattered mind. Eventually it is the scattered mind that may overcome you. You may be one minute into your method and you're already somewhere else. This is not easy to overcome, but by understanding the right view and keeping your mind in the present moment, you will eventually be able to hold on to your method continuously.

Finding the Center Point

Practicing Chan is similar to somebody learning to balance on a rope. They fall to one side and they fall to the other side, but eventually they will find that

balance and people will look at them and say "How do you do that?" Sometimes when I go surfing I take my friends with me, so they can learn how to surf. Even people that are physically fit get humbled in the first ten minutes of surfing. They think they can easily stand up and then they realize it is more about balance and being clear about what's happening in the present moment. After ten minutes of tiring frustration, they already want to come out of the water. I just tell them "Take it easy, relax, enjoy it, just take your time, and invest in losing. Every time you fall off you learn something." With this in mind, after a while they are able to stand up. In this way we practice to find that center point of being in the present moment. What is there in the present moment is awareness. Consciousness is only there by awareness, but it is not cogitating, it is not thinking. It's just simply aware of this moment. In this moment, if we are aware, there is no thought.

In meditation there is no thought. Shifu used say that if one holds onto the method that it is indeed a thought, but a thought of the method. Shifu compared it to being a giant bullfrog in a pond sitting on a lily pad. He sees other lily pads around but has no interest to jump from one to the other. He is very well contented to sit on this lily pad and by sitting on the pad, he is no longer aware of the pad on which he sits. Likewise as we sit on our method, we no longer think of the method as a thought but instead as a point of reference.

Sometimes when I begin to speak, such as today, I have no thought. My mind is not sticking to whatever I've said before, it just simply brings up point after point and flows like a river. As the ancient masters say, "Have this one thought for ten thousand years," my thought being to present this lecture. When you're sitting on your cushion, your one thought is to sit and meditate. When you're walking, just walk. When you're eating, just eat.



Photo by Kevin Crosby

When you sleep, just sleep. In this way you are taking a rest from all of the other activities and keeping your mind in this perfect awareness. If something happens that you need to deal with, you are very well-equipped in that moment to change from one thought to another thought. However, among the many thoughts that arise in mind, we should always avoid having "sticky thoughts."

Sticky Thoughts

A sticky thought is what they call *akuśala* in the Abhidharma. *Kuśala* is a wholesome thought, and *akuśala* is an unwholesome thought. Now this does not mean wholesome and unwholesome as in good and bad, or sacred and profane; *akuśala* is a thought that comes up and lingers in consciousness. When you stick to such a thought, it produces another thought, and then another thought. That is the unwholesomeness of it, that it's constantly producing thoughts, not necessarily for the benefit of that

moment, but something being brought up as habit energy from the ego. The ego is constantly trying to sustain itself.

Our purpose in meditation is to expose the ego and see that the ego itself is not real. That it too, is just a thought that arises in accordance with causes and conditions. So if one is to bring up the proverbial (at least proverbial for me) jelly doughnut, then a thought rushes into consciousness. One begins to think "Hmmm, what kind of a jelly doughnut?" and your mind thinks of flavors of raspberry or lemon and rushes out to reach it, embracing it before you even see it coming. That is because you are not clear about how mind works, and you are not able to detect these subtle changes and subtle movements in mind itself, nor the direction of the movement. When we understand how mind works, we understand that when we are meditating there are going to be all sorts of thoughts. You might have already found yourself thinking: "I am sitting very well." Where the heck did that come from? Who is it that is grading you? You

may even think: “I am sleepy.” Actually, “I am sleepy, I am tired” is not as insidious as “I am doing well.” That one causes you problems all the time, because up until that moment, you *were* sitting well. All of a sudden this thought arises because ego wants to have you come and pet it. There are two things to know about the ego: it’s very clever, and it’s very fearful. A lot of times it doesn’t want to leave. Instead it gives you the false impression of awareness making it look as though it is not really the ego. It fools the *mind* that is sitting and observing all of this into saying “Yeah, look, we’re doing a really good job now!”

This is where we have to practice very carefully with what we call “subtle wisdom.” Most of you have been practicing for a long time, and as a result you are very adept at sitting, crossing your legs and generally not falling asleep. You may still have your scattered mind but every once in a while you have a good streak and practice well. However, if you practice with the right view your progress will improve by leaps and bounds, simply by understanding how to stay in the present moment by having no thought. When you are sitting in meditation you should have no thought. Does anybody know how you have no thought? It’s very simple; I’ll tell you the key. Don’t think! Thus not thinking is an important component of a proper meditation. No thinking is the clarity of the mind at rest without unnecessary sticky thoughts arising.

Components of Meditation

We’re going to be discussing the components of what should be in meditation. What was one of the components that we learned today? Being in the present moment, being clear moment to moment that you are *in* the present moment. This is quite beneficial to keep in mind when you are no longer sitting on your cushion so that you do not affect others with

the words you say or the things you do. You’re just in the moment, always aware of body, speech and mind, knowing what is occurring and clearly aware of having no thought. When you are engaged in an activity, do you really need ego-attached thoughts about it? If you find yourself walking it does not mean that you are walking like a zombie; with each step you’re very clearly aware of your surroundings. It doesn’t mean that you have no thoughts, but your thoughts are only of walking. Just like the method, the thoughts no longer have a sequence to them and you are just simply aware in this moment that you are walking. You try to do your best, but of course you are going to stumble, we all stumble. However, we stumble less and less as we begin to practice more and more.

If your idea of practice is just sitting on a cushion then it becomes a waste of time. People would say “Wow this person is so good when he sits, he’s like a statue, he doesn’t move!” only to find out how agitated with his surroundings he really is when he leaves his cushion. You don’t want that! That does you no good. What we want to do is learn from our experience on the cushion, so that we harmonize with the environment around us. So we have this component of being in the present moment; we don’t think.

Staying in the present moment is important but an even more important component of our practice is the right view. The idea of right view is this idea of knowing clearly how the mind works. If we do not have a right view of things it is not very easy for us to sit and meditate, because what happens is we are thinking that we need to extinguish thought. We don’t understand that if we simply ignore thought it extinguishes itself. In fact, what is the English word for Nirvana? Extinguish – extinguish the thought that gives rise to the sense of self. What we’re really doing, as the Shakyamuni Buddha did 2500

years ago, is extinguishing thought. Not mind, but consciousness. Thus nirvana really means to blow out the ego. The ancients said if you want to really learn how to practice you must sever the mind that seeks continuation (consciousness).

How Mind Works

I previously talked about wholesome thought (*kuśala*) and unwholesome (*akuśala*). In the Thirty-Seven Aids to Enlightenment, it discusses how one must maintain wholesome thoughts in mind, give rise to new wholesome thoughts, cease unwholesome thoughts, and recognize, but do not give rise to, new unwholesome thought. These are the four foundations of mindfulness. However, this wholesomeness does not necessarily have to do with morality, just as mindfulness does not have to do with morality. It has to do with being aware of how mind works. If you give a cigarette to a child, it’s obviously unwholesome, because the child is going to be smoking a cigarette without knowing the dangers of it. Nevertheless mind itself through its wisdom would never do that; it’s just practical common sense. It looks at things from the viewpoint of “causes and conditions never fail” and is completely in harmony with that viewpoint. Your present mind’s attention can extend outwards and can feel what has come from the past and also see the probabilities of the future. This does not necessarily mean that one can see the future, but one is mindful of the direction in which he is traveling. We begin to see far enough to notice many of the things around us and the consequences through body, speech, and mind of what we do. Being armed with *pratītyasamutpāda* when we sit to meditate, we are well prepared to practice. We understand mind and we know how it works. By doing this it enables us to practice in the proper way.

Computer Analogy

I can imagine some of you work with computers quite a bit. I’m sure that the ancient masters would have used this analogy if they had computers in their day. But they instead give examples of ox carts and things we have probably never seen. Computers come preloaded with an operating system and a bunch of other useful programs. Unfortunately, they also have many other “junk” programs preloaded in there. We have a computer [the mind] and even though we’re not computer engineers we understand how it works. We know that there is an operating system, but what we don’t see is that the idea of an ego or a personality is not integral to the main operating system. It [the ego] comes partially loaded and it invites other aspects like it into the computer. You can be busy typing something you need to get out, when all of a sudden it says “I’m tired,” or “Oh look at that now, I need to cut that nail,” or “I’m hungry.” You keep typing and it’s saying “I want to play a game; let’s play a game!” And you’re wondering, what’s wrong with this computer? It’s not working properly. I’m supposed to be typing this out and all this computer does is keep getting distracted. The reason is because the program that’s running that you don’t see is a virus. It’s something that’s added on that isn’t necessary for the system to run.

You begin to realize that the virus is your false sense of self, your ego, your personality, your perceived life in being, as referenced in the *Diamond Sutra*. It doesn’t need to be there. It’s the thing that keeps the computer from functioning properly. When you are sitting to meditate, what you are doing is becoming aware when that ego arises. Ego isn’t always there, awareness is. [Claps hands together] awareness hears that; ego doesn’t need to hear that. Ego may say something afterwards about it, but it’s not necessary. When we are unaware of the fact

that we have this ego there, it hinders the computer. It ceases to run properly and we keep wondering why. The subtle wisdom is there for us to ferret out the ego; to ferret out these mental impressions that aren't necessary for that particular moment when somebody says "Oh you're a jerk." You begin to think "Get them back! Call them stupid! Protect my ego." but these types of things are of no value. We are constantly trying to placate the ego. When we sit to meditate and we really are attuned to our awareness, we will become aware of the ego arising. Let it go. Don't do anything to push it out nor try to block it with your mind. Simply illuminate it. Illuminate everything that's in the mind.

Subtle Wisdom

When we are sitting to meditate we are not trying to make the mind blank. That's the wrong type of meditation; that is called dead samadhi. Nothing is happening. The lights are out and nobody is home. In illuminated meditation you are totally aware of the present moment. You are aware of the gross thoughts that arise in your mind, such as "I'm hungry" and all of a sudden a jelly donut appears. The stomach gurgles and some thought of food comes up. What you're missing is those subtle shifts, those subtle mental impressions that are colorless. This is subtle wisdom. In your level of practice now you should be at a point where you can discern these subtle shifts in mind. That's not easy to do because these shifts are very similar to a black hole in the universe. A black hole is a point in space where everything is drawn into it by a strong gravitational force. You can't see the hole because even light is sucked into it. When the ego arises it doesn't have a color nor does it have a name. It is just composed of mental impressions that are going towards something. When you are sitting there you will see a thought like a jelly doughnut

move to the center of the mind as though it is being pulled by a black hole. You should not be concerned about the jelly donut. What you want to do is ferret out that which is moving it.

When you're meditating you know how mind works. You know that there are forces at work even though you cannot see them, but you are aware of them. That's what awareness is all about. The more you use your awareness, the stronger it gets, thus the more you are able to become aware of something that's there, or the potentiality of something that's going to happen. When you are aware you see all these different conditions arising. You begin dealing with these probabilities as you practice and you start acting as though you are some mathematical genius figuring out all the probabilities and picking the best option possible. So when you get mad at the boss you don't call him a bad name. You might say "I beg to differ but perhaps you might be wrong about that." In being mindful

*When we are sitting
to meditate
we are not trying
to make the mind blank.*

you can save your job for another day. You would never tell him afterward "I told you so." Through body, speech, and mind you are aware, moment to moment, what is happening. You are aware of what could happen into the future and you are clear about it through awareness, not through the ego, not through something that you want to do to protect the ego, but you see the things that are happening. So when you're sitting to meditate you are aware and you want to bring out this awareness.

Awareness Illuminates

Awareness does not have a shape or a form; it does not have a name. The awareness that you are using right now is the awareness of the patriarchs, it's the awareness of the Buddhas. It's nothing other than that. Not bad! You already have it because that is the operating system we are using, it's the mind. This mind when left to work naturally works very well. What awareness does is illuminate. What does it illuminate? It illuminates everything, all phenomenal occurrences. Let's picture a red apple in your mind. Can you see the red apple? All of you can see it. This red apple is suspended on something, what's that? Sometimes people say "it's on the tree." However, we should not think of the tree but the apple itself and ask ourselves, "What is the apple being projected upon?" You have to see that clearly. Our search is not for the apple because it could easily turn into a banana. Don't worry about the apple or the banana and instead try to look at where they came from. Where *is* that? All phenomena are suspended in mind. When we begin to see mind in this way we no longer see mind as stuck in our cranium. This is mind and everywhere you look is mind. There is no place mind is not. It all follows the natural laws. We become aware of that. So we no longer keep our mind crammed in this little box. This is consciousness. What we try to do is become more and more aware, more illuminated.

Your Illumination Ticket

Illumination is not just the thoughts that are arising in your mind. Ultimately it's the thoughts in your mind, as well as your *mind* in your mind, because there are no borders there. But initially what we want to do is concentrate about what just came up. The ancients say the crime is not in the fact that a thought has arisen, the crime is that one did not become aware

of it earlier. As you sit in meditation, you begin to see the thoughts as they start to arise, or the potentiality of thoughts. The ancients used to label thoughts as "ephemeral bubbles that arise." We should see thoughts in that way, as ephemeral bubbles. When we're meditating our mind is aware and it's as though we're sitting in an aquarium with these bubbles rising all around us. But we don't have to do anything; we are like that little ceramic diver at the bottom of the tank, not moving. Perfectly aware of all these things that are coming up, we don't pay attention but we know that they are there. We are aware that a jelly doughnut just rose up on the right side and a big bill rose up on the left side, and a problem here, and maybe the thought of a family member, or some other loved one is arising. The mind is illuminated.

That's what illumination is. Don't wait as if somebody is going to hand you this illumination ticket and you're going to Disneyland; that's not illumination. It doesn't happen that way. All that happens is that you are here in the ordinary and the mundane. The only difference is you're aware of what's happening. Not bad! Somebody gives you a ticket to stay awake; that's your illumination ticket. Stay awake: "In this moment, I am going to be awake; I'm going to be clear about what's happening." That's worth much more than some kind of cheap sensory experience; don't look for that. There are people in this room who reflect the practice in such a way that I give them great respect because they've really dedicated their lives to the Dharma. Many of you are already this way. You don't need somebody to punch your ticket; it's being punched moment to moment.

Discernment

This idea of awareness is something that is incredible for you to have. If you're not sitting in awareness you're not going to go very far. Because what you

are doing is trading in consciousness. By trading I mean that your interactions are consciousness. Consciousness is that red apple that arose in mind; where did it arise from? This where we put our mind when we sit to meditate as well as the place where the thoughts arise and cease. Always looking there; being aware of these ephemeral bubbles coming up, knowing they are naturally occurring, because we put them there with our past actions. If we keep bringing them forth in consciousness, they are naturally going to arise again so we must learn to let them go. We don't need them right now because they have nothing to do with the awareness of meditation. This is called discernment – knowing what is arising in mind and

what should be in mind in the present moment. Knowing what is arising in the mind is illumination of the mind. Illumination of the mind is being at one with *pratītyasamutpāda*. In fact the ancients stated that *pratītyasamutpāda* is the Buddha mind. It's not very hard at all and you already have it so use it. Why would you want to use this "junky" one that only craves consciousness?

We have the ability to use this incredible mind, and we're not using it. We tend to pick consciousness over awareness, attempting to polish something that is illusory. We convince ourselves by saying, "I don't want to have the problems I have, I'm suffering." We sit in meditation hoping to stop thoughts and reform consciousness. So let go of that; trade it in for awareness. Don't worry about the bell. Just keep bringing yourself to awareness. Relax, rest in this awareness, keep your method, discern, and be aware when thoughts are arising in the mind. Let them go. The only thing that you want discernment for is not to think about the thoughts but to recognize that thoughts have arisen or are trying to arise.

Kung Fu Wisdom

After a while, for instance if one uses a *huatou*, the thoughts are so thick they can barely come up. It's like a big bubble trying to force itself up through the La Brea tar pits, but it just weakens and tires and subsides. Awareness of the mind is so great that all of these vexations and thoughts have lost their energy. Whereas before they came up very strong and you were like Scrooge in *The Christmas Carol*, all afraid of the thoughts that have arisen in your mind. If you understand that your

mind is king and you have the ability to let that all go, you find that all of these things are but an illusion and as such, will weaken and fade away. However, you have to be present and you have to fight from the very beginning.

In Chinese hero movies where they use kung fu to fight the enemy, as soon as they knock one out another one appears and then another one. You have to be that way, just be present and just keep knocking them down. You don't knock them down by fighting them or pushing them, you knock them down with

*Don't knock them down by
fighting them or pushing them,
you knock them down
with wisdom.*



wisdom. Master Linji said to use your innate power to create more power. Other masters say you derive power from your power. So you use the power of the right view. You use the power of your ability to have faith and the vigilance to be able to continue on. *Vīrya* [energy, diligence, enthusiasm, effort] is the power for you to be able to stay there and fight the ten thousand enemies that come, arising as thoughts. You fight them, again not by slashing at them but by the wisdom of illuminating them. So let's practice illumination, let's practice wisdom. Let's stay in harmony with *pratītyasamutpāda* and understand that causes and conditions never fail.

The ancient master Hanshan said that if you really stay with your method for seven days, you will have a realization, and he added if he's wrong about that may he go to *avīci*, the lowest hell, and have his tongue cut out moment after moment after moment. That's a very serious vow on his part to

make. I join Hanshan in his exhortation, saying that if you practice ceaselessly your mind can come to a realization within seven days. It may not be the ultimate complete enlightenment, but there is the possibility of that happening if you are very vigilant in what you're doing and you have the *vīrya* to do it and the right view.

Awareness and Consciousness

Everything is about right view and without right view you go nowhere. But with right view you know the difference between awareness and consciousness. Consciousness is what wasn't there a moment ago but is now there. That's constantly changing, that's phenomena. In the Hua-yen school, and the Tien-tai school, the *noumenon* is that which supports the phenomena. Without the *noumenon* none of this could appear – indeed where could it appear, if not other than mind? As the ancient masters stated, "Sages return consciousness to mind, while fools turn mind into consciousness."

Today after your break, get on your cushion and get to work right away. What I want you to do is be with your method already as you are getting on your cushion. Adjust your posture and make your towel orderly, but your method is already there. You are on that method, and you stay on it keeping awareness there as you sit. Pay no attention to what time of day it is. If you think this [morning] is the afternoon, or in the afternoon you think it is still the morning, that is good and means you are on your method. You need not worry about anything. Not about food, not about cold or hot, you are just on that method. Really try your best to do this every time you sit to meditate, not just during a retreat. That way when you come to retreat you're good to go; you should be able to get into *samadhi* very quickly and illuminate the mind. ☺



Photo by Mohamed Nuzrath

The Arising of Conditioned Appearance from the True Mind

Part 11

BY

Abbot Venerable Guo Xing

This is the eleventh in a series of articles taken from Dharma talks given by Abbot Venerable Guo Xing at the Shurangama Sutra Retreat in August 2012. The talks focus on the first four chapters of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and include the discussion of Chan theory and practice, stories of the Chan Masters, and how to apply Chan methods in daily life.

HOW DID THE “three subtle and six coarse appearances” arise from the mind? The True Mind has the ability to perceive and cognize. Originally, there is no distinction between the True Mind, and the subject and object of this capacity for perception or cognition. Yet, in this state of “not-same and not-different,” there suddenly arises the sense that there is an object of perception/cognition. Subsequently, the notion of subject also arises. In truth, the subject and object of perception/cognition have always been one and the same. They are neither the same nor different, yet the delusion arises as soon as the notion of “prior thought” and “later thought” comes about. It is as if I first make a fist with my hand, then I open it to reveal my palm. Both the fist and the palm are of the same hand. However, when we perceive our first thought from the vantage point of our later thought, then immediately the later thought becomes the subject

and the prior thought becomes the object. At this precise juncture, the sense of distinction arises from what is intrinsically “not-same and not-different.” The subject and object of perception/cognition become separate and different. This one deluded thought is what gives rise to the three subtle appearances, which are: 1. the subtle mark of karma, moved by ignorance, 2. the subtle mark of the objective world; and 3. the subtle mark of the subjective perceiver.

Then, amidst all perceived objects, we look for and establish similarities among differences. Based on what we have perceived, sameness is seen as space, while differences are understood as the various phenomena. Then we further establish the notion of “not-same and not-different.” That which perceives and cognizes the similarities and the differences of all phenomena is called “not-same and not-different.” In other words, the objects of perception/cognition

are divided into similar and different, whereas this capacity for perception/cognition is “not-same and not-different.” This “not-same and not-different” differs from the perceived empty space, which does not have the capacity to perceive or cognize. It is considered a static emptiness. On the other hand, while the True Mind is also empty, it is true emptiness and is capable of perception and cognition. Therefore, that which can perceive and cognize (the True Mind) belongs to neither the category of sameness nor difference. It is called “not-same and not-different.”

The True Mind is intrinsically devoid of characteristics such as similarities and differences. There is neither subject perceiving nor object perceived. But, as the dualistic view arises, the sameness that is perceived/cognized is understood as empty space, while all the differences become

“the world.” Meanwhile, that which is capable of perception/cognition is called “not-same and not-different.” As the mind continues to function in this dualistic manner, a fatigue is formed. It is a fatigue that is caused by afflictions. The subject and object continuously interact with each other, resulting in a fatigue of the mind. It is also called *zhi-xiang* in Chinese, “the appearance of discriminating awareness/knowledge.” Here, the Chinese character *zhi* does not refer to wisdom; instead it refers to the discriminating awareness that harbors specific attachments. As the subject and object endlessly interact with each other, slowly, illusory physical phenomena are manifested from the midst of empty space.

We can draw a parallel of this phenomenon with a common meditation experience: If the eyes stay open and keep staring at the floor, after a while the floor may seem to shift. Another example: If



Photo by Freddie Marriage



Photo by Varshesh Joshi

we keep staring at the sky, after awhile illusions can start to appear. This is the so-called “illusory flower manifesting in midair.” There is yet another example: Try drawing circles in midair using a lighted incense stick. There is really only one point of light, but after a while we begin to feel there’s actually a circle. This example also illustrates the working of the same mechanisms.

This constant interaction between the subject and object perpetuates the affliction-fatigue. Furthermore, we become attached to the resulting phenomena and start to conceptualize and give names to phenomena, another one of the six coarse appearances.

We’ve used this analogy many times already: The “mother” manifested in our mind is perceived by us as our real mom. We mistake the notion or image of mom in our own mind as the real thing. Subsequently, we label this mental phenomenon as the “real mom,” and develop positive associations

around it. In truth, aren’t we merely interacting with ourselves this whole time? We’ve talked about this hundreds of times already, yet we continue to operate in this erroneous manner, don’t we!? What is it that we are so attached to? Treating something false as real is called “attachment.” This kind of attachment is not what people commonly associate the term with, which is “clinging to specific persons, things, or phenomena.” Here, attachment means to treat something false as real.

Because of this dualistic interaction, vexations arise. That is why Master Sheng Yen said, “Vexations should be eradicated and returned to the mind.” There is also a Chan saying: “Vexations are Bodhi.” These phenomena are all functions of the True Mind. Ultimately, there is neither “mom” nor you. It is only you that want to believe so.

As we’ve said, the phenomena perceived and cognized by the mind are understood as world

versus space. “Not-same and not-different” refers to the mind that is capable of perception and cognition, while empty space arises from sameness, and the world is from differences. We view this as the self. This is called “fundamental conditioned existence.” This means we believe there is a self when there really isn’t. This false-self is conditional. A conditional phenomenon is intentionally created. On the other hand, the unconditional existence/phenomenon is the True Mind. The fact that you are capable of perceiving and cognizing, and consequently generating intentional behaviors, is all called conditional phenomena. There is a false self that is generating all these phenomena and actions. But “not-same and not-different” is actually the most ultimate and real conditional phenomenon, because the True Mind exhibits the ability to manifest illusory phenomena. But when we erroneously believe in this capacity as the self, from that point on, karma and suffering are created and perpetuated.

“The three subtle and six coarse appearances” first arise, followed by the world, sentient beings, and karma. They continue and perpetuate. If we do not interact with phenomena once they are manifested originally, then both the world and we would disappear. So now, why is our world continuing to exist? Because we are interacting with these phenomena constantly and incessantly. On the other hand, through meditation we can experience “the ground drops” and “empty space shatters.” At that juncture, the world will cease to exist and its perpetuation will stop.

We say that there are birth, aging, sickness, and death in the human beings’ life span. As for the natural world, there are the phenomena of becoming, existing, decaying, and disintegration into space. If this space does not return to the True Mind (as it should), then it is considered an empty space (static

emptiness). In other words, this world is created by our mind. *The Shurangama Sutra* discusses precisely this: that in the True Mind there is no space, world, sentient beings, and karma. But then, how are the dualistic mind (subject and object), space, world, sentient beings, and karma manifested? This is precisely the Great Inquiry and rightly so.

Our thoughts are all created by ourselves. Subsequently, we continuously interact with these thoughts. Isn’t it true that we selectively choose our memories? And then we interact with these memories and treat them as real? Consequently, thoughts are perpetuated and do not decrease or cease.

When people experience something really painful, difficult, or burdensome, usually they don’t know how to deal with such experiences, so they tend to choose not to think about it. If we don’t recall these memories, naturally there are no further interactions with them, and the memories will eventually fade away. This is the method most people adopt. The more one interacts with the troublesome memories, the more they surface in one’s awareness.

Once we start learning about the Buddhadharmā, we learn to accept these memories by changing our own attitude toward them. We suffer because we are unwilling to accept. Once we accept the painful experiences, the pains will lessen. An even higher level of dealing with it goes beyond accepting or not accepting the memories. It is actually realizing they are merely memories. We’ve mistakenly treated the memories as the real “self.” We erroneously think that they are real. To resolve sufferings and pains in the most fundamental way is to see through the memories as merely illusions generated from the mind. The memories are not real. They are only phenomena.

Once we have established this understanding, we can truly “see all five skandhas as empty and transcend all sufferings.” ☺

(To be continued)

The Past

from CMC, DDRC and DDMBA worldwide

DDM Pilgrimage to Chinese Temples

In November 2015, Edward Lin participated in a pilgrimage organized by Dharma Drum Mountain to visit Buddhist temples in China. You can read more about it and see more of his photos at his website: www.snappybuddhist.com/china-temple-2015/

I SAT IN SILENCE in half lotus on a cushion facing the center of a large dark octagonal room. The enclosure could easily fit two hundred fifty meditators in two concentric rings along the periphery of the room. With my eyes half closed, I let the monkey mind come and go while still staying focused enough not to doze, lest I risk being awakened by a patrolling monk and his bamboo stick. This was a well-timed intermission at the Gaoming Temple in Yangzhou, Jiangsu, during our two-week pilgrimage.

This was my first trip where we visited temple after temple and learned about the origins of Chan/Zen, as well as Pureland Buddhism in ancient China. Upon returning to the United States, my friends were surprised to hear that there was no time for shopping, but that did not matter to me. Physically being at all the renowned temples and learning about their histories opened my eyes.

The first temple we visited was Guangjiaosi in Nantong, Jiangsu, the over one thousand year old home temple of Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva. For we pilgrims from Dharma Drum Mountain this

temple has a very special significance, as the late Chan Master Sheng Yen, our founder, was ordained here as a novice monk.

We visited the Hengshan Mountain in Hunan, where Master Huai Rang famously taught Mazu Daoyi by attempting to polish a brick into a mirror. Here I learned that in 1943, the US President Franklin D. Roosevelt and members of Congress had also heard a brief version of the mirror story when the First Lady Soong May-Ling, Madame Chiang, delivered a speech on behalf of China.

New knowledge brought meaning to caverns I didn't know existed. I learned that the Great Compassion Water and Land Dharma Service (Liberation of Rite of Water and Land, or The Grand Prayer), which is one of the most important Buddhist prayers, originated at Jingsan Temple in Jiangsu and that the childhood fable of the *White Snake* is connected there too.

As we continued our trip, I gained an admiration of the altruistic individuals who devoted themselves to spreading the Dharma from over fifteen hundred years ago to the present day. We heard about how the teachers established and passed down centers of Buddhist Dharma. I learned that during societal turmoil, brave sangha members came through to keep the Dharma from fading. The abbot of Yumen Temple in Guangdong almost lost his life protecting the temple from the Red Guards of the Cultural Revolution.

Most of the temples we visited had suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution, and they were rebuilt or are being renovated. Many had help from practitioners and monastics leaders from abroad. Now these temples are grand and beautiful, even those high in the mountains and hidden in the clouds. Many pilgrims who had taken this same trip ten years ago with Master Sheng Yen barely recognized some of the same temples.

These physical and spiritual developments are a result of dedicated individuals such as the Abbess Juchai of Western Forest Temple in Jiujiang, Jiangxi, originally from Taiwan. She saw an extremely dilapidated temple when she first visited many years ago and raised money to help rebuild. During the process, she became the abbess of the temple. At Puli Chan Temple in Jiangxi, they had an area dedicated to late Master Nan Huai Jin where he initiated the reconstruction. At Youmin Temple in Jiangxi, the abbot stated that the abbot of Hong Kong's Po Lin Monastery was integral in helping to renovate the Youmin Temple.

The abbot of Sanzu Temple in Qianshan, Anhui, stated how Master Sheng Yen visited China at a critical juncture to provide deep Buddhist knowledge and practice when Buddhism had started to reemerge in China. At Dingshan Temple in Nanjing, I spoke to a young monastic living an austere monastic lifestyle. I discovered that before wearing the Chan robe, he had studied in Pennsylvania and was a professor of mechanical engineering.

For many on this trip it was their second pilgrimage; ten years earlier Master Sheng Yen had brought over five hundred pilgrims to visit the very

same temples that we visited. I feel so fortunate to have come on this trip, as I gained precious insights into the origins of Chan and also our Dharma Drum lineage. We pilgrims feel inspired that our new wisdom will encourage us to do more with our practice. ☸

by Edward Lin

DDRC Receives Grant from Hemera Foundation

IN JUNE 2015, the Hemera Foundation invited DDRC to apply for a fellowship grant that provides funding for educators to attend retreats at DDRC. In August 2015, DDRC received the grant and joined retreat centers such as Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Zen Mountain Monastery, Spirit Rock Meditation Center, Blazing Mountain Retreat Center and Garrison Institute, in offering retreat scholarship support to people working full-time in pre-K or K-12 education or enrolled in a Master's degree program in education. DDRC is pleased to support

the vision of expanding the community of educators who use the practice to inform their teaching and lives. In the fall of 2015, DDRC received a second grant from Hemera Foundation to provide retreat scholarship for health care workers. Given the demanding nature of working in the health care fields, the opportunity to deepen their practice in a retreat setting will be invaluable to health care professional. DDRC looks forward to having more health care workers and educators joining its retreats. ☸



Puli Chan Temple Photo by Edward Lin

Dharma Drum in the Media

DHARMA DRUM is represented (by Rebecca Li) on the cover of *Lion's Roar*, one of the major Buddhist magazines in the English-speaking world (previously known as *Shambhala Sun*). In this premiere issue of *Lion's Roar*, published in March 2016, the editor invited Rebecca Li along with thirteen Dharma teachers from various Buddhist traditions (Kate Johnson, Norman Fischer, Sharon Salzberg, Anam Thubten, Reverend Angel Kyodo Williams, Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, Lama Rod Owens, Sylvia Boorstein, Geoffrey Shugen Arnold, Gina Sharpe, Ethan Nichtern, Larry Yang and Josh Korda) to be in the tri-fold cover photo. These teachers also



Rebecca Li (lower right), with (clockwise), Geoffrey Shugen Arnold, Lama Rod Owens, Roshi Pat Enkyo O'Hara, and Gina Sharpe, in an outtake from the cover shoot for *Lion's Roar Magazine*. Photo by Christine Alicino

contributed to the issue's feature article "Hear the Lions Roar" by responding to the question: What is the most important truth to proclaim in today's troubled world? Rebecca Li from Dharma Drum represents the Chan tradition in this piece. Also recently, Dharma Drum appeared in the Winter 2015 issue of *Buddhadharma* magazine which featured the Generation X Dharma Teachers Conference hosted by Dharma Drum Retreat Center in June 2015. Dharma Drum was also featured on Tricycle.com through an online retreat led by Rebecca Li over the month of October 2015. The online retreat was titled "Living the Platform Sutra." ☸

Westchester Chan Meditation Group

THE WESTCHESTER CHAN Meditation Group has been meeting once a month in White Plains, New York since 2013. They investigate core Chan teachings found in Master Sheng Yen's talks and writings – *the Heart Sutra* and *the Diamond Sutra*, as well as the foundational teachings of the Four Noble Truths, Eight-Fold Noble Path, dependent origination and emptiness. Meetings consist of Eight Form Moving Meditation and sitting meditation, followed by a Dharma talk. Currently led by Harry Miller, a student of Master Sheng Yen for over 30 years and a practitioner for over 40 years, topics and teaching are geared to contemporary life with all of its joys and problems. Questions and follow-ups are always welcome. The group meets at Still Mind Martial Arts & Yoga (above the 7-Eleven store), 305 Central Avenue, Suite 2, White Plains, New York. Their phone number is 914-648-0492. The atmosphere is open and friendly. ☸

21-Day *Intensive Chan* Meditation Retreat

- Led by Venerable Chi Chern, a dharma heir of Master Sheng Yen
- 31 July – 21 August 2016, Dłużew, Poland
- CONTACT budwod@budwod.com.pl • www.czan.eu



Painting by Ven. Chi Chern

Chan Meditation Retreats

Beginner's Mind

April 29 – May 1, 2016

Nancy Bonardi & Rebecca Li

Silent Illumination Intensive

May 27 – June 5, 2016

Simon Child & Rebecca Li

Investigating Huatou Intensive

June 17 – 26, 2016

Žarko Andričević

Essentials of Chan Intensive

July 17 – 26, 2016

Venerable Chi Chern



Painting by Chen-Chih Liu



DHARMA DRUM RETREAT CENTER

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The Future

Calendar of retreats,
classes and other
upcoming events

Schedule is subject to
change. Please check
websites for updated and
detailed information.



Great Dharma Drum

Videos from Chan Master Sheng Yen's
television program *Zen and Inner Peace*
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DDMTV05/videos>

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

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

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Thursday Tea Meditation	2:00 PM-4:00 PM	Eight-form moving meditation, Chan relaxation, tea ceremony, sitting meditation, Dharma talk. Led by Venerable Chang Hu
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RETREATS (register online)

Day of Stillness & Children's Program	Jun 11	Saturday 9 AM-5 PM Venerable Chang Hu Little Bodhisattvas Team
Beginner's Mind Retreat	Apr 29-May 1	Nancy Bonardi and Rebecca Li
Silent Illumination Intensive Retreat	May 27-Jun 5	Simon Child and Rebecca Li
Investigating Huatou Intensive Retreat	Jun 17-26	Zarko Andrcevic

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

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All activities will be held at our rented temporary center at 91-26 Corona Ave.
We welcome you to come and practice with us at our new place.

SUNDAY OPEN HOUSE

Every Sunday	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 & Recitation	1 st , 2 nd , 4 th (& 5 th) Sundays 2:00-3:30 PM	Guan Yin Bodhisattva Chanting Service
	3 rd Sunday 2:00-4:00 PM	Earth Store Bodhisattva Sutra Chanting Service

REGULAR WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

Monday Night Chanting	7:30 PM-9:15 PM	Bodhisattva Precept Recitation Ritual Every last Monday of each month
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-12:00 PM	Sitting, yoga exercises, video teachings by Master Sheng Yen

RETREATS (Pre-registration advised)

1-Day Retreat	Apr 30	Saturday 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM	Led by Ven. Chang Zhai
	May 29		Led by Nancy Bonardi

SPECIAL EVENTS

Buddha's Birthday Celebration	May 8	10:00 AM- 3:30 PM	Visit chancenter.org for details
		11:00 AM-12:30 PM	Special Dharma Talk by Abbot Ven. Guo Xing
Transmission of the Bodhisattva Precepts	May 19-22	Held at DDRC Download application form at chancenter.org Applications are due by April 30	

CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS (Pre-registration advised)

Taijiquan with David Ngo	Every Thursday 7:30 PM-9:00 PM	\$25 per 4-week month — \$80 for 16 classes First class is free for newcomers
Sunday Afternoon Movies	Mar 13, May 22 1:30 PM-4:30 PM	Led by Dr. Peter Lin, film Viewing and discussion Check website for film title and description

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The Map to Nowhere

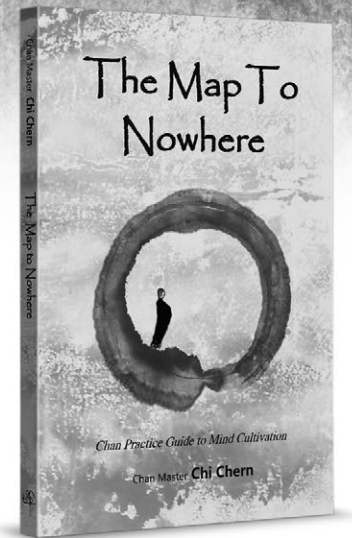
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